Literary Celebrity from Romanticism to the Twenty-first Century

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<u>Contents</u>

Abstract

Discourses on authorship have constantly evolved throughout the last few centuries; one of the most notable yet contentious developments in authorship is the author's involvement in celebrity culture. While the Medieval conception of authorship saw the author as a craftsman, the period of Romanticism singled out the author as a distinctive individual of original genius, and the 'author as celebrity' concept began gaining momentum. This trend extended well into the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries, and authors remain celebrated figures in contemporary society.

Much work has been dedicated to the conception of authorship, as well as to the field of celebrity studies. Yet authorship studies and celebrity studies have, in recent years, merged, giving the figure of the author a renewed sense of importance. 'Literary celebrity' as a discipline has therefore been the focus of a number of useful and insightful studies, notably in the works of Joe Moran, Loren Glass, Lorraine York, and Leo Braudy. Yet the specific study of literary celebrity from an extensive historical perspective has been relatively undeveloped. An historical analysis is needed in order to contextualise the celebrity author's place and status in the contemporary mediasphere.

This thesis adds to the existing body of work on literary celebrity, addressing a gap in research on the topic by providing an historical background to the celebrity author. In charting the development of the celebrity author from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century, my research shows that distinctly Romantic conceptions of authorship have persisted into contemporary society. This is the first work to examine and present an extensive account of literary celebrity from its historical origins to twenty-first century media. In so doing, this thesis illustrates how arguments and assumptions surrounding literary celebrity have been steadily maintained. As a result, literary celebrity remains an important, intriguing topic of discussion, prompting renewed debates relating to modernised conceptions of authorship, writing, reading, popularity, and culture. My research examines the continued importance of celebrity authors in light of their long history.

Declaration

I certify that this work has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution. The work herein is entirely my own, except where acknowledged.

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Introduction

In 1994, Hungarian philosopher György Márkus wrote that 'authorship is not in vogue nowadays', and that authorship was 'rooted in the illusory idea of the rational subject as the sovereign source of all meaning' (1994: 257). He argued that authorship implies the denial of 'the autonomy of the text' (257). Márkus' views reiterate those of poststructuralist theorist Roland Barthes, who, in 1967, declared the 'death of the author', arguing that the Romantic legacy of authorship and its privileging of the author interfered with the authority of the text itself. A decade after Márkus' comments, theorist Loren Glass claimed, in his influential work *Authors Inc.* (2004), that literary celebrity, as a 'historically specific articulation of the dialectical tension between modern consciousness and public subjectivity persists only as a residual model of authorship. It no longer commands the cultural authority it did in the modern era; and it never will again' (2004: 200). Despite the prevalence of such theories in the academic industries, particularly in the latter half of the twentieth century, cultural commentary in the last decade or so has routinely suggested that, in fact, authorship is not only in vogue, but a thriving cultural discourse bound up in the equally compelling industry of celebrity. This thesis illustrates that the views of Barthes, Márkus, and other anti-authorial theorists are inconsistent with the prevailing discourse that favours the author as a significant figure, a cultural hero and an individual of tremendous public renown. Far from receding into obscurity, the author remains a crucial figure in twenty-first century culture.

This thesis explores how the Romantic conception of authorship has persisted into twenty-first century society, providing an historical analysis of 'literary celebrity'. An historical discussion of literary celebrity is fundamental in order to inform the author's continued prominence in the contemporary mediasphere. By situating the contemporary status of the celebrity author within a broader historical analysis, I illustrate the particular ways in which the Romantic conception of authorship – based on an idealistic notion of the author as a solitary, melancholy genius – has persevered in increasingly mediated eras. Moreover, through its historical analysis this thesis demonstrates the various continuities inherent in literary celebrity, in particular the ongoing tension between literature and celebrity culture through authors who are seen to conform to standardised notions of the Romantic author. Therefore, in its historical approach, this thesis offers a significant, renewed discussion on celebrity authorship that has previously been undeveloped, to illustrate how certain assumptions regarding authorship are problematically maintained.

A number of studies have illuminated the significance of the celebrity author[1]. While these theorists provide an important analysis of both the popularity and contradictions associated with literary celebrity in more recent years, my work offers a broad scope of celebrity authorship in order to show that these trends have an historical basis. In canvasing a broad range of periods and authors, this thesis demonstrates how and in what manner the celebrity author has continued to function as both intellectual individual and public personality across different generations. My work shows that, since its inception, the celebrity author remains an intriguing, albeit controversial figure within broader discussions on authorship and popular culture.

With an historical framework in mind, this thesis looks more specifically at predominant 'narratives' of literary celebrity, namely, the image and figure of the 'melancholy genius', and the 'solitary hero', and how these narratives of literary celebrity problematically serve a predominantly white-male demographic. Indeed, the use of canonical authors to reflect literary celebrity as a whole shows that discussions relating to both celebrity culture and authorship are fairly one-sided; issues relating to an author's reputation within a broader system of celebrity and commodity tend to overlook or completely ignore the figure of the female and/or non-white author, suggesting that such narratives are of primary interest to white-male authors only. As Richard Dyer has observed, 'whiteness' is the manner in which ideologies of normalisation are framed, and from which all other categories depart (1997). He writes, for instance, of the fundamental 'invisibility of whiteness' in culture determined by its 'ubiquity' (1997: 3). As a result, a sense of 'whiteness' insidiously informs much of the standard attitudes towards histories of literature and celebrity. The authorial genius trope, therefore, persisting since the Romantic era, is primarily embodied by white-male authors, with the ideologies relating to authorial integrity, creativity, and literary prestige enacted through fairly canonical authors. Hence our understanding of literary celebrity is problematically shaped by a select group of authors whose careers replicate similar concerns of reputation and integrity, as I will discuss.

Literary celebrity has continuously been marked by narratives of discontent and theorised as a contentious phenomenon primarily through a set group of authors who serve as

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[1] The most notable of these include Joe Moran *Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America* (2000), Loren Glass' *Authors Inc.: Literary Celebrity in the Modern United States 1880-1980* (2004), Lorraine York's works *Literary Celebrity in Canada* (2007) and *Margaret Atwood and the Labour of Literary Celebrity* (2013), and Leo Braudy's *The Frenzy of Renown* (1986). While Glass and Braudy's works evidently feature historical components, this thesis specifically focuses on the celebrity author's history from the eighteenth century to the twenty-first century, thereby providing an extensive analysis in light of changing authorship and celebrity studies.

an ideological springboard from which literary celebrity is formed and discussed. From Jean-Jacques Rousseau to David Foster Wallace, the elusive figure of the 'celebrity author' has proved simultaneously intriguing and problematic, prompting claims of incompatibility, disloyalty, contradiction, and the increasing disrepute of literature as a whole. Ideas that adhere to more traditional views of authorship and literature continue to proliferate in spite of the celebrity author having become an integral part of Western society and the subject of unwavering interest. At the same time, the increasing scholarly attention being given to the cult of celebrity has had a positive impact on the role of the author-as-celebrity.

One of the more prominent theories of literary celebrity I will be employing throughout this thesis relates to the comparative success of the literary market, overturning the assumption that celebrity culture and the fiscal expectations therein dominate the market. The particular union between celebrity culture and literature (as opposed to the music, film and sports industries) shows that, as theorist Joe Moran rightly notes, sales success *does not* wholly determine the strength of the celebrity author's career. Indeed, book publishing, he notes, remains 'one of the few areas of the mass media where market values have not triumphed wholesale' (2000: 42). The continued strength of more 'literary' publishing houses such as Scribners, Moran argues, shows that artistic merit is not completely overlooked in favour of commercial material. Such a claim is readily perceptible when considering the careers of authors from Thomas Pynchon to David Foster Wallace, authors whose sales success is surpassed by their cultural capital, which does not negatively impact their success as authors, but in fact strengthens their position in the global market. The authors discussed in this thesis are predominantly considered to be 'literary authors' – with the exception of Stephen King, whose career offers a useful comparison between literary and 'brand' authors – and in their continued success in the marketplace show that there is still a place for literature in the commercial mediasphere. The selection of authors chosen for this thesis illustrates that literary, artistic merit still informs much of the structure and function of the cultural marketplace.

This thesis also explores the theoretical claims surrounding the actual *production* of celebrity authorship, to show that the media and cultural industries, rather than just the authors themselves, are responsible for the creation of an author's public image. Cultural commentary, journalism, editors, publishing houses, and readers all contribute, however moderately, to the construction of a distinct literary star system, influencing the trajectory of

the celebrity author's career in no small way. While celebrity authors invariably possess significant agency in forming their careers and image in the public, they do not do so in isolation. The perception relating to the celebrity author's sole responsibility in forging their public image is one element of the legacy of the Romantic conception of authorship, one that has steadily persisted throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first century.

Often idealistically portrayed or regarded as a solitary endeavour, the act of writing has, in the last few centuries, dramatically altered to accommodate a more glamourised, public perspective on writing and authorship, one that has increasingly embraced celebrity culture as a necessary (and sometimes natural) feature of literature. As the role of the writer and the phenomenon of authorship in general have undergone continuous change throughout history, it is no surprise that the figure of the author has found a necessary counterpart in celebrity culture. What this illustrates is not only the way in which authorship has continued to act as a vehicle of varying and shifting ideologies, from the Medieval craftsman, to the Romantic genius and the poststructuralist author and beyond, but shows that the celebrity author has become, curiously, a steadier and more enduring development in the history of literature. The isolation of the writer as a special individual, what Barthes calls the 'prestige of the individual' (1977: 143), has thus far become the most popular and enduring development in the history of literature and authorship, and, along with the 'cult of personality', has strengthened interest in literary celebrity.

Since the identity and figure of the author has risen to prominence, it has embodied various different meanings and has become, as Moran notes, 'a vehicle for ideologies' (2000: 59). Throughout its complex and often indecisive history, the author has been conceived of in various ways and through multiple discourses, each attempting to define not just what an author is but how the author operates within society. This has led to a state in which authorship has become a fragmented phenomenon, with the author becoming malleable to each new cultural discourse. As Moran has argued: 'authors are complex cultural signifiers who are repositories for all kinds of meanings' (1983: 19). One of the most popular of these meanings is the cult of personality, intensified with the increased interest in the personal lives of artists and other public figures.

By the late twentieth-century, however, following on from Barthes' influential essay, a sense of ambiguity surrounded the role of the author. As Simone Murray writes: 'A point of consensus for almost all writers on the culture of authorial celebrity is that the figure of the

author appeared, by the late twentieth century, to be displaying, in Sarah Brouillette's phrase, "something of an identity crisis"' (2012: 34). Uncertainty regarding the author's role emerged, as although the author was pronounced theoretically dead by academics and poststructuralists, the author was very much thriving in popular culture and society with the aid of emerging media platforms and technologies. The cult of the personality, developed in Romanticism and sustained throughout the Victorian era, flourished in the twentieth century, somewhat contending with Barthes' argument against the idealised conception of the Author in literary discourse.

Literary Celebrity: A Contradiction?

The conception of the author as a figure of genius has continued to pervade popular culture and remains one of the most prominent narratives of literary celebrity. Dugald Williamson, in his book *Authorship and Criticism* (1989), argues that the Romantics were the first advocates of the theory that an author, or poet, is affiliated with 'original genius' (1989: 3). Since then, the concept of the author as an exceptional individual has achieved overwhelming support in society and culture. Stuart Glover, furthermore, notes that this particular view, stemming from the eighteenth century, has continued to thrive in contemporary instances, stating: 'we still have the author in its most Romantically individuated form – organised around the idea of genius' (2012: 296). That an author is a popular individual possessing creative genius is one of the most enduring discourses on authorship, and with the rise of celebrity culture, this particular view has only intensified in the last few decades.

Harold Bloom's book *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Minds* (2003) perfectly illustrates prevailing notions on the link between authorship and genius, with Bloom discussing the lives and careers of authors ranging from Shakespeare to Hemingway and Faulkner. Yet the book has been criticised on the grounds that it lacks a strong female and non-white representation. As this thesis will show, the female, non-white author has been noticeably absent from most discussions on authorial genius, with the exception of examples such as Gertrude Stein and Toni Morrison, both of whom embodied the tension of literary genius and celebrity author. In this way, discussions around authorial genius still predominantly exclude women and writers of different nationalities, showing that discourses on authorship, as John Young (2001: 186) has pointed out, still serve a white-male

demographic. This also serves to sustain notions of authorial 'purity' that have dogged discussions of authorship, with authors feeling pressured to produce an 'authentic' profile and persona to the public. This means that the celebrity author is often meant to adhere to certain traits, behaviours and images, from denouncing promotional, commercialist endeavours, to maintaining an image of a serious, 'solitary scribbler' (York, 2007: 5). This has produced a distinctive kind of celebrity author, one who is often ambivalent in regards to their celebrity status, wanting to be widely read and, more importantly, desiring the prestige of literary reputation, while cautious to appear dismissive of celebrity culture. This has furthermore put celebrity authors in a paradoxical '"damned if you don't, damned if you do" position' (Roynon, 2013: 125), in which the celebrity author is often unable to satisfy the conflicting and contradictory demands of the media and the public and how they are seen by their fans.

As a result, the notion of 'persona' – now itself an area of scholarly attention[2] – is particularly applicable and important to this thesis. The integration of celebrity and persona is evident, since 'celebrity represents a powerfully visible exemplification of persona: celebrities are public presentations of the self and they inhabit the active negotiation of the individual defined and reconfigured as social phenomenon' (Marshall and Barbour, 2015: 7). In this instance, the celebrity authors discussed in this thesis strongly correspond to notions of self-presentation and the negotiation of a public 'persona'.

The celebrity author has operated at the centre of an ongoing debate between literature and celebrity, and throughout history has negotiated through the tensions of these supposedly incompatible cultures and roles. As Rebecca Braun notes, there is seen to be a deep-rooted contradiction in literary celebrity:

> [Literary celebrity] is forged out of the mass public exposure of an intellectually demanding content, but this exposure is facilitated by a popularising approach that quickly becomes self-sustaining and valued as an interest story in itself. Herein lies the key contradiction within literary celebrity, for, unlike other forms of celebrity, it combines two apparently mutually exclusive value systems from two opposing fields (2013: 235).

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[2] See the academic journal *Persona Studies*, whose first issue launched in 2015

This is a line of thought that has pervaded, however directly or subtly, twenty-first century thinking around the respective cultures of celebrity and literature. Although there are, as Loren Glass (2004) notes, very many instances of celebrity authors throughout history who have successfully managed to reconcile their fame alongside their writing – Mark Twain and Charles Dickens being two of the most notable – a general, though ever-decreasing scepticism, continues to surround literary celebrity. This thesis will show a consistent debate that sees the celebrity author problematizing conventional (and often erroneous) conceptions regarding intellectualism and celebrity culture. Because of the particular reputation that celebrity has received, particularly in the latter half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, the development of literary celebrity has been fraught with criticism. For some, the celebrity author is seen to transgress certain boundaries of social tastes and class, while others see the celebrity author as emerging in an increasingly commercialised literary sphere in which the market dominates publishing trends and therefore damages the integrity of authorship. As Paul Clements notes:

> Literary celebrity is a response to an increasingly commodified world, which debateably threatens the autonomy of the literary field. Moreover, there is a correlation […] between the literary gatekeepers and the publishing industry which corresponds to the publication of specific authors of literature classified within relevant genres, a system which is reliant upon some degree of celebrity and [is] particularly acute in the U.S., where the rubric of the marketplace triumphs over the more literary and rational processes for determining quality and value (2013: 149).

As this thesis will demonstrate, the dominant criticisms of the cult of celebrity and its relationship to authorship stem from the notion that celebrity culture is less concerned with quality – a factor that authorship is generally seen to value – than it is with marketability, commercialisation, and popularity.

Literature and Celebrity

In the last few centuries, as a wider reading public has gradually emerged, there has been increasing tension between literature and variations of popular, mass, commercial culture. Raymond Williams, writing in 1961, discusses what he calls 'serious literature',

unintentionally distinguishing between works that are serious and works that are deemed commercial.

Williams notes that serious literature was previously read by those who were privileged enough to be literate: 'It seems fair to conclude that the largely professional reading public, of the clergy, of scholars and students, of doctors and lawyers, grew steadily throughout the Middle Ages' (1975: 178). Even in 1961, Williams identifies and criticises the assumption that a reading public that consists of everyday society will bring down the prestige of literature, and that serious literature is reserved for those in intellectual positions:

On the one hand there is the fear that as the circle of readers extends, standards will decline, and literature be threatened by "blotterature". Related to this, but involving other prejudices, has been an essentially political fear that, if the common man reads, both quality and order (sometimes the one standing for the other) will be threatened (179).

As celebrity culture is most often associated with mass consumption trends, the union of celebrity and literature, then, has been interpreted as problematic for the 'conventional' role of the author and something that is seen to undermine the integrity of literature. More recently, the commercialisation that naturally comes with celebrity culture has similarly been criticised for lowering the prestige of ostensibly 'serious' literature, and in turn has problematised the role of the celebrity author, who is seen as making literature too accessible by associating it with the wrong culture, thereby destroying genuine literature. All of the authors I discuss throughout this thesis, from Charles Dickens to Ernest Hemingway and Jonathan Franzen, have at some point been criticised for engaging too heavily in the cult of celebrity, and have subsequently been discredited by various critics. In contrast, authors such as Gertrude Stein, Toni Morrison, and Thomas Pynchon are often seen as being too 'highbrow' to be completely and effectively embraced by and disseminated throughout popular culture. This shows that literary celebrity is often defined by a significant degree of compromise; either the author is deemed too popular to be taken seriously, or they are not quite accessible enough to be considered as widely famous and readable as other celebrity authors.

The attempt to bring literature to a wider audience through the avenues of celebrity culture has been met with praise, but also with much disparagement, predominantly from the

point of view of cultural status. And although many celebrity authors have had success in undoing this assumption, embodying both popular celebrity and 'serious' author simultaneously, a tension still exists between celebrity culture and literature.

Scope

The authors in this thesis have been chosen for their particular illustration of the literary/celebrity divide; the tension between one's literary reputation and celebrity status has been exhibited in the careers of authors from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, Norman Mailer, Bret Easton Ellis, Toni Morrison, and Dave Eggers, among many others. In this respect, literary celebrity has become an intriguing development in which the celebrity author engages in both literary society and celebrity culture, or is seen as possessing both creative genius and the cult of personality related to celebrity culture. As a result, this thesis is forced to exclude the merely famous author, such as Virginia Woolf and Jane Austen, both of whom were not as heavily engaged in celebrity culture (the latter achieving only posthumous fame), and thus are not exemplars of the tension of literary celebrity with which this thesis is concerned. Instead, this thesis directly explores those authors who exemplify/ied the contradictions and, more importantly, exhibited the tensions involved in the merging of celebrity culture and literature.

From Romanticism to the twenty-first century, a notable trend shows authors consistently grappling with their role as author and status as celebrity, with authors from Romanticism, through to the Victorian era, Modernism, and Postmodernism, bemoaning their fame and expressing discontent with their reputations as a result of their inclusion in celebrity culture, whether through film, television, magazines, or other promotional endeavours. This tells us many things, one of which is that despite how much progress has been made by authors attempting to bridge mass media with literature, essentially undermining the highbrow/lowbrow divide, tension still exists between these particular cultures. The tension between literature and celebrity has subsequently made the phenomenon of literary celebrity both intriguing and partly defined by a significant degree of incompatibility, paradox, compromise, and an overwhelming sense of discontent. This is particularly evident in the ways in which authors have expressed their dissatisfaction with their careers or have struggled through their literary fame, from Byron's creation of the Byronic Hero archetype,

referring to one intensely bemoaning their fame, to David Foster Wallace's reputation as a genius and his struggle through depression and hesitance to engage with the public.

The simultaneous desire for popularity and prestige in many cases makes the celebrity author an important, transitional figure, in which certain rules and expectations used to define both cultures are challenged and undermined. While literary celebrity has been an increasingly popular topic of scholarly discussion in recent years – with the works of Joe Moran, Loren Glass, Lorraine York and Leo Braudy being particularly relevant – this thesis provides a broad analysis from Romanticism to the twenty-first century in order to track the continuities of the celebrity author's career through different eras. What this illustrates is that although it is an enduring development, the celebrity author remains a contentious figure, one that deserves greater investigation and analysis.

The Structure of this Thesis

The first chapter of this thesis provides an overview of the existing literature dedicated to authorship, celebrity, and the development of the academic field known as 'literary celebrity'. This includes a discussion on the changing status of the author throughout society and culture, as well as the various and varying definitions of 'celebrity'. As a result, the notion of a 'celebrity author' remains a contentious term in itself due to the shifting definitions and ideas surrounding both the author and the celebrity. Moreover, my preliminary discussion on literary celebrity, informed by research on both authorship and celebrity culture, focuses on the continued tension that exists between literature and the cult of celebrity.

As this thesis takes as its focal point the Romantic conception of authorship, the second chapter focuses on an analysis of the emergence of the author as a significant figure of creative genius in Romanticism, discussing this concept through the careers of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Lord Byron. While these authors were of intense fascination to their readers, both Rousseau and Byron exemplify the theme of the 'tragic artist', or the 'melancholy genius', a trope which has persevered in studies of literary celebrity. The continued popularity of these identities illustrates how literary celebrity is still marked and sustained by ideas of incompatibility and compromise, in which one's celebrity is seen to sully an author's integrity.

The third chapter examines how this Romantic notion of the author persevered into the Victorian era, specifically through the lens of 'hero-worship' that certain authors were

associated with, particularly Charles Dickens and Mark Twain. These authors are significant as they are not only regarded as the most prominent and important literary figures of literature, but are also noted for their authorial performance strategies in the early literary market place. Both Dickens and Twain were celebrated for their ability to relate to the public with an increase in mass literacy, which had a profound impact on the status of literature in subsequent eras. My research in this chapter also shows that the sense of melancholy and depression that functioned in and partly defined Romantic authorship was also present in the careers of Dickens and Twain.

The fourth chapter of this thesis discusses the Modernist conception of literary celebrity, focusing on Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. In this chapter I discuss the continued importance of the concept of authorial genius within an increasingly commercialised environment. Stein, Hemingway and Fitzgerald's divergent approaches to celebrity culture are particularly useful in examining the inconsistent nature of literary celebrity, and how certain authors remained uncomfortable with their literary fame, while others, such as Stein, were able to more successfully navigate through fame and literary renown. Hemingway is, moreover, a particularly important case study in examining the author's transition from famous individual to public personality with the advancement of mediated technologies such as the magazine.

Chapter Five focuses on post-war celebrity in an increasingly mediated era, and again notes how certain authors approached celebrity culture in different ways. As case studies, Norman Mailer and J.D. Salinger, whose careers were starkly different, exemplify the divergent attitudes towards celebrity, Salinger's career one of privacy and reclusiveness, and Mailer's an intensely mediated one. That Mailer was, as I discuss, much more criticised as an author than Salinger suggests that society continued to prefer authors who were considered more 'serious', rather than overtly and shamelessly engaging in mass media formats. Mailer's career as a celebrity author shows how an author's persona was becoming an increasingly important factor, while Salinger's career illustrates how reclusive authors have maintained somewhat of a fascinating presence within popular culture.

Chapter Six takes a more theoretical approach in which I discuss how the 1960s proved to be a crucial time in changing conceptions of both authorship and celebrity culture. The 1960s saw Andy Warhol's work influencing generalised conceptions of the nature of celebrity. His view and depiction of celebrity as hollow, glamourised and repetitive subsequently shaped the reputation of celebrity culture as devoid of actual achievement and

talent. As a result, authors who were increasingly associated with celebrity culture would be scrutinised for emphasising their public persona over the merits of their literary work. Moreover, the 1960s signalled a shift in theoretical attitudes of authorship, with the poststructuralists, namely, Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, directly challenging the role of the author as a significant figure of literary discourse. Hence, the 1960s were an important period in illustrating changes in society's understanding and opinion of both celebrity culture and the author's role, which would influence successive decades.

The seventh chapter of this thesis focuses on the postmodern celebrity author, in particular Thomas Pynchon and Salman Rushdie. Both Pynchon and Rushdie are not only important case studies due to their partial absence from the public (Pynchon's by choice and Rushdie's by necessity), but also due to their playfulness in the media, with both authors appearing in popular culture. Pynchon and Rushdie are two of the most useful case studies in this thesis as, throughout their careers, they have directly undermined anachronistic notions of authorship that disavow celebrity culture. Pynchon's absence from the public notwithstanding, his engagement in popular culture through his pseudo media-appearances, alongside Rushdie's constant appearance in the public eye, shows a departure from older views of authorship as above and beyond commercialism. Pynchon's career in particular is useful in showing how authors absent from pervasive celebrity culture are in turn more fascinating for contemporary culture, while Rushdie's case shows how the anti-intentionalist argument towards authorship is redundant insofar as Rushdie has been forever linked to his literary creation.

Chapter Eight discusses the rise of brand authorship in the 1980s and 90s, with Stephen King and Bret Easton Ellis illustrative of what is believed to be the increasing disrepute of authorship. As brand culture is understood as celebrating the name over the work, both King and Ellis have been regarded somewhat unfavourably by contemporary audiences for contributing to the 'dumbing-down' of literature. Their careers have both been marked by a sense of commercial performance at the expense of quality literature, since their ability to sell their work is often understood to be based on controversy and public visibility.

Following on from brand authorship, Chapter Nine discusses the relationship between celebrity authors and Oprah Winfrey's televised book club in the late 1990s. Two authors, Jonathan Franzen and Toni Morrison, also have had very different experiences regarding their engagement in a promotional endeavour that has been at the epicentre of recent discussions on literature and reading in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century

culture. Franzen's experience with Oprah's book club exemplifies the ambivalence and, arguably, the hypocrisy of various authors who profess a desire to be respected as authors while wishing to promote their work on a public platform. Audiences have reacted less favourably to Franzen than they have other authors, for a range of reasons, not least due to Franzen's elitist views on authorship that are, moreover, seen to conflict with his prolific presence in the media. His constant desire to produce something of an 'authentic' self has also contributed to his less than favourable reputation.

Toni Morrison, on the other hand, as a Nobel Prize Laureate, has been a significant, useful individual for undermining elitist notions regarding the relationship between celebrity, television culture, and quality literature. Yet as I argue in this chapter, Morrison's work has, to a degree, been limited in its ability to be absorbed by popular culture due to the perceived complexity of her work, showing how there is, indeed, a limit to which ostensibly 'highbrow' literature can successfully operate through popular culture. In spite of this, Morrison, like Pynchon, is one of the more important celebrity authors considering her ability to dismantle elitist notions surrounding literature in the media.

Finally, the tenth and final chapter of this thesis examines the emergence of the New Sincerity movement in literature, focusing on the respective careers of David Foster Wallace and Dave Eggers. While Wallace has achieved tremendous posthumous praise following his death, Eggers has been criticised in a similar manner to Franzen for his ambivalence regarding his place as an author in contemporary culture. As a public intellectual, Eggers has been scrutinised for embodying the seemingly incompatible roles of celebrity, author, and public intellectual. Wallace, on the other hand, has been the subject of much scholarly and critical discussion, not only for his mammoth creative output, but also for his personal life and his struggle with depression. Wallace's career has been elevated to the status of legend, his sincere disposition being highly commended by critics and readers, and his work earning him the Romantic title of 'genius', showing the resurgence of Romantic rhetoric and thought. In contrast, Eggers' philanthropic endeavours in the literary market place have somewhat ironically damaged his reputation, showing that there is a limit to which readers and critics can embrace sincere authors.

All of these case studies illustrate the complexities and inconsistencies inherent in the industry and phenomenon of literary celebrity, undergirding its nature as a compromising, paradoxical cultural development. While this thesis maps the development of the Romantic conception of authorship, I also take as a primary focus how, in spite of the author's

continued popularity, the status and role of the author is in a constant state of flux. This idea is particularly evident in discussions of celebrity authorship. It is through the lens of literary celebrity that the author's unstable role in contemporary discourse is abundantly apparent.

There is an evident overlap between the eras that this thesis examines, and while this thesis attempts to identify specific shifts in cultural values in literary celebrity between these eras (see Table 1), its findings are neither total nor conclusive, and moreover subject to interpretation.

Table 1 *Cultural Values in Literary Celebrity Across Different Eras, 1800-Present*

Era	Interest in emotion, imagination, and sincerity	Importance of value categories (highbrow/lowbrow)	Engagement with the media/public
Romanticism (1760-1850)*	Strong interest	Not as important	Strong engagement with the public
Victorian Era (1837-1901)	Interest	Very important	Strong engagement with the public
Modernism (1901-1940)	Strong interest	Very important	Strong engagement with the media
Post-War (1945-1968)	Interest	Very important	Strong engagement with the media
Pop Art (1955-1970)	No interest	Blurring of highbrow and lowbrow	Strong engagement with the media
Postmodernism (1960-2001)	Less interest	Somewhat important	Strong engagement with the media
New Sincerity (1993-Present)	Strong interest	Not as important	Strong engagement with the media

Note: These dates are not in any way conclusive

Chapter One: Literary Celebrity – A Review of the Literature

Literary Celebrity Today: Discourses on Differentiation

In 2015, Rebecca Braun discussed the developments of literary celebrity in the last few years. In her reconsideration of salient texts such as Loren Glass' *Authors Inc.* (2004) and Aaron Jaffe's *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* (2005), Braun observes that literary celebrity continues to thrive in contemporary culture, and moreover asserts that our focus on literary celebrity ought to be framed on *where* literary celebrity is, rather than *what* literary celebrity is. Indeed, Braun suggests that literary celebrity can be found in a broad range of disciplines and cultural areas, from academia, to film, publishing etc., each area fashioning its own conception of what constitutes literary celebrity and how literary celebrity ought to be used in a broader social framework. Hence the celebrity author eludes a concrete definition when we consider, as Braun notes, the different authors and the worlds they represent. A discussion of literary celebrity's historical mapping, therefore, is useful in underscoring the social compass of the celebrity author. Yet these authors nevertheless belong to a similar geographical and social demographic.

'Who have we excluded?' Braun asks, 'and why?' (2015). As this thesis shows, female literary celebrity is a significantly under-developed point of enquiry. While there are various texts that explore literary celebrity from this position[3], they are more often excluded from such broader discussions on literary celebrity as a whole which, in itself, shows the manner in which literary celebrity is often incorporated. Contemporary female authors, comprising a substantial list that includes Toni Morrison, Margaret Atwood, Joan Didion, Alice Munro, Arundhati Roy, and Zadie Smith, are often overlooked in such discussions of literary celebrity as an archetypal phenomenon, not wholly absent but certainly under-represented, suggesting that discourses on literary celebrity are obstinately shaped by a white-male demographic. As John Young argues: 'high culture remains a white-male preserve in the popular press (2001: 186). This factor creates a discourse on literary celebrity that is shaped by ideals of normalising certain canonical figures in literature, where issues of authenticity, reputation, representation, Americanisation, and other forms of identity are discussed through a select group of authors, many of which are discussed in this thesis.

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[3] Three of the most salient of these include Alexis Easley's *Literary Celebrity, Gender, and Victorian Authorship* 1850-1914 (2011), Brenda R. Weber's *Women and Literary Celebrity in the Nineteenth Century* (2012), and Lorraine York's *Margaret Atwood and the Labour of Literary Celebrity* (2013).

Canonically famous authors, as Braun argues, become 'part of a normatizing discourse' through which we understand broader social values. But the way in which these authors are appropriated by different fields challenges 'purely aesthetic readings of these authors' significance' (2015). Indeed, literary celebrity attaches a plethora of meanings and values to authors that relate to discourses of production, identity, nationhood, and talent, to name but a few, producing newer and conflicting ways of reading the author within a wider discourse of celebrity, which may bring us closer to understanding why certain authors are omitted from such discussions.

Where Braun calls for differentiation in literary celebrity between Anglo-American and European authors, Anders Olhssen et al call for a more substantial differentiation that includes cultural capital, geographical differentiation, and finally diachronic differentiation that charts the 'changing functions and uses of a celebrity author *over time*' (2014: 32, own emphasis). As Olhssen et al argue, differentiation is needed to ensure a more substantial theoretical framework of literary celebrity is produced. This thesis is primarily concerned with Olhssen's third differentiation by showing how certain frameworks – including those that are more one-dimensional – obstinately persist in contemporary analyses and discussions of celebrity authors. The particular authors used in this thesis are part of a normalising discourse surrounding issues of authenticity, reputation, and identity, and are analysed not in an effort to rehash already-established ideas in the discipline, but to show how, in spite of evident changes in the industry, somewhat antiquated discourses persist. Narratives of literary celebrity pertaining to the melancholy genius, the solitary hero, and of literary prestige and authorial credibility, obstinately circulate around the white-male author, even in the twenty-first century, suggesting that the consistencies in Romantic literary celebrity are not necessarily positive. Although there are many female celebrity authors, much cultural commentary, as I will discuss, persistently and controversially favours white-male authors to represent the fairly one-dimensional image of the struggling celebrity author in a broader discussion relating to the relationship between literature and celebrity, identity and publicity.

The Pre-Romantic Author

While literary celebrity is a phenomenon that became widely embraced and mythologised in the Romantic era, literary fame was not exclusive to this epoch; Leo Braudy's extensive work *The Frenzy of Renown* provides an in-depth look at a history of fame and the conception of

genius, and the shifting interpretations of its broader implications. Discussing famous figures such as Augustus, Homer, Ovid, Virgil and Horace, and the relationship between authorship and power[4], Braudy notes that Augustus's engagement with literature: 'created an environment in which […] writers could believe that their public power needed their special blend of public mythology and private virtue' (1997: 121). Such an observation has persisted for a remarkable amount of time, in which authors balance mythology with their own personal ideologies. Genius, too, while understood as a distinctly Romantic phenomenon, had its origins in the Augustan era. Discussing the Genius of Augustus, Braudy argues that the 'changing definition of genius is a central element in the history of fame' (108). He notes that in Roman religion, genius was linked to the spirit of the family or the individual, linking humans to 'the forces of fate and the rhythm of time' (108). Resembling the Greek *daimon*[5], Bruady argues that the notion of genius in Ancient Rome was a 'connection with powers outside one's temporal nature', and that 'unlike the modern concept of genius, which dates from the eighteenth century, it implied no special personal talent' (108).

Moreover, Braudy discusses how literary fame differed from other kinds of fame in earlier eras, noting that literary fame: 'would not be like the fame of the conqueror […] but one that reflected the fame of the wise, the private contemplator of time rather than its public master, a fame defined not by the things of the world but by its intangible ability to transcend them, the authority of its authorship' (121).

Paul F. Grendler argues that the author was also a significant figure during the Renaissance, but without financial reward: 'Renaissance men boasted that printing conferred immortality on authors, but few received direct financial reward for their books' (2003: 31). Further, Marcy L. North's work *The Anonymous Renaissance* (2003) discusses the anonymity of authorship during the Renaissance.

Just prior to the Romantic era, the medieval theory of authorship[6] perceived the author more as a tradesman or craftsperson who, rather than performing as a central, elite figure, simply engaged in the collection and construction of manuscripts and texts. In Romanticism, however, the author took on a particularly significant role; rebelling against the ideals of

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[4] Braudy's chapter 'The Uneasy Truce: Authority and Authorship', is particularly useful and relevant in terms of the shifting reception of 'literary fame'.

[5] In Greek mythology, the term *daimon* refers to a benevolent spirit of genius. It is also linked to the terms *daimonion*, used by Socrates to refer to a 'divine something', and *eudaimonia*, which translates to well-being and happiness in Ancient Greek.

[6] Studies on the medieval conception of authorship include Russell Ascoli's work *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author* (2008), Alastair Minnis' 'The Significance of the Medieval Theory of Authorship' (Burke, 1995), both of which discuss the medieval 'auctor', and Jennifer Summit's 'Women and Authorship' in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing* (Dinshaw and Wallace, 2003).

Enlightenment, such as reason and scientific empiricism, and promoting their own ideals such as the imagination and individual genius, the Romantics held the poet and author in special esteem, birthing the notion of a distinct kind of celebrity author.

The Romantic Author

The Romantic conception of the author has persisted into twenty-first century society. In contrast to previous eras which did not elevate the author's textual status, the Romantic conception of authorship focused more explicitly on the original genius of the author – or poet – and saw to elevate the status of the poet to a semi-divine figure of inspiration and insight. Holmes and Redmond observe that 'the aura attached to authorship […] has a history dating back at least to the turn of the nineteenth-century, when the Romantic poets celebrated the image of the artist as creative genius and cultural hero' (2007: 250). Similarly, as Williamson argues, this perception of writing coexisted with the Romantic rhetoric of the original genius. He argues: 'In contrast to an earlier view of the author as a master of collective, rhetorical practices, the author came to be seen in Romanticism as a unique personality individually responsible for creating new work' (Williamson, 1989: 3). The Romantic era represents a radical departure from previous theories on the role and status of the author, in which the author was credited primarily as a craftsman, not as a particularly important individual associated with original genius.

A pivotal study in the culture, theory and rhetoric of Romanticism is M.H. Abrams' *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953). Reflecting on various theorists and claims, Abrams argues that the Romantic period invests its cultural importance in the figure of the author, thereby displacing the audience as the point of reference and importance in Romantic enquiry. Critiquing classical rhetorician Longinus, Abrams writes: 'A conspicuous tendency of Longinus, therefore, is the move from the quality of a work to its genesis in the powers and the state of mind, the thought and emotions, of its author' (1953: 73). Moreover, the composition of poetry and texts, for Abrams, places 'the author at the centre of the theory, and to make the moral and pleasurable effects on the audience a fortunate by-product of the author's spontaneous expression of feeling' (89). Similarly, poet William Wordsworth advocated this theory of the poet as a direct conduit for divinity, and also stressed that an author's work is an example of spontaneous expression. The Preface from his *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) highlights Wordsworth's theory that the central meaning of the text, the poem, is to be

found within the poet: 'Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity' (1800: xxxiii). For both Abrams and Wordsworth, the text was an expression of the Romantic poet's emotions, thereby fostering a distinct view of the author as the origin of a text's meaning[7].

Such an understanding of the author is readily perceptible in cultural commentary that presently circulates in the media; books and reading at large are routinely discussed not only in connection to their authors, but with direct reference to the author's personal life, psychology, and history. Such is the Romantic legacy of authorship that we rarely discuss and understand literature in both an historical and contemporary setting without some reference to its authorial genesis. The 'spontaneous creativity' persistently linked to authors and literature informs subsequent discussions on the role of the author within an overarching system of celebrity and commodity culture.

That the Romantic conception of authorship persists is not necessary a positive trait of contemporary society; as Julian North observes, the Romantics fostered an image of the author as a solitary, autonomous, 'male genius' (2009: 3). For the Romantics, the authorial genius was distinctly masculine (6), separated from society and considered unreachable. Female authors were all but excluded from this dynamic. While contemporary literary celebrity certainly is more inclusive of varying identities relating to the figure of the author, discussions surrounding the Romantic mystique of the author found in the media as well as in cultural commentary are still predominantly focused on the figure of the 'male genius'.

Anti-Authorialism

The primary issue for authorship studies is the status of the author, and whether she possesses the Romantic perception of originality. Various texts – many of them classic examples of anti-authorialism – seek to displace the author as a dominating, interpretive figure. Theorist Martha Woodmansee presents a notable criticism of the author's place in history in her work *The Construction of Authorship* (1994), in which she argues that while the author made a significant contribution to a work, they did so only as 'an enterprise conceived collaboratively' (1994: 17). Furthermore, Woodmansee states: 'The notion that the writer is a

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[7] Other critical works on the subject of Romanticism and Authorship include Sonia Hofkosh's *Sexual Politics and the Romantic Author* (1998), Zachary Leader's *Revision and Romantic Authorship* (1999), Duncan Wu's *A Companion to Romanticism* (1999), Andrew Franta's *Romanticism and the rise of the mass public* (2007), and Michelle Levy's *Family Authorship and Romantic Print Culture* (2008).

special participant in the production process – the only one worthy of attention – is of recent provenience' (16). Woodmansee perceives author Samuel Johnson as less an archetype of the modern author and more a participant in the process of 'true collaboration' (20).

The most well-known critiques on authorship theory stem from the post-structuralist movement in the 1960s and 70s, when theorists Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault dedicated their studies 'The Death of the Author' (1967) and 'What is an Author' (1969) to dismantling the privileged position of the author in textual discourse. Barthes approaches authorship through a predominantly ideological lens, arguing how the prominence of the author in literature problematises the interpretation of texts. Foucault's approach to authorship, conversely, aims to show how the author, rather than being an essential figure to the text, is actually both a creation of legality and a function of discourse, or what he calls the 'author-function'. I will discuss the concept of 'The Death of the Author', and anti-authorial theories as discussed by Barthes and Foucault, in greater detail in Chapter Six.

Critics such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Jacques Derrida are equally critical of the Romantic prominence of authorship. Where Lévi-Strauss believes that authorship functions 'to increase the authority and prestige of one individual – or function – at the expense of others' (2012: 282), Derrida's argument is rooted in the belief that an author's psychology is not accessible through his or her writing. His famous notion, *il n'y a pas de hors texte* (there is nothing outside of the text), stands to claim that there is no one context through which a text may be read. Discussing Rousseau, Derrida writes that works such as *La nouvelle Heloise* (1761) and *The Social Contract* (1762) are not even an 'inarticulate psychoanalysis of Jean-Jacques Rousseau' (1997: 161). Instead, certain theories of authorship, for Derrida, propound a notion that is simply a Western thought that 'entertains relationships of cohabitation with Rousseau's text' (161)[8].

Authorship Now

The theories against the prominence of authorship in culture have been predominantly ignored in the decades that followed the poststructuralist attack on authors. In fact, as Sean Burke argues: 'With unavoidable irony, the theory of authorial absence no more signalled a disengagement with issues of authorship than iconoclasm attests to the dwindling of the icons' (2011: xvi). Moran, on the other hand, argues that Barthes' belief in the death of the

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[8] Derrida's notions on authorship are further and more extensively explored in his *Of Grammatology* (1967) and *Limited Inc.* (1977)

author is reserved primarily for academic cultures, and that, in contrast to these theories that wish to abolish the author as a maker of meaning, the author is 'very much alive' (2000: 58).

In contrast to Barthes' and Foucault's notion that the author's name or figure is irrelevant to the text, various pro-authorial schemes exist in which to dispel the 'death of the author' concept. One is, undoubtedly, the invention of copyright which seeks not only to protect but recognise texts as belonging to the person who wrote it. For Mark Rose, this invention represents the 'commodification of literature' (1993: 1), a view that is supported by Woodmansee, who claims that 'as creative production becomes more corporate […] the law invokes the Romantic author all the more insistently' (1999: 28).

Indeed, contemporary culture has seen a renewed interest in authorship studies more broadly. Christine Knoop notes that contemporary authorship has been taken up with conceptions of 'individuality, intellectual property, economic brands, and copyright' (2011: 1). For Knoop, moreover, authorship has come to embrace critical theory in nuanced ways in order to interrogate the essential issues of authorship, and how we come to define an 'author'. She writes that literary theory has influenced contemporary authors such as Milan Kundera, Paul Auster[9], Ian McEwan, Umberto Eco and Salman Rushdie, among others.

Hence the 'death of the author' rhetoric remains significant only as a residual facet of literary theory. In fact, what contemporary authorship is characterised by is a dramatic reversal of this dynamic in which the author's power is not only reinstated, but actually accentuated, intensified, and celebrated. Paul Dawson, for instance, discusses what he believes is one of the more salient trends of contemporary authorship, namely the resurgence of 'omniscience' of narration in recent literary work, a seemingly 'obsolete' trait belonging to nineteenth century literature. He argues that 'postmodern experimentation has influenced contemporary omniscience' (2009: 151), seen in the works of Salman Rushdie, Martin Amis, Zadie Smith, Jonathan Franzen, Don DeLillo, and David Foster Wallace, among others. Omniscience in narration features 'an all-knowing, heterodiegetic narrator who addresses the reader directly, offers intrusive commentary on the events being narrated, provides access to the consciousness of a range of characters, and generally asserts a palpable presence within the fictional world' (143).

In this manner, the 'Author-God'[10] rhetoric appears to be reinstated to a degree, in which the authority of the author is validated once more. Yet Dawson notes that in cases such

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[9] Auster's work notably employs the theories of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan.
[10] In *S/Z* (1974), Barthes proclaims that 'the author is a god' (174). As Andrew Bennett observes, Barthes treatise on the author-god as presiding authority alludes to Nietzsche's nineteenth century proclamation that

as Franzen's *The Corrections* (2001), the use of omniscient narration is 'part of a broader project to reassert the authority of the *novel* in contemporary culture' (151, own emphasis).

Thus in contrast to Loren Glass' theory, put forth in his influential work *Authors Inc.* (2004) that literary celebrity 'no longer commands the cultural authority it did in the modern era; and it never will again' (2004: 200), contemporary authorship is in fact characterised by a deep engagement with social concerns, in which we see, as Dawson argues, the 'writer's authority as a reporter of contemporary culture' (2009: 157).

Yet Dawson posits that authors have, through their fiction, become public intellectuals, spokespersons for society, in which authors 'seek to establish their cultural authority through a range of genres, while still promoting the central significance of fiction as their source of "knowledge"' (151). For Dawson, Salman Rushdie, for instance, is granted his role as cultural authoritarian on Muslim culture precisely because he is the author of *The Satanic Verses* (1988). By granting authors certain cultural and social responsibilities based on their literature, we are consequently framing debates around the renewed position of the author and their role in deliberating on social issues of the era, whether through their books, or directly in the media itself.

Olhssen et al argue furthermore that 'the development of celebrity studies in the 1990s paralleled the "return of the author"' (2014: 33). This not only reversed the anti-biographical manner in which poststructuralist theories approached authors and authorship, but effectively propelled the author to a significant height of social renown. Olhssen et al write that 'the anti-biographical position [in authorship] is untenable for a number of reasons' (34). They argue that ignoring the importance of authors who write works based on gender, colonialism, and the Holocaust 'is problematic both from an academic and moral perspective, since the authenticity of these texts, which is crucial, is closely connected to the figure of the author' (34).

As the ninth and tenth chapters of this thesis attest, authenticity is still very much connected to discourses on both authorship and celebrity[11]. As Hookway and James (2015) put it: 'Authenticity is the value of our times'. Society and culture has placed renewed stock in the value of authenticity in increasingly secularised times, in which we 'seek to perform authentically, to consume authentic products and to be authentic people. To describe

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'God is dead', thereby linking authorialism with theism (2005: 15). Chapter Six of this thesis further explores Barthes and the 'Death of the Author' essay.

[11] Chapters Nine and Ten have an extended discussion on authenticity and sincerity in contemporary literary and celebrity culture.

something as inauthentic is the critic's cruellest barb, implying that the product or person under review is contrived, insincere, or at worst, soulless' (Hookway and James, 2015). Similarly, Michael Albrecht observes that 'authenticity is one of the key lenses through which we view contemporary mediatised society and the anxiety around the consumption of the inauthentic is central to modern life' (2008: 5).

Much contemporary commentary suggests that these supposedly obsolete myths of the purity and authenticity of authorship are actually retained in readers' attitudes; Carey Mickalites, for instance, shows that Martin Amis' publishing deal with Andrew Wylie in 1995 for his book *The Information* 'signalled for readers of literary fiction a betrayal of a lofty ideal of authorship in favour of capitalist greed and glamor, a celebrity sell-out' (2013). Yet Mickalites also argues that Amis himself is concerned with interrogating the politics of literary celebrity-as-commodity, arguing that the author's works *Success* (1978), *Money* (1984), and *The Information* (1995), all 'reflect the ways in which literary value came to be produced in the 1980s and '90s, including the value of the celebrity author as a cultural commodity' (2013).

Although celebrity culture in itself is not entirely based on inauthentic traits and characteristics, assumptions surrounding celebrity culture do often focus on the juxtaposition between that which is authentic, and that which resists authenticity. In recent decades in particular, discourses on authenticity and sincerity have re-emerged, suggesting that value is still placed, however modestly, in the author as a sincere, engaged, authentic writer.

Differentiating Celebrity

The way in which the author is used to represent varying disciplines, ideologies and discourses parallels the manner in which celebrity is used as a prevailing discourse of authority and creativity. This makes 'Literary Celebrity', as an area of academic enquiry and social discussion, particularly important as it contains a vital social subtext regarding personality, identity, and individualism in an overarching discourse of Western ideology. As P. David Marshall explains: 'Celebrity status operates at the very centre of the culture as it resonates with conceptions of individuality that are the ideological ground of Western culture' (1997: x). Similarly, as Aaron Jaffe observes: 'The same way modernists and modernism's literary economists fetishize authorship, celebrities and their publicists fetishize the production of the self' (2005: 90). So it is unsurprising that literary celebrity has become

such a prominent topic in contemporary society; as a phenomenon that incorporates two distinct yet invariably interconnected areas, literary celebrity functions as a model of contrasting qualities, of the image and the self, of the visual and the written, and the media and literature.

The increased fascination with celebrity in the scholarly realm was highlighted in 2012 when Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia, hosted the inaugural *Celebrity Studies* conference. Co-organiser and celebrity studies scholar Sean Redmond stated: 'celebrities offer us forms of identification and belonging, and we measure our happiness and sense of self-worth against them. They offer people, fans, a great deal of pleasure, and pleasure is a very important part of everyday life' ('Feast of celebrity', 2012: No page).

In the last decade, the relationship between literature and celebrity has become of critical interest to various theorists who approach the subject in a variety of ways, including: Jason Nathanial Goldsmith's *The Work of Romantic Authorship in the Age of Literary Celebrity* (2005), David Haven Blake's *Walt Whitman and the Culture of American Celebrity* (2006), Jonathan Goldman's *Modernism is the Literature of Celebrity* (2011), Brenda R. Weber's *Women and Literary Celebrity in the Nineteenth Century* (2012), and Karen Leick's *Gertrude Stein and the Making of an American Celebrity* (2012). Some of the more salient texts that exist on the subject of literary celebrity are Joe Moran's *Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America* (2000), and Loren Glass' *Authors Inc.: Literary Celebrity in the Modern United States 1880-1980* (2004).

Yet along with the development of celebrity culture are the notable criticisms against such a phenomenon. Distinctions between certain kinds of fame and renown have frequently been made throughout history. Matthew Arnold, in 1865, distinguishes between fame and celebrity, writing: 'The lonely precursor of German philosophy, [Spinoza] still shines when the light of his successors is fading away; they had celebrity, Spinoza has fame' (1990: 181).

More recently, John Ralston Saul distinguishes between three kinds of celebrity: the heroic fame granted to descendants of royal stardom, the vulgar fame associated with actors and sports stars, and lastly the fame given to philosophers, poets and novelists. Although he stresses the importance of the latter kind of fame, Saul writes: 'The rising systems inevitably came between writers' fame and their freedom to use it in the real world. By the end of the nineteenth century, that fame was being redefined as notoriety or celebrity' (1992: 504). The latter aspect of fame's transition into celebrity is of key concern to theorist Daniel Boorstin.

In Boorstin's renowned essay, 'From Hero to Celebrity: The Human Pseudo-Event' (1962), the author offers the most scathing critique of celebrity to date, one that shows the progression of celebrity from a heroic figure to a strongly commodified entity. As a result, Boorstin distinguishes between the term 'celebrity' and 'fame', working from Arnold's phrase, where 'celebrity' is perceived as not only inferior to fame, but something that carries with it unfavourable associations. Boorstin argues that 'within the last century, and especially about 1900, we seem to have discovered the process by which fame is manufactured […] Celebrity-worship and hero-worship should not be confused. Yet we confuse them every day' (1989: 73-74). Boorstin writes of the kind of celebrity that emerged within a 'Graphic Revolution' (73). Though he doesn't characterise or define it, it can be argued that the Graphic Revolution represents the visual culture dependent on the image, rather than the real. For Boorstin, heroes were genuine figures who deserved fame, while celebrities are seen as symptomatic of a commodified culture, gaining fame through their 'well-knownness'. These are the arguments that tend to undergird modern and contemporary discussions on celebrity, while informing the tension that such a union produces.

An evident paradox emerges in celebrity culture in which celebrity figures are meant to be both exceptional and ordinary. Indeed, in his notable work *The Frenzy of Renown* (1986), Leo Braudy identifies a contradiction of sorts within this urge to be unique. He writes: 'In part [fame] celebrates uniqueness, and in part it requires that uniqueness be exemplary and reproducible. What special individuals pioneered, many can imitate' (1986: 5). This has led to what Graeme Turner describes as the concept of the 'demotic turn' (2006) in which celebrities are being increasingly associated with ordinary, normal people, or in which ordinary people claim celebrity status. In *Celebrity* (2001), Chris Rojek states that 'celebrity' actually denotes a degree of ordinariness: 'Although god-like qualities are often attributed to celebrities, the modern meaning of the term celebrity actually derives from the fall of the gods' (2001: 9).

Thus while the commodified celebrity emerged alongside the star system, reality television, and the growth in tabloid and gossip culture has seen celebrity become more analogous to what some would classify as trashy, low brow culture. However, in recent years theorists have been attempting to demystify certain out-dated ideologies surrounding the union between celebrity and literature; despite evidence to the contrary, as Loren Glass writes, there is the strongly-held assumption that celebrity somehow corrupts the 'integrity' of authorship. Of the era of modernism, Glass writes: 'Although many high modernist

authors dismissed the American culture of celebrity, [Gertrude] Stein's fame confirmed that the modernist "genius" could easily become a star' (2004: 2). Glass therefore identifies an evident separation between the celebrity culture and the cult of authorship, though his argument shows how these two fields may be integrated. Furthermore, Glass' comment shows that the 'genius' – a distinctly Romantic figure – can also be incorporated into the star system, undoing certain ideological frameworks that would seek to keep the star and the genius separate.

Authorial Agents

The author-as-celebrity has been a popular phenomenon in the last few decades, and has received increasing attention, both in popular culture and the academic industries. P. David Marshall calls the celebrity author a 'negotiated terrain of significance' (47). Hence the celebrity author's importance in a broader social framework is largely dependent on negotiation and context, meaning that there is no one kind of celebrity author. The increased plurality with which authorship has been consistently theorised in recent decades sees various authors functioning in their roles in various different ways, whether as brand name, media personality, cultural commentator, critic, public intellectual, and/or as best-seller. What this suggests is that contemporary authorship is involved with a significant degree of agency within a broader celebrity culture industry. As Amanda Adams writes of nineteenth century celebrities: 'Celebrity would come to mean, for some, a loss of agency and a sense of public vulnerability' (2016: 40), while for more contemporary authors, their celebrity has actually engendered, in many cases, a more active role in producing and circulating their public image. Integral to this development is the theme of performance in a celebrity author's career, seen in the lives of Mark Twain, Gertrude Stein, and Thomas Pynchon, among others, in which performance was central to, as Adams writes, authorial agency (12). This agency has consequently broadened the role of the celebrity author.

At the same time, however, the celebrity culture industries possess authorial input in the star's image; the complex and somewhat under-researched issue of the industries which actively produce stars shows that authors are not single-handedly responsible for producing their authorial image. As Lawrence Lipking argues, authors do not create themselves, but are created: 'Authors do not single-handedly create themselves. As theorists and historians have lately been insisting, the idea of authorship is a social construction, historically and culturally

determined' (1998: 51). In her study of author Margaret Atwood, Lorraine York makes a similar comment, focusing on the celebrity 'as the product of the labour of many other agents in dialogue with a celebrated individual: in the literary field, this means editors, agents, office staff, publishers, publicists, and the like' (2013: 8). Indeed, as previously noted, celebrity revolves around rather idealistic conceptions of the special individual, and the Romantic notion of their work produced in solitude.

The 'celebrity function', as Krieken (2012: 8) calls it, or the 'logic underpinning the production of celebrity' (8), directly influences the manner in which we view celebrities, and moreover shows that, as Rosemary Coombes argues, 'the star is authored by multitudes of persons engaged in diverse activities' (1998: 95), including those involved in the publishing and media industries. Richard Dyer makes a similar observation when he argues that: 'Looking at stars from the point of view of production puts the emphasis on the film-makers (including the economic structures within which they work and the medium they use) who make stars, or cause them to exist' (1995: 19). He argues, however, that audiences also have a significant role in the production of celebrities as images in media texts, yet clarifies that their creative power, too, is limited: 'Audiences cannot make media images mean anything they want to, but they can select from the complexity of the image the meanings and feelings, the variations, inflections and contradictions, that work for them' (2004: 4). The audience, he writes, 'is more disparate and fragmented, and does not itself produce centralised, massively available media images' (4). Hence the inherent complexity of the author's image in the mediasphere should not be undermined; while more recently theorists have been deconstructing the manner in which these industries help *produce* authors, effectively the Romantic legacy of authorship sustains the idealised conception of the author as a solitary hero who is considered, more or less, the primary agent behind his or her image.

Fragmented Authorship

That there is no one single way in which to theorise celebrity authors gives credence to Moran's argument that authors operate as vehicles for various ideologies. The author-as-celebrity phenomenon is particularly intriguing as it encompasses a broad range of areas, including marketing, philosophy, public intellectualism, entertainment, and beyond. What this means is that celebrity authors do not, and cannot, function in the same manner, belonging as they do to different cultural worlds. The celebrity author is used as a

representative figure for all manner of disparate, conflicting ideologies and social areas, such as politics, entertainment, marketing and philanthropy. The celebrity author, in particular, is considered a special individual in the politics of celebrity more broadly. As Pramod Nayar writes, the celebrity author is a figure that is 'removed from the film or sport star' (2009: 64). Indeed, in the broader scope of celebrity culture, authors are not immediately associated with the industry of celebrity in the way that film and sports stars are. As Jonathan D'Amore argues, on the continuum of celebrity, authorship exists at the 'low end in terms of broad name recognition', but with 'exceptions such as J.K. Rowling and Stephen King' (2012: 28).

Moreover, Nayar notes how, in their own ways, authors such as Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Amartya Sen and J.K. Rowling are all placed under the umbrella term, coined by Joe Moran, of 'mediagenic author' (64). For Nayar, J.K. Rowling is 'the mediagenic author *par excellence* for the careful orchestration of her life and appearance – her early poverty, single mother-hood, stardom. Rowling is, arguably, even more famous than her literary creation' (2009: 65). Yet Rowling is not also considered a public intellectual, at least in the same way that Arundhati Roy is, and Salman Rushdie's celebrity authorship is partly the result of religious fanaticism, with his *The Satanic Verses* (1988) culminating in a *fatwā* being placed on the author's life. Hence there are various manners in which the celebrity author can be conceived, and what this leads to is a state in which the celebrity author becomes a fragmented entity. As Malcolm Bradbury writes, we are living in an age where the author is 'hyped and promoted, studied and celebrated; the age of the author denied and eliminated, desubjected and airbrushed from writing' (1989: 311). The current state of literary celebrity, therefore, is one characterised by plurality, yet is nevertheless invariably tied to distinctly Romantic narratives of the author as an emblem for certain cultural values, as this thesis explores.

Moreover, in his comprehensive collection *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern* (1995), Burke[12] argues that conceptions of authorship remain in a state of flux: '[The inspirational view of literature] at once elevates the poet or author as an elect figure – set apart from the rest of humanity via the gift of a divine afflatus – but deprives the author of the role of originating force' (1995: 5). Contemporarily, the author embodies various discourses simultaneously; the author can be seen to possess an authority over the work while also being considered by others to be an irrelevant aspect to the text. As Burke writes, 'While

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[12] Rebecca Moore Howard, in her work *Standing in the Shadow of Giants: Plagiarists, Authors and Collaborators* (1999), makes notes that Martha Woodmansee is notably absent from Burke's *Authorship* collection, seeing it as a direct attack on Woodmansee's theories of authorship (1999: 51-52).

aspects of romantic and symbolist thought have attempted to preserve this hieratic view of poetic origins, twentieth-century theory has relocated the source of otherness in the unconscious or language itself' (5).

Narratives of Literary Celebrity

Because of the idealised manner in which authorship has been steadfastly theorised, its inclusion in the discourse of celebrity has proved contentious for certain theorists who see celebrity and literature as diametrically opposing. Indeed, a pivotal distinction made in Turner's seminal work *Understanding Celebrity* (2004) reflects on the assumption that contemporary celebrity is not typically associated with cultures that do not rely on the visual (such as that traditionally of literature). He writes how it is often assumed that 'the modern celebrity [is] a symptom of a worrying cultural shift: towards a culture that privileges the momentary, the visual and the sensational over the enduring, the written, and the rational' (2004: 4). Turner's observation suggests that the culture of literature, seemingly characterised by endurance and rationality, conflicts with the celebrity system, characterised by glamour, image, and spectacle. Indeed, in the mid-to-late twentieth century, theories relating to the cult of celebrity circulated around persistent notions that celebrity was, by way of its reliance on the visual, directly contributing to the disrepute of art and society.

Referring to Walter Benjamin's concept of the cult and exhibitionist value of art, Moran argues: 'Within this sphere, a more pressing problem is that the name of the author herself can become merely an image, either used to market a literary product directly or as a kind of freefloating signifier within contemporary culture' (2000: 61). For Moran, there is the fear that an author will digress into the more commodified state of celebrity culture, in which the author becomes merely an image rather than a legitimate figure of social and cultural standards.

For example, in his work *Popular Fiction: The logics and practices of a literary field* (2005), Ken Gelder writes that popular fiction is often seen as the antithesis to literature (2005: 11). Indeed, he writes that 'it can often seem as if Literature and popular fiction exist in a constant state of mutual repulsion and repudiation' (11). Gelder cites authors such as James Joyce, William Faulkner, Saul Bellow, and Vladimir Nabokov as those who write Literature. One can therefore argue that authors such as J.K. Rowling, Stephanie Meyer,

Robert Grisham, and Nicolas Sparks are, conversely, writers of popular fiction, yet Gelder does concede that many authors of literature are also 'popular'.

While Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer attacked the entertainment system and commodity culture in their work *The Culture Industry* (1944), theorist Guy Debord argued in his renowned work *Society of the Spectacle* (1967), that the more modern manifestation of celebrity relates to a culture of spectacle; celebrity culture encompasses the unreality of the mediated world: 'The spectacle […] is the very heart of society's unreality. [it is] part and parcel of the unity of the world, of a global social praxis that has split up into reality on the one hand and image on the other' (1999: 13).

Because of celebrity culture's apparent reliance on and use of visual mediums (and what this in turn suggests about celebrity culture itself), unfavourable assumptions have been made regarding its union with literature, namely that a culture built on literary prestige, imagination and linguistic technique cannot easily merge with the cult of celebrity that is, as Turner points out, one that is overtly sensational and fleeting. The seemingly contradictory nature of these two cultures is referenced in Lorraine York's work *Literary Celebrity in Canada* (2007), in which she argues that 'literary celebrity' exists as somewhat of an oxymoronic term:

> At first glance, the very notion of literary celebrity may seem like a contradiction in terms. Can we really use words like "fame" and "celebrity" to describe writers, those notorious privacy-seeking, solitary scribblers? [...] According to conventional wisdom, writers cannot, it appears, be real celebrities because the proving grounds of global celebrity are not the bookstore, publishing house, or an individual reader's private experience of consuming worlds. They are, instead, those globalised media, such as film, television, and pop music, that draw mass audiences (2007: 5-6).

Following on from York's sentiments, several theorists have attempted to reconcile an author's literary prestige with their commercial fame. For Pierre Bourdieu, there is an 'antagonistic coexistence' between the economy of production and pure art (1996: 142). He argues how traditional discourses on production and authorship are framed by the idea that writers and intellectuals operate in an 'anti-economic logic,' maintaining an image of financial indifference (1996: 142). Moran develops this idea further, arguing how writers are 'complex cultural signifiers who are repositories for all kinds of meanings, the most

significant of which is perhaps the nostalgia for some kind of transcendent, anti-economic, creative element in a secular, debased, commercialised culture' (2000: 9), a line of thought which, he argues, has been 'popular since the Romantic era' (9).

Indeed, this particular 'anti-economic' attitude is particularly prevalent in the careers of authors such as Ernest Hemingway, Norman Mailer, Jonathan Franzen and Dave Eggers, with the loss of credibility a recurring theme in authorial celebrity. Irretrievably part of the author's role, indeed their public image, is an attitude against economic appeal, meaning that the celebrity author, from its very inception, faces a difficult transition into culture. Inevitably the celebrity author, because of their distinct standing in celebrity studies more broadly, is assumed to be a compromising figure, whether compromising on their credibility, or indeed on their accessibility in a culture that demands access to the author's world.

Yet the most useful and significant aspect of this dilemma regarding one's literary reputation – as the case studies in this thesis attest – is that the threat of one's 'loss of prestige' seems primarily reserved for white, male authors, a narrative that is repeated throughout a history of literary celebrity, thereby suggesting that such arguments about the desire for credibility all but ignore female authorship. The female celebrity author is seldom discussed through the lens of authorial credibility, suggesting that a female author's foray into celebrity studies is not automatically challenged or criticised by arbiters of culture. Credibility is therefore associated and defined – in both scholarly and cultural commentary – as a distinctly male ideological concern, as this thesis shows.

The discussions regarding credibility that frequently recur in the careers of Hemingway, Franzen, and Eggers (among the other authors in this thesis), are not also directed to female celebrity authors, at least in the same manner. Cultural commentary in both scholarship and journalism on celebrity's impact on reputation, credibility, and prestige persistently omit female celebrity authors from analysis, erroneously suggesting not only that such narratives of authorial integrity are of no interest to female authors, for whom reputation is considered a marginal, inconsequential issue, but that female authors do not even have a reputation that warrants justification.

Hence what this thesis demonstrates is not simply the manner in which the Romantic notion of authorship has persisted into twenty-first century celebrity culture, but how this enduring figure retains many of the outdated values attached to the mythologised figure of the author, namely that narratives of prestige and integrity obstinately circulate around male authors. That the same reputational conflicts that 'plagued' Byron and Hemingway continue

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to be of concern to more contemporary authors such as Ellis and Eggers, suggests that the antiquated image of the Romantic author as (white-male) melancholy genius and solitary hero is still eagerly disseminated, valued and fetishized within a system that favours canonical authors to fulfil such archaic narratives.

Chapter Two: Rousseau, Byron and the Romantic Genius

The Romantics

The epoch of Romanticism can be seen as the beginning of the phenomenon known as literary celebrity. There were of course instances prior to this period in which celebrity, or fame, existed in the field of literature[13]. However, this type of fame was not yet established enough to be considered a significant movement in culture, and I contend that the birth of the modern celebrity, that is, a personality/figure whose private life becomes of interest to their public, took place firmly within the era of Romanticism[14]. As Clara Tuite observes:

> The Romantic period saw the birth of the literary celebrity, a figure distinguishable from the *merely famous* author by his or her status as a cultural commodity produced by highly-developed capitalist relations of production and consumption and a fully industrialised form of print capitalism. With the rapid expansion of literary markets from the late eighteenth century, works of literature were no longer produced for a small audience […] but for a vast, anonymous body known as the reading public (2007: 62).

Tuite's articulation of the *merely famous* author directly stands to oppose both Braudy and Boorstin's estimation of the word 'fame', as opposed to celebrity. Where Boorstin asserts that the term 'celebrity' is inferior to the terms 'fame' and 'renown' (1987), Tuite's observation directly opposes this, by placing fame on an equal status with that of celebrity. Moreover, Tuite acknowledges that the development in literary markets helped establish a greater intimacy between the author and their readers, propelling the author for the first time to an elevated status of esteem and prominence.

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[13] Fred Inglis' *A Short History of Celebrity* (2006) is a good historical text on celebrity, although Leo Braudy's *Frenzy of Renown* (1997) is the most useful and comprehensive treatise on historical celebrity and includes a great deal of discussion on authors such as Rousseau and Lord Byron, and earlier examinations of fame in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome.

[14] While Romanticism saw the birth of a distinctive kind of celebrity author, previous authors of notable 'renown' include Voltaire, Shakespeare, and Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1342-1400). In fact, it can be argued that Chaucer was one of the earliest authors (if not the earliest) to secure what we know to be 'fame'; Chaucer in particular paved the way for many authors including Shakespeare, with his famous work *The Canterbury Tales* (c. 1390s) playing a central role in making English a prominent language in literature beyond 'classical' languages such as Latin and French. He also wrote a poem called *House of Fame*.

The Romantic era's construction of the celebrity figure was particularly acute; the emphasis on the inner self was heralded as a method in which to understand and potentially decode the outer world. As a result, the birth of celebrity emerged with an overwhelmingly heroic status where authors and poets were not simply well-known figures, but considered heroes of their culture. Among the prominent figures of this era were Lord Byron and Jean-Jacques Rousseau[15].

It was in this era that the concept of the original genius was first developed, in which the author's genius and inner self, through their spontaneous creative work, was used to explain the outside world. Thus an emphasis on divine spiritualism was explored in this period, distinct from others, particularly those in which the author was one of many collaborators on a particular project. Romanticism's value of spontaneity, as expressed in Wordsworth's preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, was attributed to the work of various authors and poets, who were seen as a conduit through which divine inspiration flowed. For instance, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's composition of the opening verse of his poem *Kubla Khan* was said to have been the result of spontaneous inspiration, as was Rousseau's *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* (1750), in which Rousseau apparently 'underwent a moment of illumination, a "sudden inspiration", in which he claimed to have seen the guiding thread of all his future work' (O'Hagan, 1999: 3).

This was to be a significant turning point and development in fostering the image of the celebrity author, uniquely associated with 'genius'. As Wordsworth wrote in his *Essay, Supplementary to Preface* (1815): 'Genius is the introduction of a new element into the intellectual universe: or, if that be not allowed, it is the application of powers to objects on which they had not before been exercised, or the employment of them in such a manner as to produce effects hitherto unknown' (1815: 371). Further, Woodmansee argues that Wordsworth's essay witnesses the radical transformation of society's perception of the author: 'We owe our modern idea of an author to the radical reconceptualisation of writing which came to fruition in this essay in 1815' (1999: 16).

This reconceptualisation of writing was also aided by the increase in widespread literacy. Previously a luxury only bestowed on the aristocracy, greater and more widespread literacy ensured a wider readership and a greater devotion to authors. As Alan Richardson writes: 'during the modern era in Europe, with formal schooling less and less confined to an

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[15] While I argue that Byron and Rousseau were prominent figures of European Romanticism, the Romantic era also flourished in America with figures such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. William Andrews' *Literary Celebrity in America* (1981) is a good introduction to American Romanticism.

elite and with the informal spread of literacy among an increasingly mobile population, education and indeed childhood itself were politicised as never before' (2004: 44). Further, Richardson argues that this increase in literacy greatly transformed the role of the Romantic poet, enabling a more egalitarian and progressive society to prosper:

> Wordsworth was as acutely aware as anyone of how a society which increasingly relied on literacy and print for its cohesion and reproduction offered unprecedented opportunities to the author who wrote with "spirit"; and how, moreover, those opportunities had been vastly expanded through the now global reach of the English language. The poet's role was now to help hold an extended, fragmenting, increasingly far-flung social group together through creating a "common 'human' discourse" that could cut across class, age, profession, gender, geo-political and ideological lines […] By the time of Arnold and J.S. Mill, the "Romantic" idea of literature was becoming ascendant (265).

This new kind of author operated as 'a way of explaining moments of unusual creative energy as inspired by some external influence' (Williamson, 1989: 3). Poetry and the concept of the self were integral aspects of the culture of Romanticism. The latter was most especially explored through art and literature, creating what would be the first phenomenon of many to focus on the culture of confession. As King writes: 'The Romantic conception of the self that emerged – as a submerged luminosity revealed in peak experiences – was connected to the rise in confessional autobiography as a literary genre. This genre was codified by Rousseau in his *Confessions*' (2008: 118). This desire for transparency between the author and the reader represented a radical shift in conceptions of the author. Where previously the author was simply part of a group of collaborators, a distinct Romantic aura was attached to the writer within Romanticism. As Tom Mole observes, readers developed a Romantic attraction to their authors, and hoped the text provided a way in to an author's psychology: 'This torrid partnership of confessional author and curious reader was supplemented and mediated by a third term: an industry of "book-sellers, printers, and stationers" whose primary motive was pecuniary' (2009: 2). Thus contrary to popular assumption, the Romantic era saw a thriving celebrity culture in which authors flourished as Romantic, quasi-divine geniuses.

Friedrich Nietzsche writes that Romanticism, like all kinds of art, lends itself to suffering, claiming it to 'presuppose suffering and sufferers' (2001: 234). This observation, in

light of Rousseau's and Byron's relationship to their fame, is significant in framing debates about the Romantic genius and the tragic hero archetype that is instilled in Romantic thought and discourse. A crucial element to the Romantic genius (and subsequent writers throughout history), is an element of either suffering or ambivalence, further accentuating the issues surrounding literary celebrity as well as maintaining a strongly held foundation in the Romantic conception of the author.

Rousseau and Celebrity

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born in Geneva, 1712, and was a fierce detractor of modernisation and industrial progress, preferring the natural world to the cities, particularly London, which Rousseau felt was filled with 'black vapours' (Kippis, 1780: 54). As the first historical celebrity author, he became what David Edmonds calls an 'intellectual celebrity' (2012: 115), admired for his works but, as this chapter will show, also for his persona. Rousseau's seminal work *The Confessions* (1782) is noted as the first autobiography, through which he achieved a fame he both courted and despised. Yet in spite of the nature of the genre – characterised by or idealised as complete transparency between author and reader – Rousseau refused the notion that his sense of self was both penetrable and accessible through his work. He stated: 'Nobody in the world except for myself knows me' (quoted in Stelzig, 2000: 25). The 'me' Rousseau writes about is different to the 'me' that his public – past and present – know. The only Rousseau that readers are capable of knowing is the fictional one created through his works and the information attained about his life. This fictional identity is not characteristic only of Rousseau, though his is the first instance in which an identity became skewed between man and celebrity. As Stelzig writes, Rousseau's many writings, including his debut work *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*, brought Rousseau 'an unprecedented fame, but they also embroiled him in polemical debates and bitter controversies. And they helped to generate a public image or legend of "Jean-Jacques" that he felt bore little or no resemblance to the man he knew he was' (2000: 25). The figure of Jean-Jacques, or simply "J.J", would feature prominently in Rousseau's writings in his attempt to undo what he felt was an erroneous characterisation of his image.

Rousseau can be regarded as the first literary celebrity, his works garnering the kind of praise synonymous with contemporary bestseller lists, as well as his identity being of interest to his public. His work *La Nouvelle Heloise* (1761), for example, was a substantial

success and an example of what is contemporarily understood as the 'bestseller.' Darnton explains:

> *La Nouvelle Heloise* was perhaps the biggest best-seller of the century. The demand for copies outran the supply so badly that booksellers rented it out by the day and even by the hour […] At least seventy editions were published before 1800 – probably more than for any other novel in the previous history of publishing (1984: 242).

Thus the Romantic era greatly fostered the cult of the celebrity author and indeed produced a social movement in which the publication of a novel was followed by great popularity, the kind characteristic of more contemporary media. Yet just as the Romantic era saw the *mythologising* of authorship, so too did it see the beginning of what would become the very commonplace act of the public assuming a link between themselves and their beloved authors, an 'illusion of intimacy' as Schickel describes it (1985: 39). As Leo Damrosch writes, Rousseau was tormented by his celebrity, being:

> …famous not just for his writings but for his character – a distinction he himself earnestly promoted – he was baffled and alarmed at being turned into a legend […] The split between the public image and the sense of a true self was something quite new in the eighteenth century, when a rapidly growing reading public began to assume a personal relationship with authors they had never met. In later years this aspect of celebrity would become commonplace, but to Rousseau it felt like a uniquely personal injustice (2007: 476-477).

As was the case for many celebrity authors to come, Rousseau's celebrity was more than a simple inconvenience, but was something which he felt had seized his identity, presumptuously creating a persona he found far divorced from his own understanding of his sense of self. A collection of Rousseau's works, published in 1763, featured the author's own reflection on his celebrity:

> What is celebrity? Here is the unfortunate work to which I owe mine. Certainly this piece, which won me a prize and made me famous, is at best mediocre, and I dare

add that it is one of the slightest of this whole collection. What an abyss of miseries the author would have avoided, if this first book had been received only according to its merits! (2006: 3).

This excerpt aptly illustrates Rousseau's torrid relationship to his fame. He believed his success to be an unfortunate result of only his image as a celebrity rather than as a respectable philosopher. His observation of the cult of celebrity is particularly useful, suggesting a grim awareness of the association between authors, their publics and the image this subsequently created. As I discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, the phenomenon of celebrity has become popular through its insights into Western individualism with its direct association with the self. However, the same effect occurs with celebrity authors in a seemingly negative way, as this sense of individualism is at once understood through celebrity though at the same time disrupted and usurped by those who assume a direct link between the image of an author and the author themselves. Just as celebrity helps contextualize the self for the anonymous public, as seen with Rousseau it also acts as a catalyst for an identity-crisis, in which the public purports to *know* the author intimately. While Rousseau's works launched him into the realm of celebrity, his personal life, salaciously divulged in *The Confessions*, promoted his status to that of tremendous fame. Krieken makes an interesting comparison between Rousseau and the late Princess Diana:

Rousseau was the European celebrity of his day, constantly being gossiped about in newspapers and cafés, as recognized a face on the streets of Paris as Diana was globally two centuries later […] For Rousseau as well as for Diana, the public interest in who they 'really' were, the human being behind the public image, was both a benefit and an unwelcome intrusion into their private lives (2012: 4).

Rousseau was very much a part of this practice of discovering the 'human being behind the public image'. His works were immensely popular and he was frequently visited by admiring fans. More so than the contemporary film celebrity, literary celebrity was and is particularly effective as the author's book acts as a means by which readers assume access into an author's psyche. Brock identifies Rousseau's fame as being particularly illustrative of the Romantic's desire for transparency and access:

The cult surrounding Jean-Jacques Rousseau extended further than personal visits to the man himself and later to his shrine at Ermenville. The places represented in his phenomenally successful bestseller *La Nouvelle Heloise* were besieged post-publication with besotted admirers […] Rousseau recreated himself as a modern deity, encouraging a trend whereby gods could be worshipped into existence. Integrating writing with the private self, Rousseau put forward models of self-representation which were accommodating to women as well as men (2006: 12-13).

Rousseau's fame therefore accommodated the Romantic discourse that saw the writer, poet or philosopher as a figure of semi-divine creativity who not only established a new understanding of the private self and the celebrity figure, but also drastically influenced the way in which society functioned in terms of their own ideas of this public/private dichotomy.

Rousseau and Autobiography

Rousseau's earlier writings brought him great fame. Yet his posthumous work *The Confessions* created great scandal, and to this day remains a revolutionary work, featuring such salacious details as Rousseau's sexual proclivities, which included spanking, sadomasochism, and flashing, confessions which were undoubtedly scandalous and controversial. As Yagoda explains: 'Such passages – and others, in which he describes his masturbatory practices – caused a great scandal when Rousseau read them to some private gatherings in Paris in 1771. (They so shocked one of his listeners that she petitioned the police to stop the readings)' (2009: 60). Yet his autobiography also proved poignant with Rousseau's admission of guilt at having framed a young girl for stealing a ribbon which he himself took, something that was to haunt him for the rest of his life: 'The cruel remembrance of this transaction, sometimes so troubles and disorders me, that, in my disturbed slumbers, I imagine I see this poor girl enter and reproach me with my crime, as though I had committed it but yesterday' (1861: 70-71). Rousseau also writes of how he and wife Therese abandoned every one of their five children. Yet as the reception from his readings was unfavourable, Rousseau decided to publish the work posthumously, becoming both famous and notorious in death as well as in life. Being an author who entered into the realm of fame as a result of an autobiography is particularly significant, signaling the beginning of what would become an

obsession with an author's identity through the medium of memoir, a commonplace behaviour in twenty-first century celebrity culture. Yet Rousseau's fame through autobiography is also illustrative of the breaking down of public and private spheres, from which celebrity culture develops and becomes more powerful.

Rousseau's was not the first example of a confessional work; there were the *Confessions of Richard Norwood* written between 1639 and 1640, *The Book of Margery Kempe* written in the 1430s, and of course the *Confessions of Saint Augustine*, a work which was written in the fifth century and from which Rousseau borrowed the title[16]. An important discrepancy between Augustine's work and Rousseau's own, is that while Augustine's work was seen as a dialogue with God, Rousseau's *Confessions* represented a more secularised autobiography, a more modern conception of the term. Rousseau's image as a significant, famous man was, furthermore, greatly fostered by the social and political events that were shaping society, namely, the Industrial Revolution. Rousseau professed to loathe industrial progress, but it was this growth in newer technologies that enabled Rousseau's name and works to be circulated more widely. Thus it can be argued that Rousseau's autobiography and indeed Rousseau himself prompted Western society's intense interest in the hitherto private lives/details of individuals. Rousseau describes his sudden fame articulately:

> The success of my first writings had given me celebrity. My new situation excited curiosity. Everybody wished to know that whimsical man who sought not the acquaintance of anyone, and whose only desire was to live free and happy in the manner he had chosen; this was sufficient to make the thing impossible to me. My apartment was continuously full of people, who, under different pretences, came to take up my time. The women employed a thousand artifices to engage me to dinner. The more unpolite [sic] I was with people, the more obstinate they became. I could not refuse everybody. While I made myself a thousand enemies by my refusals, I was incessantly a slave to my complaisance, and, in whatever manner I made my engagements, I had not an hour in the day to myself (1861: 305).

The Confessions can thus be seen as a way for Rousseau to reclaim his persona after, he believed, it had been usurped by his public, many of whom believed that they were

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[16] For a more comprehensive discussion on historical autobiographies and 'Confessions', Ben Yagoda's *Memoir* (2009) is a useful text, particularly the second chapter which has a useful historical component.

intimately acquainted with Rousseau's personality through his celebrated image. As Ourida Mostefai writes in regards to the author's fame: 'Rousseau draws a sharp contrast between the falsity of the public image and the truth of the private one. Writing about himself will allow him to undo the damage caused by fame; for fame has produced a distorted image, a lie that conceals the author's true self' (2003: 69). Mostefai sees Rousseau as both a celebrity and an outcast, arguing: 'We see now the paradoxical character of Rousseau as a literary figure: he is simultaneously famous and marginal' (70). Indeed, as well as being considered the first true celebrity author, Rousseau's ambivalence illuminates him also as the first paradoxical author. Antoine Lilti describes Rousseau's celebrity as an intriguing introduction into the culture of literary celebrity. He also notes how rather than Romanticism being understood as the era which saw the birth of celebrity, the Enlightenment period in which Rousseau was also a part of witnessed the birth of celebrities, 'specifically, those great writers to whom one pays quasi-ritual visits and writes letters' (Lilti, 2008: 55). In regards to Rousseau's specific celebrity, Lilti writes:

…what is intriguing is Rousseau's ambivalent feeling of anguish about celebrity […] Rousseau experienced in a particular sharp manner the paradoxes of celebrity, to which he was exposed more than others because he became, during his own lifetime, such a famous person and such a successful author. But the image of himself that the public reflected back at him was one that Rousseau could neither accept nor escape. What his paranoid writing reveals is his difficulty in maintaining his own image of himself while in the public eye. But the paradox is that Rousseau himself *eagerly sought celebrity* and strongly put forward his personal image as an author writing for a wide public, not just for social elites (2008: 55-56, own emphasis).

Rousseau's simultaneous courting and distaste for fame was, and is, not unique. Yet the sense of paradox is particularly evident in Rousseau[17], in which he felt that his persona was at the mercy of his readers, but also that he needed to negotiate his fame with his status as a respected writer. Lilti furthermore observes that Rousseau's *Dialogues: Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques* (1776) embodies the evident contradictions in the authors' character. In the

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[17] The phenomenon of the 'paradoxical author' is a trend that continues on into later generations. Chapters Seven and Nine in particular focus on authors whose career are marked by a notable sense of paradox between commercialism and integrity, including Thomas Pynchon, Salman Rushdie, and Jonathan Franzen.

work, more commonly referred to as his *Dialogues*, Rousseau wrote a series of conversations between himself and an anonymous Frenchman. The subject of these conversations focused on what Rousseau saw as a conspiracy against his character (or against what has come to be known as the figure of "J.J"), by those who 'govern public opinions' (1776: 781). Discussing this 'conspiracy', Swenson writes:

Rousseau's discussion of the sale of his portraits, for example […] or his rage at the popular appropriation of his Christian name…indicates that the conspiracy includes the entire gamut of phenomena that make up literary celebrity. More fundamentally, we can note that one of the primary characteristics of the conspiracy is that it produces an absurd and contradictory discourse about "J.J", who is accused of contrary and incompatible vices' (2000: 126).

Swenson also identifies Rousseau as having gained in society a 'reputation of "paradoxical" brilliance' (69). This observation is useful insofar as it situates Rousseau in a position of contradiction and hypocrisy, introducing into literary celebrity the common perception that authors often possess contradictory and incompatible values and traits. Addressing this conspiracy, Rousseau observes early in his *Confessions*:

In thus investigating the first traces of my sensible existence, I find elements, which, though seemingly incompatible, have united to produce a simple and uniform effect; while others, apparently the same, have, by the concurrence of certain circumstances, formed such different combinations, that it would never be imagined they had any affinity (1781: 27).

As stated by many theorists (Botting, 2006: 15; Stanlis, 1991: 181; Bullard, 2011: 189; and Dart, 2005: 54), Irish author Edmund Burke observed in Rousseau a prominent sense of 'paradoxical morality', which, as Ritchie writes, Burke believed to be the catalyst of the Cultural Revolution that preceded the French Revolution (1997: 127). Rousseau's ambivalence and sense of inherent 'paradox' of his character is indeed characteristic of what Braudy identifies as the 'shy star', who 'desires to be spiritually public and physically private' (1997: 375). Indeed, Creighton elaborates by calling Rousseau an object 'of great curiosity of the paradoxical author' (1978: 56). In turn this made Rousseau even more of an

object of intense fascination and curiosity. His posturing as what Braudy identifies as a 'shy star' correlates with various theorists' views on the author's character. Ian Dennis, for example, purports that Rousseau's celebrity, rather than being of an admirable, genuine quality, was more a celebrity of victimhood (2009: 87). This is an integral observation in the study of literary celebrity as it often requires a sense of either disillusionment or dissatisfaction with one's public and one's own fame. Indeed, part of Rousseau's continuing intrigue is his constant philosophical battle with his fame and its relationship to his persona. Rousseau's celebrity, for the author, usurped his character and was to plague him for his entire life. Rousseau's claim that he was misunderstood by his public is, however, opposed by theorist Judith Shklar who instead argues that his reading public understood Rousseau quite well:

> When he complained that he was misunderstood [Rousseau] was, however, wrong. Those who read him understood him very well and had every reason to dislike his abuses. He was certainly not loved, but he was understood by his highly intelligent and knowledgeable audience. Their opinion of him is, therefore, a very reliable guide to his thought (1985: 222).

Interestingly, Shkar argues that contrary to popular belief Rousseau was not, as some would have it, a distinctly Romantic figure, arguing that there is 'no hint in Rousseau of that Romantic quest of originality' (56). Yet although Rousseau had made various enemies through his works (as Rousseau himself has admitted as the aforementioned excerpt from *The Confessions* would attest), he was in fact a greatly admired figure. Further still, regardless of the reality of the public's opinion of Rousseau, he was a popular figure who, characteristic of celebrity culture, was dually loved and loathed for his popular works and disdained for his publicity respectively. Shkar's argument highlights the debate surrounding Rousseau's public reception, and is further useful in showing how the cult of celebrity, even in Romanticism, provokes discussion over an author's identity.

Rousseau's relationship to his celebrity is indeed an intriguing insight into the origins of literary celebrity. More than a product solely fostered by contemporary mediated society, literary celebrity was a ripe phenomenon throughout Romanticism. Literary celebrity was, furthermore, greatly accommodated and accentuated due to the values that the Romantic era professed, such as that of the original genius and spontaneous inspiration,

helping to elevate the writer to a legendary status. These values helped illuminate the author as a celebrity, although, as I have discussed, this led increasingly to a feeling of seized reputations and unwanted character profiles. The fascination with the eighteenth century celebrity writer in turn created this somewhat idealistic notion of intimacy between readers and their favourite authors, a manufactured relationship that would see Rousseau come to despise his fame for what it had done to his own sense of identity. Rousseau's induction into celebrity culture was also significant due to his notorious autobiography, significant insofar as it captures the importance of the concept of the self in relation to the cult of celebrity. The self has thus always had a prominent relationship to that of the cult of celebrity, and further constructs the Romantic notion of the author and of authorship.

Lord Byron and Byromania

The author George Gordon Byron, more commonly known as 'Lord Byron', notoriously and anecdotally woke to find himself famous. This was due to the immediate popularity of Byron's cantos of his first work, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812), or simply *Childe Harold*, which made Byron famous overnight. This observation alone has similar traits to the kind of haphazard and instantaneous kinds of fame that are commonplace in more contemporary, mainstream media. While Rousseau was, as I have argued, regarded as a celebrity, it is Byron whose fame really eclipsed the ordinary notions of eighteenth century renown, provoking what is still known as Byromania, a phenomenon that disproves notions that celebrity is a product of modernity. As was the case with Rousseau, the popularity of the autobiography was one of the catalysts boosting Byron's reception. Where Rousseau's popularity stemmed primarily through his writing, especially his notorious and salacious *Confessions*, Byron's fame was less a product of his writing than it was a complete romanticised creation of his identity, even being considered by many to be a sex-symbol, as he wrote primarily for women. The protagonist in his infamous work *Don Juan* (1819-1824), for example – in which Byron continued the legend of a wealthy, seductive lothario – was frequently compared to Byron himself, and aided his sexual appeal. As A.O.J. Cockshut describes him, he was immensely appealing to woman, yet 'here was a man of European celebrity as a poet, whose life was admittedly scandalous, but also, in part, impenetrably obscure' (1974: 32). The scandal he created culminated in the burning of some of Byron's documents after the author's death, perceived to be 'unfit for the world' (32).

Interpretations of Byron's fame persist to this day, which shows both the endurance of eighteenth century literary celebrity but also the inherent complexities within the notion of fame itself. In 2011, The University of Sydney held a talk by Professor Will Christie that focused on historical fame, specifically that of Lord Byron's, called 'The Spoiled Child of Fame: Lord Byron, Poetry and Celebrity'. Christie claims that the popularity of Byron's poetry tapped into the psychology of his times, that it 'stimulated a craving analogous to that for news and opinion' (cited in Leatherdale, 2011: NP). William St. Clair moreover observes that Byron's fame witnessed a radical form of celebrity culture: 'As early as 1829 Byron, his poems, his life, his reputation, his portrait, and his image had together created *Byronism*, a celebrity different in scale from anything that had gone before' (2004: 333, own emphasis). The concept of Byronism, or Byromania, is the subject of only two complete works: Ghislaine McDayter's *Byromania and the Birth of Celebrity Culture* (2009) and Frances Wilson's *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Culture* (1999). In McDayter's work, the author writes:

> Contemporary descriptions of Byromania evoke images of the familiar scenes of 'mass hysteria' associated in our minds with the screaming mobs that greeted the Beatles as they arrived in America or the teenagers who fainted at Elvis' feet. Byron was the first to bask in this glow of 'mob' adoration, and he reportedly watched the excitement he inspired with a blend of satisfaction and bemusement (2009: 2).

Greater in scale than Rousseau, Byron accumulated a fame that many considered analogous to low-brow forms of celebrity. Yet his fame elicited the same assumption of intimacy between himself and his readers. McDayter explains: 'Byron's writing, like Rousseau's led his readers into a state of hysterical excitement, and the poet's association with this Enlightenment philosopher would not have gone unnoticed by nineteenth-century readers' (2009: 50). Rousseau and Byron did indeed experience stark similarities in regards to their respective celebrity, both ruing the manner in which their identity was heralded as genius. As Braudy observes, Byron's fame was characteristic of the public's desire to understand the concept of the self and individualism, and of those personal characteristics deemed taboo. He writes that Byron was celebrated:

…not for his position or his poetic ability so much as for the literary display of "himself" – a swirling whirlpool of almost sexual allure in which his audience might glimpse an image not of their public selves so much as those desires and aspirations that had seemed socially unfit or irrelevant, now write large and grand […] Byron marks the point at which the desire for fame, the aristocracy of the spirit, might be vicariously enjoyed by every reader (1997: 401).

Byron's fame marks a departure, as Braudy notes, from public prestige that was accumulated through birth or talent. Thus Byron was a significant figure whose celebrity, it can be argued, was perhaps the first of its kind. While his works remained popular, his image was circulated more widely. Yet Byron retained a glamourous status throughout his life, an integral feature of celebrity culture. As Chris Rojek notes, celebrity is 'the attribution of glamourous or notorious status to an individual within the public sphere […] glamour is associated with favourable public recognition' (2001: 10). James Soderholm similarly argues that Byron's image and indeed Byron himself was a constructed, glamourised mechanism:

In Byron's life and legend we see the modern and antiquated senses of glamour overlap. He was (and is) a "glamour boy" who borrows not a little of his seductive magic from those who would touch – and touch up – their idol. In demystifying this spell we recognize that both forms of glamour are partly the result of public investment and invention. As much phenomenon as artifact, "Byron" was half-perceived and half-created (1996: 5).

Thus features of celebrity culture deemed to be 'modern', such as the glamourisation or construction of stars, were in fact apparent in eighteenth century celebrity culture. It is important to stress how, like Rousseau, Byron himself was somewhat and to some extent a product of invention. The theories relating to the construction of celebrity are therefore as acute in Byron's circumstance as they are for modern and more contemporary instances of fame-manufacturing. Tom Mole explains how Byron's celebrity was a very visual phenomenon that is suggestive of more contemporary, modern examples of mediated celebrity, thereby defying the notion that Romanticism lacked suitable technology to circulate celebrity imagery. He writes:

Byron's image was engineered over time, by several artists, until it was sufficiently simple and memorable to recognize his silhouette […] Within a few years after his death, however, Byron's silhouette was recognisable, in a version that had been modified and branded through a series of reproductions and metamorphoses that made it distinctive, but may have left it looking very little like Byron in the flesh' (2007: 79-80).

He goes on to write:

The Romantic period's new technologies of letterpress printing […] were accompanied by new methods for reproducing images […] This was a period of rich cross-fertisilation between texts and images, in which books provided subjects for paintings, paintings circulated in reproductive prints and those prints often got bound into books […] For Byron's first readers, images of the poet appeared not as a troublesome distraction from properly unmediated critical engagement with his poems, but a welcome adjunct to reading them (80-81).

Mole notes that Byron gradually lost control of his public image, and once this occurred, it allowed for his image to change and transform (81). The imagery of a celebrity author was thus very prominent in Byron's time, much to the author's chagrin.

Byron's Genius

The concept of the genius is an integral aspect to the phenomenon of literary celebrity. Byron's image as genius – tortured or other – has persevered throughout history. Byron's Romantic genius, according to Julian North, is irrevocably linked to the notion of biography[18]. As previously discussed, Julian North argues, in a similar manner to Shapiro, the 'mythology of the poet as a solitary, autonomous, male genius' (2009: 3), moreover noting that Romanticism 'enshrined a version of genius as masculine, autonomous, and unreachable […] Biography in practice and theory claimed that to domesticate was to democratise, to question the exclusivity of cultural production that withholds itself from general consumption' (6). The Romantic genius was therefore a figure separated from and elevated

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[18] See chapter 3.4, 'The Promise of Intimacy: Byron and his Readers', in North's work *The Domestication of Genius: Biography and the Romantic Poet* (2010), for more information.

above society, something which ensured their credibility. But with the growing popularity of biography, such gaps between reader and 'unreachable' author were fast diminishing, enabling the collapse of certain high and low brow attitudes.

When Byron died in the Ottoman Empire, now Greece, in 1824, his death was considered the greatest in poetic literary history. For the artist Benjamin Robert Haydon, the poet's death was 'a great loss to the Literature of the Age' (cited in Jolliffe, 2012). Others observe that in fact Byron's death in turn not only aided the continuation of his celebrity but elevated him to the status of genius. However, after watching Byron's funeral procession in London, John Clare began to write his essay *Popularity in Authorship* (1825), based on his observations on fame and popularity. Clare argues, even as early as Byron's time, that the kind of celebrity he was witnessing possessed an inauthenticity, a kind of celebrity that was only disguised as fame, positing a difference between popularity and true fame: 'Now it becomes natural for Reason to inquire, whether such sandy foundations as popularity builds on may be taken as indications of true fame' (1825: 319). Further still, it is Clare's belief that popularity 'gains a superficial notoriety that has no resemblance to fame […] The nearest akin to popularity is "common fame"' (320). Clare's assertion that popularity is linked to common fame is to be repeated by Boorstin, who famously describes popular celebrity as manufactured and inauthentic (1961). This kind of popularity is quick and often temporary, and Byron was purportedly a victim of this hasty popularity that sought to undo any claim to true fame:

> Lord Byron's hasty fame may be deemed a contradiction to the above opinion, that popularity is not true fame, though at its greatest extent it is scarcely an exception, for his great and hurried popularity, that almost trampled on its own heels in its haste, must drop into a less bustling degree, and become more cool and quiet (1824: 302).

Clare's argument shows that the distinction between manufactured celebrity and a more 'authentic' kind of fame was established well before the twentieth century when the Hollywood studio system began creating commodified celebrities.

As with many authors – famous or not – death did not hinder the growth of Byron's celebrity, but actually facilitated its growth. In fact, as Mole asserts: 'For [William] Hazlitt, Byron's living celebrity actually hampered any appreciation of his merit as a poet. When life and celebrity end, genius begins its immortal triumph' (2009: 49). It is not uncommon for

death to be advantageous to an author's success. Death often immortalises authors, making their work and status more valuable in the process. As Tyler Cowen notes in his work *What Price Fame?* (2000): 'Death often brings stars even more fame. In the process of mourning dead stars, many fans elevate them to a higher symbolic position. The fans imbue the performer with an air of grand tragedy' (20). This elevation of star status was certainly the case for Byron, whose identity as a result of death was regarded with both esteem and admiration. Romantic culture often turned death and funerals into grand events, something which would continue in successive eras[19]. In so doing, the author ceased being a living celebrity, as Mole would have it, and instead became a legendary figure[20]. This phenomenon, in which death and celebrity are irrevocably linked, would be repeated throughout history, where the death of a famous author would turn them from a celebrity into a renowned figure[21].

As with Rousseau, and in a similar vein to the many other celebrity authors that would follow, Byron's fame was conflicted and complicated, positioning him as what would become the typical paradoxical author, created by the uneasy alliance between literature and fame. As Mole writes, Byron expressed great ambivalence in response to his fame, observing how the author both courted and rejected his celebrity: 'We are most familiar with the ambivalence toward fame exhibited by a Siddons or a Byron, both of whom woke to find themselves famous […] and both of whom exploited and bemoaned their extravagant renown' (2009: 246). Byron's life was as much of interest to the public as his beloved works, his various love affairs and exploits, showing how scandal[22] was already a significant ingredient of popular celebrity. As Inglis writes:

It is during Byron's brief lifetime – he died at thirty-six in 1824 – that charm and its distorted and magnified echo, glamour, became public values, and what is more, values looked for as attributes of celebrity […] But charm, along with youthfulness, good looks, great gifts (preferably in the arts), and impulsive, dashing action – these were the qualities Byron brought to the newest dramatization of fame (2010: 67-68).

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[19] Graeme Turner discusses the notion of 'global mourning' in relation to the premature deaths of twentieth century figures John F. Kennedy, John Lennon, and Princess Diana, in *Understanding Celebrity* (2004).

[20] For more on the impact of Byron's death, see 'The Death of Byron' in Samuel Chew's *Byron in England: His Fame and After Fame* (1965).

[21] Chapter Ten of this thesis focuses on this relationship between death and genius in regards to David Foster Wallace.

[22] Australian scholar Clara Tuite's book *Lord Byron and Scandalous Celebrity* (2015) offers an extensive analysis on the relationship between scandal and celebrity in Byron's career.

Byron's scandals were numerous, and thus fascination with his identity and personal life shares similar traits to contemporary gossip columns that focus on trivial aspects of a celebrity's life. Of the various women[23] with whom he was purported to have had affairs, there was Lady Caroline Lamb, whose affair with Byron had shocked the aristocracy, before he also engaged in sexual and romantic dalliances with Jane Elizabeth Scott, Augusta Leigh (Byron's half-sister), and Anne Isabella Milbanke. Byron also associated with numerous other purportedly 'famous' poets, including Percy Shelley, his wife Mary Shelley, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, amongst others. His association with Percy and Mary Shelley, aside from fuelling and creating scandal, led to the term 'Byron-Shelley Circle' being created and used to refer to the group of famous poets, similarly to later eras that would also feature groups of famous writers, such as the Lost Generation of the 1920s (Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald), and the literary 'Brat Pack' of the 1980s[24]. Yet this literary grouping also correlates to the concept of the celebrity group, prevalent in contemporary society, where certain famous individuals associate with other celebrities, much to the fascination of viewers and readers.

Certainly, both Percy and Mary were celebrities in their own right; Percy, although not as famous as Byron, after having his first poem in 1813 criticised by critics, nevertheless had become an established poet. Mary, on the other hand, had penned the classic *Frankenstein* (1818), which made her a much-celebrated writer, even to this day. Yet it was their personal lives that garnered both criticism and scandal with their romantic rendezvous. In 1781, Percy Shelley, married, but in love with Mary, left his pregnant wife Harriet Westbrook for his new-found love, after which Harriet was discovered drowned in the Serpentine River in Hyde Park, presumed to have suicided[25].

The extravagant lives of Byron and Shelley and their supposedly loose morals made their union the intense fascination of the public. While Shelley frequently threatened suicide if women he loved did not return his love, Byron paid extravagantly for mistresses and servants, all the while treating his own wife quite poorly. As Lehmann writes: 'both poets had fallen foul of the moral establishment at the time' (1984: 6). Cline writes also of their liaison

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[23] It is known that Byron also had various affairs with men, though the details of his homosexuality/bisexuality were supressed due to the homophobic times in which he was writing. In an effort to censor Byron's more bisexual material, the author's journal was destroyed, and his letters and later poems were banned. Yet the more innocuous term 'flamboyant' was often used to describe Byron and other Romantic poets in wider society.

[24] See Chapter Eight of this thesis for an extended discussion on the 1980s 'Brat Pack'.

[25] For an intimate insight into this break-up and death, see 'The Last Days of Harriet Shelley' in Cameron's *Romantic Rebels: Essays on Shelley and his Circle* (1973).

in Italy where '[Byron's] dissoluteness for the next two and a half years comprises the most lurid chapter in a life of indulgence' (1952: 38). According to Cline, when Byron was staying in the Pallazo Guiccioli in Pisa, '[Shelley's] visit lasted for about two weeks, during which he slept late hours, talked to Byron, rode in the pine forest, practiced pistol-shooting, viewed the antiquities, and talked again until morning' (40). The union in Pisa thus prompted the term created to allude to their friendship: 'The Pisan Circle' or the 'Pisa Circle'[26]. The life of passion and impulse, which was, as both Byron and Shelley attested, such a prominent factor in their lives and associations, is reiterated by Cockshut in describing their approach to life:

> The prevailing impression left on a reader of the lives of Byron and Shelley is of the overriding power of impulse. Byron may have regretted being the creature of impulse; Shelley certainly gloried in it. For many young men growing up in the shadow of these short-lived giants, unpredictable impulses and thus irresponsible actions, must have seemed like a proof of being really alive, since the most alive were those who felt the most. Untidy lives, and socially impossible young men were the natural consequence (1974: 97).

This focus on 'impulse' is not only a precursor to contemporary interest in celebrity gossip and scandal, but is also indicative of the Romantic concern for impulse and spontaneity, which would remain a crucial focus of literary celebrity itself. Undoubtedly the factor of 'irresponsible actions', as Cockshut describes, assists celebrity culture in its focus on and attraction to the unfavourable elements or previously undisclosed elements of one's private life. Thus the phenomenon known as celebrity culture came to thrive early on scandal, controversy and disrepute.

Such was the romance and intrigue of Byron's personal life that it led the *Portfolio*, upon their opening notice of Byron's *Childe Harold III*, to proclaim: 'Indeed it is the real romance of [Byron's] life, immeasurably more than the fabled one of his pen, which the public expects to find in his pages, and which not so much engages its sympathy, as piques its curiosity, and feeds thoughts and conversation' (1816: 73).

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[26] See also Buxton's *Byron and Shelley: The History of a Friendship* (1962), a comprehensive and concise work on the friendship of Byron and Shelley.

The Byronic Hero

The Byronic hero – an archetype appearing not only in Byron's works but in Byron's persona himself – laid the foundation of the artist or writer as tragic figure. Neither Rousseau nor Byron wholly enjoyed their fame, (though neither did they entirely refuse it), leading to a state of confusion and contradiction that would become starkly apparent in later eras. Peter Quennell, in his landmark work *Byron: The Years of Fame* (1943) paints a picture of Byron as the reluctant celebrity after the publication of his hugely popular *Childe Harold*, which was completely published between 1812 and 1818. The image he portrays of Byron shows a contradiction of sorts, of an author dismissive of his fame but nonetheless intrigued by it. Quennell writes:

> Byron refused to talk of profit; it was enough that the sober and depressing scenery of his old existence should have rolled up or been shriveled away, and that the book to which he had hesitated to attach his name – the bundle of Spenserian stanzas criticized by Lord Sligo – should have lifted him willy-nilly to an elevation from which henceforth he could never descend. Yet at the moment he was a little uneasy in the admiring crowd. Women thronged and struggled to catch a glimpse of him. They saw a small man, carefully but rather too elaborately dressed, who stood apart, often frowning with a sharp contraction between the brows, the victim, as they imagined, of some mysterious secret sorrow (1954: 49).

Thus this image is characteristic of the Romantic genius that too befell Rousseau – the notion of the reluctant hero whose status rose to that of a divine figure, a status which was often unfavourable to the person it fell upon. Thus the Romantic genius is not one who is solely elated with their fame but acts as somewhat of a sorrowful figure. This is further accentuated in Quennell's estimation that Byron was the 'victim' of what his public imagined was a great sorrow. In this respect Byron – and indeed, many other Romantic figures – emerges as the tragic figure of art in which he suffers through and possibly for his greatness, a theme that was to be reiterated in the careers of many other authors, from Hemingway to Foster Wallace. Quennell nevertheless describes Byron as the 'showman of the Romantic movement' (69). While the movement had existed for half a century, for Quennell, its 'character remained indeterminate; it floated and hovered, and Byron's function – a function, incidentally, that he

neither quite understood nor found particularly sympathetic – was to display the movement in a popular and dramatic guise' (69). Thus already in this period is the archetype of the 'Romantic genius-as-tragic hero' flourishing. For there to be a Romantic genius, then, there has to be an element of suffering and/or sorrow. Thus the Romantic genius and, moreover, the cult of literary celebrity within Romanticism is not merely a glorified phenomenon but a very dramatic one that exploits elements of tragedy in order to elevate the figure of the author to genius. Literary celebrity is thus greatly affiliated with the characterisation of sorrow.

A similar narrative and figure is explored in various other works and theorists. In Ayn Rand's *The Romantic Manifesto* (1962), Rand observes that Byron was considered the leading poet of his time, whose name 'had been attached to this particular, "Byronic" view of existence: its essence [being] the belief that man must lead a heroic life and fight for his values even though he is doomed to defeat by a malevolent fate over which he has no control' (1962: 74). The latter aspect of this sentence shows again the necessary element of tragedy in forming and constructing the Romantic genius. That Byron was 'doomed to defeat' beyond his control attests to this characterisation of the tragic figure, and furthermore illustrates how the Romantic genius must also be a victim if they are to be regarded as a heroic figure. Romantic literary celebrity therefore propounds a distinctly dramatic and sorrowful image. Kerley, moreover, describes the conception of the Byronic Hero as:

> …both cruel and courteous, sympathetic and sadistic. There can be no doubt that the heroes of Byron's works invariably are linked with the personality and legend of Byron himself. Though he tried, unsuccessfully, to separate himself from the hero who many thought was an extension of his life and loves, Byron could not be surprised when the public saw his personality in Cain, Manfred, Don Juan, and Childe Harold. Other characteristics of the Byronic hero are the energetic spirit, a rebellious individualism, and a vast capacity for feeling and suffering; he is an exile or outcast whose tormented life is a search for meaning in a meaningless world (2009: 72).

The Byronic hero, as Kerley observes, does in fact mirror or at least intends to replicate circumstances of Byron's own approach to and perspective of his fame. That the Byronic hero features suffering and cruelty in its creation aligns the genius, as previously argued, to a heroic status of deep complexities. The Byronic hero, and thus the Romantic genius, becomes a tragic hero. Kerley identifies these traits as Romantic extensions of Byron's own life,

showing how the 'self-tortured temperament and guilt-laden sensibility are certainly characteristics Byron saw in himself, and his heroes merely project what he viewed as his role in defying society' (73). Byron's character therefore created the popular archetype of the tragic hero who must rebel against and defy society, and one who is at once elevated above and separated from society. And this distinctly Romantic conception of the literary genius who is emotionally distraught and whose fame corresponds to a sense of tragedy is a significant aspect to literary celebrity that I will continually explore throughout this thesis.

Further, the image of the Byronic Hero – an early example of what can be seen as a branding mechanism – sustained Byron's popularity and depended on the melancholy aspects of one's character. As Jerome McGann writes, the primary function of the Byronic hero was to 'instil in the reader a dislocated and melancholy intelligence […] all Byronic heroes are almost hypnotically fascinating' (2002: 25).

The replication of the Byronic Hero, moreover, alludes to Leo Braudy's (1986: 5) earlier comments on the paradoxical nature of fame as needing to be both unique and easily replicated. The Byronic Hero image was seen as a distinct characterisation of Byron's persona, while also being used to describe other authors and artists embodying similar traits.

The imagery of the Byronic hero remained, however, distinctly Romantic and, moreover, became perhaps one of the most defining images or archetypes of the Romantic period. The Byronic hero was, as McGuire writes, 'characteristically melancholy, aloof, troubled, defiant, sinful but remorseful, yet still romantic' (cited in Brewer, 2001: 141). Thus the Byronic Hero was a necessary component to the discourse of Romanticism, as it was to creating the paradigm of famous authors as reluctant or ambivalent celebrities.

There was undoubtedly a trend throughout Romanticism in which significant, revered characters dually courted and bemoaned the fame that they accumulated through their works. An underlying theme of either suffering or disillusionment suggests that in the origins of literary celebrity – perhaps even inherently in celebrity culture itself – there exists an undercurrent of discontent with the way in which a person comes to be understood, and by that extension, misunderstood, by their initially admiring public. Both Rousseau and Byron, on closer examination, expressed deep frustration, even depression, in regards to the adverse effects that their celebrity had on their lives. Heralded as geniuses, they nevertheless expressed disdain that their celebrity had in turn usurped their conception of their identity, and, further still, this personal injustice that they felt against them is apparent in both the

authors' works; where Rousseau sought to reclaim his sense of self in *Confessions*, Byron infused his works with this characteristically suffering figure, the Byronic hero. The origins of literary celebrity therefore are not inherently based upon the glamourisation of figures, a process which flourishes in mainstream media and celebrity, but rather a sense of disillusionment and discontent, already producing a prominent sense of ambivalence in which the discourses of writing and authorship prove problematic when intertwined with celebrity culture. This, in turn, provides the arguments and cultural debates surrounding literary celebrity upon which most if not all successive eras are based. As the following chapters will show, this sense of ambivalence in regards to fame and writing was not unique to Romanticism; such uncertainty where celebrity and authorship was concerned continued prolifically into the Victorian era.

Chapter Three: Victorian Literary Celebrity in Dickens and Twain

Dickens and the Public Genius

The Victorian era held a greater importance for the novel over the poem, and privileged novelists over poets, yet there are stark similarities between the Romantic epoch and the Victorian era with regards to authorship. Bradley Deane argues, for instance, that there is a constant struggle to define authorship in the Romantic era, which therefore leaves Victorian novelists with an 'ambivalent parentage' (2003: 3). Deane also argues that the Victorian era saw a clear distinction emerge between writer and author, arguing: '*writers* may be individual human agents who set pen to paper to make a living, but *authors* are the products of ideology' (2002: x, author's emphasis). A significant change in this era, however, is the greater connection seen between authors and their public, the greater visibility of famous authors and the proximity they encouraged between themselves and their admiring public, which produced a different kind of celebrity authorship than was experienced in the previous Romantic period. Rather than being received as semi-divine figures, famous authors of the Victorian Age were heralded as public geniuses and heroes, beginning to close the gap between themselves and their public. This was an intriguing development in literary celebrity's history as it illustrated the beginning of what was to become an appeal to the masses, an appeal not based on a romanticised, hierarchical status but one in which the famous figure, in this case the celebrity author, attempts to reflect common society and the common experience.

Significantly, the rise in nineteenth century literacy meant that a greater percentage of working-class societies were able to engage with literature. Not only did figures such as Charles Dickens and Mark Twain capture the nature of the working-class environment, but their work simultaneously contributed to greater literacy amongst lower classes. As Amberyl Malkovich attests, Dickens' writing appeals to 'readers of all socioeconomic backgrounds as he tries to realistically display the life and times of Victorian culture and society. His work contributed to the rise in literacy throughout the nineteenth century' (2013: 19). In his comprehensive study *The Rise of Popular Literacy in Victorian England* (1992), David F. Mitch argues that the Victorian era witnessed a dramatic rise in the number of people learning and mastering basic literacy skills (1992: xvii). Further, he observes that there was a

greater demand among the working-class to engage in basic literacy, yet this development had been substantially delayed in Victorian England:

> Despite England's eminence in the world of letters since the time of Chaucer, it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that most working-class English men and women could read and write […] Some historians have argued that the rise of literacy reflected a growing working-class demand for this skill (1992: 1, 2-3).

This dramatic rise in literacy for the lower classes perhaps coincided with the great and unprecedented popularity of figures such as Dickens and Twain, whose celebrity status have rarely been rivalled since the time of their writing. There is, therefore, an evident link between the popularity of Dickens and Twain and their respective depictions of working-class society. As Boorstin writes:

> Our most admired national heroes – Franklin, Washington, and Lincoln – are generally supposed to possess the "common touch." We revere them, not because they possess charisma, divine favour, a grace or talent granted them by God, but because they embody popular virtues. We admire them not because they reveal god, but because they reveal and elevate ourselves (1987: 50).

This is true of both Dickens and Twain, whose respective identities and personae were increasingly public and whose works continually elevated the lower classes so often represented in their works. Where in the Romantic era the literary celebrity was, in fact, a demigod of sorts, the Victorian era transforms the literary celebrity from their divine status into a more common figure, possessing the common touch of the lower class, of the 'commoners'. This in turn elevates the allure and prestige of those authors whose appeal is wide and varied, appealing to both the masses and the intellectual minority.

In the wake of the Romantic period, whose primary concern had been poetry and the Romantic notion of an author's 'original genius' (Williamson, 1989: 4), the Victorian era of literary celebrity ushered in a more public entity of authorship that would crucially change and determine the course of both celebrity culture and authorship itself. While authors were indeed still revered as geniuses, they became a more *public* phenomenon, rather than individuals who were considered 'unreachable' (North, 2009: 6). In contrast to Romantic

authors such as Rousseau and Byron, both of whom expressed continual disdain for their celebrity, Dickens more eagerly courted it, although this not without its own sense of ambivalence. Larry Leslie writes:

> Charles Dickens was a celebrity […] He sought fame and recognition by touring England and America, reading his works to audiences in formal, lecture-like settings. In both England and America, the public read about him in the newspapers, read his work in magazines or books, and perhaps attended or heard talk about his performance at a reading. Clearly, the media most responsible for Dickens's celebrity were magazines and books, but he solidified his place as a celebrity by seeking fame and recognition (2011: 12).

Comparing him to Byron, Juliet John writes: 'Dickens seemed much more than a literary phenomenon, the extent of his readership matched by the geographical reach of his fame. He has a greater claim than Byron to be called the first self-made global media star of the age of mass culture' (2009: 7). This was certainly because, as Leslie writes, Dickens courted his fame more actively and with greater enthusiasm than did Byron. John continues: 'Like Byron, [Dickens'] international celebrity was enhanced by travel, but Dickens was both more desirous of conquering the mass market than Byron and disseminated himself across more diverse media' (7). It appears then that in the Victorian era, more so than almost any other era, the cult of celebrity is encouraged, fostered and well-received, where both Dickens and Twain accumulated great prestige in their roles as public figures and celebrity authors.

Victorian Hero-worship

Although the Victorian celebrity author was to a great extent democratised, the Victorian era continued to foster this romanticisation of the public figure, particularly the man-of-letters figures such as John Ruskin and John Stuart Mill. There persisted a sense of reverence for these figures, mostly men, in which hero-worship became prominent though heavily criticised. One of the earliest works to consider hero-worship is Thomas Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-Worship* (1869), in which the author argues how the notion of the 'hero' has transformed through various eras. The hysteria surrounding Dickens propelled the author to reflect on the attributes of fame. As Frederic G. Kitton writes, the notion of hero-worship:

'struck Dickens in so forcible a manner that he cynically remarked that the way to obtain the favour of the Court, and to attain fame, is not by means of intellectual qualifications, but rather through being a freak of nature – such as a giant or dwarf' (1900: 81). Thus for Dickens, the concept of 'hero-worship' was not something noble or commendable. One can therefore notice the continued commentary on the notion of 'genuine fame' where authors are concerned.

Juliette Atkinson writes that much scholarly work discounts the extent to which the phenomenon of hero-worship was criticised, stating, 'there was a distinct lack of agreement about who the great men were' (2010: 48). It was nevertheless a popular practice, elevating the mortal figure to a status of hero. As Cockshut states: 'hero-worship is a normal attribute of nineteenth century biographers, and since hero-worship and spiritual admiration were seldom as well distinguished as they ought to have been, this is a common case' (1974: 42). Further still, Boorstin discusses the notion of hero-worship as distinct from that of celebrity worship, explaining:

Celebrity-worship and hero-worship should not be confused. Yet we confuse them every day, and by doing so we come dangerously close to depriving ourselves of all real models. We lose sight of the men and women who do not simply seem great because they are famous but who are famous because they are great. We come closer and closer to degrading all fame into notoriety (1987: 52).

In Dickens' case, his status as hero was the result of both his hugely popular works and the way in which he marketed himself. Few would argue that Dickens was not a fine author; indeed, Dickens emerged as a famous author in a time when to be a celebrity author had not yet become something that was entirely discredited.

Dickens and Victorian Celebrity

Charles Dickens is perhaps the most well-known author of any generation or age, his works continuing to be read and adapted for screen and theatre. Dickens functions as a celebrity by way of being internationally recognised and celebrated even for those who have not read his works. His fiction remains attractive on a mass level. Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1837) and *Hard Times* (1854) not only reflect but elevate the status of the lower classes. This was a crucial

manoeuvre in the phenomenon of literary celebrity and indeed celebrity culture itself, with Dickens not merely positioning himself as an object above the working class but something of a voice *for* the working class. As Cockshut articulates: 'Wordsworth was the idol of the intellectuals, and Dickens of the crowd' (1974: 17). This was essential in cementing Dickens' attraction to the public as he became not a celebrity to be revered, a semi-divine genius as experienced with Byron and Rousseau throughout Romanticism, but more a genius for the people. His experience in the literary marketplace mirrors more contemporary examples of mass publication. As Nicola Bradbury writes:

> The evidence of audience response in sales figures, like the visible output of the author, engendered an economy of production and consumption: a measure of the dialogue between the novelist and his public. Such close correspondence extended from the financial to the aesthetic spheres of influence. Part-publication enabled Dickens to generate and sustain levels of curiosity, suspense, audience manipulation, over the ungovernable pace of reading. It also exposed the author to the pressure of public demands in the development of character and plot. Serialisation, in a sense, foreshadows the dramatic rapport which Dickens later developed with live audiences in his hugely popular public readings (2001: 153).

Alongside serialisation, Dickens' courting of the masses greatly catapulted his fame. The era in which Dickens was writing proved fruitful for such an author to emerge. As Cockshut elaborates, Victorian England 'was a world in which class differences were very important, and a lord was dearly loved. But it was also a world possessing a classless elite. Dickens and Thackeray quarrelled partly because they belonged to the same club' (1974: 64). In this way, the figure of Dickens was able to prosper with his account of class structure throughout his characters in his novels, from *A Christmas Carol* (1843) to *Little Dorrit* (1857). But Dickens himself proved to be just as popular: 'He was, in short, an object of fascination, a true celebrity (maybe the first true celebrity in the modern sense), a social phenomenon, a figure unique among his contemporaries and yet representative of them, as they themselves understood' (Smiley, 2002: 6). Moreover, Smiley describes Dickens as possessing 'idiosyncratic genius' (24), reasserting the notion of Romantic genius in Dickens' career and persona.

Smiley acknowledges that the Victorians, Dickens' readership, would likely have witnessed what they understood as a 'growing intimacy' (2002: 12) between themselves and Dickens. This is especially lucrative in the Victorian era when authors engaged in more public events with their readers, which would have undoubtedly fostered what Schickel calls the *illusion* of intimacy (1985: 4), the idealised perception of proximity between author and reader. Where the Romantics desired a degree of transparency in the works of the Romantic poets, Smiley's comment suggests that the Victorians desired a more realistic intimacy that was based on mutual admiration rather than a Romantic image of divinity. This notion was accentuated and delivered by the increasing public personae of Dickens.

Dickens' works have not only been adapted for film and theatre consistently throughout history but Dickens himself has been the subject of much artistic expression and interpretation. An older example is a play from 1936 by H.H. and Marguerite Harper, called *This Thing Called Fame: Dramatic Episodes in the Life of a Literary Genius* (1936), which focuses on the life of Dickens. The play ends with Dickens standing at his desk and contemplating existence, stating: 'Youth! Vibrant – happy – ambitious youth! [...] And the curse of fame – to be left alone – in the solitude of greatness' (1936: 38).

Dickens was viewed as having several kinds of personas that he was able to perform. Discussing Dickens' original preface to his favourite work, *David Copperfield* (1850), Mario Oritz-Robles, in a Barthesian manner, inquires as to which Dickens is speaking, stating: 'It is impossible, in any case, to tell which of these Dickenses is speaking in this passage, for Dickens, the consummate performer, is ventriloquizing "Dickens," the most enduring among all his fictional creations' (2011: 457). Smiley similarly posits that Dickens was the first instance of a celebrity brand: 'If we see Dickens as the first true celebrity of the popular arts, we also can see him as the first person to become a "name brand"' (2002: 26). She also describes the author as a 'self-made phenomenon' (27).

Lisa Rodensky discusses Dickens' popularity in terms of the mass audience and mass production. By appealing to the lower class, Dickens affirmed his popularity and celebrity, yet it is through this same mass popularity that Dickens becomes a target for criticism, in which his celebrity, entwined with and determined by the lower classes, becomes, according to some, less than fame. Rodensky writes:

Reviewers note – both to praise and to blame – that Dickens's novels reproduce the
language of the lower classes, who became synonymous with the people at strategically

interesting moments. Some early reviewers explain Dickens's popularity as the reading public's response to his representations of the shared experiences of his countrymen. Set against this cluster of meanings are those circulating in the reviews that relegate the popular to the lowest common denominator, a category of mass-produced novel and novelist that better classes of readers should resist for many reasons, among them the suspicion that a work which attracts so many readers will degrade them, make them part of a manipulated and undifferentiated mass reading public (2009: 584).

The association between popularity and that which is 'common', therefore, becomes starkly apparent in the reviews of Dickens, and becomes a significant inclusion in Victorian literary celebrity, in which to appeal to the masses supposedly affronts the aristocracy. Amidst the rigid class structure of Victorian England, this assumption can be taken to be a preliminary instance of the continuing tension between popularity and reputation that becomes so crucial to the career of a celebrity author. As Rodensky writes, in Dickens there grew the notion that a better class of readership should resist such popular works, given the suspicion that it creates an unfavourable, common reading public. Writing and reading thus became, in the Victorian era, more strongly associated with class and social structure than ever before.

In this manner the celebrity author, especially one as insightful and observant as Dickens, whose characters seemed to relate well with the lower classes of Victorian England, becomes something of an oxymoron for its inclusion of fame and ordinariness. Although he made his fame capturing the lives of the poor, lower classes, through this Dickens could no longer entirely relate to those very same people he was depicting, since he was earning great sums of money and esteem for his works. For Dickens this meant his celebrity would bring with it unwelcome associations, as it did when he toured America. As Simon Callow writes in his *Charles Dickens and the Great Theatre of the World* (2012):

[Dickens] also discovered the price of celebrity: a man came up to him, claiming to have been the first person in that city to have sold his books. The man told him that he was financially distressed, while Dickens was obviously revelling in luxury. Dickens sympathised, but offered no money, at which the man told him that he thought it rather strange that the man who wrote *Nickleby* should be utterly destitute of feeling. Dickens was amused by this, and keenly interested in every aspect of American life. But his illusions were rapidly evaporating (2012: 114).

Much of Dickens' reading public would undoubtedly and unsurprisingly require Dickens, the author of such works as *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-1839) and *David Copperfield* (1850), to embody, to an extent, the traits of his characters – sympathy, humanity, and compassion. As unrealistic as this expectation is, the politics of celebrity culture, the disintegration between the life of the author and the life of the work, ushers in this kind of behaviour that in turn troubles the celebrity author, as it did Dickens and, indeed, Rousseau and Byron.

For Juliet John, Dickens perceived authorship as a dual occupation or role, writing: 'The author, to Dickens, was both a serious artist whose abilities entitled him/her to certain moral and commercial rights, and a marketable celebrity whose image could be transported and modified into a variety of contexts' (2009: 49). Such a perception is evidently helpful in framing debates around literary celebrity, which in itself requires this unusual discourse, particularly in the Victorian era in which a novelist, traditionally, is one who categorically ought *not* to appeal to the masses in such a way as to function as a celebrity. Dickens thus becomes a useful and critical figure in understanding the development of literary celebrity by his bridging of two hitherto distinct, somewhat opposing cultures.

Many theorists have speculated on the diverse nature of Dickens' writing and perception of culture. For Mario Praz, in his piece 'The Decline of the Hero' (1956), Dickens remains a petit-bourgeois figure whose early works affronted and criticised capitalist values, as seen in *David Copperfield* and *Hard Times* in which Dickens and his readers sympathise with those of the proletariat. Praz writes: 'The note of optimism is only to be found in the first novels, when the writer believed in the inevitable triumph of virtue, and in an enlightened humanitarianism that was capable of smoothing out the difference between rich and poor' (1956: 141). This optimism, however, declined as Dickens continued writing, according to Praz. His earlier works reflected Dickens' optimism, whereas '*Great Expectations* […] represents, as though a parable, the final failure of optimism and the Victorian compromise' (142). There are indeed many vestiges of Romanticism to be found in the life and work of Dickens. For Praz, the character James Steerforth from Dickens' *David Copperfield* is 'the symbol of the Romantic poet in the guise in which he appeared in England, in Byron particularly, and with a few allusions to Shelley as well' (1956: 127). Dickens' early work is particularly infused with the writer's sense of optimism, which later declines.

Dickens' Public Lectures

Of course it is Dickens' public readings that established the author as more than simply a writer of fiction. As Collins writes: 'Dickens, besides being a great and good man, was an outstanding author and performer too' (1975: liv). Quoting an unnamed Irish critic, Collins also notes how Dickens was seen as the greatest reader and writer of the age (1975: liv). Collins writes that to have heard these readings was to witness the '"spontaneous expression" of Dickens' genius' (1975: liii), a phrase which undoubtedly mirrors the psyche and ideology of the Romantic period in their reverence of writers as geniuses who mastered the art of spontaneity. Dickens meticulously organised his readings in order to develop a close bond with his readership, yet as Andrews notes, this too was to prove an inconvenience for Dickens. He writes:

> Once Dickens has reconciled himself and his readership to his new profession he had two principal tasks to address: the practicalities of staging the Readings, and the rewards and difficulties of being a hugely popular celebrity. In the 1860s, and particularly in America in 1867-8, he consolidated his status as one of the first great international celebrities in history. It was a type of celebrity more easily associated with rock stars of the 1960s. For Dickens this raised tensions between privacy and public expectations, even though it was the direct outcome of his lifelong courtship of a close relationship with his readers (2008: 126).

This account sounds starkly similar to the woes expressed by Rousseau as a direct result of his readings and culmination of celebrity status. Yet Dickens, despite the loss of privacy that his public readings eventually afforded him, did indeed passionately court this medium of connection with his readers. Evidence of Dickens' favouring of an author's physical presence is also expressed in his works, particularly in his relatively unknown *The Wreck of the Golden Mary* (1857) in which a character states, in regards to the electric telegraph: 'I admire machinery as much as any man, and am as thankful to it as any man can be for what it does for us. But, it will never be a substitute for the face of a man, with his soul in it, encouraging another man to be brave and true' (2009: 110). Dickens clearly placed a great deal of importance in his readings as a manoeuvre which enabled his face to be publically recognised, a technique he would frequently use during his tour of America.

In 2004 the Charles Dickens Museum commemorated Dickens' first public reading which took place 150 years before. Shinn writes that Dickens' 'first public readings were for charity, beginning with two performances of A Christmas Carol, before a crowd of 2,000 working-class people in Birmingham' (Shinn, 2004: NP). But soon Dickens was lured by the financial prospects of the readings. John Forster, Dickens' friend and confidante, attempted to dissuade the author from doing the readings for money, considering that it would be too demeaning. As Shinn continues: 'respectability was an issue with [Dickens]. But the lure of public performance proved too much, and the author turned professional in 1858. As he told Forster, most people thought he was being paid for his readings anyway' (2004). Similarly, Ferguson notes: 'For, whatever else might motivate Dickens as author, financial gain is surely an aim' (2001: 744).

The readings were not simply the act of an author reading from his works but a performance in which the author displayed theatrical ability in *performing* his works. As both Praz and Ferguson note it is this sense of theatrics that separated Dickens not only from his contemporaries but from his predecessors. Rousseau did of course engage in his own readings, causing people to faint when hearing excerpts from *The Confessions*. However, Dickens achieved the same effect – public fainting spells – but in a distinctly positive manner, gradually courting his audience's veneration and spectatorship. Dickens also achieved this esteem on a *global* scale. Ferguson writes how Dickens, through his performances, helped shape the status of the Victorian author. She writes: 'these performances must also certainly be viewed as performances of the authorial persona as well' (738), writing that Dickens as an author, not simply a performer, is of critical importance: 'It was not Dickens' theatrical abilities alone that drew audiences to the readings; his fame as an author was crucial to his success as a public performer (739). The complicated relationship between reader and author is exemplified in Dickens' readings, in which Dickens simultaneously embodied the author, the narrator, the reader and even the spectator of his own work himself. As Ferguson further states this practice affirmed Dickens' role as an author in control of his work:

The actual presentation of Dickens on the stage in certain performances – the author appearing with the book before him but then rarely if ever consulting it, perhaps even shutting it before the performance – may be seen as an authorial tour-de-force, suggesting the author's control of his own material (739).

Further still, Ferguson identifies that the belief in the author as key to the book's interpretation, what Barthes and Foucault would later argue against, was of great prominence in the Victorian era and in turn made Dickens' readings all the more popular:

> Fascination among Victorian audiences with Dickens's readings was surely that these were moments in which the author might provide the key to the interpretation of his works, revealing the origins or otherwise authorized accounts of the works […] While my analysis of the readings finds Dickens variously resisting the kind of closure that Foucault suggests "we" demand of the author, the public reading performances were unquestionably part of the construction of "Dickens" as an author in the Foucaultian sense […] In the plasticity of roles Dickens played in the readings – Dickens appearing at once as actor, as reader, and as author, in a performance style that was always somewhat in flux […] lies evidence of the complexity, even in Dickens's own lifetime, of this process of making "Dickens" at once the celebrated author and everyday reader's "friend" (2001: 745-46).

In his work *Dickens: Novelist in the Market Place* (1982), James M. Brown describes the relationship between Dickens' novels and middle-class ideology, describing Dickens as a bourgeois writer. He states:

> Certainly Dickens wrote for a middle-class reading public, and deferred to their standards of decorum […] but his relationship with his literary public, and his imaginative commitment in his novels to their ideals and values was far more complex and problematic than either [Ruskin or Blackwood's Magazine] would indicate (Brown, 1982: 38-39).

For Brown, Dickens' mature novels offer a scathing criticism on the social situation of the Victorian era, and yet they also function as an inevitable means of financial gain that may appear, to others, to be contradictory to the very essence and nature of Dickens' novels. Brown elaborates:

On the one hand the novels remorselessly expose and repudiate the market nature of society, but on the other hand they are themselves highly remunerative products in a very profitable literary market. Clearly the situation is too complex and messy for the label "bourgeois novelist" to be an adequate or satisfactory summary of the mature work (54).

This is where Dickens' case is particularly lucrative for the study of literary celebrity and the tensions therein; the distinct ties that celebrity shares with the market and economy tend to oppose, culturally, the field of authorship. This tension was felt in Dickens' life, although Dickens nevertheless approached celebrity with more of an enthusiastic flair than did the authors of the Romantic period, and his understanding of the masses enabled his popularity to grow, in turn allowing Dickens to be perceived as a hero, who partially embraced this popularity.

Dickens remains a popular figure in early twenty-first century society, and is arguably one of the most influential authors of all time (with the possible exception of Shakespeare). Unlike many contemporary literary celebrities – Morrison, Franzen, and Eggers – Dickens has sustained his status as a household name across a tremendous amount of time. In fact, he is arguably more famous today than many living celebrity authors. Indeed, Jon Michael Varese argues that the author is perhaps more famous now than in the author's own lifetime. While contemporary audiences are 'more disparate and fragmented' (Dyer, 2004: 4), Dickens had a direct relationship to his literary public that cannot be underestimated.

On the question of why Dickens remains as famous as he is, Varese argues that 'he tells us things about ourselves by portraying personality traits and habits that might seem all too familiar. His messages about poverty and charity have travelled through decades' (2009). Varese alludes to Dickens' 'pantheon of rich characters mirroring every personality type', and the 'universal themes' in Dickens' work, suggesting that the author's staying power stems from his ubiquity and the timelessness of his works, which are as relevant today as they were in the Victorian era. In ensuring his popularity and staying power, Dickens clearly understood his readership and the emerging promotional platforms that enabled his celebrity to grow. As a result he was able to cultivate a reading public that in turn elevated his influence and renown, illustrating the crucial connection between an author's fame and their readership.

Mark Twain's Legend

Mark Twain, the pen name of Samuel Langhorne Clemens, was a famed American author whose most notable work, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), is often considered the great American novel. His persona and personal life, as with Dickens, was of considerable interest to his reading public and along with Dickens he engaged in public readings and was considered a great literary author, indulging in the phenomenon of his fame equally with his authorship. Arguably Mark Twain remains the greatest ever writer to have come out of the United States. As Ernest Hemingway's famous anecdote from Green Hills of Africa attests: 'All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn* […] American writing comes from that. There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since' (2003: 22). Indeed, in America, it is difficult to find a suitable equivalent to Twain in regards to literature and fame. There was less a romanticising of Twain than there was an active process of mythologising the author, which in turn made Twain a Victorian legend more than a Romantic genius, although he was and is still considered a genius. He was also known as the 'people's author' (Hill, 1993: 91), and also called himself 'the mighty mass of the uncultivated' (91).

In 1910, the year of Twain's death, a group of scholars addressed Twain's celebrity in a ground-breaking symposium at the University of Alabama that addressed the process of 'mythologising' Mark Twain. They asked: 'What was the extent of Samuel Clemens' participation in that myth-making process, and how much resulted from our subsequent embellishments, the generous homage paid by readers and an obliging public to one of our authors of authentically innovative prose?' (Gribben, 1984: 39). Further, it is thought that Twain 'willed the creation of his posthumous legend. However, the historical facts also reveal that those who lived after Clemens' death helped gild his habitual mask until it became the artefact ultimately adopted as an American icon' (39). *The Mythologising of Mark Twain* (1984) is the collection of essays presented at this symposium.

Mark Twain was born Samuel Langhorne Clemens, in 1835, Hannibal Missouri. He took his pen name from riverboat slang (marking the twain being the method in which to determine how shallow the water is). The building in which he lived from 1874 to 1891 in

Hartford, Connecticut was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1962, and is now a popular literary tourist site[27].

Similarly to Dickens, Twain possessed a charisma that was characteristic of the 'common man'. Through his works, Mark Twain elevated, as Boorstin argues, the status of the proletariat. Much of Twain's work is dedicated to illuminating the lives of the poor or lower classes. His books *Huckleberry Finn*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *The Prince and The Pauper* (1881), and others, as with Dickens' work, propelled him to a kind of celebrity that was created partly through a sympathetic engagement with the masses. Indeed, as Wallace Stegner argues, Mark Twain was one of those writers who possessed 'some form of the common touch – humour, sentiment, violence, sensationalism, sex, a capacity for alarm – and raise[d] it to the level of art' (2007: 134). For Stegner, Mark Twain 'didn't exhaust the possibilities of lifting a whole mass of common preoccupations into beauty and significance' (134). This is an integral aspect of Twain's works which undoubtedly propelled him to a particularly lucrative kind of fame, the kind of fame based on social reciprocity between himself and his public as well as his apt ability to articulate the struggles of the working class, which would have made him popular with the mass society. Both Twain and Dickens, therefore, are perhaps the most important figures of literary celebrity in their ability, through their work and public appearances, to democratise celebrity and circulate great literature through the masses where previously it had been reserved for a minor elite. The Victorian era is thus a pivotal one in transforming the cultural taste of mass society, something of which would influence successive decades.

Intriguingly, the inspiration of much of Twain's work was the elite society he professed to dislike. As Elliot Engel argues: 'no one *loathed* society more than Mark Twain. He detested the wealthy and abhorred those who graced the social pages' (2005: 170, author's emphasis). Engel also notes that due to the author's poor background, Twain felt those in high society had to prove to him that they weren't also stupid. This dislike (and distrust) of wealthy society ensured his popularity with readers as a detractor of the elite and a supporter of the oppressed and neglected, under-appreciated masses. As Kaplan writes:

Dickens was still a Northern hero, a demigod even for the abolitionists like the Langdons. The circumstances of the evening Sam Clemens spent with his future wife

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[27] The term 'literary tourism' refers to the industry in which the places that famous authors have lived, written in or about, eaten at or visited become popular tourist spots. For Mark Twain's influence on this industry specifically, see Hilary Lowe's *Mark Twain's Homes and Literary Tourism* (2012).

were appropriate. This was the valedictory reading tour of a towering literary personality, a hero of the mass audience which would soon elevate the newcomer, Mark Twain, and also a great public reader as well as an actor *manqué*, to an analogous height (2006: 65, author's emphasis).

Indeed, the vestiges of late Victorianism can be seen with Twain being referred to as a 'hero', similarly to Dickens. But, as Kaplan specifies, he was a hero of the mass audience. Kaplan repeats this sentiment, describing Twain's situation in England:

> The man adored by the masses could be certain that the best he could expect from the custodians of official culture was cool tolerance. In England, despite all the class divisions he believed would make such rich material for satire, there seemed to be no class division in taste as far as humour was concerned. He was a hero of the mass audience, but he was also given almost every honour and hospitality short of the dread accolade of having to dine with the Queen (152-153).

As Kaplan continues, Twain was greeted with an ovation at a ceremonial dinner, after the Sheriff of London gave him a speech of welcome. As Twain writes in a letter to his wife, Olivia:

> I did not know what to do, & so I sat still & did nothing. By & by the new sheriff, in his gorgeous robes of office, got up & proposed my health, & accompanied it with the longest & most extravagantly complimentary speech of the evening, & appointed me to respond to the toast to "literature." Imagine my situation, before that great audience, without a single word of preparation – for I had expected nothing of this kind – I did not know I was a lion (cited in Salamo and Smith, 1997: 184).

Twain was, as he himself acknowledges, a literary lion, a legacy of the Romantic movement of elevating authors (or poets) to gargantuan heights. Undoubtedly a large part of Twain's fame was the result of him being regarded the first 'humourist' of American literature, as well as providing Americans with literature that captured authentic American life. His humorous outlook was in part experiential; anecdotally Twain detested his hometown of Hannibal, Missouri, calling it 'Misery' instead. Prior to Twain's richly explored characters and towns,

American literature had been confined to British-sounding characters and 'serious' literature. His first story, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* (1865), introduced Twain's humorous prose to the world.

The strongly perpetuated notion that only 'serious' literature was acceptable material for society was directly in keeping with Twain's loathing of upper-class society. Yet while romanticised and mythologised, it is important to stress that Twain was not a man *above* society but a man of the people, a factor that would have a tremendous effect on literary celebrity. This is where the Romantic tradition of elevating authors falters; while continually revered as geniuses, Victorian authors were regarded as more accessible public heroes rather than as Romantic, 'unreachable' figures. It was a kind of celebrity that succeeded in undoing stringent class structures by providing mass cultures with great literature.

Like the famed authors before him (and certainly those after him), Twain himself carefully engaged in the creation of his image as a celebrity. As Powers has noted, Twain 'manipulated his visibility with the same shrewdness that he'd summoned to manipulate lecture-hall audiences as a kind of proto-rock star of the 1870s' (2001: 6). His white broadcloth suits, along with his white hair and moustache, as Powers further points out, had become a familiar attribute of Twain. Hence Twain had the uncanny ability to craft his own image in terms of the public's familiarity with his image as a white-suit wearing, middle-aged writer. Powers writes that Twain had was 'at the height of his celebrity' at the age of sixty-six (291). Along with being at the height of his celebrity, he was also 'at the height of his private ruminations on the pain of existence' (291). This sense of melancholy was present in Twain's *Extracts from Adam's Diary* (1904) and *The Mysterious Stranger* (1916).

It is often observed that there was a change in Twain's character following his celebrity. As Emerson writes: 'The young Sam Clemens had much in common with Mark Twain, but the middle-aged celebrity was someone quite different' (2000: 118). Indeed, Twain had since become more pensive and melancholic than his younger self. Emerson furthermore states: 'Samuel Clemens too had changed: now he was a celebrity' (1984: 125). Celebrity for Twain thus functioned as both a blessing and a curse. Twain recounts his misery in a letter to Olivia: 'That world which I knew in its blossomy youth is old and bowed and melancholy, now; its soft cheeks are leathery and wrinkled, the fire is gone out in its eyes, and the spring from its step. It will be dust and ashes when it comes again' (cited in Emerson, 1984: 125). Twain's melancholy sentiments echo those expressed by Rousseau, Byron and indeed Dickens as well; celebrity had proved useful for Twain in attempting to circulate great

literature through the oppressed masses, yet it had also had an adverse effect on his sense of self.

Mark Twain as Humourist

Several theorists, including Hamlin Hill, have reflected on the notion that the last ten years of Mark Twain's life were physically and psychologically difficult, something which is reflected in Twain's later novels, many of which focus on darker elements of life and would even include the figure of Satan, who also appeared in the works of Byron and Shelley. That Mark Twain was a humourist is of vital importance and has been extensively studied. Twain exemplifies this archetype of tragic figure precisely through his role as a humourist writer, linking Twain to the Romantic consideration of the tragic figure. As Hill explains: 'Comedians, in whatever media they work, are supposed to be essentially tragic figures who sublimate their grief in laughter' (1973: ix). For Hill, Mark Twain fits this stereotype. Twain first came to prominence with his famous and humorous travel work *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), which became an instant bestseller. But in the same vein as Dickens, Twain managed to establish his fame through publicity; where for Dickens this was through public readings, for Twain it was vis-à-vis his hugely successful public lectures which continued to be popular throughout the author's life, along with his publications. As Lorch writes:

> Before presenting the reception which Mark Twain and his lecture "the American Vandal Abroad" received, one should point out briefly the extent of the reputation and popularity of the rising young humourist as the tour opened. His first great book, *Innocents Abroad*, it must be remembered, did not appear until several months after the tour closed. Consequently, the fame that came to him following its publication still lay in the future. Nevertheless, and examination of the news files show that in the fall of 1868 Mark Twain was already well known (1987: 44).

Although popular in his own country, Twain was anxious about the reception he would receive in London. However, Twain's fame was not completely established as not every audience he lectured to initially recognised him. Twain used this to his advantage when beginning his lectures, which further accentuates the author's humorous touch. Lorch notes:

On opening night, he employed another device of his earlier days – that of self-introduction. The device had two forms. In the one, Mark Twain deceived his audience momentarily by allowing them to think he was a local person selected to introduce the lecturer. The surprise occasioned when he finally identified himself as the lecturer invariably brought a burst of applause and put the audience in a receptive frame of mind. In the other (when he knew he would be instantly recognised) he simply announced that he would introduce himself, and proceeded to do so in a humorous fashion. In London, of course, the second form seemed more appropriate, and he used it during the early opening nights with success (1957: 300).

Both tactics that Twain employed in his public lectures highlight the author's awareness of his fame – whether in its infancy or completely developed. The method of self-introduction implies Twain's familiarity with and understanding of the dynamics of celebrity culture at the time of his writing. Twain's popularity in the lecture circuit was undoubtedly fuelled by his comedic approach to his audience. Yet James M. Cox argues that the author indeed wished, in part, to be viewed as a serious writer in spite of his famous image as a humourist:

Small wonder that Mark Twain meant to be taken seriously. Or was it that he meant to please the "serious" readers and critics who required the illusion that he was serious? The question inevitably brings us back to the sceptical edge of Mark Twain's identity as a humourist. This scepticism is no mere ambivalence, for it is predicated not upon whether Mark Twain is serious or humourist – we know he is preponderantly humorous – but upon whether he ever is or can be serious (2002: 61).

The conflicts inherent in this debate of Twain's authorial identity in genre and his writing summon issues of class and culture. Twain's identity as a humourist initially places him in the realm of popularity, as his various lectures attest to, in which Twain would inject his lectures with humorous performance. Loathing the social elite as Twain did, he was very much considered a popular humourist, the first of what would be many humourists. Yet although most if not all of Twain's works include this popular tactic, his later novels, as previously mentioned, include darker, pensive elements. His final work, his unnamed autobiography, was curiously interspersed with rambling humour and more pensive considerations.

As with the case of Rousseau, Twain found posthumous fame with the genre of autobiography. At the time of Twain's death, his autobiography was uncompleted and unpublished. Yet the first published attempt was Twain biographer Albert Bigelow Paine's two volume edition of Twain's work in 1924, which was not well received nor was it a commercial success. It has not been until relatively recently that Twain's autobiography has received critical attention. The first volume of the three volume series, titled *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, was published in its complete form in November, 2010, edited and archived by academics as part of the Mark Twain Project with California University Press, with the second volume published in October, 2013, and the third volume published in October, 2015. Of Paine, Twain stated:

> Here is another compliment by Albert Bigelow Paine, my biographer. He is writing four octavo volumes about me, and he has been at my elbow two and one-half years. I just suppose that he does not know me, but says he knows me. He says "Mark Twain is not merely a great writer, a great philosopher, a great man; he is the supreme expression of the human being, with his strength and weakness." What a talent for compression! It takes a genius in compression to compact as many facts as that (2000: 318).

Twain's sentiments reflect those of Rousseau's in stating 'Nobody except for myself knows me'; for Twain, then, even the autobiography simply reflected another version of the author, one that Twain felt was a stranger to himself but that he nevertheless performed. Glass writes that Twain's body of work is fundamentally autobiographical (2004: 58), while also arguing that Twain somewhat encouraged the fanciful process through which his audience conceived of him. He writes:

> For Twain, one of the protocols of democratic fame is to participate politely in the imagined intimacies it generates, to assist his fans in spinning stories about a shared past that never happened. His elderly solicitude for the fantasies of his audience bleeds over into the structure and intent behind the autobiography itself (2004: 64).

Despite Twain's original intention not to have his autobiography published until after his death, he published 'Chapters from My Autobiography' in the *North American Review* in twenty-five instalments in 1906-1907. After his death in 1910, numerous editions were

published, none of which were well received, although Paine's work remains the most well-known of the earlier editions. The opening paragraph of the autobiography has since become a famous excerpt in which Twain, in his handwriting, speaks posthumously: 'In this autobiography I shall keep in mind the fact that I am speaking from the grave. I am literally speaking from the grave, because I shall be dead when the book issues from the press' (1990: xxxv). Glass observes how the presence of his handwriting, as well as Twain's signature, is an instance of Mark Twain's authorship being fetishized, arguing that: 'the degree to which Twain's written signature continues to be fetishized as a mark of his authorial intention is remarkable […] Thus, we continue to authenticate the value of Twain's work through the fetish of his signature as a lingering mark of his authorial presence and intention' (2004: 69-70). Glass writes that this has been achieved through the numerous editions of Twain's work which contain reproduced facsimiles of Twain's handwriting as well as his signature being embossed on various covers of biographies.

The use of the pseudonym Mark Twain is, moreover, an important development in the field of literary celebrity as it presents a point of departure from oneself and presents the imperative notion of an author's identity as being significant to their work. Theorists have speculated as to the significance of the departure from Samuel Clemens to Mark Twain, addressing it as a point of critical enquiry that separates the famed author from the reclusive writer. As Steinbrink writes:

Mark Twain, the persona, had survived, essentially intact and somehow still intimately bound to his ostensibly more "worthy" creator. Clemens' solution to the problem of gaining respectability, that is to say, was not simply to divorce himself from the persona; if anything, in fact, Sam Clemens and Mark Twain grew closer together as the movement from Elmira to Buffalo to Hartford progressed (1983: 300).

Many texts often refer to Samuel Clemens as being the superior figure to Mark Twain, and both the persona Mark Twain and the writer Samuel Clemens are discussed in accordance with each other as two separate figures and identities. In her work *Dark Twins: Imposture and Identity in Mark Twain's America* (1989), Susan Gillman writes:

…critics have themselves been divided over how Samuel Clemens relates to Mark Twain: in creative or destructive opposition? The critical division goes all the way

back to the divided subject himself, who regarded his literary methods with similar ambivalence. No one, including the writer himself, can decide whether "Mark Twain" was a blessing or a curse for Samuel Clemens (1989: 34)

This disparity between the writer and the persona is of particular significance in regards to the way in which literary celebrity functions; the persona often seems to function to the detriment of the writer, whose identity becomes, as seen previously with Rousseau and Byron, a complex creation of marketed performance and authentic existence. With the rise of Twain's popularity, the figure of Samuel Clemens became comparatively less significant. One of the more significant texts that charts the rise of Twain's fame is Louis J. Budd's *Our Mark Twain: The Making of his Public Personality* (1983). Budd, the most well-known of Twain's biographers, describes Twain as 'a soul held hostage by popularity' (1983: 18), a sentiment that fits well with many descriptions of Twain during his lifetime of 'submerged fame' (3). Budd makes a similar statement to Steinbrink when he states that '*The Innocents Abroad* proves elusive under analysis of the authorial persona and the real-life man who, readers know, operates behind him. It presents the typical puzzle of Twain's writings' (31). Budd further describes Twain as cultivating a mythical individual that appeared throughout the author's writings, fuelling the notion that, as Hill attests, Twain's life and literary works were 'remarkably intertwined (1973: ix).

Like Dickens, Twain managed to craft his fame internationally, so that his name became a global phenomenon rather than remaining a celebrity only in his own country. As Fishkin remarks, it is the prominence of Twain's work that appears all over the globe even to this day that sustains him as the last great legendary writer. He writes how in the screen and stage, Twain's works:

…also appear outside the United States, helping to sustain the worldwide popularity – unprecedented for an American author – that Twain achieved in his lifetime […] Big River played to enthusiastic houses in Tokyo and Osaka in 1985, a stage version of the Prince and the Pauper is performed regularly for young audiences by a Japanese repertory company, and an animated series based on Huckleberry Finn won some of the highest ratings in Japanese television history when it first aired in 1976 […] Twain's popularity outside the United States can often be traced, in part, to a native writer who championed his works (1998: 144).

Similarly to Dickens, Twain fostered a tortured relationship to Victorian era optimism that would also later be tainted by the author's own sense of pessimism that became crystallised in Twain's later life. As J. Ferguson opens in *Mark Twain: Man and Legend* (1965), 'American optimism reached high tide somewhere between 1815 and 1850' (1965: 13). Yet this optimism, if indeed Twain experienced any of it, would have had less of an effect on the author who was continuously plagued by death. Hill writes that Twain was 'immensely interested in his destination after death' (1973: xvii). This was to be reflected in the author's writings despite being a prolific humourist. As Baldanza writes, 'the death of [Twain's] son Langdon engulfed him in familiar guilt fantasies that plagued his life. These had begun with the death of his father, [and…] they were strongly intensified on the death of his brother Henry' (1961: 6). His daughter Susy and wife Olivia also died in 1896 and 1904 respectively; his wife's death, after a long illness, 'confirmed the deepening pessimism that had marked his thought from much earlier (9). Indeed, as Glass observes, much of what Twain wrote in the last twenty years of his life 'were brooding mediations on the moral depravity of humanity' (2016: 46). One such piece was *The Mysterious Stranger*, published posthumously in 1916, and an essential though neglected work published in what is known as the author's dark period. Unfinished at the time of Twain's death, the book features the figure of Satan, who Twain uses for a social commentary on morality, humanity, and determinism. As Cox argues, 'though [Twain] could end the story, he could not finish it. Instead, it finished him as a writer' (2002: 275).

In this manner Twain exemplifies Romantic archetypes of authorship not simply in his embodiment of the revered genius, but through his characterisation throughout his life and after his death as something of a tragic figure made all the more explicit in his role as America's greatest humourist. To reiterate Hill's sentiment, Twain's role as a humourist was countered by his more prominent (though less publicised) role as a tragic figure whose humour was something of an inward expression of grief. In Twain, therefore, there is a familiar sense of ambivalence that was also apparent in the lives of Rousseau, Byron and Dickens, all of whom courted their fame to a degree but expressed an unwavering sense of injustice and depression in relation to their heightened fame.

Twain's celebrity is of immense interest and significance to the phenomenon of literary celebrity; Twain's career as a writer shows the significant aspect of performativity that began with Dickens, as Twain separated from his initial identity and cultivated a figure

that would become synonymous with authorial mythology, and would also serve to form the basis of many writing careers to follow. The name Samuel Clemens is nowhere near as revered a name as Mark Twain, the latter of which carries with it significant assumptions and ideologies. The recent revival of his autobiography, moreover, not only indicates the continued interest in Twain's life and work but also significantly demonstrates the continuation of Twain's legend.

Chapter Four: Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway and Modernist Literary Celebrity

Modernism ushered in a distinctive form of celebrity, precisely through its embrace of the promotional apparatus that emerged in the Hollywood studio system. Modernist celebrity therefore becomes a particularly crucial turning point in the history of literary celebrity by aligning literature with the marketisation that became a defining trait of the celebrity industries, helping to cement the public branding of the era's most illustrious authors.

The period of modernism, loosely defined as beginning in the early twentieth century, was characterised by great experimentation in the arts. Modernist literature experimented with new forms of expression and literary techniques such as stream of consciousness, repetition, and subjectivity, distinctive elements that have since retained their influence in contemporary culture. The period also held in high regard dense structure and writing, with many works famously complex, including James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegan's Wake* (1939), William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *As I Lay Dying* (1930), and T.S. Eliot's dense poem *The Waste Land* (1922). Modernism therefore became known for being intentionally difficult and often reserved for high, elite culture, showing a noticeable departure from the Victorian era and its focus on mass readership.

The difficulty and complexity of modernist writing developed, as Vicki Mahaffey[28] writes, in reaction to the bleak political situation of the time. She argues that modernist literature, often dismissed due to 'arcane allusions, experimental procedures, and perceived difficulty' (2007: 3), is mistakenly characterised 'by wilful obscurity and shot through with nostalgia for a rapidly waning elite culture' (3). Instead, she argues that modernism deeply engaged with questions about society at a time of great political uncertainty, including Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, which in turn influenced the structure of modernist prose. She argues that modernism: 'gloried in experiments with form, but its experimentation was not detached from the social conditions that shaped it; on the contrary, it was part of a richly varied pattern of literary reactions to one of the least stable periods of human history' (3).

Modernism also ushered in a distinct kind of celebrity author that was as glamourised as the Romantic author. This emerged during a time of dramatic technological change that enabled star status to proliferate. Although the literature throughout the period of modernism differed greatly from the literature preceding it, it nevertheless maintained a Romantic

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[28] Mahaffey's *Modernist Literature: Challenging Fictions* (2007) specifically looks at the notion of complexity and obscurity within modernist literature.

sensibility. Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald's work and careers show evidence of this Romantic impulse, exerted in the way in which they advertised themselves – both publicly and through mediated representations – but also in their literary works which focused on romanticised figures. Indeed, this archetype, which had become crystallised in the Byronic hero and accentuated in the Victorian hero, became epitomised in Stein and Hemingway's creation of the 'Lost Generation', a group of disillusioned authors who were regarded as geniuses of the era.

In their comprehensive work *Marketing Modernisms* (1996), Dettmar and Watt investigate the self-promotional tactics that utterly transformed the modernist industry. They posit that: 'the durability of the notion of an impassable gulf between modernist writing and the popular audience has been nothing short of remarkable' (1996: 3). Indeed, as Joyce Wexler argues, modernist writers were 'ambivalent about wanting a large audience' (1997: 2), and that, moreover, modernists were required to 'forfeit popularity to maintain aesthetic quality, [in which] the minority audience offered a kind of prestige unavailable to Victorian novelists' (3). 'Instead of sales', Wexler argues, the modernist writer gained 'access to elite circles of fame, luxury, and power' (3). In contrast, Dettmar and Watt's work suggests that sales were indeed important to modernist writers, ensuring that their identities proliferated in an increasingly competitive literary climate. They argue: 'the positioning of such a gulf, such a guarantor of Romantic isolationism for modernisms of various form and political inflection, is not only inaccurate, but also exceptionally damaging insofar as it influences matters of canonisation and reception' (6). If we were to favour this flawed logic, Dettmar and Watt argue, 'modernists would inevitably be portrayed as the unfortunate victims of a mechanism outside of their control' (6). In contrast, it is evident that modernist authors strategically manoeuvred themselves in such an industry of celebrity self-promotion, in an effort to not only demystify certain archetypal and trite assumptions about the modernist author and popular audiences, but to deliberately engage with the politics of reputation control. Evident in the careers of Stein and Hemingway in particular is a noticeable determination to seize control over one's image in the public. For Stein, this was accomplished through her unorthodox approach to authorship in autobiography, her distinctive yet odd style of writing, and her subsequent trademarked style and image in proximity to celebrity stardom. For Hemingway, his desire to control his own public image was similarly achieved not only by making use of the emerging media platforms of the era, such as photography and magazines,

but by inserting himself frequently into his literary works, thereby creating an aura around his identity that became larger than life.

Authorial self-production

An important difference between modernism and previous eras was its ushering in of a very distinct kind of authorial self-production. In modernism, celebrity culture becomes a promotional system whereby authors can extend their influence with the utilisation of promotional technologies and artefacts. As Lawrence Rainey writes in regards to modernist celebrity, there were 'new strategies for reputation building – involving theatricality, spectacle, publicity, and novel modes of cultural marketing and media manipulation' (1998: 4), all of which became paramount in the careers of modernist authors.

For Jennifer Wicke, the development of advertising crucially determined the extent to which a celebrity author's public image endured. Advertising became, she writes, the 'centre of knowledge production, a determining economic site, as well as a representational system comprising a vastly heterogeneous set of individual artefacts' (1988: 1). Advertising did not emerge in isolation, Wicke argues, but arose alongside the 'establishment of the novel as a literary form', further noting that 'the dialectic between advertising and the novel reveals both how advertising was able to take on the status of a mass literature, enforcing its own codes of social reading, and how the novel relies on the conditions of advertising to permit it to become a major literary form' (1).

Evidently this ability for an author to craft their reputation in more creative ways was influenced by the celebrity system of 1920s Hollywood and the new self-promotional formats that they fostered. Photography and cinema in particular allowed not only for the celebrity's image to be more widely disseminated, but also for the development of a celebrity's trademark style. The parallel between the Hollywood star system of the time and the particular brand of literary celebrity in the 1920s is evidenced in comparisons made between the modernists and the stars. Jeffrey Meyers, for instance, emphasises this link in his comparison of Hemingway and Humphrey Bogart:

> Hemingway in fiction and Bogart in film created tough heroes, torn between ironic fatalism and despairing courage, who sought authenticity and adhered to a strict code of honor. Both imitated their own artistic creations, and were expert at inventing a

fascinating public image. In the 1930's they acted out in real life the public personae – Bogie and Papa – they had established in their work (1996).

Indeed, As Julian Murphet notes, 'it was the writers of the Anglo-American literary avant-garde who first and most illustriously "absorbed" the technical world of the second industrial revolution into their formal labors with language' (2009: 37). Yet while these personas were established in their work, the persona itself took on a life beyond that of the artist's creative output, a crucial distinction in modernist literary celebrity. Jonathan Goldman in particular stresses how various studies of modernism neglect this crucial parallel between these new strategies of self-promotion and the Hollywood studio system. Goldman argues how modernist aesthetics incorporated the logics of the celebrity system that was flourishing in both the United States and Europe. Yet Goldman's concern is less to do with representations of celebrity and more pertaining to the broader social changes that were discreetly informing the modernist-author-as-celebrity through *style*, rather than explicitly through content. As he writes regarding Gertrude Stein's celebrity, the modernist author's style 'simultaneously constitutes her identity as author' (2011: 85), furthermore serving to function as a trademark. The author's unusual use of language, characterised by a humorous yet compelling defiance of logic ('a rose is a rose is a rose'), informs Stein's image in a broader system of literary celebrity.

Following this theme of the trademarked author, Aaron Jaffe focuses on renewed ways of understanding the modernist author, whose value, for him, is based on an authoritative *imprimatur* created by the literary marketplace of the era. 'With modernism', Jaffe argues, 'authorship instead resembles a kind of textual imprimatur' (2005: 20), which 'turns the author into a formal artifact, fusing it to the text as a reified signature of value'. The imprimatur, for Jaffe, is the personality of the author stamped into the literary object, operating 'with indifference to the merit of the author's work' (31), so that the *author* becomes the focal point of textual value in the commodity culture, rather than the work for which the author gains renown. Hence, for Jaffe, the textual imprimatur is a 'metonym for its subject, a metonym that represents it as an object of cultural production, circulation and consumption' (1).

Crucially, Jaffe shows how extensively the modernist author differs in textual aesthetics from authors in the Romantic and Victorian eras. He explains that the imprimatur 'depends on its synecdoche between the formal work of the text and the mental state of the

author', where previously much literary work was understood as 'veiled autobiography' (31). Modernist literary aesthetics therefore produce an incorporeal author who becomes, by way of modernist style and the logics of celebrity, a substitute for the literary work. The text then becomes understood, analysed and valued through the lens of the author's life in a way previously unseen.

Indeed, the imprimatur and its potential success has less to do with the high literary quality of the work and more to do with 'promotional apparatus' (165), with the celebrity author's 'capacity to *stay news*, to keep their imprimaturs extant' (Jaffe, 165, author's emphasis), which helps to explain the popularity of high modernists such as Stein, Pound, Joyce and Eliot, whose success in the marketplace was notable despite the evident impenetrability of their works. These authors were thus able to capitalise on their popularity by embracing the nuanced tools of self-promotion such as editing and anthologising.

As Jaffe furthermore observes, authors such as Djuna Barnes, Hilda (H.D.) Doolittle, and Mina Loy were not as successful in maintaining their imprimaturs on any significant scale. For Jaffe, while these authors were never directly *suppressed*, they nevertheless 'failed to embrace the 'requisite promotional techniques' (165) of the industry, yet he notes that the reputations of these women modernists were 'poorly served by the restrictive promotional system of introducing, editing, and anthologising', for which Pound, Joyce and Eliot functioned as gatekeepers.

But whereas Barnes, H.D. and Loy were notably unsuccessful in promoting themselves in such a system, Stein – whose works rivalled her male peers in terms of both popularity *and* impenetrability – was able to flourish, expertly navigating the system that propelled Pound, Joyce and Eliot (among others) to stardom and literary significance. The system's inherent favouring of such male Anglo-American writers actually serves to accentuate Stein's success in what was a male-dominated industry.

Gertrude Stein's Literary Genius

With her clever utilisation of the promotional apparatus of the era, Gertrude Stein's fame was strongly marked by the politics of self-representation and identity, her public image being crafted by both herself and her public. Stein in particular formulated a distinctive kind of literary celebrity network predicated on proximity to famous figures. Yet this kind of celebrity, as Goldman asserts, can only be helmed by the modernist author as a *legitimising*

figure. Hence Stein found herself in the enviable position in which she balanced the supposedly opposing positions of high modernist authority and celebrity figure extraordinaire, making a place for herself in both popular culture and high culture.

From October 14, 2011 through to January 22, 2012, the Smithsonian Museum in Washington D.C. held a photographic exhibition in their National Portrait Gallery commemorating the life and celebrity of Stein, called *Seeing Gertrude Stein, Five Stories*. The stories included 'Picturing Gertrude', 'Domestic Stein', 'Art of Friendship', 'Celebrity Stein', and finally 'Legacies.' In 'Celebrity Stein', it is stated:

> For seven months, with Toklas at her side, Stein travelled by car, train, or plane across America, speaking about her writing and love of modern painting to the young on college campuses and to art associations and museum audiences. She averaged two to three lectures a week – about seventy in all – and finally achieved the fame she always desired. The press lionized Stein, giving her more coverage, headlines, and photographs than she had ever before received (*Story 4: Celebrity Stein*, 2011).

Stein therefore carried on the tradition, enthusiastically encouraged in the Victorian era, of travelling and lecturing as a celebrity author. Stein's *Lectures in America* (1935) is a collection of the lectures that Stein presented while on tour in America. As Wendy Steiner writes: 'Stein was greeted by such large enthusiastic audiences throughout the tour that Bennett Cerf of Random House offered to print *Lectures* and a new book of hers each year, regardless of whether it was written in her "difficult" style' (1985: ix). However, as Steiner writes, although Stein's *Lectures* seemed to bring the author 'an unparalleled readership and a genuine popularity to one of the most arcane of the modernists' (x), she also notes that her audience was: 'anxious to see Stein but not read her, and she was left to sort out the conflicting demands of self and audience, God and Mammon, entity and identity, that the experience entailed – a project that dominated her thinking for the rest of her life' (x). Such contradictory demands forced Stein to adopt numerous public personas, many of which are still endearingly attributed to her. Stein was not only known for her public lectures, but also for her difficult work, her position as matriarch of the lost generation, and critic of the arts, among other roles. As Hoffman writes:

At least three Gertrude Steins have been accounted for in modern criticism, biography, and gossip: the formidably gracious and effective matron of modern American letters, expatriate mistress of ceremonies; the theorist of language and literature and of their fusion in "composition as explanation" of the thing seen; and the artist, author of two or three distinguished books and of a dozen or more provocative and puzzling others (1961: 5).

Hoffman goes on to describe Stein as an artist, celebrity, autobiographer and literary theorist (39), highlighting the various roles that Stein embodied, something that would be a crucial development in the making of literary celebrity as a phenomenon itself, as a project creating multiple public personas. Loren Glass discusses the phenomenon of literary celebrity in direct correlation to modernist authors, including Jack London, Ernest Hemingway, and Gertrude Stein, among others. Discussing Stein, Glass writes:

The transformation of the literary value of a text in turn transforms the identity of the author who wrote it. Now that Stein was the world-famous writer she had always known she would become, she felt strangely as if she had become someone other than who she had been before. Stein had, in short, become a celebrity. Her triumphant return to the United States was announced on the front page of most of the urban dailies; her name appeared in neon lights on Broadway; she was flocked by interviewers and autograph seekers. Suddenly, Stein saw her name everywhere, and strangers recognised her on the street (2004: 1).

Glass' description of Stein's growing fame aligns itself with the ongoing dilemma of the author's sense of 'self' that is central to an understanding of celebrity culture. Similarly to the famous authors before her, Stein felt her identity was being overtaken by her celebrity persona. Stein did not just become a famous author; she became, as Glass accurately observes, a celebrity, something which in itself adheres to its own system of performance.

A significant observation made by Glass, which is crucial to this thesis, is the union of literary genius and consumer culture. Glass argues: 'Despite all the evidence to the contrary, authors and the critics who canonize them have traditionally worked under the assumption that great literature is somehow beyond or outside the logic of the market' (2004: 2). This observation illuminates the tension continuously felt between the consumer market and

literary culture, particularly during the period of modernism. Despite the number of authors who have existed to challenge this assumption – Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, Ernest Hemingway, for example – the combination of consumer associations such as television and marketisation and more literary structures such as writing and publishing is seen to be an affront to strict cultural tastes that persevere in keeping these cultures separate. Glass goes on to posit Gertrude Stein as one of those authors who have come to embody the characteristics of both celebrity culture and of literary culture, stating: 'Although many high modernist authors dismissed the American culture of celebrity, Stein's fame confirmed that the modernist "genius" could easily become a star' (2004: 2).

Barbara Will discusses the notion of genius and Gertrude Stein's fame in *Modernism and the Problem of Genius* (2000). For Will, the essential problem of genius is that it tends to belong to a literary culture that is perceived as difficult or dense. In one respect, Stein was exemplary in bridging the high-modernist genius with mass media, 'by affiliating herself with both sides: her work is on par with that of the canonical writers, but as readable as newspapers: no special interpretive tools required' (2000: 135). However, Bob Perelman writes in his *The Trouble with Genius* (1994) that Stein is sometimes seen as an unlikely candidate for the role of genius, even though she has authored various complex works, which place her in the same group as James Joyce, Ezra Pound and Louis *Zukovsky* (1994: 129). He writes:

> While she aspired to more than a simple fame as an iconoclast and wanted to succeed in the same arena with Joyce and Proust, it needs to be remembered how opposed to, or indifferent to, general ideas of exactitude, efficiency, and "good writing" her own writing is. Whether this condition is ascribed to her genius, her courage, her need, or to her lack of ability, it is ubiquitous (131).

By writing of Stein's attempt to achieve more than *simple* fame, Perelman implies that Stein possesses *complex* fame, what might be defined as a kind of fame possessing conflicting, contrary elements. This is where Stein becomes one of the more intriguing subjects of literary celebrity. Her status continually resists representation, as she is seen to possess genius but, at the same time, her writing becomes the focal point of scholars who attempt to identify and categorise her style into one dominant field. The uncertainty over Stein's place in modernism suggests an unwillingness to align genius with celebrity status. However, the prominence of

the Romantic genius invariably had an effect on Stein who, as I will discuss, attempted to accommodate the intellectual demands of her work while not appearing fundamentally elite. This in turn has made Stein a crucial figure in the development of literary celebrity by following on in the same vein as Dickens and Twain in making high literature the concern and interest of mass culture.

Stein and Autobiography

The fundamental aspect of Stein's fame is her embodiment of both the Romantic genius and the commercial celebrity. In the same vein as Rousseau, Stein cultivated and cemented her fame ultimately through the genre of autobiography, which in turn catapulted her into stardom. *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933) is arguably the author's most famous work, focusing on Stein's partner, and deemed to be the most accessible of the author's works. Of the work, Virgil Thomson[29] wrote:

> This book is in every way except actual authorship Alice Toklas's book; it reflects her mind, her language, her private view of Gertrude, also her unique narrative powers. Every story in it is told as Alice herself had always told it. There is nothing comparable to this compactness elsewhere in English, nor to my knowledge in any other literature (1984: 75).

At the time that Stein composed the *Autobiography*, Corinne Blackmer writes, Stein was 'still an obscure and largely unpublished author whose distinctive style had achieved a dubious fame by being parodied in American newspapers and magazines' (1996: 244). The *Autobiography* signalled a shift in the manner in which Stein's reputation was (self) created.

It was Stein's input in the artistic design of the book, and her curious approach to the issue of her own authorship, that helped remove Stein from the obscurity with which her publishing record had hitherto been defined. Stein had requested that her name not be published on the spine, title page or cover. Instead, a photograph by Man Ray depicting the two women was printed beside the title page, representing the collaborative nature of the 'dual-authored autobiography' (244). Following this, 'the general readership seized upon the diverting account of modernist alliances and rivalries, personalities and geniuses, and

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[29] Steven Watson's *Prepare for Saints: Gertrude Stein, Virgil Thomson, and the Mainstreaming of American Modernism* (1998) provides good insight into the friendship between Thomson and Stein.

intrigues and social gatherings' (244). Blackmer notes how readers failed to notice the particular bond between Stein and Toklas, the social condemnation of lesbianism at the time notwithstanding.

All direct allusions to Stein as author were absent until the very last paragraph of the book's last page, in which Stein writes:

> About six weeks ago Gertrude Stein said, it does not look to me as if you were ever going to write that autobiography. You know what I am going to do. I am going to write it for you. I am going to write it as simply as Defoe did the autobiography of Robinson Crusoe. And she has and this is it (272).

Stein's unorthodox approach to the autobiographical genre enabled her public renown to grow, cementing her place as the modernist 'genius', while allowing her to reclaim the control of her reputation distinctly through the voice of another. As Blackmer writes: 'Through a superb act of ventriloquism of Toklas's distinctive voice, Stein authorises her claims of centrality within the narrative of modernism […] Stein, through Alice's voice, can proclaim her own genius' (245). More importantly, Blackmer writes, Stein can 'seize control of the processes of her own reputation making'.

In Stein's autobiographical works, Goldman sees a new system being produced in which the celebrity author's name is used as a complex cultural signifier beyond the text that lends itself to the accoutrements of production. Stein's particular, idiosyncratic style, becomes significant more than just for its use in textual and theoretical circumstances, but for its use in the fashioning of Stein's own authorial identity. Or, as Goldman puts it, the celebrity name 'gestures beyond the diegesis of a text […] towards the textual materials that produce *person as discourse*' (86-87, own emphasis).

In effect, Stein trademarked her style in a way characteristic of other authors such as Kafka (Kafkaesque). This in effect produced a style that has transcended Stein herself, a facet of Stein's career that suitably exemplifies the distinct politics of modernist celebrity culture and its production of archetypal identities and styles.

Indeed, in Adam Gopnik's *New Yorker* article 'Understanding Steinese' (2013), Stein's odd use of punctuation (or lack thereof) is enthusiastically deconstructed; Gopnik sees Stein's writing style as deceptively simple, more ordinary and coherent than it initially seems, and one that became popularised by Hemingway. That Hemingway's style of writing became

the most influential prose in American literature during the twentieth century, for Gopnik, makes Stein's own style the 'bedrock of modern American writing' (2013). Where Stein's style came to be characterised by an innocuous omission of punctuation, Hemingway's style incorporated much of the repetitiveness first seen in Stein's work, his frequent use of the word "and" in place of commas being one such example[30].

The *Autobiography* became Stein's most successful work, and therefore its readability and popularity suggests a growing trend in literature toward mass critical reception. Yet Stein, who observed herself as a genius, nevertheless adhered to more complicated prose in order to ensure her status as a literary genius prospered. As Curnutt writes:

> Throughout her American tour, she shocked audiences by declaring that artists care little whether their writing is comprehensible. As if to prove her commitment to this principle, she abandoned the reader-friendly voice of the *Autobiography* and published a series of less accessible works […] all of which baffled reviewers who assumed that she had outgrown her old hermetic habits (1999: 292).

Indeed, the works of Stein that are considered too complicated for such a wide readership include: *Lectures in America* (1935), *Geographical History of America* (1936), and *Narration* (1936). The complexity of Stein's writing, or its eccentricity, is evidenced in most of the author's work. Sentences such as 'In America everybody is but some are more than others' (1985: 143), from *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937), and 'Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose' (1999: 187), from her 1913 poem *Sacred Emily*, which appeared in *Geography and Plays* (1922), have become famous simply because they are so bizarre. Ironically, even her instructional work *How to Write* (1931) features such phrases as 'What is a sentence mostly what is a sentence. With them a sentence is with us about us all about us we will be willing with what a sentence is. A sentence is that they cannot be carefully there is a doubt about it' (1975: 34-35). It wasn't until Stein released her much more fluent *Autobiography* that her language was received more widely and warmly. What this suggests is the extent to which a writer's difficulty has the potential to hinder their popularity, but reinforce their reputation.

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[30] This particular trait is not largely discussed in Hemingway studies, yet commentary on his use of the word "and" can be found in Michael Thurston's 'Genre, Gender, and Truth in *Death in the Afternoon*' (1998), in which Thurston argues: 'In all of Hemingway, the joining of independent clauses by "and" cues heightened thematic or affective significance' (1998: 49).

Stein, as well as James Joyce and his notoriously complex works *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegan's Wake* (1939), saw her more difficult writing as being linked to a more high-brow status. Yet Stein evidently felt herself torn between literary esteem and wider popularity. Curnutt further observes that Stein's work and public profile are illustrative of the author's ambivalence towards her own popularity (1999: 292). Despite her increasingly complex prose, Karen Leick writes that during her American tour, Stein: 'emphasised throughout the tour that she did not like to associate with intellectuals or "high-brows", and specifically worked to counter the impression that, since she considered herself a genius, she could not relate to everyday people' (2009: 180). The concepts of elitism and commercialism are thus both strongly explored throughout the career and writings of Stein, whose actions, sentiments and work suggest a strong sense of ambivalence in regards to her literary celebrity.

Throughout the *Autobiography*, Stein refers to herself in the third person, a technique that would later be adopted by other authors including American author Norman Mailer. Lejeune et al argue that Stein's use of this technique is a subtle literary method by which to enhance and illuminate one's own persona. Discussing Stein, Lejeune et al argue that writing an autobiography in the third person:

…also provides a humorous way of singing your own praises without anyone being able to accuse you of obvious pride. Ultimately, the stratagem, far from corresponding to an inner "doubling" or social anxiety, is a cunning form of self-hagiography which neutralises or forestalls criticism. The reader cannot fail to be charmed by this double reading of the enunciation of the "witness", both as fictive achievement and as autobiographical prop (1977: 43).

In this sense, and in spite of the title of the work, the central figure to emerge from Stein's autobiography of Alice B. Toklas is in fact Stein herself. In much the same way as Rousseau utilised the genre of autobiography to recover his sense of identity and insert his own analysis of his persona, Stein captures the essence of autobiographical manipulation by accentuating her own star status in the work. Instead, while the work may circulate around the identity and life of Toklas, invariably it is Stein's identity and life that become the focal point of both scholarly studies of the novel, and popular culture. Helga Lénárt-Cheng writes of autobiography, in relation to Stein, as a fundamentally manipulative genre and tool in regards to self-promotion, furthermore arguing that it is used to manipulate public opinion (2003:

117). That the *Autobiography* remained Stein's most popular work is testament to the notion that by writing in a style that was more accessible to more readers, Stein's popularity grew and her celebrity flourished. As Lénárt-Cheng further states, critics and writers observed a literary chasm between Stein's *Autobiography* and the author's earlier work (2003: 120), suggesting that fluent and readable prose is often linked to commercial success. The discrepancy between the literary marketplace and the pursuit and practice of art was at the heart of Stein's career as a writer whose celebrity grew after the publication of a commercially successful work. Yet writers, as Lénárt-Cheng elaborates, preferred not to be associated with the marketplace, which is illustrative of the unstable connection between writing and commercialism. She writes:

> For decades, it was considered a sacrilege in critical circles to mention the name of an esoteric modernist writer and the words "market place" or "men in the street" within the same sentence. Because modernist writers were surrounded by the myth of the purity of art, critics did not question the methods used by these authors to win over audiences. In recent years, however, modernist writers have been dragged from their pedestals and the critically suppressed relationship between canonical modernist writers and the commercial marketplace has been reconsidered (121).

Indeed, in his *Rules of Art* (1992), Bourdieu, as previously argued in the first chapter, makes a claim that identifies authors as being distinctly anti-economic in favour of 'pure art' (1996: 142). Goldman moreover describes this as 'high modernism's suspicion of images and anxiety about containing meaning within a system of signs' (2011: 13). Although this cultural dispute between art and the economy was previously experienced in Romanticism and Victorianism, it reaches cultural prominence in the era of modernism when the literary marketplace was more strongly associated with a sacrifice of artistic values[31.] Alissa G. Karl, in her work, *Modernism and the Marketplace* (2009), discusses this phenomenon, and explains how 'consumerism and commodities hinge[ed] the modernist projects and American values articulated by Stein and Beach' (2009: 82). For Lénárt-Cheng, there is a complicated relationship between art and advertising that becomes epitomised in Stein's autobiography,

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[31] For more information on the relationship between modernism and the marketplace, see Willison, Gould and Chernaik's *Modernist Writers and the Marketplace* (1996), McDonnell's *Katherine Mansfield and the Modernist Marketplace: At the Mercy of the Public* (2010), and Pamela L. Caughie's *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (2000), particularly Part I which discusses the concept of intellectuals in the marketplace.

which for Lénárt-Cheng exemplifies the use of art as advertisement. For Timothy Galow, Stein uses her autobiography to illustrate and explore the contradictions of her authorship, operating as a high-brow genius (or high modernist), while simultaneously crafting a celebrity persona, though he argues that Stein has managed to keep her reputation from becoming compromised by the culture of celebrity, stating:

> Thus, unlike many modernist authors, Stein has not only constructed a persona that insulates her from the corruption of crass materialism, but one that also distances her from the rarefied airs of the avant-garde. It is a complex construction that allows her to become, as Laurel Bollinger says, "the dual figure who writes the successful novel and also the solitary genius who writes the experiments in language. She need not choose one over the other". Of course, as Stein reveals indirectly throughout her text, it is not always an easy position, and it certainly comes with its own set of costs (2011: 108).

Both Galow and Bollinger identify the popular assumption that an author must always fundamentally choose between star status and genius, in turn making the phenomenon of literary celebrity inherently problematic. Yet Stein manages to avoid categorisation and falling into a set, cultural archetype, by fulfilling both the demands of literary genius and the spectacle of celebrity. The publication of the *Autobiography* propelled Stein into greater literary significance and fame, and culminated in a book tour in North America for six months after the success of the work. In 1937, Stein published *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937), an account of what effect the bestseller had on her life and career, though it was not nearly as well-received as the *Autobiography*. Of her own celebrity, Stein writes:

> It is very nice being a celebrity a real celebrity who can decide who they want to meet and say so and they come or do not come as you want them. I never imagined that would happen to me to be a celebrity like that but it did and when it did I liked it but all that will come much later (1985: xxi).

She later states:

I used to say that I would not go to America until I was a real lion a real celebrity at that time of course I did not really think I was going to be one. But now we were coming and I was going to be one. In America everybody is but some are more than others. I was more than others (143).

Stein's sentiments of being a literary lion echo those of Mark Twain's, when the author stated of his early fame: 'I did not know I was a lion' (1997: 184). Stein therefore did not only eagerly cultivate her fame but often declared herself a genius and star in a distinctly overt manner that was seen as unusually confident, while various other authors attempted to *deny* their stardom in an effort to eschew the unfavourable politics that celebrity culture produced.

Celebrity and The Lost Generation

Stein was considered the matriarch of a group of expatriates, known as the Lost Generation [Génération Perdue][32], whose work focused on the period of World War I and its aftermath. These writers existed, therefore, between two significant wars. Craig Monk links the lost generation to expatriate autobiography; American expatriates were, he argues, depicted in an unflattering manner, which arguably led many of these writers to chronicle their burgeoning bohemian experiences. He writes: 'As the idea of the Lost Generation emerged and persisted in the popular imagination, self-conscious critical responses from expatriates were inevitable, especially as fictional portraits placed Americans abroad in an unflattering light' (2008: 5). Stein's *Autobiography*, along with Hemingway's *The Sun also Rises* (1926), undoubtedly fuelled the popular imagination surrounding these illustrious writers. Although the years of the Lost Generation lasted only from 1920-1927 (Stendhal, 1994), the creative portrayals and self-depictions of these writers continued to provoke a strong literary mythology and romanticised imagination, aided by the genre of autobiography. As Monk further explains: 'Through autobiography, modern authors thus found a way to communicate with a mass audience in an attempt to secure and improve their positions in the popular imagination' (2008: 15). This cultural memory created for and around the Lost Generation undoubtedly enabled Stein's fame, as well as that of her contemporaries, to expand. During these years

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[32] In *Marketing Modernisms* (1996), Timothy Matterer notes that Ezra Pound's creation of the 'catchy' name for the poetic movement 'Imagiste' or 'Imagism' was one of the advertising strategies that ensured the success of the movement. The term 'Lost Generation', in effect, has enjoyed greater success beyond the movement itself, showing how shrewd Stein's promotional tactics were.

Stein became introduced to the circle of authors who would make up the group of the Lost Generation, including Hemingway in 1922, and F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald in 1925. Hemingway writes of Stein's creation of the artistic, literary group he would become a significant member of:

> It was when we had come back from Canada and while we were living in the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs and Miss Stein and I were still good friends that Miss Stein made the remark about the lost generation. She had some ignition trouble with the old Model T Ford she then drove and the young man who worked in the garage and had served in the last year of war had not been adept, or perhaps had not broken the priority of other vehicles, in repairing Miss Stein's Ford […] Anyway he had not been serieux and had been corrected severely by the patron of the garage after Miss Stein's protest. The patron had said to him, "You are all a génération perdue. That's what you are. That's what you all are," Miss Stein said. "All of you young people who served in the war. You are a lost generation" (2003: 29).

In the same way that Stein romanticised the era and the circumstances of American expatriates, she also took part in romanticising Hemingway in the same manner in which the media and his devoted readership would come to idealise him. In the *Autobiography*, Stein stated that Hemingway was 'just like the flat-boat men on the Mississippi river as described by Mark Twain' (1966: 233), but also writes: 'what a book, they both agreed, would be the real story of Hemingway, not those he writes but the confessions of the real Ernest Hemingway […] what a story of the real Hem, and one he should tell himself but alas never will' (233-234). Indeed, Stein was not only a crucial figure in promoting her own celebrity persona, but greatly participated in the myth-making of Hemingway's identity[33].

Hemingway and Celebrity Culture

If Charles Dickens was the prominent celebrity author of the Victorian era, Ernest Hemingway was undoubtedly the prominent celebrity author of early twentieth century literature, and was also considered the last great, 'heroic' author. He therefore exists as perhaps the most crucial example of where genius and celebrity collide. His work was not

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[33] For a greater analysis of Stein and Hemingway's relationship, see Lyle Larsen's *Stein and Hemingway: The Story of a Turbulent Friendship* (2011)

only heralded as genius, but Hemingway himself created an image that can be seen as a precursor to contemporary celebrity branding. As Scott Donaldson writes: 'Hemingway radiated a kind of charisma that made people talk about him' (1996: 6), further noting that his various roles consisted of 'the sportsman, the tough and virile manly man, the exposer of sham, the arbiter of taste, the world traveller, the bon vivant, the insider, the stoic veteran, and finally and most important, the heroic artist' (11). This showed that Hemingway's identity was varied and eclectic, and overwhelmingly Romantic in nature. Archibald MacLeish claimed that Hemingway possessed 'tremendous physical presence […] the only [other] person I have ever known who could exhaust the oxygen in a room the way Ernest could just by coming into it was Franklin Delano Roosevelt' (cited in Donaldson, 1978: 2). John Aldridge, moreover, described Hemingway as having become a legendary figure: 'a kind of twentieth-century Lord Byron; and like Byron, he had learned to play himself, his own best hero, with superb conviction' (1972: 83). These descriptions all convey the sense of apparent charisma possessed by Hemingway that aided in his myth-making[34]. When the author committed suicide on July 2, 1961, his death was received in much the same manner as Byron's death. To date it is fair to argue that since Hemingway no other author has accumulated a greater presence or sense of mediated heroism. While his writing certainly played a significant, if not key role in constructing his celebrity, the new mass media of the twentieth century largely fostered this image. As Leonard Leff writes:

> The mass media of the late 1920s transformed the relationship between Americans and their public figures. Capitalising on professional sports, network radio, and Hollywood motion pictures, the press and its syndicated gossip columns produced a desire to know the renowned—who they were, how they lived, and what they thought […] By 1931, with *A Farewell To Arms* having won a large audience, Ernest Hemingway was also composing a so-called celebrity text, *Death in the Afternoon*. In that nonfiction manuscript about bullfighting, he took as his subject—overtly—the self (Leff, 1999: xvii).

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[34] There have been many books written on Hemingway's identity, more than can be included in this work. Even after his death, scholarly work and an assortment of literature persists in attempting to understand the man behind the works. Of the works, there are some more interesting texts including: Carlos Baker's *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story* (1969), and his *Hemingway: The Artist as Writer* (1972), Marty Beckerman's satirical work *The Heming Way: How to Unleash the Booze-Inhaling, Animal-Slaughtering, War-Glorifying, Hairy-Chested Retro-Sexual Legend Within, Just Like Papa!* (2012), and A.E. Hotchner's *Papa Hemingway* (1955).

Thus the concept of the self, for Hemingway, was integral to his work and in illuminating his celebrity, and Hemingway was very much a part of this desire of the public to know their public figures. As Leff articulates, it was a desire to know the 'renowned.' Yet Matthew J. Bruccoli, who was the most eminent Fitzgerald scholar, describes Hemingway as being 'famous for being famous' (2006: xviii), a statement that echoes Boorstin's analysis of a modern celebrity being known for their well-knownness. And the speed with which Hemingway's fame developed certainly suggests that his celebrity was both produced from his work, but also largely from the image he exuded to the world, becoming a household name even to those unfamiliar with his work, in which he combined 'nonliterary fame with literary stature' (xvii). This notion that Hemingway's fame was of a 'nonliterary' nature further accentuates the belief that Hemingway achieved the kind of fame more characteristic of film stars. Thus he was not merely a famous writer, but a modern celebrity, known as much for his identity as for his literary works, if not more so.

The blurring between fact and fiction was the marker of Hemingway's success as a celebrity author. As A.E. Hotchner writes: 'Part of the mystique about Ernest stems from the manner in which he blurred the demarcation between fiction and fact' (2005: viii). Further, David Earle describes what he calls 'Hemingway himself as a fiction' (2009: 4). This description characterises Hemingway as both a real writer and a thoroughly mediated persona, what has come to be known as the 'Hemingway myth', in which attributes, stories, and other 'facts' about Hemingway are either exaggerated or fabricated, to secure the illusion of Hemingway's greatness[35]. As Kenneth Lynn writes in his comprehensive work *Hemingway* (1995), Hemingway's involvement in World War II came to serve the myth that surrounded his identity, where details of the battles he was in and the injuries he sustained were exaggerated in order to propel this mythicised image. As Lynn writes: 'World War II, it was clear, was going to be another vehicle for the Hemingway myth – and as had been the case a quarter of a century before, even the tallest of the tales that Hemingway dreamed up would eagerly be disseminated by ingenious admirers' (1995: 510). Hemingway's following was, and is, particularly astounding, given that many stories about his life and character are greatly exaggerated. Hendrickson similarly articulates these inconsistencies and embellishments, as well as the contradictions associated with Hemingway's character. However, Hendrickson also observes that the myth surrounding Hemingway is nevertheless useful:

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[35] For a greater discussion on the Hemingway Myth, see my article: 'Remembering Hemingway: The Endurance of the Hemingway Myth' (2013) in Issue 4 of *Culture/ Култура*.

So what we have of this man are the irresolvable contradictions of the life and the glories of the work – some of it. The Hemingway myth, however much oversold and devalued, can still powerfully stand in a new century for a great many tensions unresolved in American males, or so I believe – and not only males (2012: 17-18).

The romanticisation of Hemingway's image links him with his Romantic predecessors, especially Byron, whose literary celebrity was a form of legend and genius. Novelist Nelson Algren states of Hemingway: 'he flaunted a personality as poetic as Byron's (2008: 328). This 'poetic personality' was exerted in various forms, the most notable of which is perhaps his semi-autobiographical work, *A Moveable Feast* (1964). As part of the Lost Generation, Hemingway epitomised the caricature of the struggling writer, a particular kind of celebrity that was popular in Dickens' era. Consider the following excerpt from *A Moveable Feast*, in which Hemingway discusses his hunger while staring at famous paintings:

There you could always go into the Luxembourg museum and all the paintings were sharpened by and clearer and more beautiful if you were belly-empty, hollow-hungry. I learned to understand Cezanne much better and to see truly how he made landscapes when I was hungry. I used to wonder if he were hungry too when he painted; but I thought possibly it was only that he had forgotten to eat. It was one of those unsound but illuminating thoughts you have when you have been sleepless or hungry. Later I thought Cezanne was probably hungry in a different way (2003: 69).

This paragraph illustrates that the Hemingway myth was a collaborative effort of the public, Hemingway's admirers, but also of Hemingway himself. In truth, Hemingway was not poor while travelling in Paris, earning a good salary as a journalist with the *Toronto Star*, while his wife, Hadley Richardson, had a trust fund and inheritance that she used for her finances. Contrary to the popular image Hemingway portrayed of himself then, the Hemingways were particularly secure financially, and there was a great amount of Romantic imagery that went into carving this figure of literary genius for which Hemingway was partly responsible. It was an image in which Hemingway 'wore his poverty as the cape of virtue' (Leff, 1999: 7).

Similarly to Dickens, Hemingway developed what Boorstin calls the 'common touch' of fame (1987: 50), whereby appealing to the lower classes enabled Hemingway to secure his

image as both celebrity and great, literary writer. Thus Hemingway's attraction was, in many ways, connected to this Romantic image of the 'struggling writer', a favourable image particularly in twentieth century literature. Often, in order for a writer to have been favoured by the masses, it seems apparent that they needed to struggle to some extent. Being part of the Lost Generation greatly fostered this image, and provided the perfect Romantic atmosphere for an image of the poor yet determined young writer. Hemingway's celebrity relied upon or was at least assisted by an emphasis on struggle. In *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation* (1983), Fitch writes: 'In her memoirs, [Beach] perpetuates [Hemingway's] stories of childhood suffering, hunger and bravura. He had a fatal capacity to make people want to tell fantastic stories about him' (1983: 117).

According to Earle, in his work exploring Hemingway's image in American magazines, *All Man!* (2009), Hemingway embodied '1950s masculinity, one whose reputation as a "he-man" was forwarded in these magazines, but, at the same time, one whose reputation, both in popular culture and the academy, was built by this media construction' (2009: 4). In discussing Hemingway's approach to authorship and celebrity, Donaldson writes that Hemingway: 'was one of the rare writers whose fiction appealed both to the general public, which made him rich, and to the gatekeepers of the academy, who made him respectable' (1978: 1). This comment illustrates the dual nature of Hemingway's career as a celebrity author. As seen in this context, there is a distinction between respectability and wealth in terms of authorship, which also inadvertently implies an assumed distinction between literature and celebrity culture. While Hemingway was able to appeal to the masses, he was also still considered a *literary* author, making him perhaps the most successful literary celebrity. Hemingway was therefore more successful in negotiating his fame through two cultures that were, and are, purported to be antagonistic. Yet similarly to Rousseau, Hemingway's relationship to his celebrity was unstable. The word 'celebrity', even in Hemingway's era, had developed its own unflattering associations. As Hendrickson writes, Hemingway 'let his own insides get eaten out by the *diseases* of fame' (2012: 7, own emphasis). As this expression articulates, fame, for Hemingway, as it was for Rousseau, was a problematic notion that had the potential to completely discredit the writer's work. It is in Hemingway's case that we can see the more scathing aspects of fame coming to light, in the vein of Boorstin's estimation of celebrity culture. For Hemingway, as it is for many authors, celebrity impeded the growth of his literary renown. This idea of fame, in which celebrity is

seen not simply as a product of low brow culture, but as an insidious cultural disease, is reflected in Hemingway's own relationship with it. As Suzanne del Gizzo writes:

> For years, Hemingway had felt trapped by fame and the pressure it put on him to produce, a sentiment first expressed in *Green Hills of Africa*. In 1954, bitter for having been passed over the year before for the Nobel Prize, Hemingway may have been seeking to become a member of a culture without writers – a place where he would have the opportunity to explore himself and re-define his identity on other terms. Hemingway had become famous so early in life that his sense of identity was intricately linked to his persona […] Hemingway's longing to be a member of society where his public role or profession does not even exist is an expression of his desire to abdicate authorship and by extension authority. At the same time, significantly, this desire does not eradicate his identity as a writer; rather, it coexists with it (2003: 518).

While Rousseau struggled with his own fame, it was not on the same scale and the same intensity as the kind encountered in twentieth century culture. Indeed, as Gizzo writes, Hemingway worked under 'the glare of an intensified celebrity' (2010: 8). This intensified celebrity culminated in Hemingway's name becoming a trademark. As Moran writes: 'Hemingway, whose public persona was created almost exclusively by mass market magazines and who endorsed many products in his lifetime, was so often invoked in advertisements for clothes, guns and other products after his death that his family made his name a registered trademark' (1995: 359-360).

Hemingway's Mediated Persona

Many theorists (Baker, 1969; Donaldson, 1996; Glass, 2004) write of Hemingway's fame as more a burden for the author than something that was partly orchestrated by Hemingway himself. These biographers tend to focus on Hemingway's literary fame as rare and unsurpassable. In his seminal work *Authors Inc* (2004), Loren Glass observes how Hemingway's celebrity and authorship presented the kind of anxieties existent in previous figures such as Mark Twain (2004: 139). Glass argues that Hemingway was considered a 'serious' author, which made him a well-respected figure in popular culture, demonstrated

through the popularity of his 'Papa' image – characterised most often with Hemingway in his older age with white hair and a white beard. Yet 'Papa' was an affectionate term which was applied to Hemingway as early as 1926, when the author was twenty-seven years old. In an interview with Alice Sokoloff, Hadley Richardson claims that Hemingway saw the term as something to separate himself from others, a term which Hemingway, as Lynn argues, 'actively engaged in hanging on himself' (1995: 346). The term became the focal point of A.E. Hotchner's biography *Papa Hemingway* (1955), and was also most often associated with Hemingway's later years.

Glass states that Hemingway's two roles, the literary writer of great novels and the popularised image of celebrity culture, have been traditionally 'analysed and evaluated separately. In many ways, the critical tradition on Hemingway has been built on trivialising the latter [Hemingway's public persona] while sacralising the former [Hemingway's literary style]' (2004: 140). Both Glass and Leff suggest that Hemingway, particularly in his later years, suffered from the pressure of his popularity, feeling unable to produce quality work as a result[36]. Instead, Hemingway felt that he was only able to provide his readers with versions of himself: 'Ernest Hemingway the Professional Writer, Ernest Hemingway the Husk' (Leff, 1999: 3). As Glass writes, the story of Hemingway is 'one of the heroic modernist author whose skills are corroded by mass cultural celebrity' (2004: 141).

Yet Hemingway's own role in the construction of his celebrity is undeniable. While considering himself a detractor of celebrity, Hemingway not only accentuated his image through his writing, but also through media endorsements characteristic of more contemporary celebrities (athletes, actors etc.). Hemingway publicly endorsed two famous brands, one being *Ballantine Ale*, and the other *Pan American Airlines*. Along with this, Hemingway was often featured on the *Time* magazine front cover. As the twentieth century introduced new media mechanisms in which to portray popular figures to the public, the celebrity was heralded in a new manner. The photographic image was a key component in the construction of identity and celebrity in the twentieth century. Established in the nineteenth century, photography was a widely embraced method in the twentieth century, in which a popular figure, be it an author, musician or actor, could have their identity become more accessible to those who were less inclined to be familiar with their art. As Moran argues:

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[36] Similarly to Rousseau, who had decided to posthumously publish *The Confessions* due to uncertainty over its potential reception, Hemingway, upset by the negative reviews for his *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950), was 'hesitant to publish until he was sure of the power of his work […] his two larger novels remained unfinished when he died, victims of his uncertainty' (Fleming, 1996: 131).

In the case of authors, these formulae – Hemingway the man's man, Faulkner the farmer, Cheever the country gentleman, Salinger the hermit – became the emblem by which those who were unfamiliar with their work could know them. The captioned photographs accompanying the text, whilst never as large or significant as those in LIFE, reinforced this emblematic quality by imparting information directly and simplistically – the pictures accompanying the two Hemingway cover stories, for instance, show him fishing and shooting, posing behind kudu horns, steering his yacht on the open seas, standing bare-chested at his typewriter and slugging from a bottle at a bullfight (1995: 358).

One can therefore speculate that Hemingway's fame would not have reached the heights it did had it not been for the advent of innovations in both photography and media which helped create his hugely popular mediated persona. The photographs of Hemingway directly correlate to this artificial reality, where the popular and often exaggerated image of Hemingway as a manly hunter and fisherman is photographically exploited to appeal to both readers who are familiar with and admirable of his work, and those who were unfamiliar with his literature. In the case of the latter, the photographic medium, as Moran notes, enables non-literary audiences to become familiar with the author's image nonetheless.

As indicated in the previous chapters, there have been many celebrity authors who have been revered amongst the masses. Yet Hemingway's celebrity is something perhaps more remarkable[37]. What makes Hemingway's fame more pronounced is that it emerged during a period where society witnessed the advent of newer media technologies, essentially enabling Hemingway's fame to grow in a manner unseen in previous centuries. As Donaldson writes: 'only with the development of mass communication has it been possible for the public writer to be transformed into the celebrity' (1978: 2). Although authors were still able to achieve great fame and celebrity prior to the twentieth century, as my previous chapters indicate, newer technologies enabled a rapid expansion of global celebrity. Hemingway can therefore be seen as the first of many 'mediated' celebrity writers to have his image circulated widely around the world in a way previously unavailable to writers. The

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[37] Similarly to his predecessors, Hemingway's fame has also grown through the literary tourism industry. In Paris, the walking tour company *Paris Walks* dedicates two of their tours to Hemingway: *Hemingway's Paris* and *Writers of the Left Bank*. The former takes place around Paris's Latin Quarter, described by the company as being 'immortalised by Hemingway in *A Moveable Feast*.'

prominence of the photograph throughout twentieth century culture both fostered and hindered the progress of celebrity. While the dissemination of one's image around the world through magazines propelled the culture of celebrity, it also put less pressure on the imagination of the public to create a Romantic image, or provoked less engagement in the public's creative imagination. These new media platforms were to be carefully negotiated by emerging authors. As Galow writes: 'Figures as diverse as T. S. Eliot and Marianne Moore, Willa Cather and Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Gertrude Stein all wrestled with the new media apparatus and emerging forms of promotion' (2010: 323).

Hemingway and Fitzgerald

Hemingway developed a well-known friendship and later rivalry with F. Scott Fitzgerald[38]. Fitzgerald, himself embroiled in the politics of celebrity culture, preferred the term Jazz Age to the 'Lost Generation', which is reflected in his novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925). Although his works brought him great public esteem, Fitzgerald's celebrity, in the same manner as the Byrons and Shelleys, was greatly facilitated by public affairs and scandals. His turbulent relationship with his wife Zelda Fitzgerald, endearingly romanticised in Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris* (2011), remains public knowledge and gossip even in contemporary instances. As Prigozy writes: 'scarcely a week passes that we do not notice an allusion to one or both of them in our mass media' (2002: 1). Further, Curnutt writes: 'So pervasive was the couple's celebrity that Fitzgerald made the hard work of living up to the public's perception of him a central theme' (2004: 6).

Fitzgerald's career exemplifies the tension between literary renown and celebrity status. Critics differ on whether Fitzgerald actually enjoyed or bemoaned his celebrity. Matthew J. Bruccoli and Judith S. Baughman argue:

Fitzgerald enjoyed his celebrity, but he had a poor sense of public relations and provided interviewers with opportunities to trivialise him. He didn't know the rules: Never trust a reporter, and never indulge in irony when talking to a reporter. Hemingway, who knew the rules, was treated respectfully in the press; Fitzgerald was usually treated condescendingly (2004: xiii).

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[38] Ruth Prigozy's introductory chapter to *The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald* (2002), titled 'Scott, Zelda and the Culture of Celebrity', is an insightful introduction to Scott and Zelda's relationship with fame.

Bruccoli further notes how many interviews with Fitzgerald featured the word "flapper" in the headline, continuously linking Fitzgerald to an era that was fast becoming somewhat of a gimmick. Despite the current popularity of *The Great Gatsby*, it was the author's work *This Side of Paradise* (1920) which first propelled Fitzgerald into stardom. As Thomas Powers notes, the book:

> …made Fitzgerald as famous as a movie star: he was recognised everywhere as the bard of the bold young women in short skirts […] Fitzgerald didn't invent the word "flappers" but for two or three years explaining them was a part-time job. His views were sought on the war, cigarettes, bathtub gin and everything else that was blamed for the flappers' contempt for convention. None was Fitzgerald's doing but he described it in short stories and in the novel everybody was reading and the public couldn't get enough (2013: 9).

Fitzgerald was constantly being compared to Hemingway, in terms of writing style, success, and public personality. The emerging media platforms of the early twentieth-century engendered this intense fascination with the author's personality. As Dickstein observes:

> This was the beginning of the media age, with its emphasis on personality, novelty, showmanship, and style. The best one can say about Fitzgerald's role as a celebrity was that, unlike Hemingway, he never believed his own clippings, and always kept a good deal of himself in reserve, a sense of being answerable to posterity rather than to the newspapers (2003: 303).

Indeed, Fitzgerald displayed nowhere near the same sort of showmanship as Hemingway, despite having a prolific presence in the public. While he may have enjoyed the fame that his writing granted him, he did not exploit it in the same overt manner as Hemingway. Bryer et al further note how Fitzgerald's writing of the rich was mistakenly believed to affirm the author's admiration of their way of life, yet Fitzgerald desired to be disassociated from such a lifestyle, and 'nourished a burning ambition to be a serious writer, someone whose work would matter to people some fifty years later' (303). Similarly, Curnutt observes: 'Even as he revelled in his fame, however, Fitzgerald understood that his popular reputation undermined the literary credibility he also craved' (2004: 6). For Curnutt, Fitzgerald's critics

acknowledged the author's wit, but felt that had Fitzgerald not been so concerned with his celebrity, he would have sooner realised his artistic potential. Literary critics would later express the same sentiments in regards to the career of Norman Mailer, illustrating the critics' disapproval of the union between celebrity culture and authorship.

Thus Fitzgerald's desire to be treated seriously, and with the same kind of respect and critical admiration afforded to Hemingway, reveals the paradoxical nature with which celebrity and literature continuously operated, particularly during the early twentieth-century. Too strongly associated with a culture that both made him popular but also made him common, Fitzgerald sought to establish himself as a writer worthy of critical, rather than just popular, attention. Fitzgerald's desire furthermore exemplifies the growing development of value judgements in literary celebrity at the time of his writings. The theory that one had to choose between artistic integrity in literature and celebrity status began to gain momentum in modernist literature.

Although his most famous book *The Great Gatsby* eventually became a popular classic – one which Fitzgerald hoped would establish him as a serious writer – upon publication it did not receive much acclaim at all, and Fitzgerald believed himself to be a failure as a writer. This was in direct contrast to Hemingway, who established himself both as a celebrity and a critical, 'serious' author.

Fitzgerald's rivalry with Hemingway has also become the interest of much scholarly research[39]. One of the earliest causes of their dispute was Hemingway's and Zelda's mutual dislike of each other; Hemingway felt that Zelda was a bad influence on Fitzgerald, whereas Zelda perceived Hemingway's machismo as merely an act, and considered him brutish and misogynistic. Fitzgerald's (failed) attempts to be successful in Hollywood, however, was another cause of duress in their friendship, with Hemingway openly claiming such acts – Fitzgerald's writing and selling of screenplays in Hollywood – to be the work of a hack. Thus their friendship acted as another method through which Hemingway's persona would be elevated in public discourse. Fitzgerald's insecurity with his celebrity status further illuminates the extent to which a writer, such as Hemingway, manipulated the media for their own use. While Fitzgerald was uncertain about how to navigate through the burgeoning celebrity culture, Hemingway was an experienced showman who revelled in performance.

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[39] Among the works that specifically address the Hemingway/Fitzgerald friendship are: Matthew J. Bruccoli's *Fitzgerald and Hemingway: A Dangerous Friendship* (1994); J. Gerald Kennedy's *French Connection: Hemingway and Fitzgerald Abroad* (1998); and Scott Donaldson's *Hemingway versus Fitzgerald* (2000) and *Fitzgerald and Hemingway: Works and Days* (2009).

Hemingway and the Media

The macho image that Hemingway and the media projected has been studied by both scholars and writers. Zelda Fitzgerald famously loathed the author, believing right from her first meeting with him that his bravura was merely an act that the author performed. McConnell goes further to posit that Hemingway himself was convinced of his character-flaw. He writes: 'Hemingway himself was a weak man – and sad because he knew that he was. His bluster, his bullying, his loud adventurism were a mask for a deep-seated insecurity' (1986: 162). However, McConnell goes on to write that Hemingway 'managed also to be a hero of consciousness, a writer and a stylist who made his cowardice, and his knowledge of his cowardice, the very stuff of his heroism and his endurance' (162). The resurgence of the word 'hero', in this context, suggests that Hemingway was perhaps the last celebrity author to be associated with the Romantic notion of heroism. What is perhaps more intriguing in light of Hemingway's duplicitous nature is the way in which he subsequently developed his fame. In both his works and his public life the author decried the culture of celebrity, feeling both victimised by its distorting nature and frustrated with its corrupting influence on his readers, who purported to revere and intimately know the author himself. As del Gizzo writes:

> Throughout [Under Kilimanjaro], Hemingway takes the measure of commodity culture and assesses its impact on authorship and personal identity. He continually expresses his frustrations with the mechanisms and accoutrements of celebrity authorship and the cultural values that encourage it. As a result, Under Kilimanjaro emerges as a study of the contradictions of commodity culture that are the hallmark of Hemingway's career, and offers a glimpse into how Hemingway came to feel imprisoned by this dynamic (2010: 10).

Moreover, del Gizzo argues how Hemingway felt that the pressure from fans culminated in Hemingway's work being artistically damaged (2010: 11). His persona, moreover, became the property of his readers: 'For Hemingway, such claims to intimacy confirmed his belief that the persistent efforts of his audience to "know" him had hijacked his persona. He began to feel that he was a prisoner of his public image' (11). Thus Hemingway was representative of a literary culture that continuously expresses ambivalence in regards to celebrity status. While apparently disgusted with the way in

which the media and the public hijacked his image, Hemingway nevertheless partook in various schemes in which the very image he claimed to have hated was emphasised and glorified in order to entice more readers. A similar scenario occurred with Samuel Beckett, a notoriously reclusive author. As Stephen Dilks argues:

> While it is evident that Beckett withdrew from any explicit involvement in the marketing of his texts, and while it is part of his legend that he had no interest in fame or money, it cannot be denied that he played a significant role in the construction and dissemination of his public image and that this image continues to influence the production and interpretation of his texts (2006: 163).

It was important for many authors throughout modernism to exert an image of the non-commercialist writer uninterested in money, a dynamic repeatedly apparent throughout twentieth century literary culture. Hemingway and Beckett were not the only instigators of this image, though they were closely associated with the popular rhetoric of decrying celebrity. As Michael Newbury writes:

> If the first decades of the twentieth century witnessed the advent of a luxuriously developed consumer and mass culture – the emergence of modern advertising firms, the apotheosis of the department store, the wide ownership of the automobile, and the increasingly glamorous vision of Hollywood celebrity – high literary modernists, with their perplexing narratives, manipulations of syntax, and erudite references to arcane texts, often stood opposed to mass culture, even finding it contemptible (2011: 126).

Moreover, Newbury asserts that in spite of whatever image of elitism the Lost Generation attempted to project, inevitably: 'Stein, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, and virtually every author one might think of – were both part of a corporate marketing process and unavoidably tethered to the mass cultural discourses of their moment' (2011: 128). This process was one that Hemingway persisted with throughout his career, through his younger years as a lothario, and toward the end of his life during the 'Papa' years. A segment in his final work, *The Dangerous Summer* (1985), sheds light on Hemingway's reaction to his own fame that is in contrast to the much disseminated notion of

Hemingway's contempt for his own persona. The following passage takes place at an inspection post in Spain where Hemingway and his crew are attempting to get into the country:

> It was grim at the inspection post too. I took the four passports into the police and the inspector studied mine at length without looking up. This was customary in Spain but never reassuring. "Are you any relation of Hemingway the writer?" he asked, still without looking up. "Of the same family," I answered. He looked up through the pages of the passport and then studied the photograph. "Are you Hemingway?" I pulled myself up to modified attention and said, "*A sus ordones*," which means in Spanish not only at your orders but also at your disposal. I had seen it said and heard it said under many different circumstances and I hoped I said it properly and in the right tone of voice. Anyway he stood up, put out his hand and said, "I have read all of your books and admire them very much. Let me stamp these and see if I can help you at the customs" (1986: 12).

Thus no matter how much Hemingway resented his fame, he nevertheless continued to engage in his own myth-making process. John Raeburn writes that Hemingway was the 'architect of his public reputation' (1974: 93), and that his reputation was furthermore:

> …created by an ongoing dynamic relationship between his self-advertisement of his personality and the mass media's exploitation of it. Once this relationship was firmly established – and it materialized quite early in his career – he was on his way toward becoming both the public writer of his time and a celebrity of the first magnitude (1974: 97).

The fame that Hemingway experienced, moreover, was detrimental to his identity and life. As Donaldson argues, his fame had three primary penalties for Hemingway: that of Hemingway's overfamiliarity in the mass media leading to public contempt for his writing; jealous critics and reviewers who resented Hemingway's popularity; and lastly how Hemingway's celebrity adversely impacted an analysis of the author's work (1978: 6). That Hemingway's works would always be analysed through the lens of his celebrity was especially detrimental. However, in spite of all the apparent hardships of fame,

Hemingway's death – suicide by fatal gunshot to the head – was received by many as what Raeburn describes as the most difficult and significant death since American President Roosevelt. He writes that Hemingway's death 'signified more to his culture than the passing of a distinguished writer. It was the demise of a national institution' (1984: 167). With the death of Hemingway was invariably the death of what was believed to be the last significant figure in the last significant literary movement. Hemingway's death coincided with the peak of post-war authorship, and would have a tremendous impact on successive authors, many of whom believed that the golden age of literature had ended with Hemingway.

Chapter Five: Post-War Mediated Celebrity in Salinger and Mailer

This chapter focuses on the phenomenon of post-war mediated celebrity, addressing the period following World War II and the increasing fascination with the celebrity author's personal life and engagement with various media industries. Discussing American authors J.D. Salinger and Norman Mailer specifically, I argue that the post-war period witnessed a divergence in regards to both authorship and celebrity, exemplified in the respective careers of Salinger and Mailer, who approached their careers as authors in drastically different ways, and with completely different outcomes.

As television became commercialised in the United States (in New York City) on July 1, 1941, what followed was a steady increase in the prominence of television culture and advertising, and by the 1950s, television in the US was established as the dominant media format. This coincided with a gradual change in American consciousness and a growing interest in the celebrity figure and their personal lives, now predominantly accessible through television. This not only gave the illusion of connection between celebrity and viewer, but ironically produced yet another form of distance between the viewer and the celebrity figure that would serve in intensifying the mythology of the celebrity's image. Through Mailer's exploitation of various media formats, and conversely through Salinger's dramatic withdrawal from the public eye, a crucial development in the history of literary celebrity was experienced, establishing many of the commonly held assumptions about celebrity authors that are still in place in the twenty-first century. This chapter explores how Mailer's and Salinger's respective and opposing engagement with celebrity culture and authorship in the post-war era significantly affected the course of literary celebrity in successive eras.

The Post-War Author

The post-war era in the United States is defined by a variety of authors who dedicated their work to the exploration of (predominantly) American post-war society and Jewish identity, often with an emphasis on the urban environment. Among the authors included in this era were Saul Bellow, Kurt Vonnegut, Joseph Heller, John Updike, Philip Roth, Norman Mailer and J.D. Salinger. Mailer and Salinger in particular exemplify the radically different ways in which an author pursued or approached authorship as a product of growing celebrity culture. While Salinger eschewed celebrity and dramatically withdrew from public life, becoming an

intensely fascinating figure by doing so, Mailer, in complete contrast, embraced the emerging media platforms of self-promotion and exposure. He became what Joe Moran describes as the 'mediagenic author' (2000: 35) by frequently appearing on television to either promote his works or discuss the political movements and debates of the era, often to the disdain of his readers.

The emphasis on a sense of Jewishness was of particular importance to post-war writers, evidenced in various works[40] that addressed the notion of the Jewish identity following World War II, particularly in American culture. This focus on Jewish identity subsequently saw the emergence of the New York Intellectuals group, which included Saul Bellow, Hannah Arendt and Susan Sontag among other Jewish writers. Yet as David Brauner writes, the post-war boom in American-Jewish writers and fiction 'was not, however, replicated in Britain, partly because there simply was no British equivalent to the "New York Intellectuals" […] and partly because of their host culture's ambivalence towards Jewishness' (2001: 13-14).

Ihab Hassan, writing in 1962, argued that post-war fiction was often 'dismissed by critics who seem to have lost their youth in the golden age of Faulkner and Hemingway' (1962: 1). Indeed, Donald J. Greiner, addressing the question of who was to replace the great literary heroes of modernism, argued:

Norman Mailer was much talked about, partly because of *The Naked and the Dead* (1948), but largely because of his determination to be famous as a public intellectual, [and] Saul Bellow was much admired, primarily because of *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), the first of his three National Book Award winning novels, and *Henderson the Rain King* (1959) (2006: 116-117).

However, Greiner argues that it was Salinger who was seen to be the defining author of the post-war movement: 'in 1961, the author generally identified as most likely to follow the great American Modernists was J.D. Salinger' (117). Hassan describes Salinger's seminal work *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) as the classic of the post-war era and of post-war fiction (1962: 6). Further, Hassan argues that the dominant image found in the works of these post-

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[40] Of the many works that explored the ambivalence of Jewish-American identity, there is Philip Roth's *Goodbye, Columbus* (1959), *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969), *American Pastoral* (1997) along with his *Zuckerman* Novels; Saul Bellow's *Dangling Man* (1944) and *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953); Isaac Bashevis Singer's *Gimpel the Fool* (1953) – translated by Saul Bellow; and Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant* (1957), among others.

war authors was that of the anti-hero, the rebel who is also seen as a victim. He writes of this archetype: 'He is an actor but also a sufferer. Almost always, he is an outsider' (3). Hassan refers to Salinger's character Holden Caulfield in *Catcher in the Rye* as an example of this image, as well as the hapless soldier in Mailer's *Naked and the Dead*, describing this suffering, tragic figure as 'a mixture of Prometheus, Job, and Sisyphus' (4). In so doing, Hassan conjures the image of the tragic hero archetype that was utilised in Romantic fiction, referring to the figure of Prometheus that was used by Mary Shelley, as well as the figure of Sisyphus, which was used as a defining existentialist figure in Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). Hassan therefore unintentionally shows a renewed significance of the suffering individual in the post-war generation, maintaining the Romantic interest in the suffering artist.

Salinger's Reclusive Celebrity Status

Salinger is one of the most intriguing case studies in the topic of literary celebrity. Having garnered unprecedented international fame and respect following the hugely successful publication of *The Catcher in the Rye*, Salinger retreated from the public eye, detesting his renown and, consequently and ironically, becoming an even more fascinating figure by doing so. Such was, and is, the obsession with Salinger's unconventional fame, that in 2012, a toilet purported to have belonged to Salinger was sold on eBay for 1.3 million dollars. Moreover, despite the author's well-known reclusiveness, Salinger's estimated net worth is 20 million US dollars ('Celebrity Net Worth').

Following the publication of *The Catcher in the Rye*, which gained the respect and popularity of scholars and readers, Salinger retreated into relative anonymity, which ironically provoked many scholars and readers alike to speculate on and study the author's personal life. As Myles Weber writes:

Lost on none of the scholars interpreting the author's silence is the apparent irony that the more Salinger insists on anonymity, the more famous he becomes; the lengthier and more remarkable his period of nonpublication grows, the louder his text of silence speaks […] Observations about Salinger's inescapable celebrity status began early, while the author was still publishing. He had from the start avoided the usual trappings

of literary publicity, refusing to sit for interviews, demanding that his autograph be removed from the cover flap of his novel, […] and departing New York city (2005: 96).

Indeed, certain phrases in *The Catcher in the Rye* suggest that even before the mania surrounding the book's publication took place, Salinger's views on celebrity culture were less than favourable. For instance, through the narration of Holden, Salinger writes: 'Ernie's is this night club in Greenwich Village that my brother D.B. used to go to quite frequently before he went out to Hollywood and prostituted himself' (1994: 102). He also writes: 'The bartender was a louse, too. He was a big snob. He didn't talk to you at all hardly unless you were a big shot or a celebrity or something. If you *were* a big shot or a celebrity or something, then he was even more nauseating' (128).

Weber discusses the theory that Salinger was often seen by his critics as a shrewd manipulator of the media and his personal reputation, arguing: 'At first, critics responded to the talented author's personal quirks with fond bewilderment or outright admiration' (2008: 207). But, Weber argues, many of Salinger's critics eventually came to speculate that, rather than being a shy man intensely guarded with his privacy, the author's reclusiveness was seen more as a stunt to ensure his reputation remained intact. Discussing Salinger's partner Joyce Maynard and her memoir *At Home in the World* (1998), which exposed many details of Salinger's personal life, Weber writes:

No longer is Salinger the lonely middle-aged recluse trading on his celebrity status to elicit the company of a young woman, ultimately causing his own downfall through inadvertent exposure. Instead, the author is a manipulative genius who introduces an uninhibited writer into his inner circle precisely so that, twenty-seven years later, she will raise a storm of controversy by violating his privacy, thereby extending the Salinger myth and selling yet more copies of his extant books (210).

Yet, as Weber argues, this is mainly journalistic speculation. There is little actual evidence to suggest this is the case, as Salinger, during his career, did actually approach journalists every so often, but remained cautious nonetheless. For instance, in his article 'The Day I Met J.D. Salinger' (2014), Mark Pendergrast states:

I wish I had been able to talk about the Fat Lady, about Esmé, about war, about life, with Mr. Salinger on that bus. But perhaps it's just as well that I didn't get a chance to try. He obviously preferred to have his meaningful conversations through his books, and in that way, we had already communicated much more deeply than in our brief in-person contact (2014).

Blair Fuller's *Paris Review* article, 'An Evening with J.D. Salinger' (2011), similarly approaches Salinger with awe and admiration. But the accusation that Salinger was more of a manipulator than actual recluse is, however, illustrative of a broader dynamic on the culture of celebrity that sees reclusiveness as aligned with respectability and literary status, showing that Salinger, more so than any other author, was and is seen as more worthy of our attention than those authors who 'shamelessly' court the media's attention.

Following the author's death in 2010, at the age of 91, there was no funeral service, in keeping with the author's desire for privacy. Audie Cornish, who presented one of the author's many obituaries on the National Public Radio, stated that Salinger was a famous recluse who not only detested his literary fame, but who 'probably would've hated the flowery obituaries that followed his death' (2010). Cornish further described Salinger as an 'anti-celebrity' in an otherwise 'celebrity-soaked culture' (2010), and interestingly maintained that she had 'admired the way Salinger was unapologetic about his decision to no longer have his work published […] I don't expect to hear anything like that from anyone in my generation today' (2010). Cornish's latter comment is indicative of this sense of reverence that readers and critics alike have for the anti-celebrity author. In contrast to Mailer, who, as I will discuss, courted public attention much to the ridicule and disdain of the public, Salinger retained a respect belonging to recluses, and detractors of fame.

Salinger, whose father was a Jewish immigrant, had a comfortable living during the 1930s Depression, and was brought up secular. He was pampered by his parents, particularly by his mother, to whom he dedicated *Catcher in the Rye*. Although he had considered acting as a profession, he took creative writing classes at Columbia University, where he was 'discovered' by Whit Burnett, a journalist and editor of *Story Magazine* (1931-2000), where Salinger was first published. By 1946, at the age of 27, Salinger was published in *The New Yorker* for the December 21, 1946 issue. The published short story 'Slight Rebellion off Madison', would form the basis of *Catcher*.

In April 1942, Salinger was drafted to fight in World War II. Of this event, John Sutherland writes: 'Salinger had a bloody war – much bloodier than Mailer's, who hardly saw a shot fired in anger. But unlike Mailer, he never spoke or wrote about his frontline experience' (2011: 557). Following the war, two of Salinger's stories that were published in *The New Yorker* – 'A Perfect Day for Bananafish' and 'For Esme – with Love and Squalor' – were said to have expressed Salinger's post-traumatic stress from the war, although the term was not yet established. As Sutherland explains: 'Both stories expressed longing for childhood/adolescent worlds […] Three years later, *Catcher in the Rye* would confirm this psychological retreat into the childhood past' (557).

Although *Catcher in the Rye* was repeatedly rejected, alongside other famously rejected works of the time such as Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* and Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961), Salinger's novel, once published, became immensely popular, with many readers and critics noting how accurately the novel captured teenage-angst during 1950s American culture. Although the book, seen as a coming-of-age work, was positively received, there were also various criticisms, brought about mostly through disappointed expectations due to the novel's actual popularity. As Rohrer writes: 'Many of these readers are disappointed that the novel fails to meet the expectations generated by the mystique it is shrouded in. J.D. Salinger has done his part to enhance this mystique. That is to say, he has done nothing' (2009). With the unprecedented popularity of the novel, Salinger retreated from publicity, ironically intensifying both the book's popularity and his own renown, becoming, as Sutherland articulates, 'a man famous for not wanting to be famous' (2011: 555), a term that is in direct contrast to Boorstin's theory of being famous for being well-known. Further, Rohrer argues: 'Salinger's most famous achievement is writing *The Catcher in the Rye*, but his second most famous achievement is several decades of seclusion' (2009).

Salinger's seclusion did indeed make the author unintentionally more famous; such was the fascination surrounding his disappearance from public view that articles continue to be written about why he was such a recluse, while various biographies attempt to capture Salinger's personal life. One of the more well-known biographies of Salinger is Ian Hamilton's *In Search of J.D. Salinger* (1988), which is less a biography than it is an account of Hamilton's struggle (and failure) to gain the rights to use Salinger's letters for his original biography, the unpublished *J. D. Salinger: A Writing Life*. This original biography remains unpublished due to a legal ban still in place. As Sara Hodson observes of the latter biography:

The fiercely private Salinger refused to cooperate with Hamilton, who was writing a biography of the famously reclusive author. When Hamilton persisted with his plans, Salinger transformed what began as a privacy case into a copyright case (2004: 208).

Salinger successfully blocked Hamilton and publisher Random House from quoting his letters, which were held in libraries at Harvard, Princeton and the University of Texas. By retroactively registering copyright on his letters, Salinger maintained some of his privacy. However, in 2013, three years after the author's death, a new biography was released, as well as a film tie-in. *Salinger* (2013), written and edited by David Shields and Shane Salerno, details Salinger's private life through those who were close to the author, including his family, friends, his classmates, his lovers, colleagues, people he went to war with and people he worked alongside.

While various reviews of the film were favourable, others were negative, particularly due to the attempt to unravel Salinger's personal life against the author's wishes. A.O. Scott from the *New York Times* called it: 'less a work of cinema than the byproduct of its own publicity campaign' (2013). Further, Scott argues: 'Salinger moved to the woods of New Hampshire partly to escape the intrusions and indignities of American celebrity culture. "Salinger" is that culture's revenge' (2013).

Both the biography and the film are testament to the unwavering attempts of the public to expose the unknown details of a particular celebrity; even if the celebrity in question is as guarded of their privacy as Salinger, that value is dismissed for the public's benefit. Hodson further argues that 'the strong interest that we feel in the lives of famous people is not a new phenomenon, but simply an ever-burgeoning outgrowth of a long and deeply rooted human propensity' (2004: 202-203). She further argues how this phenomenon is particularly evident in the age of tabloid culture:

At its most basic, the human fascination with celebrities and public figures is manifestly evident in the tabloid periodicals, which have proliferated in the last few decades and whose screaming headlines seduce the public from every newsstand and supermarket checkout line. Humankind's desire to know everything, even (or especially) intimate details about the lives of celebrities, has also come to pervade the work of both popular and scholarly biographers (203-204).

Indeed, the biography, an increasingly popular genre in celebrity culture, seeks to unearth and expose the 'true life' or the 'true story' of the celebrity, even in a case as unique as Salinger's. While the public seems uncompromisingly obsessed with exposing the private lives of celebrities, they often simultaneously decry those who are considered *too* public, or too well-known, thereby exposing and illustrating a continued paradox in celebrity culture and authorship; scholars and readers alike attempt to expose a celebrity's public profile, yet that same celebrity cannot be too deeply engaged in the media and publicity, lest they be seen as a shameless media opportunist. Thus while various readers and critics criticised Mailer, as I will discuss, these same readers and critics admired Salinger for his reclusiveness, yet nevertheless sought to invade his privacy in accordance with celebrity culture's obsession with the individual.

Catcher in the Rye Controversy

Salinger's seminal novel remained controversial for various reasons. In 1982, along with novels such as Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* (1963) and John Steinbeck's novels *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) and *East of Eden* (1952), Salinger's *Catcher* was banned from school libraries in Calhoun County, Alabama, purportedly due to the book's foul language. Yet one of the prominent reasons for the controversy surrounding Salinger's *Catcher* and its subsequent censorship was in regards to American identity. In a time of ripe political and social concern following World War II, the contents of *Catcher* seemed to reiterate, for many, the issue of American identity, and thus the book was seen as a potential threat to American ideology. As Pamela Hunt Steinle argues on the censorship of *Catcher*:

> Individual incidents of censorship "activity" translated into community debates most often because of the parents who were motivated to protest and defend their viewpoints regarding the education of their children; parents who were willing to articulate the often extravagant, unselfconscious, and painfully honest claims as to whether Catcher was "American" or "UnAmerican." […] But in their arguments, they spoke "as Americans," calling upon broad American ideals which they saw to be failing in the larger experience of contemporary society, not the least of which was democratic freedom (2002: 146-147).

But perhaps the most notorious aspect of the novel was its place and significance surrounding the murder of John Lennon by Mark David Chapman. On December 8, 1980, Chapman, after successfully receiving an autograph from Lennon roughly five hours earlier, shot the singer outside of the Dakota Apartment buildings where Lennon was staying with his partner, Yoko Ono. Chapman had brought a copy of Salinger's *Catcher* to the scene, having signed it: 'This is my statement, Holden Caulfield.' Chapman also remained at the scene reading his copy of the book, until police arrived and arrested him. Chapman purportedly told police: 'I'm sure the big part of me is Holden Caulfield, who is the main person in the book. The small part of me must be the Devil' (cited in Jones, 1992: 66). Chapman also read out one of the book's most famous passages during his trial. The notorious incident has led many readers and scholars to re-analyse the work in light of this event. David Stashower, arguing that *Catcher* is essentially about the preservation of innocence, writes: 'either Mark Chapman saw John Lennon as a corruptor of innocence, or he saw him as an innocent about to be corrupted' (1983: 374). He then comes to the conclusion that it is more likely that Chapman saw Lennon as someone about to be corrupted by the phoniness of 'selling-out' that Salinger writes about in *Catcher*, and how shooting Lennon was an act of preserving his innocence and greatness in death. He argues:

> Like Lennon, Salinger has preserved the mystique that surrounds his early work, and he has accomplished this simply by removing himself from society. This isolation has done nothing to damage but rather has strengthened the claim of some literary critics that Salinger is one of the more important American writers in the postwar era (Stashower, 1983: 375).

Stashower thus makes a statement as to the need to preserve one's artistic integrity in celebrity culture, either through public isolation or death. Salinger's *Catcher* was, moreover, also found among half a dozen other books in the hotel room of John Hinckley, who attempted to assassinate Ronald Reagan in 1981, while Robert John Bardo had been carrying a red paperback edition of the book when he murdered actress Rebecca Schaeffer on July 18, 1989, whom he had stalked the previous three years, yet Bardo insisted that his possession of the book at the time was coincidental.

Although Salinger never spoke publically about the incident, John Guare, interviewed for the film *Salinger*, stated: 'If one person uses something I have written as the justification

for killing somebody, I'd say: "God, people are crazy!" But if three people use something I'd written as justification, I would be very, very troubled by it' (Salerno, 2013).

Both the murder of John Lennon and Salinger's withdrawal from the public form an intriguing thesis on the kinds of extreme ways in which an individual may react to the cult of celebrity. Moreover, through both of these events, it appears as though celebrity culture in the post-war era developed into a particularly problematic and abhorrent phenomenon, resulting in various anti-social outcomes that in turn portray celebrity culture as a harmful social development.

Various comparisons have been made between Salinger and previous authors. Edgar Branch argues that Salinger's *Catcher* was an urbanised version of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*: 'Especially in its characterisation of the hero, *The Catcher in the Rye* is a haunting reminder of Huckleberry Finn' (1962: 25). Further, Branch argues that, 'Clearly Mark Twain and Salinger present parallel myths of American youth confronting his world – Huck Finn over many months, when time was expendable; Holden over two days when, Salinger seems to imply, time is rapidly running out' (22). Steinle, too, sees a connection between Huck and Holden, though he argues that each offers a radically different parable on American society: 'The adventurous image of Huck on a raft becomes safe and almost domesticated when it is juxtaposed against the highly charged image of Holden atop a nuclear warhead' (2002: 168). Albert Fowler, however, writing in 1957, argues that: 'J.D. Salinger's picture of man sickened by society reflects the idea propounded by Rousseau and the disciples of naturalism of the individual born good and corrupted by his institutions' (1957: 193). In this manner Salinger retains many of the literary values that were connected to earlier Romantic and Victorian writers, discussing universal and enduring themes. The comparison between Twain and Salinger, in particular, not only anchors the notion of Salinger's genius and American ideological significance but also the notion that Salinger, like Twain, exists as one of the last great authors of a particular era.

Although a part of the post-war era, Salinger is often spoken of or critically discussed in isolation, seen as a superior writer to most others. For instance, during the post-war era of the 1950s and early 60s, Salinger was much more respected as an author than Mailer, who, as I will come to discuss, was frequently seen as a shameless celebrity hack. As Gwynn and Blotner argued:

For the future historian, the most significant fact about American literary culture of the Post-War Period may be that whereas young readers of the Inter-War Period knew intimately the work of a goodly number of coeval writers (Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Dos Passos, Wolfe, Sinclair Lewis), the only Post-War fiction unanimously approved by contemporary literate American youth consists of about five hundred pages by Jerome David Salinger (1958: 1).

Indeed, Mailer himself stated that Salinger was 'everyone's favourite' (1992: 467), perhaps because Salinger, in retreating from the public eye, would not run the risk of damaging his reputation, but instead managed to crystallise his fame in time with the one novel he is most famous for. Mailer often criticised Salinger, though he praised Salinger's work, writing: 'I seem to be alone in finding him no more than the greatest mind to ever stay in prep school. What he can do, he does well, and it is his, but [...] I cannot see Salinger soon emerging onto the battleground of a major novel' (467-468).

Interestingly, although Salinger was frequently the subject of criticism, he was never as criticised as Mailer would be. Instead, Salinger, particularly after his death, and despite the unfavourable depictions of him in various biographies and memoirs, remains a figure of intense fascination, admiration and respect. Being predominantly known for one novel, and for his reclusiveness, Salinger was a particularly interesting figure during the intense emergence of celebrity culture during the 1950s. Moreover, Salinger's withdrawal from celebrity culture would affirm, for many, the notion that the kind of celebrity that America and other countries were experiencing was something of an inferior nature to that of previous eras. Salinger therefore belonged to a specific cultural movement that began theorising on authorship's increasingly prominent, and problematic, engagement with celebrity culture as something that appeared out of place. Despite Mailer's attempts to undermine this notion, the assumption remains firmly in place.

Mailer's Exhibitionist Celebrity

Norman Mailer emerged as an author in a time when American writing was dominated by urban Jewish writers and war novelists (Foster, 1968: 5). He established, as Stuart D. Hobbs argues, 'the pattern of [the] postwar celebrity writer (1997: 153). Mailer publically courted and was very much a part of celebrity culture. Mailer's *Advertisements for Myself* (1959) is

perhaps the most notable example of his works that make a statement on the status of the post-war celebrity, that of a radical and altered nature to celebrity authors who existed previously, and who were only marginally affiliated with mass media society. As Lillian Feder noted in relation to the aesthetics of mid twentieth-century literature, 'the self has become an image' (cited in Hobbs, 153). Indeed, Mailer embodied this philosophy by turning himself into something of a spectacle through which he emerged as a significant author embracing various aspects of imagery and superficiality.

Mailer had become more a mediated celebrity than actual author, appearing on various television programs and becoming, himself, a mediated object that would influence countless successive authors. Yet his continuous and flagrant public displays garnered much criticism. As Robert Ehrlich explains: 'It has become almost fashionable to criticise Norman Mailer. He has been continuously accused of wasting his aesthetic talents by catering to his combative needs in a never ending series of public displays' (1978: vii). Truman Capote, too, criticised Mailer, despite acknowledging the author's literary talent:

> Flannery O'Connor had a certain genius. I don't think John Updike has, or Norman
> Mailer or William Styron, all of whom are talented, but they don't exceed themselves
> in any way. Norman Mailer thinks William Burroughs is a genius, which I think is
> ludicrous beyond words. I don't think William Burroughs has an ounce of talent (cited
> in Grobel, 1985: 36).

William S. Burroughs, famed author of *Naked Lunch* (1959) and *Junkie* (1953), was also considered to belong to this phenomenon of possessing genius *and* celebrity status in what was regarded as a problematic union. Norman Mailer once proclaimed that Burroughs was 'the only American writer who may be conceivably possessed by genius'. And yet Burroughs, like Mailer, invested and thoroughly engaged in the politics of mediated celebrity culture, much to the intrigue and scepticism of society. Burroughs appeared in numerous videos including a clip for Irish band U2's song *Last Night on Earth* (1997), in which the author appears near the end of the clip, as well as appearing in an advertisement for *Nike* shoes. While this may seem incidental or even irrelevant, rarely would one associate such consumerist politics such as *Nike* shoes with the author of *Naked Lunch*, who eschewed consumer culture. Goldman and Papson write: 'When Nike ads feature Dennis Hopper and

William Burroughs, they engage viewers in a tongue-in-cheek form of hero-worship[41] for a media-literate audience' (1998: 82).

In *Advertisements for Myself*, Mailer describes, with the same kind of discontent as Rousseau in his *Confessions*, his accumulation of celebrity:

> Once it became obvious that *The Naked and the Dead* was going to be a best seller, and I would therefore receive that small fame which comes upon any young American who makes a great deal of money in a hurry, I remember that a depression set in on me […] I think I probably had been hoping [the book] would have a modest success, that everyone who read it would think it extraordinary, but nonetheless the book would not change my life too much […] And so I was prominent and empty, and I had to begin life again; from now on, people who knew me would never be able to react to me as a person whom they liked or disliked in small ways, for myself alone (the inevitable phrase of all tear-filled confessions); no, I was a node in a new electronic landscape of celebrity, personality and status (1992: 91-92).

Mailer's observation that he had become famous in what he describes as an 'electronic landscape of celebrity' reveals the changes in celebrity culture which accommodated newer technologies that greatly fostered not only the image of the celebrity, but, more importantly, the celebrity as becoming an image. Mailer further observes that he was 'moved from the audience to the stage', and that he had instantly become someone for whom society could reflect and arouse emotions. Characteristic of many authors before him, Mailer paints a picture of a dejected and perhaps despondent, reluctant celebrity by addressing his fame alongside anxiety and fear: 'I was obviously a slave to anxiety, a slave to the fear' (92). However, similarly to Hemingway, Mailer's approach to celebrity culture and himself as a product of that very same culture is highly (and somewhat expectedly) contradictory. As Moran notes: 'this way of presenting himself solely as a victim of celebrity culture has a "protective elegance" which avoids the questions of how far the author himself created "Norman Mailer"' (2000: 70). As with Hemingway, and as Moran observes, Mailer's persona 'of a literary *enfant terrible*, which flourishes today well into his 70s, was created first not by the mass media but in his work' (70).

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[41] The notion of hero-worship, prominent in the Victorian era, thus remained a crucial component of celebrity culture in the mass media era.

Not only in *Advertisements for Myself* was this practice of literary self-creation evident, but also Mailer's Pulitzer Prize-winning nonfiction work *Armies of the Night: History as a Novel/The Novel as History* (1968), in which 'Mailer deals in greater depth with the way in which this persona has become an inseparable combination of self-creation and media-invention. This book, written in the third person, is all about Mailer as a celebrity' (Moran, 2000: 71). That the book is written in third-person, in which Mailer addresses himself as 'Norman Mailer', is particularly significant as it shows an apparent attempt by Mailer to distance himself from his celebrity image. Yet it also in turn cements, perhaps inadvertently, Mailer's image as a famous author, despite describing himself on the opening page as an 'anti-star' (1968: 3). Although its plot focuses on the 1967 March of the Pentagon – an anti-Vietnam rally conducted by the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam – many critics note that the book also has a strong focus on Mailer himself as a public personality. Keith Beattie writes: 'The result of Mailer's narcissistic narrative focus, as with other texts that concentrate on personalities, is a displacement of the presence of opposition to the war […] In *The Armies of the Night*, Mailer enacts his agency in what is, essentially, yet another "advertisement" for himself' (1998: 115). This can be seen in the way in which Mailer writes of his celebrity in the third-person:

> Mailer had a complex mind of sorts […] Mailer had the most developed sense of image; if not, he would have been a figure of deficiency, for people had been regarding him by his public image since he was twenty-five years old. He had in fact learned to live in the sarcophagus of his image – at night, in his sleep, he might dart out, and paint improvements on the sarcophagus […] Mailer worked for the image, and therefore he detested the portrait of himself which would be promulgated if no one could *ever* reach him (1994: 5-6, author's emphasis).

It becomes clear that Mailer's hand in the creation of his own much-publicised image was far greater than perhaps he himself would have admitted. However, as Moran describes it, Mailer's 'admission of his own collusion with celebrity culture in his promotional appearances on the late-night talk show circuit at this time […] make it clear that his celebrity has always been partly self-inflicted and partly imposed by external forces' (2000: 72).

In light of the reception that authors such as Rousseau, Byron, Twain, Dickens, Stein, and Hemingway received, it is interesting that Mailer's much-publicised career and self-

promotion has been received so unfavourably. Discussing Mailer's work and lucrative career as a celebrity author, Leo Braudy writes: 'Mailer has so concertedly placed his personal character and beliefs at the centre of his work that the disentangling of work and man, a process that seems so important to our current definition of lasting literary value, becomes an almost impossible task' (1972: 1). Braudy also observes that many critics have considered '[Mailer's] career a series of disjunctures held together thinly by his raucous public personality' (2). In previous years, many authors (Rousseau, Twain, Hemingway) were seen to distrust and reject their celebrity, most evidently in Rousseau's career. Rousseau's personal distaste for celebrity operates in direct contrast to Mailer, for whom celebrity was an integral aspect of his career. In contrast to earlier authors, who often felt their personas were 'hijacked' by their readers, Mailer eagerly promoted his persona, taking the reins of authorial promotion into his own hands. What is interesting in this case is the barrage of criticism Mailer received for doing so, his blatant approval of celebrity seen as being distasteful. Furthermore, as previously discussed, the discourse surrounding this 'loss of prestige' circulates around certain authors (Mailer), while neglecting others (Stein). Mailer's unfavourable reception is particularly perplexing considering that Gertrude Stein employed similar tactics in her own career, suggesting, once again, that such arguments surrounding literary credibility all but ignore female authorship, for whom credibility, it is assumed, is not an integral issue.

Perhaps in light of the mass mediated environment that had begun to take shape with the advent of television from the 1950s, the link between television and mainstream culture made it somewhat debased for legitimate authors to associate themselves with television, to further their career through a medium that was being increasingly linked to low-brow forms of entertainment and art. Simply put, Mailer had become a media event in himself. As Charles Carmello writes of the media event:

> We are used to speaking of the "media event" (from Supersunday to Gore Vidal and Norman Mailer having it out across the spatiotemporal dislocation of spliced segments of the Dick Cavett Show to international incidents that we treat as though scripted by Gilbert and Sullivan): the "media event" to which we constantly attend and through which Andy Warhol has deftly made both art and a fortune (1983: 84).

Through Warhol's experimentation with themes such as advertising and celebrities[42], mediated presence came to be rendered as hollow and devoid of form, and consequently viewed dismissively. Interestingly, Mailer speaks scathingly of celebrity culture in a television interview featured on the website *Norman Mailer the American*, dedicated to the documentary of the same name (2010). He says:

> Back then, writers were larger than movie stars to us. I remember at Harvard, we used to go to the local movie theatre and laugh in derision at these silly actors, these Clark Gables and Claudette Colbert's who took themselves so seriously. And we felt [that] we were more important as writers. We thought Hemingway and Faulkner were gods. And we felt that writers…ought to be the most respected people in America…I think the serious novelist is in danger of becoming about as interesting in fifteen years as the poet who insists on writing five-act plays and iambic pentameter ('Norman Mailer on Writers as Celebrities', 2010).

The sardonic pessimism throughout Mailer's speech is indicative of the fairly critical, disapproving perspective on writers and celebrities in general, the notion that the great writer is at its end, that the writer as genius is coming to a close. Mailer was featured on many different talk shows where he was often perceived by the audience as a rude, irritating antagonist. Mailer quarrelled with Gore Vidal on the *Dick Cavett Show*, while, on the *Merv Griffin Show* conversely, Griffin called Mailer 'one of America's great literary lions', a sentiment used to describe both Mark Twain and Gertrude Stein during their careers.

Mailer's behaviour on these various shows was notoriously antagonistic, provocative, and professed a juvenile sense of rebellion that, although widely mocked by the audience, was also eagerly consumed by the same audience that saw something of a literary rebel in Mailer, who ironically played up to his role as a literary bad-boy. Mailer's experience with his fame, while being quite distanced from others in his shameless loyalty to the celebrity machine, shares stark similarities with his predecessors Mark Twain and Ernest Hemingway. As previously discussed in Chapter Three, Twain had created two distinct figures: Twain the famous author, and Samuel Clemens, the man behind the writer, and the relationship between the two became muddled in his later life. Scholars often refer to the disparity between Clemens the man and Twain the author, and Mailer himself offers similar sentiments in

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[42] Chapter Six of this thesis provides an extended discussion on Warhol's influence on celebrity culture.

Advertisments for Myself in which he states: 'Success has been a lobotomy of my past' (1992: 93), echoing the sentiments of Twain on how his celebrity distanced him from his past.

Loren Glass compares Mailer to Hemingway, and also describes Mailer as the last true celebrity author. Glass writes: 'Mailer's genius was to render the very experience of celebrity as a psychic trauma generating an authorial persona that in its symptomatic richness far exceeded Hemingway's one-dimensional Papa' (2004: 177). Furthermore, Glass argues that Mailer is representative of the end of a culture that possesses a literary genius, arguing that as Mailer died, so too did the notion of the authorial genius:

> For a time, Mailer managed to leverage this anachronism into a journalistic career based on a residual novelistic promise. But the promise, which anchored his celebrity persona to his authorial genius, was more important than its fulfillment, which only reveals that the whole idea of literary genius has lost the cultural capital it once had. Mailer's work can now, at best, achieve middlebrow respectability (2004: 197).

As Glass notes, there are stark similarities between Mailer and the great American authors that came before him and influenced his career. Mailer crafted his image and persona in a similar manner to Hemingway whose own persona, as previously discussed, was somewhat of a fictional creation itself. In her work *Will the Real Norman Mailer Please Stand Up* (1974)[43], Laura Adams discusses the various authorial personas created by Mailer himself: 'In *The Armies of the Night* Mailer successfully joins together these fragments of himself, and the result is a self-portrait more complete and imaginative than any of his fictional characters' (1974: 25). Furthermore, Richard Foster observes the similarities between F. Scott Fitzgerald and Mailer, stating that they were both targets for the critics due to their purported lack of seriousness (1968: 6). Mailer's perceived lack of 'seriousness' hindered him from being widely accepted by his intellectual peers, who believed him to be wasting his talent on substandard works: 'They were the serious intellectuals, and here was Norman as a sort of literary tough guy, something like a Hemingway knock-off' (Manso, 2008: 60). Hemingway himself described Mailer as: 'Probably the best postwar writer. He's a psycho, but the psycho part is the most interesting thing about him. Chances are he won't be able to throw another fit

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[43] Not to be confused with the 1968 documentary *Will the Real Norman Mailer Please Stand Up?,* directed by Dick Fontaine; this documentary is considered a counterpart to *Armies of the Night*.

like *The Naked and the Dead*. But if he does…I better watch out' (cited in Hemingway, 1976: 103).

Yet despite Mailer's strong mediated presence, and despite his strong association with celebrity culture, the author was quite protective of his private life. Some of the more intimate details of his private life are carefully reserved for certain biographies[44]. As Michael Glenday observes, Mailer's celebrity status and reserved private life reveals a paradoxical nature about the author:

> Anyone attempting a fix on Mailer's life and career will soon enough confront a further paradox – that for all his public exposure, his life as one of the very few writers of distinction to have also existed as a celebrity, his private life, apart from a few lurid incidents, has escaped the media spotlight. He has shown skill in achieving celebrity for his ideas, dramatizing the public personae, while remaining essentially private (1995: 3).

However, as Cawelti writes:

> Unlike Hemingway, who lived out to the end an ambiguous conflict between celebrity and art, Mailer has tried to make his public performances themselves into a kind of artistic exploration, writing about them in a quasi-journalistic form in which the protagonist as celebrity plays the central role. Mailer's open assimilation of his role as artist into his celebrity persona is certainly one solution to the *problematic modern tension between the writer as artist and as celebrity*, though probably not one that many novelists will choose or be able to adopt (2004: 57, own emphasis).

In contrast to earlier authors who found the union between art and celebrity difficult, Mailer sought to embrace aspects of his celebrity, turning his celebrity into something of an art form. In so doing Mailer's career does not as strongly embody the Romantic tension between art and celebrity. However, the public's particular *response* to Mailer's enthusiastic embrace of his celebrity was not as well received; Mailer was routinely criticised for courting his

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[44] Mailer wrote no autobiography, but there are numerous biographies dedicated to exploring his work and life. While Mary V. Dearborn's *Mailer: A Biography* (2001) is useful as a standard biography, Carl E. Rollyson's *The Lives of Norman Mailer: A Biography* (2000) and J. Michael Lennon's *Norman Mailer: A Double Life* (2013), focus on the fragmented nature of Mailer's character, and so are more insightful as biographies.

celebrity, for throwing away his talents for the allure of media spectacle. What this suggests is that the Romantic legacy of authorship has also been sustained in audiences' attitudes, rather than solely by the authors themselves. Mailer therefore finds himself in a curious position in the history of authorship; his attempts to bridge celebrity with art were unfavourably viewed. This was not, however, the only source of the public's frequent disregard of Mailer. A particular aspect of Mailer's character that was heavily criticised was his behaviour towards and regarding women, with Mailer frequently labelled a misogynist. While Mailer certainly appeared to be sexist in the media, certain works and projects of Mailer's seem to suggest that this estimation of the author is somewhat inaccurate and perhaps exaggerated. One of the author's most well-known works is his contentious biography of Marilyn Monroe, *Marilyn: A Biography* (1973). In this work, Mailer controversially claimed that Monroe had been killed by the CIA and FBI for her affair with John F. Kennedy. Yet in a *60 Minutes* interview with Mike Wallace, Mailer stated that he wrote of Marilyn being murdered in order to sell more copies of his book. Glass claims that Mailer's confrontation with women's rights and liberation: 'severed the link between his status as a celebrity and stature as an author; he could no longer be sure that his public persona emerged from his own authorial agency' (2004: 194).

In his autobiography *Timebends* (1987), playwright Arthur Miller, a former husband of Monroe, wrote scathingly of Mailer: '[Mailer] was himself in drag, acting out his own Hollywood fantasies of fame and sex unlimited and power' (2012: 532). While Hemingway certainly introduced this mediatisation of the self in modern American culture, Mailer invariably perfected it. As his first wife, Beatrice Silverman, stated, Mailer was 'always living out his bohemian fantasies' (cited in Rollyson, 2000: 54), while Rosenberg writes: 'Mailer has sought to live his vision of the masculine' (2004: 480). Mailer continued the trend of romanticising the celebrity, but particularly the celebrity author, belonging to two opposing though intriguing cultures. Yet as previously argued this created a strong sense of vicitmisation for Mailer. As Rollyson writes, Mailer encountered a student in Paris in 1948 who, after cornering him, began asking him a lot of questions: '[Mailer] wanted to be recognised and would enjoy the attention accorded him on his return to the States, but he was uncomfortable with the feeling that he was now part of other people's fantasies and that they might be responding to an image of him that was nowhere near the mark' (2000: 54).

One of Mailer's last 'creative' endeavours includes a cameo in the television series *Gilmore Girls*. He had initially declined, but after the producers were able to get Mailer's son

on the show, Mailer changed his mind. As the author of some of the more political and violent pieces of twentieth century literature, Mailer's appearance on *Gilmore Girls*, a comedy-drama surrounding the lives of a mother and her teenage daughter, is both ironic and amusing, though also helpful in expanding the literary author's role to include a place in popular culture.

Mailer had a shrewd understanding of celebrity authorship, claiming that legendary authors become so not simply through their work but through projecting a persona that is reminiscent of legendary Hollywood actors: 'the authors who live best in legend offer personalities we can comprehend like movie stars. Hemingway and Fitzgerald impinge on our psyche with the clarity of Bogart or Cagney. We comprehend them at once' (2013: 307). Interestingly, this comment contrasts strongly with Mailer's aforementioned comments on celebrity culture, derisively mocking celebrities while idolising writers as separate to movie stars.

Glass' response to Mailer's fame and the notion of authorial celebrity and genius in the latter half of the twentieth-century is quite persuasive; indeed, the notion of the author as genius, while still overwhelmingly relevant, is problematised as the figure of the celebrity becomes increasingly synonymous with low-brow culture. Extending on Glass' view, what Norman Mailer represents is not simply the demise of the authorial celebrity or genius but, rather, the last of the great, generational celebrity authors that defined an era.

Post-Mailer Literary Celebrity

As discussed at the beginning of this thesis, Loren Glass' useful analysis of modern literary celebrity suggests that literary celebrity came to an end following Mailer's career. At the very end of his study, Glass makes the surprising claim that literary celebrity, 'persists only as a residual model of authorship. It no longer commands the cultural authority it did in the modern era; and it never will again' (2004: 200).

Such a claim is important insofar as it highlights the significance of Mailer's particular approach to authorship and celebrity culture, as well as the author's undeniable legacy in literary celebrity. However, retrospective analysis of Glass' work suggests that literary celebrity does, indeed, persist, and *more* than as a residual model of authorship. In fact, we may be permitted to see the emergence of an era classified as 'post-Mailer celebrity', in which authors' divergent responses to the call of literary fame sees literary celebrity itself

as increasingly expansive and fragmented. No longer attached to one set of ideologies, literary celebrity has since grown to encompass a wide range of conflicting ideologies.

In *The Almost World*, Hans Koning writes of the sense of 'manliness for the Norman Mailer and post-Mailer generation of western liberal and "radical" between-quotes writers (1995: 11). Invariably, Mailer's particular, larger-than-life approach to his authorial persona informs subsequent generations of literary celebrities. As J. D'Amore observes: 'Mailer's embrace of the nuances of self-promotion and his acceptance of the inevitability of an author's partial abdication of control of his or her reputation marks a newly formed postmodern conception of authorship' (2012: 61). Indeed, Mailer's mediated and literary legacy can be found in authors such as Bret Easton Ellis, whose use of the third-person and hyper-masculinised approach to writing are, as with Mailer, used to accentuate his public persona.

'Mailer carves out a space for himself,' D'Amore argues, 'in an era that was, as he saw it, creeping away from the individual toward a monolithic culture populated by philistines unconsciously under the sway of corporations' (62). Yet the concerns with the increasing commodification of literature did not end with Mailer (and his readers), but were taken up by authors including Ellis, Franzen, and Eggers, as I will come to discuss.

For Christine Knoop, the 'increasing attention of the media and the economic demands of the book market have left their mark on the literary output of our day' (2011: 1). She writes that:

> The gap between conceptions of individuality, intellectual property, economic brands, and copyright on the one hand, and definitions of the author in literary theory on the other has had a significant influence on the aesthetic programmes on a whole group of contemporary authors, including Milan Kundera, Paul Auster, Ian McEwan, Umberto Eco, and Salman Rushdie (1).

These authors critically approach the notion of individuality and existentialism in an era increasingly defined by secularism and plurality, as well as conceptions of the self in increasingly mediated cultures. Importantly, Knoop notes that these authors and 'their diverse engagements with the problem of authorship seem to indicate that authors not only build on literary traditions, but are also inspired by criticism […] thus producing a kind of literature that calls for new mechanisms of critical understanding' (1). In Kundera's work, for instance,

Knoop observes that 'the author is considered to be more than a mere feature of discourse and a pawn in the communicative situation; to Kundera, authorship presents itself as both an ethical and aesthetic issue, the consequences of which extend beyond literature' (1).

Knoop sees authorship in this instance as 'inseparable from the wider ideological contexts of individualism, personal rights, and intellectual property, while on the aesthetic side [Kundera] seems to suggest that it is impossible to separate one feature of literary communication […] from all its other elements' (1). What this suggests is that literary celebrity has indeed persisted in a post-Mailer context, with its own concerns and ideologies. As the following chapters attest, literary celebrity has indeed remained prevalent, with various authors approaching and utilising authorship in distinctive ways.

The post-war era was particularly instrumental in framing debates about the celebrity author. The celebrity figure in an age of increased political and social tension became the subject of increasing criticism and judgement, particularly with their associations and engagement with the media industries. What Salinger's and Mailer's respective careers as celebrity authors demonstrates is that an equilibrium was required in regards to the author's associations with celebrity culture. While Salinger's seclusion and reclusiveness was not only regarded with fascination but added to the author's mythicised image, Mailer's blatant exploitation of the media and his own image saw him increasingly criticised and disregarded as a serious author. Thus the post-war era exemplifies a time when authors had to be particularly shrewd in their manoeuvrings through celebrity culture in an aim to not only secure their literary reputations, but in an effort to be included in the same discussions as authors who were seen to be part of the golden age of literature, such as Hemingway and Faulkner. The post-war era of mediated celebrity is also seen as culminating in the demise of the 'great author' of literary tradition; Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* and Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* were seen as the last few works to embody a collective identity and national imagination, and thereby were both seen as being part of an era marked by declining greatness and genius. This argument was to be augmented by the post-war era transitioning into the movement of post-structuralism that witnessed Barthes' proclamation that the author had died. As I will argue in the following chapter, the 1960s marked a continuation of the theory that great literature had died, and also that celebrity was something that was increasingly linked to disrepute and a tarnishing of one's status. Despite the way in which Mailer attempted to disprove the erroneous and problematic theories that sought to keep celebrity culture and authorship separate, he was

nevertheless seen as contributing to the overall demise of genuine, 'serious' authorship. Mailer and Salinger's cases are particularly illustrative of a culture that privileges the 'genuine' figure disassociated from celebrity culture.

Chapter Six: Pop Art and the Death of the Author in the 1960s

The 1960s were a time that saw great ideological change for both celebrity culture and the role and status of authors. While Andy Warhol attempted to bridge celebrity with high-brow culture through Pop Art, poststructuralist theorists Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault sought to undermine the role of the author in textual discourse. Yet as influential as their theories were in an academic context, the author remained a significant figure in society and culture outside of the academy. As Moran rightly states:

> The notions of authorship formulated within the academy and outside it have radically diverged in recent years – while academic criticism has formulated theories about the death, disappearance or absence of the author, this figure still seems to be very much alive in non-academic culture (2000: 58).

With the rise of Pop Art, which was based predominantly on appropriation and repetition, commonly held assumptions about both authorship and celebrity began to change, but also converge. As Gaston Franssen argues, there are stark similarities and differences between the author and the celebrity. He writes: 'A common feature of the author and the celebrity is that both figures are (co-) produced by the actors and institutions that are responsible for their presentation and reception' (2010: 92). Yet he also argues that: 'the celebrity differs from the literary author in that the former is […] associated with repetition, and the latter with innovation' (94). Indeed, as the 1960s art world was being increasingly linked to ideas of repetition and appropriation, theorists in academic industries attempted to rid textual discourse of the author's repeated presence and importance. The artistic and ideological changes taking place in the 1960s thus proved crucial in re-evaluating the role of the celebrity author. Although Barthes and Foucault did not succeed in removing the author from the attention of society, their theories were nevertheless fundamental in shaping the way in which authors were malleable to social change. In this chapter I argue that the 1960s were instrumental in shaping ideas of celebrity authorship through developments such as Pop Art, the *auteur* theory, and the influence of post-structuralism. I also explore the important notion of death in relation to both celebrity culture and authorship, and highlight the ways in which these theories have influenced current debates and discourses on celebrity authorship.

Warhol, *auteurism* and Pop Art

Criticism in the mid to late twentieth century approached authorship in a variety of ways. In 1954, *auteur theory* was beginning to take shape in film studies and was becoming an influential concept amongst the directors and writers of the journal *Cahiers du Cinéma* (1951-). This theory, advocated by French New Wave director François Truffaut among others, proposed that the film's director is also its author. The films of famous directors, such as Orson Welles, Alfred Hitchcock, and John Ford, among others, were therefore seen as an expression of the director's own frame of mind. Andrew Sarris was another advocate for this theory, yet he argued: 'the auteur theory is not so much a theory as an attitude, a table of values that converts film history into directorial autobiography' (1968: 30). Although this was one of the more extreme manners in which the Romantic conception of authorship regained strength in twentieth century discourse, it was nevertheless a heavily criticised notion. Pauline Kael of *The New Yorker* frequently argued with Sarris on the topic of *auteur* theory; for Kael, although certain films can be seen to adhere to the director's style, this does not therefore imply that the director is the owner and source of meaning of those films:

> Hitchcock's personality is certainly more distinguishable in *Dial M for Murder*, *Rear Window*, *Vertigo*, than Carol Reed's *The Stars Look Down*, *Odd Man Out*, *The Fallen Idol*, *The Third Man*, *An Outcast of the Islands*, if for no other reason than because Hitchcock repeats while Reed tackles new subject matter. But how does this distinguishable personality function as a criterion for judging the works? (1963: 15).

For Kael, it is not that the author or auteur has no actual presence within a form of art, but that this presence is incorrectly used as a criterion of value and judgement. Six years after Kael's essay was published, Barthes would be building a similar case against the author of literary works.

Andy Warhol, as a prolific director as well as an emerging artist, was often discussed in relation to *auteur* theory; while many theorists saw Warhol as the auteur *par excellence*, others declared him the anti-auteur:

> By abandoning the position of auteur, Warhol allowed the indelibility of the depicted act to win out. The viewer, recognizing his or her own ability to replicate the act

depicted – in remembrance of past acts, or a desire to participate in such play in the future – was given the power to become the anti-auteur (Gumpert, 1997: 100)

In this manner Warhol shared similar traits with the poststructuralist movement that began focusing more on the reader (or, in this case, the viewer) than the actual author. Parker Tyler, for instance, called Warhol a 'filmic auteur by default' (1993: 3), and one who 'functioned with very little directorial power' (3). Sarris, on the other hand, saw Warhol as something of a documentarian, and compared his film *The Chelsea Girls* (1966) to Robert J. Flaherty's acclaimed documentary *Nanook of the North* (1922) (Michelson, 2001: 43). As Caroline Jones argues: 'The paradoxical "visible absence" of Warhol as auteur led some to imagine him the perfect documentarian' (1996: 236). Warhol was therefore instrumental in experimenting with the authoritative role in film, coinciding with the changes that were taking place with regards to authoritative roles within literary criticism.

The 1960s were a defining decade in shaping the course of celebrity culture. It was in this decade that the discrepancy between high, middle and low-brow cultures became less distinct, and created a culture that saw popularity being introduced into highbrow art. For some, this seemingly unforgivable union meant that the term 'popular' was entering the vernacular of trash, while for others it signified the breaking down of cultural structures. As Horowitz writes:

> The 1960s changed the terms for understanding commercial culture. What had seemed in the 1950s a vast chasm between avant-garde or high culture and popular, middle-brow culture narrowed or even closed dramatically in the 1960s. The music of the Beatles, the paintings of Andy Warhol, even the irony-laden *Batman* series, in suggesting that popular culture could be experimental, called into question the ability to make a clear distinction between levels of culture (2012: 195).

This was, as a result, a crucial turning point in the reception of authors who became stars, as their literary culture was becoming increasingly associated with the star system that had otherwise been, previously, somewhat separated or distinct from the literary system. But it was in the art world and in art circles that this distinction was first broken down.

While Pablo Picasso was one of the most notable artists of the twentieth century to be associated with celebrity, Warhol was undoubtedly the most well-known and revered

celebrity artist of the postmodern movement in art. While his artwork dealt with the ideology surrounding contemporary fame and reproduction, including his many works focusing on Marilyn Monroe and Michael Jackson, Warhol himself was a fascinating figure of late twentieth century celebrity culture. He coined the notorious term '15 minutes of fame', stating that 'In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes' (Guinn and Perry, 2005: 4). Warhol added a new dimension to celebrity culture that was deemed simplistic and hollow, and an insult to previous ideas of achieving fame. Both Warhol and Pop Art represented a new kind of celebrity culture that was ultimately seen to signal the demise of genuine fame. As Barthes states of the nature of Pop Art: 'What Pop Art wants is to desymbolize the object […] The pop artist does not stand behind his work and he himself has no depth: he is merely the surface of his pictures, no signified, no intention, anywhere' (cited in Foster, 2001: 70).

While Warhol was a pivotal figure in illuminating the concept of celebrity as something potentially hollow and repetitive, he was nevertheless obsessed with celebrity culture himself, and, as Jones suggests, Warhol was himself an elitist: 'In reality, Warhol believed in a hierarchy of the arts. His paintings were unambiguously his most serious activity and claim on posterity' (Jones, 2013). Warhol's preoccupation with celebrity – obsessively stalking American author Truman Capote, for example – was clearly established and reflected in his artworks throughout the 1960s when Pop Art was vying to be accepted and appreciated as a genuine art form. The pivotal aspect of Warhol's art works in relation to the culture of celebrity, however, is that they were appropriated, leading some critics to accuse Warhol of essentially promoting consumerism and marketisation, as well as simply copying the works of others. In this respect, it was a kind of celebrity that seemed to require no sense of originality or talent. For instance, Pulitzer prize-winning poet and critic, Stanley Kunitz, criticised Warhol's work for being directly reproduced, while curator Henry Geldzahler stated that Lichtenstein, in comparison to Warhol, at least 'made artistic incursions into the structure of his patterns' (cited in Honnef, 2004: 13)

The art of appropriation invariably is connected to the notion of death and authorship. As Sherri Irvin states:

> The 1960s saw the genesis of an artistic trend that seemed to give substance to the theories of Foucault and Barthes. The appropriation artists, beginning with Elaine Sturtevant, simply created copies of works by other artists, with little or no

manipulation or alteration, and presented these copies as their own works. The work of the appropriation artists, which continues into the present, might well be thought to support the idea that the author is dead: in taking freely from the works of other artists, they seem to ask, with Foucault, 'What difference does it make who is speaking?' (2005: 123-124).

Indeed, in contrast to the modernist artist, who was an impassioned and expressive figure, Warhol favoured the idea of the artist as machine, and also favoured the notion of mass production over ideas of original genius and creativity. By naming his art studio The Factory, Warhol engaged in strongly postmodern ideas of production and appropriation in contrast to modernist ideas of creativity and expression. Warhol, in a similar manner to Barthes, sought to undo the sincere, inner personality of the artist. As Walker writes:

[Warhol] also claimed that anyone could do what he did and, on one notorious occasion, when he was invited to give talks on the college circuit, set out to prove it by sending a double (Allen Midgette) in his place. He also attempted to support a robot replica of himself (2003: 215).

By having a robot replica and a body double, Warhol undermined romanticised notions of the inner self of an artist, similarly to Barthes who discussed the superficiality of authorship. Warhol's notion that anybody could do what he did directly challenged the hierarchy of creativity in modernism by privileging the amateur or general public over the serious, impassioned artist. And by breaking down these structures, Warhol's views also revived interest in collaborative art and authorship, removing idealised notions of the unique and artistic 'individual'.

Moreover, Warhol's statement on art can be discussed directly in correlation with German theorist Walter Benjamin's well-known views on the process of art in the mechanical era. In his notable essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936), Benjamin discusses the manner in which mechanical reproduction drastically altered the way in which art is perceived, effectively destroying the aura of authenticity. Benjamin discussed the effects that modernity had on the work of art, specifically how developments such as film and photography essentially 'corrupted' the essence, or 'aura', of a work of art by taking it out of its context of irreproducibility, and removing the authority with which it was originally

associated. The ability to mechanically reproduce a work of art, for Benjamin, contributed to a decaying of the aura that initially surrounded the work of art.

For Benjamin, two distinct notions function as the basis of our understanding of the way in which art is received; while the 'cult value' emphasised the work of art as an 'instrument of magic', retaining its ceremonial value, the 'exhibition value' sees art as an increasingly commodifiable entity through mass dissemination and reproduction. It is in photography, Benjamin argues, where the exhibition value displaces the cult value of the work of art. Benjamin's emphasis is on the way in which art has become, through the process of incessant mechanical reproduction, a product for the masses, with a focus on it being consistently on view.

For Warhol, the process by which a work of art becomes reproduced is something to be celebrated; the exhibition value of art, for Warhol, becomes more important than the cult value. In effect, Warhol's entire artmaking practice is to celebrate the extent to which art can be endlessly reproduced, turning the cult image – such as Marilyn Monroe, emblem of old world Hollywood prior to television – into a mass produced artefact on a global scale. Warhol's work effectively endorsed Benjamin's view of art, eagerly dispelling with the notion of any inherent aura in artwork. This was precisely what the postmodernists sought to achieve, undermining the value of the aura and the ceremonial practice traditionally attached to art, a line of thinking which extended beyond the art world into the film industry. As Benjamin writes, there is a 'shrivelling up of the aura with an artificial build-up of the "personality" outside the studio. The cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the "spell of the personality", the phony spell of a commodity' (1973: 233). For Benjamin this shift in art's value being based on commodity and reproduction was essentially harmful to the very ethos of art. For Warhol, conversely, this shift was a positive trait of the postmodern era. As Milman observes: 'Curiously enough, it would not be too far-fetched to suggest that Andy Warhol, one of the primary players in what would later be identified as the American Pop Art consortium, would, in all probability, have gleefully concurred with Benjamin's apparently contradictory observation' (1997: 195).

Warhol's initial art and film making practice, somewhat unsurprisingly, was considered the antithesis of Hollywood film, and the artist would often parody the Hollywood studio system by developing his own loyal cult following of stars. These included poor girls and drug addicts, vulnerable people who were as eager as Warhol to be associated with the

star system. As Walker notes, Warhol's intimate circle was filled with: 'poor-little-rich girls, studs, social misfits, drug addicts and transvestites. Anyone in fact who was an exhibitionist and who liked to talk and improvise on camera' (2003: 213). Furthermore, Warhol would call his unusual troupe of actors 'superstars', crediting the term to Ingrid von Scheflin, or 'Ingrid Superstar' (2003: 213).

In December 1962, the year after Hemingway had committed suicide, New York's Museum of Modern Art hosted a symposium on Pop Art. Various critics agreed that the date was particularly early for a still-emerging art form. As Honnef writes, Pop was not a term that had entered common vocabulary at this stage, and that Pop 'was still vying for acceptance with other names, such as Neo-Dada, New Sign Painting, or New American Dream' (2004: 12). However, Pop Art swiftly rose to fame, indicative of the instantaneousness of pop culture. As Scherman writes:

> Unlike abstract expressionism, which had spent decades underground before winning widespread recognition, pop zoomed to pre-eminence within two or three years, climaxing its rise in the last two months of 1962 [...] All around the city, artists were suddenly obsessed with popular culture (2001).

Pop Art's rise to prominence coincided with developments in American advertising, which undoubtedly led many critics and detractors of Pop Art to align their art-making practice – characterised by commercialism and a reverence of celebrity culture – to low-brow culture. Horowitz argues that detractors of Pop Art: 'were certain they knew how problematic pop art was [...] To them, pop art was too timid and lacked originality in developing formal elements' (2012: 226). Further, Harold Rosenberg stated in 1965 that the 1960s art world transformed mediocrity into 'the ultimate phase in the evolution of world art' (cited in Horowitz, 2012: 226).

One of Warhol's famous Pop Art paintings was of modernist genius Gertrude Stein, which he created in 1980. As Warhol's artistic oeuvre consisted predominantly of popular culture celebrities including Marilyn Monroe and Michael Jackson, it is both odd and significant that Stein appears in Warhol's work, part of his 'Jewish Geniuses' series in the early 80s. As Barbara Will writes:

Warhol reads Gertrude Stein as a "genius", but refuses to ascribe to her the kind of interiority that would traditionally be associated with this name; his Stein is literally the copy of a copy, a silk-screened print of a photograph from the 1930s to which Warhol or one of his Factory assistants had added variously a few dark outlines or some collage-like blocks of colour. A found object or appropriated image, Warhol's Stein is unoriginal, simulated, [and] depthless (2000: 160-161).

By incorporating a genius into his notoriously camp and popular works, and by transforming one of America's most well-known and celebrated literary authors into an object of popular culture, Warhol essentially continues the efforts of Stein herself in connecting the cult of the genius with the cult of celebrity. As Herwitz argues:

What Warhol saw was a landscape of signage, a new American landscape where ad and celebrity ruled, rather than water, tree, and mountaintop. He loved the mind-numbing homogeneity of this culture where one thing increasingly becomes the same as all others by virtue of its sameness of circulation (as image). But his actual art focused (at least at the beginning) not on the mere celebrity, indistinct from all others who are well known for their well-knowness, but on the star whose star quality allowed her to become iconic (2008: 34)

Thus Herwitz acknowledges that within Warhol's art there was still a pursuit and reverence for the star over the celebrity. In this way Daniel Boorstin's theories on the disintegration of fame into celebrity become apparent in regards to Warhol's art. As Andreas Killen notes, Warhol's 'emergence as a leading representative of Pop Art coincided with the advent of what Daniel Boorstin, in 1961, called the culture of "the image"' (2007: 139). Further, Goldsmith argues that while Boorstin wrote his famous book 'in order to attack as morally bankrupt the ubiquity of the pseudo-event within American culture, […] Warhol took a much more complicated and also, generally speaking, more positive stance toward this phenomenon' (2009: xxiii). Warhol's work is thus a complex development in the history of art and celebrity that somewhat foreshadows the complicated relationship that continued to develop between celebrity and literature.

Warhol has been described as the celebrity death machine (Cowser, 1998: 9), and as a result his art-making practice has significantly contributed, perhaps inadvertently, to the

growing disrepute of celebrity culture, as it came to be associated with aspects of life that Americans were disillusioned or dissatisfied with, or saw as trivial and unimportant. Warhol's art emerged in a time when cultural values were being re-evaluated, and the association of death and celebrity would have further provoked a different reception of celebrity: death was being linked to Warhol's notion of 15 minutes of fame, something that received an unfavourable reception: 'In current culture "America", those who commit suicide, die accidentally, or kill others get their "fifteen minutes" – maybe even more if the death is overly brutal' (Cowser, 1998: 10). Therefore, death was increasingly becoming a method through which fame was achieved, in which the death of a civilian or celebrity was fetishized in the mass media. On the other hand, certain detractors of Warhol claimed that his art spelled the death of celebrity itself, or the disintegration of a certain kind of celebrity that was being replaced by something more trivial, low-brow and vulgar. As Cowser writes, Warhol was obsessed with both death and celebrity in unison: 'In post-war America when Warhol began his work, Death began to take on the same mythical qualities of Celebrity, and Celebrity began to possess some of the finality of death' (1998: 7).

The notion that death is intimately linked with celebrity culture is not so bizarre when discussed in relation to Warhol and the postmodern movement. As unnerving as it may be, there is an aura attached to the early death of a celebrity that was felt quite acutely in the 1960s and 70s, an extension of the celebration of death in Romanticism. As Harris writes:

> Death – in particular, a premature death – is the ultimate democratic epiphany in the cult of celebrity. Despite the long faces we pull when they commit suicide or O.D., their funerals actually provide opportunities for jubilation, festivals in which we applaud their last performance, their last role, as a real human being as liable to physical misfortunes as the best of us (2008: 617).

Indeed, the relationship between celebrity and death illuminates the extent to which a media personality becomes fetishized. The cult status of the death of the celebrity, therefore, was not only a metaphorical status but a very realistic one as well. In the search for genuine celebrity, in the same vein as Boorstin, one way in which people have courted fame is through premature death, and Warhol was obsessed with this concept: 'Is his desire for fame so perverse that part of him wishes he'd died and thus secured it?' (Reeve, 2011: 658). This

question reiterates the notion, argued by Mole and Hazlitt, that genius begins when celebrity ends (2009: 49), since, as Cowen notes, the 'star can no longer fail' (2000: 20).

Both Andy Warhol and Roland Barthes are similar in the way in which they treat the individual, often the genius, or celebrity individual. As De Villiers writes: 'Both Warhol and Barthes propose an alternative to the notion of an identity "hidden behind" the surface. Both question the role that the face plays in these games of identity, as true marker of identity and as mask' (2005: 22). Warhol and Barthes incorporate the idea of the face, or of identity, in similar ways. For Warhol, the celebrity face is treated as an experiment, and not truly indicative of the individual's identity, and it is seen as a spectacle throughout his art-making practice. For Barthes, on the other hand, his point of discussion is the identity of the author, as he argues that the author's identity cannot be, and should not be, of reigning significance when viewing the author's work. This is where Barthes begins to fetishize the death of the author in the same manner in which Warhol fetishized the death of the celebrity – in a metaphorical manner.

Poststructuralism and Authorship

The twentieth century, particularly the latter half in the 1960s and 70s, proved a controversial period for notions of authorship, with various theorists (and authors) arguing against the Romantic conception of authorship. The role of the author in the 1960s garnered renewed interest amongst the poststructuralists in particular, including Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and Julia Kristeva. Post-structuralism contended with the theories of structuralism, a movement which was primarily based on the ideas of Ferdinand de Saussure. For Saussure, structuralism involved interpreting a text based on linguistic conventions that determined an objective meaning of words and language. French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss developed his own form of structuralism, which he called 'structural anthropology', in which signs and symbols retain an inherent meaning. As Lévi-Strauss argues: 'The choice of the sign may be arbitrary, but it retains an inherent value – an independent content – which becomes associated with its semantic function and modulates it' (1963: 94).

While structuralism emphasised the link between the word and a fixed meaning, the poststructuralists, in contrast, were more interested in debunking the apparent link between

language and the world, focusing on the ultimate instability of language as a definitive marker of objective meaning.

As well as a reaction to Saussure and Lévi-Strauss's views on an academic level, the rise of poststructuralism was also the result of great social change and ideological disenchantment. It emerged within a social milieu defined by struggle and change, in which various social events played a significant role in forming the basis of poststructuralist theory. The poststructuralist movement was particularly influenced by the changes that were occurring between World War II and 1968. In May and June in 1968, the student and workers' revolution took place in France which drastically altered the social environment in French intellectual life. These changes in the French educational system strongly influenced the poststructuralists, particularly Foucault. As James Marshall explains, Foucault was one of the more notable theorists to have been involved in the aftermath of these events, when he became head of philosophy at the Vincennes campus of the University of Paris in 1968 (2004: 1). In his *Society Must be Defended* (1997), Foucault explains the changes that were taking place during the 1960s that influenced post-structuralism:

For the last ten or fifteen years, the immense and proliferating criticizability of things, institutions, practices, and discourses; a sort of general feeling that the ground was crumbling beneath our feet, especially in places where it seemed most familiar, most solid, and closest to us, to our bodies, to our everyday gestures. But alongside this crumbling and the astonishing efficacy of discontinuous, particular, and local critiques, the facts were also revealing something that could not, perhaps, have been foreseen from the outset: what might be called the inhibiting effect specific to totalitarian theories, or at least – what I mean is – all-encompassing and global theories (2003: 6).

Marshall argues that Foucault resisted being associated with either movement of postmodernism and poststructuralism (2010: xiv). Further, the similarities and differences between poststructuralism and postmodernism are readily apparent. Marshall explains that the term "postmodern" surfaced in the 1930s and 40s in relation to the arts and humanities, and that: 'if it is very difficult to define postmodernism it is also very difficult to define "poststructuralism" (and indeed structuralism) in any homogenous manner, and to classify any philosophers normally caught by the notion of poststructuralism' (2010: xv). Marshall also argues that there is: 'an antagonism towards poststructuralism and postmodernism by

both Anglo-American analytic philosophers and also by social theorists […] who hold still to the tenets of the Enlightenment message of emancipation through critical reason' (xv).

Theorist Pushkala Prasad, however, writes:

> Poststructuralism is part of the wider *post* movement of the late twentieth-century Europe and shares a number of attitudes with postmodernism, notably its suspicion of "grand" metanarratives and its disenchantment with Enlightenment thinking. Nevertheless, poststructuralism has some distinctive features of its own, especially to be found in its focus on language as it relates to institutions and power (2005: 238, author's emphasis).

Poststructuralism nevertheless utilised and depended on many theories tied to the structuralist movement. As Bertens explains: 'Poststructuralism is unthinkable without structuralism' (2001: 120). He argues: 'Poststructuralism continues structuralism's preoccupation with language. But its view of language is wholly different from the structuralist view.' (2001: 120). Furthermore, Bertens argues that structuralism 'knows that there is no natural link between a word and that which it refers to – that, in other words, the relationship between language and the world that language describes is always arbitrary' (121). He argues, however, that structuralism does not examine the 'possible consequences of that gap between language and the world' (121).

In this way poststructuralism can be seen to reject the structuralists' view of the world as having its meaning linked irretrievably to language. Although inevitably interested in language themselves, the poststructuralists were less inclined to place faith in the foundation of language as related to a fixed meaning, seeing language as 'extremely slippery' (Bertens, 121) and focusing more on the irreducibility of meaning and the inherent instability of language. Taking place within dramatically changing social structures and environments, poststructuralism looked at the world in a very different way to the structuralists.

Moreover, the theory of deconstruction, which was derived from Jacques Derrida's work *Of Grammatology* (1967), is seen as corresponding to structuralist ideas of language and structure, but exists ambiguously in between structuralism and poststructuralism. As Derrida writes: 'To deconstruct was also a structuralist gesture […] But it was also an antistructuralist gesture, and its fortune rests in part on this ambiguity. Structures were to be

undone, decomposed, desedimented' (1988: 2). Barthes was also seen as a transitional figure; his earlier works including *Elements of Semiology* (1964) investigate structuralist theory while he later developed poststructuralist views. His famous essay 'The Death of the Author' (1968) was considered the defining work that saw him moving from structuralist to postrstructuralist theory.

Although arguments against the author have most famously been explored by Barthes and Foucault, other theorists have approached the debate of the author's role in various ways[45], and several anti-authorial arguments preceded the poststructuralist movement. For instance, in their seminal essay *The Intentional Fallacy* (1946), Monroe Beardsley and WK Wimsatt argued that a poem ought not to be interpreted through the intentions of the author. They argue that the author's claim for intention 'seems doubtful […] and most of its Romantic corollaries are as yet subject to any widespread questioning' (1982: 3).

Theorist E.D. Hirsch argues in defence of the author, stating that in the last four decades, there has been 'a heavy and largely victorious assault on the sensible belief that a text means what its author meant' (1967: 1). Hirsch explains that this attack was done to remove emphasis from the author onto the work itself, and that the 'post-romantic fascination with the habits, feelings, and experiences surrounding the act of composition were very justly brought under attack' (3). Yet, as Hirsch argues, the author exists as a fundamental tool for interpretation: 'For, once the author had been ruthlessly banished as the determiner of his text's meaning, it very gradually appeared that no adequate principle existed for judging the validity of an interpretation' (3). Further, for Hirsch, this banishment of the author began to privilege the role of the critic, with an emphasis on the critic's reading of a text: 'What had not been noticed in the earliest enthusiasm for going back to "what a text says" was that the text had to represent *somebody's* meaning – if not the author's, then the critic's' (3, author's emphasis). Such an approach, therefore, ironically preserves the Romantic discourse of aligning a text with a personality, in this instance, of explaining a text in relation to a critic, rather than the author. Criticism, it can be argued, potentially became another discourse of authorship, and did little to eliminate, or 'banish', as Hirsch argues, the desire to interpret a text through an authoritative figure. As Sean Burke suggests: 'this development from strong reader to rewriter to writer has led many poststructuralists to suggest that criticism itself has become a primary discourse' (1998: 177). Further, as Burke explains, certain critics and authors have 'expanded and revised their way out of criticism in the only way one can: that

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[45] TS Eliot, whose essay 'Traditional and Individual Talent' (1919) argues against the notion that poetry signifies the intention of its poet.

is, toward authorship' (180). Indeed, the Romantic impulse to have a text read through the lens of a personality seems an almost inevitable practice. However, although the theories of poststructuralists were not wholly embraced by society and culture as a practical method of reading texts, they were nevertheless influential and instrumental in re-evaluating the role of the author.

The Death of the Author

Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault are the most prominent and famous examples of anti-authorial theory for their arguments against the prominence of the author in literature and culture. Even before he published his most famous essay, 'The Death of the Author', Barthes relegated the author to an insignificant role, and argued against the notion of authorial 'genius.' In his earlier work, *On Racine* (1960), Barthes argues that privileging the author as 'genius' interrupts the way in which society views and understands history. He argues:

> …by focusing on the author, by making the literary "genius" the very source of observation, we relegate the properly historical objects to the rank of nebulous, remote zones; we touch on them only by accident, *in passing*. In the best instances, we indicate their existence, leaving to others the responsibility of dealing with them someday; the essentials of literary history thus fall into default, abandoned by both the historian and the critic (1992: 159, author's emphasis).

Yet Barthes' 'The Death of the Author', first published in French, remains the most established and notable example of anti-authorial theory, attacking the author on an ideological, cultural front. Barthes argues that the author 'is a modern figure' (1977: 143), and that society transformed to accommodate the 'prestige of the individual' (143). Barthes thus alludes to the Romantic idealisation of the individual over the idea of collaborative composition. This is the basis of Barthes' argument against the Romantic conception of authorship.

Discussing Balzac's story *Sarrasine* (1830), Barthes asks the question: 'Who is speaking thus?' (143), referring to the authorial voice within the text. By asking who is speaking within a story, Barthes opens up a dialogue on the concept of source and attribution, or what the source of the writing is within literature. Instead of the author, Barthes posits that

it is actually language which speaks in literature, rather than the author, and describes the text as a neutral site upon which the reader imbues their own impression. Barthes sites Mallarmé as the first author to posit language as the most important aspect of literature, stating: 'For [Mallarmé], for us too, it is language which speaks, not the author' (143). Indeed, for Barthes it is the autonomous element of language which is to be credited as the source of writing. He refuses to equate the text's meaning with the author, or refuses to locate a text's meaning within the mind of the author. Despite his attack on authorship, he concedes: 'Though the sway of the Author remains powerful (the new criticism has often done no more than consolidate it), it goes without saying that certain writers have long since attempted to loosen it' (143). Barthes also acknowledges, though in a critical manner, that authors are the fundamental basis upon which literary history is based:

> The author still reigns in histories of literature, biographies of writers, interviews, magazines, as in the very consciousness of men of letters anxious to unite the person and their work through diaries and memoirs. The image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions […] the explanation of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the author 'confiding' in us. (143).

However, Barthes continues to push for a removal of the author from literature, further arguing that: 'The removal of the Author […] is not merely an historical fact or an act of writing; it utterly transforms the modern text (or – which is the same thing – the text is henceforth made and read in such a way that at all its levels the author is absent' (145). Barthes is equally sceptical about the relationship between the book and the author, arguing that the book's history, as a result of collaboration, should be given renewed attention:

> The Author is thought to nourish the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child. In complete contrast, the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate (145).

In this paragraph, Barthes alludes to the medieval conception of authorship which, as discussed in Chapter One, saw the author as but one of many collaborators, and was not therefore seen to precede the book. Furthermore, Barthes argues that in order for a text to be read, it must exist without biographical consideration of the author:

> Once the Author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile. To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing. Such a conception suits criticism very well, the latter then allotting itself the important task of discovering the Author (or its hypostases: society, history, psyche, liberty) beneath the work: when the Author has been found, the text is "explained" – victory to the critic. Hence there is no surprise in the fact that, historically, the reign of the Author has also been that of the Critic, nor again in the fact that criticism (be it new) is today undermined along with the Author (147).

Another intriguing aspect of Barthes' essay is his capitalising of the word 'author' continuously throughout the work. Although it may be used to show just exactly *how* and in what way the author has been, for Barthes, misused in literature and criticism, it nevertheless makes Barthes' argument somewhat problematic. By capitalising the word author, and not reader, Barthes seems to inadvertently engage in the same ideological system he is attempting to undermine[46]. Furthermore, throughout the essay, Barthes appears inconsistent with his attack on the author. In spite of his scathing perspective, Barthes in fact resurrects the author in his work *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (1977), in which he writes that 'the pleasure of the Text[47] also includes the amicable return of the author' (1989: 8). Moreover, in his *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973), Barthes declares that although the author is dead, he in fact desires the author's presence:

> As an institution, the author is dead: his civil status, his biographical person have disappeared; dispossessed, they no longer exercise over his work the formidable

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[46] Several non-academic texts and sites briefly discuss Barthes' problematic act of capitalising the word 'Author', but as yet there are very few definitive academic texts that explore this.

[47] Eugen Simion in his *Return of the Author* (1996) notes that the word Text in this sentence is 'capitalised, pronounced as sacred in an analysis that – another paradox – ends by desacralizing literature' (1996: 107). Pete Bennett also notes how Barthes habitually capitalises terms such as 'History' and 'Nature' (2013: 152). Also, as Susan Sontag notes in her Preface to *Writing Degree Zero* (1977): 'This history Barthes continually invokes always wears a capital H […] while insisting on an historical perspective, Barthes employs such a generalised, thin notion of history' (1977: xix). Similarly, by continuously writing the word author with a capital 'A', Barthes problematises his own argument in proclaiming the death of the author.

paternity whose account literary history, teaching, and public opinion had the responsibility of establishing and renewing; but in the text, in a way, *I desire* the author: I need his figure (which is neither his representation nor his projection), as he needs mine (1973: 27, Barthes' emphasis).

Barthes' admiration of authors including Proust and Balzac – ironically using the latter in order to undermine the author's significance – is testament to what appears to be a reluctance to adhere to his original declaration, that the author is an irrelevant token or gesture in relation to the text. Barthes' subsequent publications oscillate between affirming his original argument and contradicting himself by positing the author as an important figure. Jane Gallop writes of Barthes' predicament as a new and drastic kind of relationship between Barthes and the author: 'As institution, the author is dead, but that hardly means Barthes does not care about, does not feel anything for the author. On the contrary, Barthes desires the author. In the wake of the dead author, Barthes outlines an erotic relation to the author' (2011: 38). Indeed, Barthes becomes his own paradoxical author in being unable to wholly disregard the figure of the author completely. Barthes establishes a paradox in enabling the return of the author. As Eugen Simion attests, in this event, after Barthes' destruction and desire for the author, this very same author must 'rise out of self-created ashes' (1996: 108). Barthes' essay is therefore, as Bennet argues, 'carefully duplicitous' (2005: 17) in its declaration of the author's death and persistence in keeping the author alive. It is also important to note that Barthes' ambivalence surrounding the author can be seen with his own attempt to write a novel, the unfinished *Vita Nova* (Barthes and Léger, 2011: xxv), thereby undermining the strength of his disavowal of the author-figure.

In comparison to Barthes' essay, Foucault's *What is an Author* (1969) is much more adamant in its assault on authorship through the lens of ownership, copyright, and political institutions. He famously argues against the author's privileged position in regards to what he calls the author-function, namely, the way in which the author has operated throughout society as a discourse. Early in the essay, Foucault criticises himself for previously using the names of authors in his own works in an ambiguous manner. He writes: 'Why did I use the names of authors in *The Order of Things*? Why not avoid their use altogether, or, short of that, why not define the manner in which they were used?' (1969: 1622). Following this interrogation, Foucault asks: 'What is the name of the author? How does it function?' (1626). The notion of the author-function, therefore, becomes Foucault's primary point of enquiry,

investigating how the author has functioned, and how the author continues to function. He describes the author in terms of a 'function of discourse' (1628), that is, as essentially a product of language and culture, not too dissimilar from Barthes' own perspective. For Foucault: 'The name of an author poses all the problems related to the category of the proper name' (1626). In a similar vein to Barthes, Foucault proposes that the author is not inherently an authoritative figure, but actually a modern invention built around modernised ideas of copyright and textual ownership. He states: 'The author's name is not a function of a man's civil status, nor is it fictional; it is situated in the breach, among the discontinuities, which gives rise to new groups of discourse and their singular mode of existence' (1628). Thus, for Foucault, the author has been ascribed a certain status in society that is at once functional though problematic. He maintains that authors, far from inherently possessing prestige in society, should not function in such a way as to be tied to their work through legal manoeuvres. He attests that the author-function:

> …is not universal or constant in all discourse. Even within our civilization, the same types of texts have not always required authors; there was a time when those texts which we now call 'literary' (stories, folk tales, epics and tragedies) were accepted, circulated, and valorized without any question about the identity of their author (1628).

Foucault, moreover, describes a third aspect of the author-function, arguing that authors are not formed 'spontaneously through the simple attribution of a discourse to an individual. It results from a complex operation whose purpose is to constrict the rational entity we call an author' (1629). By declaring the author to be nothing more than a constructed entity, Foucault establishes his own discourse on authorship, around the notion that authors are simply culturally constructed, and that the Romantic rhetoric that privileges their role is nothing more than a faulty or problematic ideology. Foucault concedes that there is a creative component in works that we identify as coming from the author herself, but, he argues: 'these aspects of an individual, which we designate as an author […] are projections, in terms always more or less psychological, of our way of handling texts' (1629). Indeed, for Foucault there remain 'transhistorical constants in the rules that govern the construction of an author' (1629). For Foucault this construction varies between different roles, including that of the poet and philosopher. He argues that the author's role, more than any other, is constructed in

an overtly Romantic manner, and uses this historical knowledge as the basis for his criticisms levelled against the author.

Foucault ends his essay by claiming that: 'we can easily imagine a culture where discourse would circulate without any need for an author' (1636). This claim, however, is as false as it is idealistic. Yet although contemporary examples contradict Foucault's claim, his ideas are useful in affirming the poststructuralist debate and purpose: to see texts as essentially authorless – a significant development in the history of literary celebrity.

Foucault's work has been particularly instrumental and influential in studies of authorship, ownership, copyright and collaboration that have since shaped legal scholarship in recent decades. While Barthes' essay undermined the author's role in ideological instances, Foucault's work has invariably impacted legal and social considerations of the author's function within society and culture in a more noticeable manner. As Peter Jaszi explains in *The Construction of Authorship* (1994): 'Foucault asked literary critics and historians to question the received modern idea of "authorship", and to reimagine its future by reunderstanding its past' (cited in Woodmansee and Jaszi, 1999: 29). Studies of legality and copyright have since strongly utilised Foucault's work in discussing notions of authorship.

Foucault's legacy can also be found in other areas of society, particularly in the music industry which has, since the 1960s, increasingly circulated around ideas of collaboration and without the notion of a singular, creative author. Music sampling since the 1980s undermined the previously-held notion of the author as originator of ideas. Instead, this period saw the author as becoming an information processor and a commodifiable entity. Collaborators in the music industry during this period therefore deliberately distanced themselves from ideas of originality and, by extension, ideas of original authorship. As Simon Frith explains, arguments in pop music 'concern the role of individual authorship in establishing the value of a piece of music; the discursive clash reflects quite different accounts of what's meant by lyrical "creativity"' (24). In the remix culture of the 1980s and 90s, greater emphasis was placed on collective production over the individual creator of music, a notion that can be seen to stem – however directly or indirectly – from Foucault's landmark ideas. The creative individual was a figure that became increasingly challenged in the 1960s as a result of Foucault's work, where he states: 'it would be worth examining how the author became individualised in a culture like ours, what status he has been given, [and] at what moment studies of authenticity and attribution began' (1969: 1623).

Foucault and Barthes thus drastically transformed not the author's social standing but theoretical considerations of the author's function and place within society, in ways that strongly influenced our understanding of authorship as a gradual product of modern society. Although the poststructuralists were not the first critics to challenge conceptions of authorship, they are, indeed, the most notable examples for their unsentimental attacks on authors. The idea of death in regards to authorship also does not begin with Barthes and Foucault[48], but they are nevertheless the most prominent examples of where death and authorship are most strongly acquainted.

The Resurrection of the Author

Evidently, the influence of Barthes and Foucault's arguments have only been sustained, as Moran states, in academic circumstances. The figure of the author has not only persevered against detractors, but has, noticeably, increased in public fascination. The sway of the author has proven to be so prominent that discourses surrounding authorship are continually discussed within the vein of celebrity. What the theories of Barthes and Foucault have achieved, however, is in showing how the author can be discussed in different manners and through different discourses. As Moran argues:

> The kind of "anti-authorial" criticism with which [Barthes] is associated is actually useful to this discussion in pointing to the ways in which the figure of the author can function as a *vehicle for ideologies* which promote the autonomy and singularity of the individual subject, and which attribute value and authority to certain texts (and authors) but not others (2000: 59, own emphasis).

Thus many anti-authorial theories have actually lead to a re-evaluation of the author's role in which the author's position in society became all the more significant. As Sean Burke aptly notes in his work *The Death and Return of the Author* (1992), Barthes' essay ironically propelled the theorist into stardom:

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[48] Blanchot's essay 'Death of the Last Writer' (1955), for instance, discusses death and writing, while Jacques Derrida's essay 'The Deaths of Roland Barthes' (1987) also provides an interesting perspective on Barthes and the notion of death.

The theorist of the author's death became a celebrity in France, an enthusiastic interviewee on television, the radio, for newspapers; he went on to write two confidently autobiographical works, texts which were not autobiographies but autobiographical, books of feeling, impressions, of the self; he talked, we know, of writing a novel, a "Proustian novel" (2004: 61).

The 'death of the author' rhetoric, therefore, only intensified support for the author's position in literature, further allowing the author to assume the role of celebrity once again. The fetishization of death and celebrity that was seen in the career of Warhol in turn established a way of fetishizing the author in a similar manner. As Kane writes, in the wake of Barthes' claim to the author's death, there has been a dramatic reaction in public authorship, which has seen the author ascend into stardom. He argues: 'The Author frequently served as a symbol of the subject's ascendance in modernity and those setting out to prove the death of the subject often wrote on the death of the Author, paradoxically becoming in the process the authors of postmodernity' (2004: 409). Although Barthes and Foucault's claims remain intriguing regarding authorship, invariably the post 1960s literary scene proved lucrative for authors to become celebrities, undermining the poststructuralist debate. As Kane explains:

In the post 1960s US, the Author does not signify the Author of History as much as literary celebrity – a writer who is known for producing ''quality'' writing, but whose life and biography are central to the marketing and promotion of his or her books. These are the figures consumed in ''Literature'' courses rather than in airports (though the success of literary celebrity – and the simultaneous interrogation of the literary in literature courses – makes such a distinction facetious, if illustrative). Regardless of where they are read, these authors retain a degree of cultural capital – often signified in their lack of economic capital (411).

The problematic ground on which anti-authorialism stands has also been attacked on the grounds of hypocrisy. In a 2013 article in the *New York Daily News*, Rebecca Rothfeld stated that the contemporary influence of anti-authorialism is compromised due to its hypocritical effect:

The very same academics who routinely assign Barthes' essay to their students eagerly perused Italo Calvino's personal correspondences, which were published last month amid much fanfare; the very same bibliophiles who profess their allegiance to Barthes' work were first in line to buy copies of David Foster Wallace's much-anticipated biography, "Every Love Story is a Ghost Story"; and the very same literature students who quote Barthes liberally at Bohemian cocktail parties avidly read the interviews of their favourite authors that appear in the *The Paris Review* (Rothfeld, 2013).

Therefore, as Rothfeld's comment illustrates, not only are Barthes and Foucault criticised in an academic sense, but also in a cultural context; the figure of the author during and immediately following the poststructuralist attack on authorship did not wane but simply persevered in an overtly Romantic sense. Michael Martin makes a similar claim, stating that many readers who initially loved books and authors are now: 'grown-ups who deconstruct texts and believe the "author" is fiction's greatest fiction. Did they never notice that Foucault, though he claimed the author to be fiction, still signed his name to his books?' (2009: 75). Indeed, on a more practical basis, with the exception of a few authors who remain anonymous, even those who adamantly reject the Romantic view of authorship continue to adorn book jackets. Yet Martin continues: 'So what do I recommend as an alternative? A return to Romanticism? The resurrection of meaning? These are the two ideas most under attack by postmodernism, and for good reason: they won't go away' (90). The link between the text and the author's personality is indeed popular in spite of the vigorous arguments built against it.

Harvey Hix discusses the death of the author through the lens of an 'autopsy'. Comparing Barthes' proclamation to Nietzsche's 'death of god' thesis, Hix writes: 'Nietzsche's proclamation is an obituary; Barthes' is a suicide note, and an enigmatic one at that' (1987: 131). What Hix's comment illustrates is the state of flux that the author appears to reside in; the notion that an author is, ideologically speaking, dead, is seen as inconclusive. Furthermore, Hix argues: 'What is worse than the fact that Barthes, himself an author, proclaimed the death of the author, is that he proclaimed it in writing' (131). Similarly to Martin's comment on Foucault, the fact that these writers proclaimed the death of their own vocation in writing remains quite problematic. Such a threat to the author through the very lens of authorship appears indecisive and inconsistent, and as a result Barthes and Foucault's respective essays have been limited in their ability to convince other authors, theorists and

readers. Arguments against Barthes and Foucault have ranged from the egotistical desire for authors—including Barthes and Foucault themselves—to keep their names attached to the work, to the simple and somewhat undeniable prominence of the author in culture during this academic assault. Peter Lamarque, in his essay 'The Death of the Author: An Analytical Autopsy' (1990), writes:

> One conception is that the Death Thesis can be read either as a statement of fact or as wishful thinking, i.e., either as a description of the current state of affairs (we simply no longer have authors conceived in a certain way), or as a prescription for the future (we no longer need authors so conceived, we can now get by without them) (1990: 323).

Arguably, both Barthes and Foucault's approach to the author's literary demise can be seen to adhere to the latter; their argument against the Romantic conception of authorship is more of an attempt to break with past conceptions of authorship than it is an actual illustration of the real state of authorship. Although the 1960s and 70s prove to be a transitional period for authorship, authors were, nevertheless, still prominent figures, as they remain to be in contemporary (twenty-first century) discourse. Thus Barthes and Foucault argue *for* change, rather than arguing what *is*. Yet their respective attacks on the author proved futile in many respects. The actual state of affairs remains distinctly in favour of authorship in its most romanticised form, surrounding the idea of original genius (Williamson, 1989). While Martin asked if there should be a return to Romanticism, Lamarque writes:

> Authors under this conception are certainly not dead. But should they be killed off? Should we try to rid ourselves of this conception? The question is political and moral, not philosophical. Should we promote a society where all writing is anonymous, where writers have no legal status and no obligation? (1990: 323).

Foucault, more so than Barthes, was more instrumental in attacking the author in regards to ownership and copyright, while Barthes' attack remained highly idealistic and ideological. Yet despite the differences between their arguments, neither of their views has been sustained. The Romantic conception thus seems too appealing for both writers and readers; the complaints made against this conception seem to remain in scholarly circles only, with cultural circles advocating the role of the author as original genius. Yet following on from the

poststructuralists is the postmodern argument against the author. Although postmodernism did not wholly dismiss the author as a relevant figure of literature and culture, it made theories of authorship vulnerable to re-evaluation. As Martin and Lamarque's aforementioned comments suggest, although the Romantic conception of authorship proves popular and sturdy, this has not made the Romantic conception of authorship impervious to criticism, or at least re-evaluation. The author's ideological death thus proves a crucial development in the continuing history of both authorship and celebrity studies. As the following chapter indicates, although the 'death of the author' rhetoric failed to culminate in the author's removal from literature, it did, however, offer different ways of perceiving the author, and the way in which authors approached their authorship and celebrity became equally varied. Following on from Barthes and Foucault's theories, the appropriation and remix cultures of the 1970s, 80s and 90s changed the conditions of authorship, especially in pop music and visual arts. The 1960s therefore saw a change in the reception of the 'author function', in which a renewed interest in collaborative authorship was seen, which would leave an indelible imprint on literary criticism and its relationship to literary celebrity.

Chapter Seven: The Postmodern Celebrity Author from Pynchon to Rushdie

The postmodern celebrity author is a key figure in the history of literary celebrity. Existing in an uncertain shift between modernist poetics and an increasingly commercialised culture, postmodern authors tread lines of style, genre and philosophy, encompassing a range of varying styles and approaches to art, fiction and the media. Despite the theories espoused by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, the author did not recede from society's view but in fact became something of a transgressive, experimental figure, not conforming to any particular style or trend. The postmodern celebrity author therefore becomes a necessary figure in confronting notions and expectations surrounding the cultures of authorship and celebrity. In particular, the postmodern authors Thomas Pynchon and Salman Rushdie exemplify this shift in literary celebrity's boundaries, and furthermore demonstrate the extent to which mediated absence enhances the aura of the reclusive celebrity author.

Restoring Authorship

Invariably, postmodernism challenged common conceptions about authorship and saw the dismantling of traditional notions of writing, which impacted the role of the author in various industries including the music industry as well as academic institutions. As Lisa S. Ede and Andrea A. Lunsford point out in their work *Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing* (1990), there remains a 'well-established image of the writer as an isolated, often alienated, hero' (1992: 73), yet they note that in the science industry, an increase in collaborative authorship 'is one of the most salient characteristics distinguishing premodern and modern science' (74). This trend also extends to the classroom. As Lise Buranen and Alice Myers Roy note: 'Ready access to socially charged collaborative influences during the process of writing is effectively redefining the concept of authorship within the classroom' (1999: 212). However, although the theories of Barthes and Foucault were particularly instrumental in re-evaluating the author's role, and in producing greater consideration of collaboration, this trend has not successfully dominated literary trends. Laura Savu explains that while 1960s postmodernism, 'under the sway of structuralism and poststructuralism, [in which] critical theories of authorial absence, death, or disappearance threatened to radically impersonalise discourse' (2009: 22), 1970s and 80s postmodernism

focused more on restoring the author as an important figure of literary discourse through salient postmodern texts:

> Functioning as an antidote to the extreme versions of postmodern thought that seek to bracket both reality and subjectivity, these narratives emphasise the value of individual consciousness for culture and restore the author as an elemental tool of scholarship, a variable textual meaning, and an ethical value obtaining from its various hypostases as originating genius, secular prophet, high priest of art, witness to the real world, celebrity, fraud, trickster, outsider, and even "the other" (22).

Thus what might be labelled as the second wave of postmodernism saw not only a re-evaluation of the author's role but a fragmentation of their role in literature. By being both fraudster and celebrity, and both outsider and genius, the author in postmodernism loses the constraining characteristics that hitherto defined authorship in stringent manners. As previously noted, Joe Moran sees the postmodern movement as most useful in showing how the author operates as a 'vehicle for ideologies' (2000: 59), whatever they may be. Savu notes: 'Both the reinvention and critical appraisal of these constructs fall in line with the project of postmodernism, central to which is the rewriting – renarrating – of history and identity' (2009: 22). The author thus paradoxically became, following the death of the author, of renewed interest to theorists and critics, who became enamoured with the identity of the author once again. As Andrew Bennett writes: 'even postmodernism, with its alleged intolerance for the sentimental humanism, the comforting essentialism, of authorship, is nevertheless – or perhaps therefore – fascinated by, fixated on, author-effects and author-figures' (2005: 109).

Postmodernism and Authorship

Various debates exist on the condition, movement or theory known as postmodernism, as well as precisely when it occurred. For Jürgen Habermas, postmodernism is simply the unfinished project of modernity (cited in d'Entrèves and Benhabib, 1996). This in turn problematises the ability to date the postmodern movement[49], although it is generally

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[49] From September 24, 2011 to January 15, 2012, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London held the exhibition: *Postmodernism: Style and Subversion, 1970-1990*, therefore providing a specific period in which postmodernism supposedly took place.

understood to have gained momentum in the 1970s and throughout the 1980 and 90s. The main proponents of postmodern theory were Jean Baudrillard, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Frederic Jameson, who viewed and discussed postmodernism through political, philosophical or theoretical lenses[50].

In terms of aesthetics, postmodern style used a variety and mixing of styles and genres, with no clear style or genre dominating the movement. Yet postmodernism can be understood as utilising irony, metafiction, magic realism, pastiche, satire, and appropriation in art, literature and media, as well as engaging more heavily in mass culture, beginning more evidently in Pop Art. For Frampton, postmodernism exhibits 'a reactionary, unrealistic impulse to return to the architectonic forms of the preindustrial past' (1985: 20). In this way postmodernism professed a lack of originality, and instead sought to appropriate the work and culture from the past and from mass culture, as evidenced in Andy Warhol's triptychs, for example. Postmodernism's emphasis on the past also influenced the act of re-telling or fictionalising historical events or figures, what Linda Hutcheon has termed 'historiographic metafiction' (1988). This device can be seen in the works of various postmodern authors[51].

In terms of literature, postmodern fiction disassociates itself from modernism in various ways. For Brian McHale[52], where modernist literature was concerned with the philosophy of epistemology or the notion of knowledge, postmodern literature was concerned with ontology, or the philosophy of being. Postmodern authors, as a result, wrote differently about the world than modernist authors. As Steven Conner writes, modernist authors such as Proust and Joyce wrote fiction 'in an effort to consume the world. [Whereas] Postmodernist fiction became big in an effort to outdo the world' (2004: 71). The postmodern author therefore engages in particular elements that are seen as distinctly postmodern, writing works

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[50] Linda Hutcheon and Joseph Natoli's *A Postmodern Reader* (1993) is a concise work containing, along with other salient essays on the topic of postmodern theory, excerpts from Baudrillard's *Precession of the Simulacra*, Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*, and Jameson's *Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, all of which are considered hallmark works of postmodern theory. Other significant works on postmodernism include Andreas Huyssen's comparative study of modernism and postmodernism, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (1986), and Linda Hutcheon's seminal works *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988) and *A Politics of Postmodernism* (1989).

[51] Of the many postmodern works that exhibit historiographic metafiction, some of the most notable are Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), Italo Calvino's Invisible Cities (1972), E.L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* (1975), Salman Rushdie's *Grimus* (1975) and *Midnight's Children* (1981), Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (1980) and *Foucault's Pendulum* (1988), Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* (1982), Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984), Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* (1984), *The Skin of a Lion* (1987) and *The English Patient* (1992), Gabriel García Márquez's *The General in his Labyrinth* (1989), and Thomas Pynchon's *Mason and Dixon* (1997), all of which fictionalise or elaborate elements of history.

[52] McHale's *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987) is the hallmark text on postmodern writing and fiction, and also offers a comparative study between modernist and postmodernist literature as well as a philosophical understanding of postmodern fiction.

that are deemed tumultuous, multi-coloured, heteroglossic and encyclopaedic, among other things (71). Authors that belong to this group include Thomas Pynchon, Donald Barthelme, John Barth, Don DeLillo, Umberto Eco, Michael Ondaatje, Milan Kundera, Italo Calvino, and Angela Carter, among others. However, for Conner, Don DeLillo is not included as a postmodern author due to the author's 'unrepresentability and incommensurability' (72). DeLillo is instead seen to exist independently of any category that would identify him as distinctly postmodern.

No concrete definition of the postmodern writer exists, especially due to the fact that postmodernism is itself difficult to wholly define. While for W. Lawrence Hogue the postmodern writer is a predominantly Euro-American male archetype who 'only aids in the furthering of the adverse and dark aspects of modernity' (2009: 39), Georges-Claude Guilbert argues that the postmodern writer utilises metafiction to show that 'he knows that everything has already been said, that all the experiments have already been attempted (by the modern) in terms of form, but that it is in no way saddening' (2002: 21-22). Indeed, the postmodern writer relishes their role as someone who expresses 'sheer fun linked to the exploration of language and of the centuries of writing that preceded her or him' (22).

John Barth is arguably one of the most significant writers in postmodern history. His famous essay 'The Literature of Exhaustion' (1967) – published the same year as Barthes' 'Death of the Author' – exists as somewhat of a manifesto for postmodern fiction. Barth discusses modernist authors such as Franz Kafka and James Joyce, but focuses on Argentinian author Jorge Luis Borges to illustrate the difference between the 'technically old-fashioned artist' (1984: 66) and the 'technically up-to-date non-artist, and a technically up-to-date artist' (66). Barth's point is that the writing styles and forms of traditional, older writers such as Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy and Balzac are stale and antiquated, particularly as the twentieth century, when he is writing, is already 'more than two-thirds done' (67), and that contemporary writers should therefore embrace more up-to-date styles. He argues that while being 'technically up-to-date is the least important attribute of a writer' (66), he also contends that this 'least important attribute may nevertheless be essential' (66). Furthermore, Barth notes that his own novels, including *The Sot-Weed Factor* (1960) and *Giles Goat-Boy* (1966) 'imitate the form of the Novel, by an author who imitates the role of Author' (72).

Thus for Barth, postmodern fiction departs from the historical, 'bourgeois' form and style of its modernist predecessors, and seeks to experiment with form through elements such as imitation and irony, arguing: 'it may well be that the novel's time as a major art form is up,

as the "times" of classical tragedy, Italian and German grand opera, or the sonnet-sequence came to be' (71). The postmodern author is therefore associated with newness and experimentation and the revolt against tradition. Borrowing a term from American poet Wallace Stevens, Joseph Conte describes the postmodern author as a 'connoisseur of chaos' who engages in 'the continual process of invention and disruption, the making of meaning and the free play of signifiers' (2002: 9).

Postmodern celebrity culture, however, seemed to fetishize the figure of the *reclusive* postmodern author; in his work *Mao II* (1991), Don DeLillo explored 'the paradoxical fascination with author-recluses in American celebrity culture' (Moran, 2000: 137). DeLillo himself, Moran writes, reluctantly rose to a kind of 'major league celebrity' (137) from the mid-1980s, and used his fiction as a vehicle for critiquing this rampant form of celebrity worship. As was the case with Salinger, DeLillo professes great respect for authors who disavow publicity:

> There are writers who refuse to make public appearances. Writers who say "no."
> Writers in opposition, not necessarily in a specific way. But there are those of us who write books that are not easily absorbed by the culture, who refuse to have their photographs taken, who refuse to give interviews […] there may also be an element in which such writers are refusing to become part of the all-incorporating treadmill of consumption and disposal (cited in Bing, 1997).

But the anomaly of the reclusive author in an age of intense, pervasive media exposure has in turn made the life of those authors outside of this media culture all the more fascinating for readers. As Bing argues: 'As the first books in years from Pynchon and possibly Salinger have inspired journalists to invade the private lives of these authors with ever increasing zeal, it has been suggested that a writer's ability to shield himself from the media is a dead art' (1997: NP). Yet as DeLillo maintains, there is an increasing desire for authors to 'refuse to submit' to such a culture, and within DeLillo's work the author continues to reproduce, as Moran argues: 'a particularly prevalent myth of author-recluses as transcendent figures defined by their separation from the "mass"' (2000: 138).

Thomas Pynchon is perhaps the most revered and mythicized of all of these recluses, becoming a phenomenon in celebrity culture. He arguably exists 'on the pendulum of self-exposure that oscillates between aggressively exhibitionistic Mailerism and sequestered Salingerism' (Moran, 2000: 102). Further, the postmodern celebrity author as curiously

absent from the public eye is seen in the careers of both Thomas Pynchon and Salman Rushdie. Where Pynchon is considered a celebrity despite never being seen publicly, Rushdie, on the other hand, famously encountered seclusion due to the political and religious uproar surrounding his novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988). While Pynchon's absence is largely self-imposed, Rushdie was forced into hiding for his own safety, opening up an intriguing dialogue on the nature of the postmodern celebrity author as famous-through-absence, undermining the notion that celebrity culture is characterised as consistently omnipresent.

Pynchon's Anonymous Celebrity

Many would argue that Thomas Pynchon, the notoriously elusive author of *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) is not, in fact, a celebrity at all. After all, someone who shuns publicity and is virtually anonymous is not often considered a product of celebrity culture. However, as was the case with so many authors before him, Pynchon exhibits both anti-consumerist intentions *and* engages in the world of celebrity simultaneously, making him one in a long line of paradoxical authors. Few theorists are willing, therefore, to discuss Pynchon's celebrity, preferring to keep him and his works within the realm of academia. Yet it is unavoidable to allude to Pynchon without then referring to his evident ties to contemporary popular culture. His 2004 appearance on *The Simpsons* alongside his flagrant anonymity positions Pynchon in a role as a very distinct kind of celebrity author – both known and unknown, accessible and unreachable, and both celebrity and stranger. As a result his authorship is representative of a small but significant cultural shift, a turning point in literary celebrity that is characterised by a refusal of celebrity.

Furthermore, Pynchon has himself criticised the term 'recluse', stating that term is a journalistic word: 'My belief is that "recluse" is a code word generated by journalists... meaning, "doesn't like to talk to reporters"' ('Where's Thomas Pynchon?' 1997). Yet by being predominantly absent from the media, Pynchon is automatically branded with the term 'recluse' to denote someone who is not as visible as an ordinary celebrity. Indeed, as Lorraine York notes, contemporary celebrity culture abides by certain extremes that see society making excuses for reluctant celebrities, trying to categorise them in order to make sense of their behaviour:

Although we have a language to describe the desire for celebrity, and a language to describe a radical recoil from celebrity – reclusiveness – as yet we do not have a way of thinking about a wavering state of celebrity that is at once both and neither of those things. Many of our theoretical treatments of celebrity take the extreme of reclusiveness into account; in conservative critiques, it often serves as a morality tale of sorts about the depredations of celebrity (2014: 1).

Pynchon's simultaneous presence and absence, therefore, proves frustrating for certain people who do not know whether to call him a celebrity or a recluse, since, by celebrity culture's standards, he cannot, apparently, be both.

While little is known of the author's personal life, it is known that Thomas Ruggles Pynchon was born in 1937 in Glen Cove, Long Island, New York, to Thomas Ruggles Sr. and Katherine Frances Bennett, and is also reputed to be a descendent of English colonist William Pynchon. He was educated at Cornell University where he studied engineering physics, before serving in the US Navy at the end of his second year. In 1957, however, Pynchon returned to Cornell to study for an English degree, where he purportedly attended lectures by Russian-American author Vladimir Nabokov. As Sweeney explains:

One of Nabokov's former students, Alfred Appel, told him that Pynchon had doubtless taken Literature 312, and asked what he thought of Pynchon's fiction. Nabokov had no memory of Pynchon, however, and no knowledge of his work […] Véra Nabokov, who often graded her husband's exams, said she remembered [Pynchon's] "unusual" handwriting, which combined cursive and printing (2008).

According to Sweeney, however, scholar Charles Hollander acquired a boot-legged copy of Pynchon's academic transcript which shows that he did not, in fact, attend Nabokov's lectures (although the lectures may not have been a part of Pynchon's official class list). Yet the curiosity regarding this event, and countless others, illuminates the intense intrigue surrounding not only Pynchon's identity but his many exploits and habits.

In a 1996 issue of *New York Magazine*, Nancy Jo Sales wrote the article 'Meet Your Neighbour, Thomas Pynchon: Tracking Down Thomas Pynchon' (1996). In the article Sales speculated as to the whereabouts of Pynchon:

Since 1963, when Pynchon's first novel, *V.*, came out, the writer – widely considered America's most important novelist since World War II – has become an almost mythical figure, a kind of cross between the Nutty Professor (Jerry Lewis's) and Caine in *Kung Fu*. There has never been a confirmed Pynchon sighting published before this one, but there have been plenty of wild theories about his whereabouts, advanced by gonzo fans and serious scholars […] In the seventies, after the startlingly brilliant and difficult *Gravity's Rainbow* – perhaps the least-read must-read in American history – came screaming across the landscape, Pynchon was hot, in mediagenic terms, and a virtual subgenre of New Journalism sprang up and circled around trying to find him, or at least understand him as a literary MIA (1996).

The term 'mediagenic' is an interesting one to bestow upon Pynchon, whose reclusiveness would otherwise contradict the term. Outlined by theorist Joe Moran, the mediagenic author is one who is part of the economics of 'literary production' (2000: 35), and one who has the opportunity to engage in the act of self-publicity. Pynchon's profile, therefore, does not automatically fit the term 'mediagenic', yet as several scholars have observed, Pynchon is neither an entirely elusive author nor is he the product of the media. Tony Tanner writes of Pynchon that 'no contemporary writer has achieved such fame and such anonymity at the same time' (1982: 12). Furthermore, Tanner argues that authors in America are usually disseminated in the public eye. He explains:

There is a dislike for publicity in the way that it can take over a writer's life and manipulate it and exploit it, turning it into a saleable image, so that the 'life' and the works may become confused, or the life becomes the dominant 'fiction' to which the writer may succumb (Hemingway is arguably an instance of this) to the detriment – or ignoring – of the imaginative 'life' contained in the work […] A writer like Norman Mailer has made a career out of accepting these conditions; it might be said that he lives in public, lives off publicity […] With Pynchon it has been the other way. He became famous and invisible at almost the same moment (1982: 13).

Pynchon is therefore a crucial kind of celebrity author, encompassing two seemingly opposing characteristics and becoming famous partly through his absence. Tanner, furthermore, sees Pynchon's disappearance as greatly relevant to the author's career,

claiming that it is used to place the focus on the author's works, rather than the author himself. Pynchon's identity, as a result of his disappearance, has both come under scrutiny while also being partly the source of the intrigue and mystery surrounding him, adding to his growing renown. This has, in turn, fuelled the myth surrounding his persona. After a rare invitation to meet the author, Salman Rushdie remarked: 'He was extremely Pynchon-esque. He was the Pynchon I wanted him to be' (Boog, 2009). Rushdie's sentiments allude to the mythology surrounding Pynchon's character in light of his absence from the media. Due to his reclusiveness, authorial mythologies continue to be created, falling under the particular umbrella term 'Pynchon-esque[53]', referring to qualities that appear in Pynchon's fiction.

Comparisons have often been made between Pynchon and J.D. Salinger, in which many Pynchon enthusiasts argue that he is in fact Salinger[54]. Novelist John Calvin Batchelor, for instance, similarly claimed in his *Soho Weekly News* article, 'Thomas Pynchon is not Thomas Pynchon, or, This is the End of the Plot Which Has No Name' (April 22, 1976), that Pynchon was Salinger. This article prompted Pynchon to reply: 'Not bad. Keep trying' (cited in Tanner, 1982: 18). Theorist Dan Foster notes, in his work *Author Unknown: On the Trail of Anonymous* (2000), that 'Some Pynchonophiles (as they call themselves) say that Thomas Pynchon is not even real. Some say that his novels were written by J.D. Salinger, or by the Unabomber, or by an extraterrestrial sapience, or by a secret organization' (2000: 189). The very phrase 'Pynchonophiles' relates to Pynchon's attraction to mass consumer culture in such a way as to create an obsession over his persona, characteristic of the kind of mass popularity seen for popular musicians or film stars. His absence from the media, his partial anonymity, has only intensified readers' desires to uncover his identity. As Foucault writes in 'What is An Author?' (1969): 'Literary anonymity was of interest only as a puzzle to be solved' (1969: 1629). Such is the case with Pynchon's authorship.

In spite of how dense and complex his works are – prompting a *WikiHow* Page called *How to Read a Thomas Pynchon Novel* [55] – he has simultaneously attained a kind of cult status as a well-publicised and mediated celebrity. Yet his reluctance to appear publicly has been received with avid curiosity and frantic exploration. The eccentricity of Pynchon's actions conflict with contemporary perceptions of celebrity, that is, the somewhat flawed

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[53] The suffix 'esque' in terms of authorship is most notably ascribed to Franz Kafka (Kafkaesque), a term that has since taken on its own specific meaning.
[54] Salinger died in 2010.
[55] http://www.wikihow.com/Read-a-Thomas-Pynchon-Novel
There are 11 steps involved in *How to Read a Thomas Pynchon Novel*, including: 'Read at a brisk, but not manic, pace', 'Be patient', 'Do not get caught up on all the characters, references, and themes', 'Unlearn what you have learned', and 'Enjoy yourself'.

notion that celebrity is a phenomenon that is globally appreciated and sought after. As Salm observes, defending Pynchon:

…the man simply chooses not to be a public figure, an attitude that resonates on a frequency so out of phase with that of the prevailing culture that if Pynchon and Paris Hilton were ever to meet – the circumstances, I admit, are beyond imagining – the resulting matter/antimatter explosion would vaporize everything from here to Tau Ceti IV (Salm: 2004, NP).

The vast interest in Pynchon's identity is not merely the result of his absence, although this is indeed an important factor. It is that Pynchon's actions defy, as Salm observes, the contemporary 'logic' of celebrity that has pervaded Western culture. To be absent in such an era in which celebrity is overwhelmingly significant, where the 'image' defines society, is a case in and of itself, a phenomenon that has been felt acutely since J.D. Salinger's notorious dismissal of publicity. Pynchon is therefore characteristic of an as-yet developed response to fame, namely, a state of 'famous anonymity'. While iconic figures such as J.D. Salinger and Samuel Beckett were renowned as much for their reclusiveness and distaste for fame as they were for their works, a minority of authors completely neglect fame altogether.

McHale argues that Pynchon's authorship exists on two distinct and somewhat contradictory levels. Referring to Charles Jencks' theory of double-coding,[56] he writes:

The notion of double-coding helps explain the paradox of Pynchon's status as simultaneously the object of academic research, widely taught in university courses, and a counter-cultural writer with a popular "cult" following. Pynchon's fiction displays avant-garde difficulty and high-cultural allusiveness, and calls upon readers to bring to bear more or less esoteric knowledge from a range of demanding specialist fields. But its high-cultural demands are counterbalanced by low-cultural entertainment value. Pynchon's novels offer all kinds of "mindless pleasures" [such as] silly names and obnoxious puns, flagrant anachronism, cartoonish characters, abundant slapstick

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[56] Double-coding, as Charles Jencks theorises, is a postmodern phenomenon that refers to an artefact or person that is understood or appreciated on two opposing levels, one that reaches a *minority* of people and is usually regarded as a more complicated element, and one that reaches the broader public and is somewhat more accessible and obvious. In this sense Pynchon is seen to exist as an author valued by a minority for his intellectual contributions as well as being capable of being understood by the masses for his notoriety and use of popular culture. The term was coined by Jencks in his book: *The New Paradigm in Architecture* (2002).

comedy, chase scenes, pornography, […] pop-song lyrics and musical comedy song-and-dance numbers (2012: 101).

Evidence of this observation is also seen in the way in which Pynchon's novels appear in popular culture. While studied in universities, in what one assumes is in a strictly academic sense, his novels are also part of more commercial culture. For instance, in the eighth episode of the fifth season of the AMC series *Mad Men*, 'Lady Lazarus' (2012), the character Peter Campbell is seen reading Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* in the opening scene, bridging academic and popular culture into one scene.

Douglas A. Mackey makes a similar observation to McHale, in which he writes: 'Pynchon's three novels – *V.* (1963), *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) – have attained a measure of popular success, but also earned him a reputation as being a "difficult" author. Because the academic establishment thrives on difficulty, books and articles about him and his work have proliferated' (1980: 3). Thus Pynchon is an important author in postmodern consideration, as he is perhaps one of few recent authors whose work has been simultaneously studied by the academy, regarded as difficult, as well as retaining, as Mackey observes, popular success. It is arguably rare for such difficult works and difficult authors to become widely disseminated in mainstream culture, given popular culture's propensity to favour cultural material through visual media such as television and cinema. To reiterate Graeme Turner's observation used at the beginning of this thesis, there is a tendency to align popularity to the momentary and sensational over that which has a more enduring quality (2004: 4). Conversely to this trend, Pynchon's works are at once perceived to possess an enduring quality, being significant to contemporary society, while also having been eagerly absorbed into mainstream culture for their element of kitsch and absurdity, as well as their merit for difficulty, which is often so significant to a 'serious' author's appearance.

Further, as Mackey accurately observes, institutions such as universities (and to a great extent, professions of authorship) tend to thrive on difficulty, thereby making Pynchon a much-valued kind of author for his works being appreciated on two generally-opposing fronts: popular and academic culture. By incorporating more difficult authors into the mainstream, by elevating the popular to the enduring, and by bridging these two roles together, the status of literary celebrity becomes strengthened. Moreover, the Romantic genius, as Moran and Glass observe, is able to be regarded as something of a star, and the

star, consequently, is able to be appreciated as a critical, high-brow author. Pynchon's genius therefore becomes synonymous with stardom.

Along with his novels, Pynchon himself is characteristic of Jencks' theory of double-coding. In 2004, Pynchon lent his voice to the television program *The Simpsons*, appearing as himself in the episode 'Diatribe of a Mad Housewife' (2004). In this episode, Pynchon, wearing a brown paper bag over his head in reference to his reclusiveness, offers to write a comment for Marge Simpson's new romance novel, stating, in a humorous and self-deprecating manner: 'Here's your quote: Thomas Pynchon loved this book, almost as much as he loves cameras!' (2004). Behind him is a sign that states: 'Thomas Pynchon's House: Come on in'. When a group of cars drive by, Pynchon yells: 'Hey, over here, have your picture taken with a reclusive author! Today only, we'll throw in a free autograph!' (2004). Pynchon also appears in the episode 'All's Fair in Oven War' (2004), in which he refers to his books, again with a paper bag over his head. As well as this, In September 2014 it was reported that Pynchon would have a cameo in the 2014 film adaptation of his book, *Inherent Vice* (2009), causing great speculation and curiosity. While director Paul Thomas Anderson kept silent on the rumour, actor Josh Brolin confirmed that Pynchon would feature in the film, and that 'in true Pynchonian fashion he "stayed in the corner" while he was on set' (Reed, 2014). Logan Hill from the *New York Times* writes:

A cameo seems like the kind of sly prank that might amuse Mr. Pynchon, who has seemed to love hiding in plain sight since his spectacular rise to literary fame began with his 1963 novel, "V" […] The mystery of Mr. Pynchon's cameo is trivial. But that doesn't make it any less fun to pursue (2014).

Through his subtle engagements with popular, commercial culture, Pynchon both relieves high-art fiction of the constraints of elitism, and becomes another paradoxical author who both shuns and embraces celebrity culture simultaneously. As I argued in the first chapter of this thesis, and as theorists such as York (2007), Turner (2004) and Gelder (2005) attest to, literature is traditionally an area in which commercial and celebrity culture is avoided or seen to be antagonistic to authorial identity, as it is assumed to conflict with the more authentic cultural values of writing and reading. It is also expected that a certain level of difficulty exists in literature which mainstream media has no way of comprehending and disseminating to mass audiences. This is perhaps why, as Turner writes, it is assumed that contemporary

culture prefers the momentary and visual to the written and laborious. Yet as McHale argues, Pynchon's fiction and indeed Pynchon himself does not correspond to the typical reception of either fame or literature. His work is both difficult and ridiculous, high-brow and trivial, and elitist and popular, reiterating Malcolm Bradbury's notion that the contemporary status of the author is one in which she is celebrated and loathed, alive and dead simultaneously, embodying two distinct cultures and ideals (1987: 311).

This kind of celebrity author has also been seen in the examples of Australian authors Patrick White, Peter Carey and Tim Winton, but to an inevitably lesser extent than Pynchon. As Rooney argues in regards to Patrick White:

> Though long considered a reclusive, White had become, increasingly, a very public figure whose outspokenness had won both admirers and detractors. His public persona was replete with contradiction, oscillating between an irritable impatience and pleasure, in his theatrical public role' (2009: 31).

Rooney also notes how Tim Winton's charismatic persona is in contrast to his reclusiveness: 'Reading a Tim Winton speech makes one long to have heard him deliver it in person. Charisma and energy leap from the page, not unlike the charisma he exuded, despite his renowned reclusiveness, on Andrew Denton's chat show, *Enough Rope*, in October 2004' (174). There is, therefore, an expectation of reclusive authors to either embrace complete reclusiveness or adhere to a more public persona, as they are otherwise seen to become a contradiction of values and identities. Yet Pynchon rejects this proposal and assumption, and instead opts for a kind of fame that embodies both exposure and privacy. Thus despite being predominantly absent from the media, Pynchon has nevertheless engaged in media of popular culture that position the author in an unusual role as a celebrity. As John Young writes:

> Any devoted Pynchon reader knows that "The Secret Integration" originally appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post* and that portions of "The Crying of Lot 49" were first serialized in *Esquire* and *Cavalier* […] Simply by publishing in those venues Pynchon cannot help but participate in a mainstream literary publicity that he has otherwise avoided (2003: 389).

The general assumption, particularly when discussing Pynchon's authorship, is that it is forbidden for an author, reclusive or not, to engage in popular avenues of promotion. Further still, as Young notes, it can be considered sacrilege for an author such as Pynchon to be involved with those media.

Conversely to these other examples and theorists, Leo Braudy argues that Pynchon is not, in fact, a product of literary celebrity at all, but someone whose authorship and career are based on his absence, something that is meant to illuminate the significance of Pynchon's works. He writes: 'Disheartened by the postwar expansion of the business of literary celebrity, Pynchon seems to believe he can avoid the inevitable competition of the novel by becoming the vanishing American writer' (1991: 145). Braudy also sets up a distinction between American author Norman Mailer and Pynchon, in which he sees Mailer as being a more overtly public figure. For Braudy, Mailer 'becomes the naturalist self-exposer and Pynchon the modernist *deus absconditus* [Hidden god], the one creating a manipulable public mask, the other vanishing into silence until, it is said, even his college records have disappeared' (145).

Moreover, Braudy notes that Pynchon represents the complete antithesis of exhibitionist, celebrity culture. He further argues that unlike Mailer, Pynchon 'does not create a famous presence to distract us from the coherence of his creation […] In seeking to disappear so that his creation will be more real and all-consuming, he makes his novels the way-stations between history and paranoia, public pattern and private-obsession' (1991: 145-146). As accurate as this might have been for the time in which Braudy was writing – when Pynchon was indeed more of a recluse – evidently it is no longer the case, with Pynchon's numerous pseudo-appearances in the media indicative of this. Braudy's argument is, however, useful insofar as it shows the reverence and respect that certain theorists and readers have for the author who remains mysterious, as DeLillo's aforementioned comments attest. Pynchon's disappearing act is reminiscent of Benjamin's notion of the aura of art. The restricted access to Pynchon, as it is for art, creates a sense of 'aura' around the author that further distinguishes his celebrity status from other authors who are in plain sight. Pynchon has all the promotional mechanisms of a more commercial author while benefiting from the aura of mystery that his reclusiveness grants him. Pynchon is therefore one of the more crucial figures in the history of literary celebrity, defying the common-place expectations surrounding authorship and celebrity.

John Young, conversely, is critical of Pynchon's status as a recluse, and argues that the respect afforded to Pynchon, as opposed to other public authors, is indicative of a culture that privileges a white-male demographic, showing how the stereotype of the Romantic genius as 'masculine, autonomous, and unreachable' (North, 2009: 6) persists. Responding to a quote in *Time* magazine that assured its readers not to expect *Ulysses* or *Gravity's Rainbow* to appear on the Oprah Book Club list (which I discuss at length in Chapter Nine), Young argues: 'This remark reflects the extent to which high culture remains a white-male preserve in the popular press, with Joyce and Pynchon too "pure" to be marketable on TV' (2001: 186). A similar sentiment appeared in a 1997 CNN article that stated: 'you won't see Pynchon hawking his wares on Oprah's book club. You won't find him signing his name for fans down at the corner bookstore' (1997). However, Young further argues that:

> Pynchon's refusal to wear the trappings of literary celebrity creates a Romantic aura for
> him: By distancing himself from all public discourse about himself and his work,
> Pynchon becomes an even greater, albeit more mysterious, celebrity than most authors
> manage in their interviews and memoirs […] Indeed, the very idea of Pynchon making
> a media appearance would negate his commercial image as a recluse (186).

Pynchon therefore carries the sort of authorial traits more familiar of Romantic poets, seen to be as 'unreachable' as Rousseau. As the aforementioned Nancy Jo Sales explains of Pynchon: 'There's such integrity to him and his work' (1996). Indeed, the respect and reverence that Pynchon has developed comes from his general refusal to engage in ostensibly low culture, such as television (that is, until recently). In an era in which commercialisation, celebrity and consumption have become the hallmark cultural traits of a society, reclusiveness and an absence from media naturally translates into a public profile of genius and integrity, built on Romantic ideals on nonconformity and artistic rebellion. Referring to the author's simultaneous popularity and genius, Richard Poirier writes:

> Among the remarkable facts about Thomas Pynchon is that if we are to believe the best-
> seller list, the selections of the Book-of-the-Month Club, the reviews, and the committee
> for the National Book Awards, then presumably we are to believe that *Gravity's
> Rainbow* is a popular book and, at the same time, that it ranks with *Ulysses* and *Moby-
> Dick* in accomplishment and possibly exceeds them in complexity. Something peculiar is

happening here. A writer is received simultaneously into the first rank of history of our literature and also as a popular novelist. Only Mark Twain has been given such praise before, unless Hemingway and Fitzgerald are counted (1976: 16).

The fact that the union between popularity and seriousness is considered 'peculiar' indicates the persistent cultural demand that these two discourses remain separate. If this was the case when Pynchon began writing his complex and famous works, then it is overwhelmingly accurate today after his (pseudo)appearances on a popular television program in which he pokes fun at himself. Moreover, David Seed attempts to locate meaning in Pynchon's distaste for celebrity:

> From 1962 onwards Pynchon has apparently subsisted entirely off his writings and has studiously avoided any personal publicity, so much so that one journalist even claimed that Pynchon is in fact J.D. Salinger! His reported comments suggest that Pynchon has avoided the public gaze partly because he has an absurdly low opinion of his own writings in spite of the fact [that] *V* won the Faulkner Award in 1964, *Lot 49* the Rosenthal Memorial Award in 1967, and *Gravity's Rainbow* only narrowly missed a Pulitzer Prize in 1974 […] Apart from this rather exaggerated modesty, Pynchon's avoidance of publicity is perfectly consistent with his sensitivity to public images. He could have gone to the opposite extreme like Mailer who, in the 1960s particularly, blended personal and fictional performances together so that the two are virtually inseparable. Pynchon's course ensures that his fiction is valued on its own merits and avoids the complication of promotional publicity (1988: 8-9).

In spite of this notion, Pynchon is somewhat unable to wholly stave off celebrity culture for the duration of his career the way in which Salinger accomplished. Further still, while Seed asserts, similarly to Braudy, that Pynchon's authorship is less a performative strategy than it is a genuine gesture to illuminate his works over himself, of late Pynchon's authorship has become very much a performance. It may not be a performance of mass promotion that resembles the careers of authors such as Mailer or Hemingway, yet it is a performance of what has become an archetype of the reluctant celebrity author[57]. As previously argued,

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[57] At the 2014 *Celebrity Studies* conference, theorist Lorraine York specifically discussed the phenomenon of 'Reluctant Celebrity,' which shows that this notion is garnering increased scholarly attention.

Pynchon's appearance on *The Simpsons* is an ironic performance playing on his rare kind of fame, in which he is both known and unknown to celebrity culture.

Rushdie as Postmodern Celebrity

In a similar manner to Pynchon, Sir Ahmed Salman Rushdie, or simply Salman Rushdie, has achieved a kind of celebrity that is partly dependent on his absence from the media. Further, as a global, postmodern celebrity, Rushdie exhibits the postmodern sense of multiplicity in his authorship, with a diverse background and experience. Rushdie was born in Bombay, India, in 1947, to a Muslim family, educated in Mumbai, as well as in Britain at the University of Cambridge. Rushdie's diverse nationality suitably parallels the fragmented nature of postmodernism. Tim Brennan, for example, describes Rushdie's public profile in the same vein as other authors such as the late Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes, for whom 'assimilation is doubly impossible' (1989: 2). For Brennan, Rushdie's 'cosmopolitan celebrity' exhibits the author's ambiguous status as a literary celebrity. As Graham Huggan explains, Rushdie's status as both celebrity and novelist combines 'the seemingly incompatible positions of the freewheeling oppositional intellectual and the slightly unwilling cultural spokesperson, dispensing wisdoms for the embattled mother country from the relative comfort of the diaspora' (2001: 70). Thus the careers of both Pynchon and Rushdie are defined by a sense of incompatibility.

Rushdie's debut work, *Grimus* (1975), exemplifies what Linda Hutcheon calls historiographic metafiction, or 'those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages' (2004: 5). Among the works that adhere to this description, Hutcheon also lists Rushdie's second novel *Midnight's Children* (1981), for which he was awarded the Booker Prize for Fiction. Although the controversy surrounding his career did not rest on this novel, it did, however, provoke early hostility. Indira Ghandi, former Prime Minister of India, filed a defamation suit against Rushdie for purported slander against her in the novel. The case was over a single sentence: 'It has often been said that Mrs Ghandi's younger son Sanjay accused his mother of being responsible, through her neglect, for his father's death; and that this gave him an unbreakable hold over her, so that she became incapable of denying him anything' (Rushdie, 2011: xv). During their ongoing but somewhat civilised legal quarrel, Indira Ghandi was assassinated by one of her Sikh bodyguards on October 31, 1984, three years

after *Midnight's Children* was published. Although the case did not go to court, Rushdie removed the sentence from all successive publications.

Much of his work, including *Midnight's Children*, discusses British colonialism, utilising the postmodern tactic of magic realism interspersed throughout his works. *Midnight's Children*, for instance, focuses on a protagonist – Saleem Sinai – who was born at midnight at the exact time that India achieved independence, and who possesses magical powers including telepathy. The work furthermore retells Indian history from the point of view of an Indian character, showing how Rushdie's utilisation of historiography and metafiction embroil him in postmodern theories of narrative history. Sabrina Hassumani provides the most substantial study of Rushdie's relationship to postmodern fiction. Hassumani, in *Salman Rushdie: A Postmodern Reading of his Works* (2002), discusses the author's work in 'the context of poststructuralist/postmodern theory' (2002: 13), which addresses the issues of representation in Rushdie's political novels and also shows 'the manner in which [Rushdie] pushes the boundaries of the modern novel' (13). Further, Hassumani argues that while Rushdie is a 'post-colonial writer in the sense that his impulse is to always deconstruct the coloniser/colonised binary' (134), his emphasis on history 'as a construct connects him to poststructuralist and postmodern theory' (134).

The Rushdie Affair

Rushdie's fourth novel, his infamous work *The Satanic Verses* (1988) was published to widespread acclaim and controversy. Rushdie was accused of inciting racial vilification by utilising the verses which supposedly involve the Prophet Mohammed and the devil, which were omitted from the Qur'an. The book also caused controversy for its depiction of other religious figures including Abraham, as well as its use of the allegedly offensive name 'Mahound' in place of 'Mohammed'. By using religious figures and beliefs in a supposedly derogatory manner, Rushdie was accused of blaspheming Muslim culture. In February of 1989, Rushdie went into hiding after Supreme leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, placed a fatwā on Rushdie's life, sentencing him to death for blasphemy against Islam. On July 3, 1991, the Italian translator of the work, Ettore Capriolo, was wounded after being stabbed in Milan. On July 11, the Japanese translator, Hitoshi Igarashi, was stabbed to death outside of his office of Tsukuba University in Ibaraki Prefecture. According to Raees Siddiqui, president of the Pakistan Association of Japan, Igarashi was 'punished by God because he

joined those who try to blaspheme Iran […] Whether he was murdered by a Muslim or by a non-Muslim, we believe he was punished by Almighty God' (cited in Delfs, 1991: 17). On July 12, 1991, the day that Igarashi's body was discovered, Rushdie stated that:

> It is hard to avoid linking the two events […] The crisis created by the Iranian fatwā of February 1989 has faded from the news; indeed it has been more or less impossible to interest the British news media in the continued threat. In spite of this silence, however, the danger to all those named in the fatwā has, if anything, increased ('Rushdie seeks pressure on Iran', 1991: 10).

A failed assassination attempt also occurred on October 11, 1993 when William Nygaard – who published the Norwegian edition of *The Satanic Verses* – was shot three times outside of his home in Oslo. It was believed, but never proven, that the attempt was linked to Khomeini's fatwā against all those associated with the work. And in 1997, the bounty on Rushdie's head doubled to $600,000. Thus, in the same way that Salinger's most famous work became negatively associated with death, so too did Rushdie's most notorious work provoke the same arguments of authorial responsibility in light of the murders which occurred following publication.

This pandemonium surrounding Rushdie's novel, in an era of intense mediated publicity, further propelled Rushdie into both stardom and notoriety in much the same way as Pynchon. Through his prolonged absence from the media – for the sake of safety rather than any sense of reclusiveness – Rushdie's media profile actually rose. This form of notoriety further provoked a spate of academic criticism around the novel which had caused so much controversy. David Bennett, for instance, argues that *The Satanic Verses* exemplifies Rushdie's role as a post-postmodernist, rather than as a postmodernist, using the notion of Rushdie's self-representation as an example. He writes:

> If we believe Rushdie himself, it is also a work in the radically ironic or self-parodic mode of postmodernist writing, which resists any attempts to locate an authorial point of view, to frame its author with any political intention, any religious belief or disbelief. [In] *The Satanic Verses* […] the narrator becomes contaminated with the fictionality of his (and with Rushdie, it usually is *his*) own plot (1997: 2, author's emphasis).

Bennett further argues that the character Salman 'is one of the author's alter-egos' (3), and that 'Rushdie's own large fortune in royalties from the sales of *The Satanic Verses* seems unable to buy *him* a haven, an escape from exile, a way out of the murderous plot in which his novel has framed him' (3, author's emphasis). By incorporating the elements of both religion and colonialism into his work, it is unsurprising that Rushdie became the subject of such an intense controversy. Yet Afzal-Khan argues that by being blasphemous Rushdie successfully confronts serious issues of race and politics. As Afzal-Khan states:

> It is only in *The Satanic Verses*, his most complex novel to date, however, that Rushdie draws explicit parallels between religion and colonialism as hegemonic strategies of containment. Whereas the latter has tried to contain people within racial and geographical boundaries and definitions, religion has tried to delimit and contain man's intellectual territory. Both kinds of containment are reprehensible to Rushdie, and the only way out he sees is through destruction and "blasphemy" (1993: 173).

Indeed, by addressing these issues in the form of a novel, Rushdie is able to more successfully generate greater attention for issues important to him as a celebrity novelist, which in turn sees Rushdie occupying the specific and important role of celebrity novelist as public intellectual. Therefore, the intense public reaction to the work ironically serves to bring these issues of race, politics, religion and colonialism to a wider audience and greater consideration than they would have received had Rushdie not chosen such a flagrant way in which to address these issues. One can speculate that the act of provocation seems to have been Rushdie's intention, whether explicitly or not. In an interview in *Newsweek* magazine, Rushdie states: 'I must have known, my accusers say, that my use of the old devil-name "Mahound," a medieval European demonisation of "Mohammed," would cause offence' (cited in Crichton and Shapiro, 1990: 54).

Although Rushdie's fame has not been created entirely through the notoriety garnered by the aftermath of *The Satanic Verses*, the dramatic reaction has certainly helped to make him a household name. Further, this phenomenon not only re-establishes the novel's role in contemporary society, but similarly reiterates the importance of the author in social and cultural issues, undermining, once again, Barthes' and Foucault's arguments that the author as a critical, social figure is dead. For Máire Ní Fhlathúin, the reaction to Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* actually illustrates and strengthens the connection between the author and the text:

In a profession which deals with the power and manipulation of images, it may be unwise to speak too glibly of the death of the author – particularly since it is in practice impossible to separate the author as literary force from the author as legal entity or human being. The affair of *The Satanic Verses* has emphasised the change imposed by publication on the relations between the author and his text (cited in Burke, 1995: 277).

The controversy surrounding *The Satanic Verses* is seen to give renewed significance to the text as a consequential object of the author's ideas and intentions. The act of Rushdie having been issued with a fatwā demonstrates the extreme extent to which people associate the ideas of a book with the intentions of its author. In Rushdie's case, this association has become particularly dangerous, which carries significant connotations for the role of the author in an increasingly politically-correct society. As Ní Fhlathúin argues:

[Rushdie] is in the worst possible situation: his stated intentions are not considered relevant to a reading of his work, but the text is used to ascribe intentions, desires and crimes to its author […] By an ironic reversal of the intentional fallacy, the author becomes the creation of the text. In the aftermath of the novel's publication, a major concern for many participants in this affair has been the construction of an author to fit a particular reading of the book (277).

Ní Fhlathúin further argues that the event caused readers to create various versions of Rushdie's persona. These creations, he further explains, seem to fall under Rushdie's own responsibility (281). Through this dramatic event, Rushdie, and seemingly all other authors, are reinstated to the centre of the text through the complex relationship between writing and intention: 'the outraged reaction to *The Satanic Verses* is a perfect example of "the return of the subject", as the process of rewriting, interpreting and interrogating the author and his work is carried out by those who felt themselves subjects of his satiric invention' (Ní Fhlathúin, 282). Ian Gregson discusses this notion of satire[58] in Rushdie's work, arguing that writers such as Rushdie and Angela Carter 'self-reflexively present their characters as

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[58] Satire is an important element of Rushdie's work, establishing the author as an exemplary figure of the postmodern movement. Among the works that discuss Rushdie's use of satire are: Margareta Petersson's *Unending Metamorphosis: Myth, Satire and Religion in Salman Rushdie* (1996); John Clement Ball's *Satire and the Postcolonial Novel* (2003); and Charles A. Knight's *The Literature of Satire* (2008).

authorial puppets' (2006: 111). Further, Gregson argues: 'These caricatural images put authorial anger fully on display' (112).

Through incorporating satire and caricature within his work – most explicitly in *The Satanic Verses* – Rushdie seems to confront the politics of representing the self within fiction by discerning between the fictional Rushdie and the 'real' author. The notions of deception and self-effacement therefore become particularly relevant in Rushdie's writing career, despite the author's prolific presence in the media. In this way Rushdie engages with postmodern ideas on both authorship and celebrity by consistently utilising masquerade in an effort to undermine notions of the self that operate at the core of both celebrity and authorial cultures. As Gregson explains, Rushdie incorporates 'masks' throughout his fiction in order to dispel certain authorial myths: 'The mask is important in caricature because it not only evokes the hiding of the "real" self, but also interrogates the very concept of such ontological coherence and substance' (119-120). Much in the same way as Salinger and Pynchon, Rushdie's temporary absence from the public in turn fuels the author's mythology. Rushdie himself utilises and engages with the phenomenon of myth in his own work. As Afzal-Khan writes:

> Rushdie's latest novel to date, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, published a year after the death sentence of Iran's government against him forced him to go into hiding, appears, in its celebration of the genre of myth (which takes the shape of a fairytale), to offer an antidote (albeit a somewhat belated one) to the debunking of myth that has been Rushdie's primary fictive strategy thus far (1993: 173)

Further, Afzal-Khan argues that throughout much of Rushdie's work, the notion of realism is 'diluted by myth' (157). Rushdie's engagement with myth therefore undergirds his career as a celebrity author, similarly using the concept of myth (as well as satire) to develop his myth as an author while using myth to undermine his celebrity status. As James Wood argues, reviewing Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999): 'his spectacular new novel, The Ground Beneath Her Feet, moves between various mythologies: Greek, Indian and the easier mythology of contemporary celebrity' (1999). Rushdie therefore seems to engage in the mythology of the reclusive author in order to make a statement on the politics of celebrity culture.

Post-fatwā Celebrity

Through the impact of the fatwā, Rushdie has achieved a curious kind of celebrity marked by public exile and notoriety. This exile has in turn framed Rushdie's own thoughts on the subject of celebrity. Discussing Rushdie's novel *Fury* (2001), Sarah Brouillette argues that it is within this novel that Rushdie explores his status as an author amidst the tremendous growth of his celebrity. She writes:

> *Fury* is a novel in which the word "celebrity" is densely present. Rushdie's negotiation with the term and its implications signifies his negotiation with his own position within a market-place laden with values about the status of literary culture and its relationship to economics in general (2005: 153).

Fury follows the story of Malik Solanka, a millionaire from Bombay who was trained at Cambridge, and abandons his wife and child to escape into New York. The biographical similarities between the character and Rushdie's own life are apparent, especially as Solanka, throughout the novel, continuously attempts to escape his growing renown. This concept of 'escape' is therefore reiterated, as Rushdie seems constantly unable to escape the notoriety and celebrity that his controversial novel has produced. In Richard Eder's review of the novel for *The New York Times*, he writes that Rushdie's novel sees the contemporary world as a 'python swallowing its tail, it has engorged its own culture, arts and values, and gone on to engorge those of everyone else' (2001). This may then highlight Rushdie's growing pessimism, during this time, for the role of celebrity in contemporary culture. Similarly to Philip Roth and Hemingway, Rushdie's subject is often himself, and he criticises the changing nature of celebrity in twenty-first century culture. As Brouillette further explains: 'The fate of the term "celebrity" itself suggests the changing nature of the literary economy. What was once used to describe a state of fame or public renown ("Salman Rushdie's deserved celebrity") came to stand in for an *individual* ("Salman Rushdie is a deserving celebrity")' (2005: 153, author's emphasis). Indeed, Anshuman Mondal similarly argues that Rushdie's novels 'reinforce the idea that fame and privilege are a reflection of one's talent, that they are, in effect, deserved' (2007: 176). Further, Mondal argues that Rushdie's novels argue against the scenario 'in which celebrity is an effect of postmodern simulacra and instead articulates the old-fashioned liberal notion of meritocracy, another of the American

myths that Rushdie recycles' (176). This issue that Rushdie focuses on thus alludes to Boorstin's theory of the changing nature of fame and celebrity as shifting from a focus on 'genuine' fame through achievement, to the focus on the well-known individual. This further shows the manner in which Rushdie self-consciously approaches the idea of celebrity through perceived 'genuine' achievement and merit, an issue that may be of great personal concern for him.

Various theorists agree that Rushdie's celebrity is predominantly a result of the fatwā, and the sympathy that it granted him, emphasising the notion of 'trauma' that appears essential to the literary celebrity experience. While Mondal argues that Rushdie 'capitalised on his celebrity even if it was a consequence of the trauma of Ayatollah Khomeini's fatwā' (171), Herwitz and Varshney argue: '[Rushdie's] celebrity status comes from his trauma (ten years in hiding from fanaticism and fatwā), and from his lively screen presence' (2008: 2). Indeed, as well as making a cameo in *Bridget Jones' Diary* (2001), Rushdie has appeared on various talk show programs including *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, *The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson* and *The Kathy Griffin Show*. He also played Helen Hunt's gynaecologist in the film *Then She Found Me* (2007). In so doing, Rushdie reverses the process through which his fame was partly created, overcompensating for his absence by appearing in some of the more commercial aspects of popular culture. Yet, as Herwitz and Varshney stress: 'The amazing thing is that Rushdie has embraced the potentially disfiguring challenge of his celebrity status and used his notoriety for more than cash value' (2008: 3). Indeed, this includes Rushdie's role as a prolific intellectual discussing global topics. As Mondal argues, Rushdie's global celebrity parlays into his role as a social authority:

> Rushdie's media presence offers an opportunity to locate his relation to the subject matter of his later novels more precisely because his authority to speak on celebrity and globalisation is bound up with his own status as a globalised celebrity […] Rushdie is in a better position than most to appreciate the duplicitous nature of celebrity, and the rapid reversals of fame and reputation that celebrities are prone to (2007: 171).

Not only has Rushdie appeared in public discussing issues such as racial vilification and postcolonial identity, but his public intellectualism is also anchored within his works. As Christopher Rollason argues:

The corpus of Rushdie's fiction may be considered the product of a critical and engaged intellectual writing principally in the novel mode. He critiques the betrayal of Nehruvian ideals in *Midnight's Children*, the decline of cosmopolitan Bombay in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, or the fundamentalist onslaught on Kashmiri syncretism in *Shalimar the Clown* (2013: 3).

As a result, Rushdie incorporates and embodies the elements of Edward Said's ideal intellectual[59], occupying a marginal position, characterised by, for Said, a sense of 'exile' and marginality (1996: xvi). Rushdie is pushed further into marginality through his celebrity status. Paradoxically, his celebrity status both engenders and inhibits the function of his intellectual status, representing the concerns uttered in Richard Posner's *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline* (2002). For Posner, there is a 'tendency of a public intellectual's media celebrity to be inverse to his scholarly renown' (2002: 7). In this way, the celebrity that Rushdie garnered throughout his isolation in turn problematises the extent to which he can function as a public intellectual, forcing him to approach such issues through the lens of fiction. Thus, in the same manner as Hemingway, Rushdie's greatest subject became himself, as seen with his most recent work, the autobiographical *Joseph Anton* (2012), a memoir which chronicles Rushdie's time in hiding during the *Satanic Verses* controversy. The name, a nod to Joseph Conrad and Anton Chekhov, is the pseudonym Rushdie chose while in hiding. Similarly to Norman Mailer's *Armies of the Night*, Rushdie narrates in third-person. The work further explores self-conscious notions of identity within celebrity culture, as Rushdie attempts to disassociate himself from the self that is known to the public. As Jonathan Yardley writes in *The Washington Post*:

Rushdie has chosen to tell his story in the third person: to write not about Salman Rushdie but about Joseph Anton, the person who for more than a decade was himself yet not quite himself. It takes a few pages for the reader to get used to this, but it works: It eliminates the temptations of self-pitying bathos (temptations that surely must have been severe) and allows Rushdie to maintain a certain clinical distance from himself (2012).

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[59] For a detailed account of Said's views of intellectualism, see his *Representation of the Intellectual* (1994), his book based on his 1993 Reith Lectures.

In *Joseph Anton* Rushdie addresses the notion of 'serious writing' and of celebrity. As he explains:

…it did not strike his opponents as strange that a serious writer should spend a tenth of his life creating something as crude as an insult. That was because they refused to see him as a serious writer. In order to attack him and his work it was necessary to paint him as a bad person, an apostate traitor, an unscrupulous seeker of fame and wealth, and opportunist whose work was without merit, who "attacked Islam" for his own personal gain. This was what was meant by the much repeated phrase *he did it on purpose* (2012: 74, author's emphasis).

Further, writing on the demonstrations attacking his work, Rushdie writes:

Their faces were angry, or, to be precise, their faces were performing anger for the cameras. He could see in their eyes the excitement they felt at the presence of the world's press. It was the excitement of celebrity, of what Saul Bellow had called "event glamour". To be bathed in torchlight was glorious, almost erotic. This was their moment on the red carpet of history. They were carrying placards reading RUSHDIE STINKS and RUSHDIE EAT YOUR WORDS. They were ready for their close-up (128).

By writing of himself in the third-person, Rushdie both disassociates himself from his mediated persona, and affirms his status as a celebrity in so doing. For Barbara Kosta, the third-person in autobiography 'functions as a more honest autobiographical practice, since the subject-in-process is virtually always changing; the subject is always repositioned within a dynamic historical context and therefore can never be the same as the past self' (1994: 69-70). Lejeune et al furthermore observe that the third-person in autobiography 'is more often used for internal distancing and for expressing personal confrontation' (1977: 28). In this way, Rushdie, through the pseudonym Joseph Anton, confronts an historical version of himself in the work in order to come to terms with the notoriety that has both served and plagued his career. Within this most recent work, Rushdie finally encounters issues of the self that is at the core of celebrity and authorship studies through the rubric of third-person autobiography. Further, Rushdie's career as a celebrity author resists categorisation, as his history and experience with celebrity culture is markedly different to the experience of other

celebrity authors. What Rushdie's career exemplifies is the renewed significance of the novelist, as well as the importance of absence in serving the myth and celebrity of reclusive authors. Rushdie's career, similarly to Pynchon's, undermines the traditional dynamics of celebrity authorship by emphasising the impact of absence on their celebrity status.

Pynchon and Rushdie's careers show a noticeable divergence in terms of authorship, illustrating a shift in the expectations and reputations of celebrity authors. Their distinctive approaches to fame and authorship offer a useful discourse through which to re-analyse the nature of literary celebrity in the mid to late twentieth century. The careers of both Pynchon and Rushdie exemplify the postmodern effect of irony and satire, as well as emphasising the effect of absence on the celebrity author's persona through the process of myth. In this way, Pynchon and Rushdie successfully undermine pre-existing notions of what an author must be, allowing authors to have contradictory roles in the media sphere. While sharing significant similarities to the writers of previous generations, postmodern authors invariably approached their role and fame in much more ironic, novel ways, incorporating elements of both humour and seriousness, and popular culture and complexity into their works, gradually undermining much of the elitism on which literature had been based. The postmodern era not only allowed celebrity authors to embody conflicting traits and values, but extensively re-established the role of celebrity-reclusive authors, thereby defying and undermining society's expectations with regards to both authorship and celebrity culture in the process. Further, the careers of Rushdie and Pynchon deftly explore the significance of absence and reclusiveness, and highlight the subsequent myth-making process that authors encounter. Through their respective absences from the media, Pynchon and Rushdie help develop new ideas in which to shape literary celebrity, and furthermore provoke renewed interest in the author as a crucial figure of social discourse, impacting the way in which successive celebrity authors would confront and approach the commercial aspects of the literary industry.

Chapter Eight: Stephen King, Bret Easton Ellis, and Brand Authorship in the 1980s

The fusion of literature and popular culture that seemed to partly define the postmodern condition continued to be a significant aspect of authorship in the 1980s. Following on from what was seen as the beginning of postmodern literature in the 1960 and 70s, postmodernism continued to be the prevailing social condition under which celebrity authors attempted to function. Yet at the end of his discussion on Norman Mailer's celebrity, Loren Glass writes that the cultural condition on which celebrity culture was previously built was no longer in existence, drastically altering the nature of contemporary celebrity authors as we see them. He argues: 'Celebrity obviously persists, and certainly some authors are famous, but the specific articulation of the private authorial genius versus the mass marketplace is no longer possible in a society no longer based on the opposition between art and commerce' (2004: 27). The opposition between art and commerce has been a popular though problematic element in literary celebrity studies. Traditional notions of what constitutes authorship interfere with the author's ability to become a popular figure, yet postmodern authors of the 1980s were, similarly to Pynchon and Rushdie, helping to bridge the gap between highbrow elitism and popular culture. On the other end of the spectrum, however, was the danger that the author may become nothing more than a commercial name. As discussed in Chapter One, Joe Moran has argued that the increasingly commercial nature of authorship threatens to undermine literary celebrity, by placing more emphasis on the commercial aspects of authorship:

> There is a danger, then, that the anti-individualising effects of the literary marketplace – the creation of the author as a "personality" by a vast network of cultural and economic practices – will actually threaten the whole notion of authorship as an individualistic activity, taking away agency from the author at the same time as it apparently celebrates that author's autonomy as a "star author" (2000: 61).

Often, when an author or critic refers to the phenomenon of branded authors, it is in a derogatory manner. Philip Roth, himself a reluctant brand author, discusses brand authorship

in a similar vein to Clara Tuite, who distinguishes between the celebrity author and the author who is merely famous[60]:

> What distinguishes the merely famous from a celebrity or a star has usually to do with money, sex, or, in my case, with both. I was said to have made a million dollars, and I was said to be none other than Portnoy himself. To become a celebrity is to become a brand name. There is Ivory soap, Rice Krispies, and Philip Roth […] The elevation to celebrity that's thought to bring a writer a wider readership is just another obstacle that most readers have to overcome to achieve a direct perception of his work (1992: 120).

In deriding his status alongside corporate, branded products, Roth reiterates the sentiments of American author John Cheever, who had once described himself as a brand name alongside Corn Flakes (Dyer, 2010: ix). The author as brand name is a particularly intriguing phenomenon as it pushes authorship beyond the boundaries of celebrity culture and into the realm of marketing and advertising, concepts which are often considered to be the antithesis of authorship itself. It produces an author that exists separately to the celebrity author, making authors themselves as much of a marketable commodity as their own books. This chapter will explore this apparent danger of commercialism by looking at the phenomenon of brand authorship, what has been deemed the lowest point of celebrity authorship thus far. The notion of brand status further complicates the role of the celebrity author as it turns the author into a commodity.

Brand Culture

The term 'brand' is perhaps just as elusive as the term 'celebrity'. Typically, celebrity branding is a form of advertising in which a celebrity endorses a product (or themselves) through their status as a celebrity. Brands, as Escalas and Bettman write, 'can be symbols whose meaning is used to create and define a consumer's self-concept' (2009: 5). Furthermore, Escalas and Bettman clarify that such meaning 'originates in the culturally constituted world, moving into goods via the fashion system, word of mouth, reference groups, subcultural groups, celebrities, and the media' (2009: 5). Thus there is a link between branding and supposed cultural and social values as evident in advertising and the media. In

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[60] See Chapter Two, Clara Tuite's description of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the figure of the celebrity author.

regards to celebrity authorship, authors also become brands of advertising potential in the media, endorsing a range of products that do not necessarily have anything to do with their literary contributions. Some authors, such as Bret Easton Ellis, may also just advertise themselves, using their brand to promote nothing more than their own cultural and celebrity status.

While the concept of the 'brand name' has become synonymous with mid-to-late twentieth-century culture, Loren Glass[61] observes that authors as early as Lord Byron and Mark Twain were adept at cultivating a kind of 'brand' for their name and works. He argues that Twain I particular 'innovated and exploited this function of literary celebrity as a type of cultural brand name that can ensure reader recognition and loyalty' (2016: 46). Yet the significance and global reach of the brand name had not been as widely embraced, circulated, or exploited in Twain's era as it has been in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, where brand name authors have flooded the literary marketplace with unprecedented regularity and success.

In his 2012 article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* discussing Jodi Picoult's book *Between the Lines* (2012), journalist Andrew Stephens describes Picoult as a 'mega-brand' (2012: 39), stating, 'Jodi Picoult is more a brand than a name – globally, she's sold 30 million copies of her 19 novels' (2012: 39). Stephens therefore suggests that brand authorship is often strongly linked to sales success.

English and Frow distinguish between the author as brand name and the author as celebrity, arguing that 'most of the world's best-selling authors (Nora Roberts, John Grisham, Robert Ludlum) are merely names: powerful brand names, to be sure, but lacking the aura of "personality," possessing no resonance as public media figures, and hence not functioning as celebrities at all' (2006: 40). However, Turner, Bonner and Marshall write: '[celebrities'] combination of commercial and cultural function remains, though, highly contradictory. Celebrities are brand names *as well as* cultural icons or identities' (2000: 13, own emphasis). Following this logic, in the absence of adequate media presence and the sense of an 'aura', authors are not considered celebrities, but simply brands. The notion of the 'aura', or lack thereof, is especially significant, as the literary industry no longer complies with the notion of 'aura' Benjamin discusses in reference to mechanical reproduction and 'the phony spell of a commodity' (1973: 233). In this respect it can be argued that an author's 'aura' has somewhat decayed in more contemporary, postmodern examples. This decrease in the aura of authors

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[61] See Glass' chapter 'Brand Names: A Brief History of Literary Celebrity' in *A Companion to Celebrity* (2016), edited by David Marshall and Sean Redmond

and the literary industry also corresponds to what Benjamin distinguishes between 'cult value' and 'exhibition value' (226-227); the former acknowledges the aura of a place or object, its authenticity, while the latter purports a sense of reproduction and mass access that decreases the 'aura'.

Literary celebrity, as Moran writes, operates in a similar way in regards to branding the author. He notes how the industry shows the 'conflicts about the meaning and purpose of literary celebrity – whether they are discussions about the commercialisation of literature and the ubiquity of the publicity machine, or the attempts by authors like Salinger and Pynchon to extricate themselves from that machine' (2000: 56). Still, Moran acknowledges that the literary industry conforms, to some degree, to this process of publicity, thereby turning authorship into a marketable endeavour: 'The contemporary literary star system is still a system, then, but one with considerable internal dissonance and fluidity, which makes it difficult to view celebrity authors as simply the product of publishers' and media hype' (2000: 56).

In *The Cultural Life of Intellectual Properties* (1998), Rosemary Coombe discusses the cult of celebrity authorship and its relationship to mass-media communications. She writes that the cultural product of the brand name or corporate logo defines the postmodern era *par excellence*. Further, she writes: 'The aura of the celebrity is a potent force in an era in which standardisation, rationalisation, and the controlled programming of production characterise the creation and distribution of goods […] it takes years to establish a brand name but only months to capitalise on celebrity' (1998: 92). Indeed, celebrity branding is an important and valuable aspect of consumer society. The combination of celebrity and brand, therefore, becomes a powerful commodity. Bret Easton Ellis, for instance, has become not merely a celebrity author but a brand in himself. While not lending his name to other cultural products his identity is marketed in such a way as to turn him into a brand so as to advertise his books.

Popular and Literary Fiction

While King is understood and conceived of as a popular author of fiction, Ellis, in contrast, belongs to the more elite realm of literature and is considered a literary author. Yet intriguingly, both popular and literary author alike feel the pressure to promote their work

while craving acceptance and respect amongst literary circles. This illustrates that the tensions of literary celebrity are present in popular, as well as literary, fiction.

There are many factors that illustrate the difference between literary and popular authors. Popular fiction is often seen as plot-driven with straight-forward expression, while literary fiction is, as well as experimental, generally character-driven and dependent on sophisticated writing. In his review of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* (2003), Anthony Lane suggests that popular authors have the tendency to overuse information, using writing to tell, rather than show. He writes: 'Brown proves that he hails from the school of elbow-joggers – nervy, worrisome authors who can't stop shoving us along with jabs of information and opinion that we don't yet require' (2006).

Ken Gelder, discussing the logics of popular fiction and its relationship to literature, writes of the 'differences between the fields of Literature and popular fiction: in particular, the necessary elitism of the former and the "democratic", inclusive yearnings of the latter' (2005: 23). Gelder writes that not only is popular fiction more widely read than literary fiction, but that 'Popular fiction is by nature mindful and respectful of its audience' (23), since 'for writers of popular fiction, readers are their *marketplace*' (24, author's emphasis). Author Scott Turow, as Gelder explains, has stated that he loves his readers, a sentiment which, for Gelder, 'is common to popular fiction writers, who often work hard to maintain a sense of "intimacy" between their readers and themselves' (23). Gelder further explains that, in contrast, literary authors such as Don DeLillo 'can sometimes seem utterly remote from their readers, disdainful of them or simply indifferent to their needs' (24).

The relationship to readers, then, appears to be a fundamental aspect determining the difference between popular and literary authors. Gelder notes how DeLillo prefers writing only for himself. As well as this, Gelder notes how literary writers are more uncomfortable with their fame than popular authors, preferring the task of writing and, also, taking longer to write books than popular authors. He explains:

Writers of popular fiction may also only want to write, but they are often very comfortable indeed with their fame and, as I've noted, tend to produce their work rapidly and frequently, on demand: many sentences in a single day, rather than many days for a single sentence (25).

Indeed, Stephen King has previously criticised authors who take what is perceived to be a long time to write and publish their fiction. In his 2014 review of King's detective book *Mr Mercedes* (2014) in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Adrian McKinty stated:

> In a review of Donna Tartt's novel *The Goldfinch* last year King expressed bafflement and exasperation at Tartt's writing pace. How could any novel take nine or 10 years to finish, he wondered, when he writes two books a year? The irony here is that with a little more time and effort and much tighter editing, King's first attempt in this genre could actually have been pretty good (2014).

The logic behind the literary/popular feud is that literature is not only more difficult for the reader, but also for the writer. It is not as fast-paced as popular fiction, and it is less concerned with appeasing readers than it is with appeasing the writer herself.

Also discussing *The Goldfinch* (2013) and the logic of popular fiction, Evgenia Peretz argues: 'For many best-selling authors, it's not enough to sell millions of books; they want respectability too. Stephen King, despite his wild commercial success, has nursed a lifelong gripe that he's been overlooked by the literary-critical establishment' (2014). Yet interestingly, Ellis, a literary author, has also coveted a similar desire for respectability, showing that this yearning for elite status is not unique to popular authors, but to more literary ones as well, making King and Ellis interesting cases to compare.

Stephen King's American Brand

Stephen King is arguably the Western world's most famous brand-name author; his extensive array of works have become a strong part of popular culture, while many of his novels have been adapted into Hollywood films, directed by prominent directors, including *Carrie* (1974 and 2013), *The Shining* (1977), *The Body* (1982) (as *Stand by Me* for the film), *IT* (1986), *Misery* (1987), *Rita Hayworth and The Shawshank Redemption* (1994), *The Green Mile* (1996), *Under the Dome* (2009) [television series], and many others. Over a career spanning four decades, King has become a successful brand name. In the same way that Philip Roth and John Cheever have discussed their brand status through the power of advertising, King has also explained his popularity in terms of branded products, once stating: 'I am the literary

equivalent of a Big Mac and Fries', alluding to his brand as a mass marketing corporate logo, and moreover something that has been intensely commodified.

King's career and his celebrity brand offer useful insights into the dynamics of literary celebrity in a more modern context; his sentiments and self-conscious mediated persona exemplify the problematic nature of seeing the author in the celebrity spotlight. As King himself has asked: 'What does it mean when somebody who is a novelist is invited to appear on "Hollywood Squares"' (cited in Bloom, 2007: 119). King underscores the persistent and commonly-held notion that, although they are not necessarily antagonistic, the literary author and celebrity culture are not automatically taken to fit together.

Michael Levine makes an interesting observation on the nature of brands in relation to authorship. He states: 'An author can be a brand, but a title can't[62], because it is only one product being sold. An author creates many products, while the title of one book is just that: the title of one book' (2003: 2). The nature of the brand author, therefore, becomes about privileging the author over the author's own work, something which is a fairly recent development in the literary marketplace. Dickens, for instance, although hugely successful and popular in his own right, was discussed concurrently with his books, not necessarily above or below his famous books which still circulate in curricula and popular culture. Brand authorship, on the other hand, often sees the author as more famous than their works. Although their works are famous in their own right, it is Ellis and King who are the focal point of their mediated career in authorship, thus illustrating the shift that takes place in the marketing world of branding.

King, born on September 21, 1947, was raised in Maine, United States, the setting of many of his works. Jonathan P. Davis argues that King embodies a distinctly American cultural identity, whose celebrity does not induce mania or hysteria in the public in the same way that it has for other authors, an intriguing notion given the strength of King's brand. As Davis writes: 'King, unlike many celebrities now participating in America's entertainment scene, has the liberty of leaving his house without armed guards. He keeps the gates to his house open. There is no barbed wire at the top of his fence' (1994: 6). Davis further establishes that King's intimate association with the state of Maine places him alongside various other famous authors for whom the notion of 'place' was so important:

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[62] Although Levine makes an interesting point, his argument neglects the vast number of books that have attained brand status, notably *Harry Potter* (1997-2007) and *Twilight* (2005-2008) amongst others in recent years.

One can look at King as not only a creative navigator of the American terrain but also an appendage of the American literary tradition he's inherited. All one needs to do is open up any American literature anthology to find an array of authors who all were greatly influenced by their regions: Mark Twain, Flannery O'Connor, William Faulkner, H.P. Lovecraft, Nathaniel Hawthorn. Yet while King and his literary predecessors are differentiated by their regional flavours, they all seem to be able to grasp the concept that while America is unique in its variety of regions, the people who inhabit those regions all dip into the same pool of human vulnerability (1994: 6-7).

This sense of regional identity not only seems to affirm his status as a distinctly American author, but also adds to his brand status by intensifying his connection to a specific region in the United States. Crucially, however, Davis argues that although, like Twain and Faulkner, King often writes about the same thing in his works, he has not yet achieved literary status or recognition, arguing: 'the movie and marketing industries have turned the searchlight away from King's relationship with his country and his literary tradition. It shines instead on the stacks of cash his stories have been able to generate' (1994: 7). Davis also argues that because of the author's potential to make money, he has often been dismissed by critics. What this illustrates is that, as Bourdieu (1996: 142) attests, there is an unstable social relationship between a person's creative work and their financial gains, showing that all authors can be disproportionately positioned between literary esteem and economic achievement. Although certain authors have balanced these aspects of their career, more often than not for brand authors the ratio shifts to favour financial stability over serious literary recognition. However, King has defended his career, stating:

I'm not the only one doing business at this particular site; Franz Kafka had an office here, and George Orwell, and Shirley Jackson, and Jorge Luis Borges, and Jonathan Swift, and Lewis Carroll […] I am doing what I do for the most serious reasons: love, money and obsession […] I am no one's National Book Award or Pulitzer Prize winner, but I'm serious, all right (1991: 583-584).

What King's sentiments convey is that there is undoubtedly still a desire for certain authors to be taken seriously while engaging in the ostensibly low-brow industry of mass marketing and branding. King may have established himself as a successful author, with a gamut of best-

selling books and film adaptations to prove it, but he is still seen as more of a brand than a serious author.

King graduated from the University of Maine in 1970 with a Bachelor of Arts in English. By this time he had already successfully published a short story, 'The Glass Floor', which appeared in an edition of *Startling Mystery Stories* in 1967. He then published short stories haphazardly in a variety of men's magazines, including *Cavalier*, as well as *Penthouse*, which published his short story *Children of the Corn* in 1978. It was during the 1970s that King's career began gaining momentum, as his first novel *Carrie* (1973) was published by Doubleday, a work which was anecdotally thrown away before King's wife persuaded him to finish it. In the same decade, King published *The Shining* (1977) and *The Stand* (1978), gradually establishing a name for himself as a best-selling author. In 1985, King contributed to a comic book, *Heroes for Hope: Starring the X-Men* (1985), which also included contributions by Alan Moore, Frank Miller and Stan Lee. His involvement in both the horror and comic book genre has led to various critics dismissing King as a 'hack' writer[63]. In 2003, when King was awarded with a National Book Award, cultural critic Harold Bloom[64] argued that this illustrated a low-point in literary culture: 'He is a man who writes what used to be called penny dreadfuls [...] That they could believe that there is any literary value there or any aesthetic accomplishment or signs of an inventive human intelligence is simply a testimony to their own idiocy' (cited in Kirkpatrick, 2003). Further, Bloom later argues:

> The decision to give the National Book Foundation's annual award for "distinguished contribution" to Stephen King is extraordinary, another low in the shocking process of dumbing down our cultural life. I've described King in the past as a writer of penny dreadfuls, but perhaps even that is too kind. He shares nothing with Edgar Allen Poe. What he is is an immensely inadequate writer on a sentence-by-sentence, paragraph-by-paragraph, book-by-book basis. The publishing industry has stooped terribly low to bestow on King a lifetime award that has previously gone to the novelists Saul Bellow

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[63] The genre of horror has not secured a favourable reputation in the wider literary industry. Janet Casey, in her book *Teaching Tainted Lit: Popular American Fiction in Today's Classroom* (2015), argues that 'horror is often considered lacking in literary merit as a result of the violence, gore, and contrived plot lines' (2015: 147). It is unsurprising, then, that King is not as respected as other writers.

[64] Bloom published an entire book on the author, titled *Stephen King* (1998), in which he calls King an 'emblem of the failures of American education' (2007: 2), while also stating: 'I cannot locate any aesthetic dignity in King's writing' (3). He also claims that 'King will be remembered as a sociological phenomenon, an image of the death of the Literate Reader' (3).

and Philip Roth and to playwright Arthur Miller. By awarding it to King they recognise nothing but the commercial value of his books (cited in Gelder, 2004: 160).

Bloom's comments are particularly illustrative of the tension that still exists between commercialism and literature. Richard Snyder of Simon and Schuster, in a similar vein, stated that the National Book Award: 'put [King] in the company of a lot of great writers, and the one has nothing to do with the other. He sells a lot of books. But is it literature? No' (cited in Kirkpatrick, 2003). Both of these comments demarcate between high-brow literature, seen as belonging to an elite minority, characterised by authors such as Saul Bellow and Philip Roth of the American post-war generation, and fiction, seen as belonging to the masses, whose commercialisation is seen as the antithesis of great writing. That King is a bestseller may guarantee him a wide audience, but it is rarely a term of endearment in literature. As Greenspan and Rose have noted, the term 'bestseller' has 'long been a term of disparagement, signifying the mindlessness and conformity of a mass society' (2000: 287).

King has not only been criticised for his work within ostensibly low-brow cultural forms, but also through his public endorsements. In 1985, King appeared in an American Express advertisement which coincided with the tenth anniversary of the company's brand. King was paid $US10,000 to appear in the commercial, in which he walks through a haunted house, stating: 'Do you know me? It's frightening how many novels of suspense I've written. But still, when I'm not recognised it just kills me. So instead of saying I wrote *Carrie*, I carry the American Express Card. Without it, isn't life a little scary?' (1985). Of the commercial, King stated at the time: 'Certainly it's not going to do much for my literary reputation, although, many would say that I don't have a literary reputation to worry about' (cited in Chambers, 1984: NP). In this manner King is alluding to the strained relationship between authorship and the media, or, more specifically, between the author and television.

Linda Badley writes that King's involvement with the American Express brand, and his very involvement with the commercialisation process of the media industry, has in turn democratised King's identity even more, and has made him a part of popular culture in such a way as to have his readers identify with him on a much more accessible level:

King is the author not as Logos but as *image*. Whereas this makes a movie star unreachable, it makes an author approachable. When we read "him" we hear his voice and see his face. He is so much a part of the popular culture that flows through his

books that he has become just like you and me. It is not merely that his books "echo" popular culture and advertising; it is that Stephen King is ubiquitous. Although he now writes occasionally for *The New York Times Book Review*, or *Life*, we are more likely to see him on television or (in paperback) at the local discount or grocery store. His relatively newfound critical acceptance has done anything but set him at a distance […] King's celebrity status doesn't taint the Northeastern homespun, family-man-and-Bangor-citizen. King's public role is so fragmented, apparently, as to resemble the "average" American's life (1996: 40, author's emphasis).

For King, his brand therefore aids his connection to his fans. His utilisation of his brand status does not separate him from his reader and fans, but actually strengthens it, as King became, throughout the 1980s, the most well-known symbol of popular culture in literature. King's brand is manufactured in such a way as to carefully imitate or exemplify the average American house-hold. It is in this manner that King's brand is so successful, in aligning himself closer to his readers in a manner not too dissimilar from Dickens' in the Victorian era. Furthermore, despite the criticisms against the brand name, King continuously uses brand names within his own fiction, arguing that it can be used to familiarise readers with the story, which King then uses to relate to his readers.

> Sometimes the brand name is the perfect word, and it will crystallize a scene for me. When Jack Torrance is pumping down that Excedrin in *The Shining*, you know just what that is. I always want to ask these critics – some are novelists, some of them college literature professors – What the fuck do you do? Open your medicine cabinet and see empty gray [sic] bottles? Do you see generic shampoo, generic aspirin? When you go to the store and you get a six-pack, does it just say beer? When you go down and you open your garage door, what's parked in there? A car? Just a car? (cited in Lehmann-Haupt and Rich, 2006).

For King, the addition of a brand within his work fleshes out the story and provides an image for the reader to identify with. He further explains: 'I think one of the things that I'm supposed to do is to say, It's a Pepsi, OK? It's not a soda. It's a Pepsi. It's a specific thing. Say what you mean. Say what you see. Make a photograph, if you can, for the reader' (cited in Lehmann-Haupt and Rich, 2006).

King's view of brands within his fiction, furthermore, can be equally applied to the notion of branding the celebrity author, in which an author's brand is used to distinguish between the author who merely writes and the author who performs his or her role as an author. By King's understanding, as a brand name himself he is not a 'generic' author merely writing books, indistinguishable from other writers in a public context, but one with a recognisable brand status behind him. In his work *On Writing* (2000), King states that his love of brands developed from watching television at a young age: 'There was a whole world of vicarious adventure which came packaged in black-and-white, fourteen inches across and sponsored by brand names which still sound like poetry to me. I loved it all' (2000: 22). For King, therefore, in place of the Romantic poetry of the eighteenth century and the prose of the nineteenth is the emergence of branding as the artwork of the twentieth century.

Conversely to King, John Thompson argues that strategically speaking, brand authors can prove problematic for publishers. He writes:

> There is always the risk [brand-name authors] will leave. Brand name authors are in a strong position in the field, and their agents can play publishers off against one another in an attempt to get them to pay over the odds for the revenue streams that will be generated by their future books […] From time to time, the big brand-name authors will move houses – in 1997 Stephen King moved from Penguin Putnam to Scribner, an imprint of Simon & Schuster, having turned down an offer of $21 million from Penguin Putnam for his next book […] High-profile moves of this kind are a testimony to the poaching game that is played out constantly in that sector of the field where brand-name authors are leveraged by large corporations seeking to grow their revenues and increase their market shares in a market that is largely static (2012: 218).

Indeed, the significant aspect of 'branding' is that it often only reinforces the strength of the individual, while simultaneously proving problematic or unhelpful for publishers and aspiring writers alike. As Briggs and Candee note: 'When a new writer appears with a talent for suspenseful writing, he's compared to Stephen King. This may be flattering at first, but it reinforces Stephen King's brand and diminishes the brand of this new writer' (2012: 14).

A great deal of King's brand growth has substantially come from his various film adaptations. Mark Browning, in his work *Stephen King on the Small Screen* (2011), argues that King has successfully used authorship as a brand device throughout these various adaptations. He argues that King is often granted 'a greater claim of authorship with the use

of King's possessory credit in *Stephen King's Salem's Lot* (2004) and *Stephen King's The Shining* (1997)' (2011: 173). Very rarely are authors granted this sort of association with or authority over an adaptation of a book. This places King in a rare and privileged position as both an author and brand name, as his name is not simply disregarded in the adaptation (which is the case for the majority of authors, both historic and contemporary), but in fact strengthened and re-established by aligning King with the ownership of the story and idea.

King's writing career, as Sutherland observes, is often focused on the very notion of authorship itself, in a social sense, and the troubles surrounding it. In *The Shining*, the writer – Jack Torrance – is struggling to write his manuscript with the burden of a wife and child, while in *Misery*: 'the writer is – as King must often feel – in bondage to his number one fan' (Sutherland, 2011: 775). According to George Beahm (1992), *Misery* was inspired by the negative reaction that King's fans had to his work *The Eyes of the Dragon* (1987). The obsessive nature of the author-fan relationship is also deftly explored throughout the novel, something which King has himself experienced. As King has noted: 'The impression fans have of people who have achieved some degree of celebrity are *always* fictional, as I can attest of my own personal experience' (cited in Spignesi, 2003: 122, author's emphasis). One of these experiences involves conspiracy theorist Steve Lightfoot, who had alleged that it was King, rather than Mark David Chapman, who murdered John Lennon, drawing an interesting parallel between King and J.D. Salinger in terms of the impact that Lennon's murder had on each of their careers. Lightfoot repeatedly accused King of not only murdering Lennon, dedicating a website to this accusation, but also accused King of frequently threatening him with violence. On one occasion Lightfoot, after having been banned from attending King's public events, appeared at one of the author's book signings, whereupon he held up a sign accusing King of Lennon's murder, after which he was subsequently arrested. Such is the frequency with which readers and fans stalk authors that the phenomenon is increasingly becoming a prominent theme within certain authors' works. As John Dugdale argues:

> At any rate, ever since Stephen King's *Misery* – in which a nurse who calls herself a novelist's "No 1 fan" keeps him prisoner at her house – authors have been increasingly drawn to stalking or related behaviour as a theme: benign in the case of the eponymous hero of Zadie Smith's *The Autograph Man*, but a creepy version of love in Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love*, Zoë Heller's *Notes on a Scandal*, Philip Roth's *The*

Humbling and Edward Cullen, troubling hero of Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* trilogy (2013).

The idea of stalking within celebrity culture is most often associated with film and music celebrities, more so than authors. Some of the more famous cases include Dante Michael Soiu, who stalked American actress Gwyneth Paltrow, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg being stalked through Facebook itself, and Jodie Foster whose infamous stalker John Hinckley Jr. attempted to assassinate Ronald Reagan in order to gain her attention and affection. The obsessive nature surrounding King's own career, then, is intriguing and moreover illustrative of the kind of impact brand authors can have in contemporary society and celebrity culture.

Stephen King's status as a celebrity author remains picked apart by critics still attempting to dissociate highbrow literature and popular culture. Tony Magistrale has described King as 'America's Storyteller' (2010: vii), arguing that instead of a being 'hack' writer, as he has often been described, King may instead have something important to say about American culture. He argues:

> Certainly part of [King's] popularity comes from his visualisation of the dark side,
> feeding the Western world's postmodern fascination with indulging Gothic expressions
> of music and art. King's narratives, however, are also associated with describing very
> particular elements of America (vii).

This notion of the 'dark side' of culture has also been explored in regards to Ellis' own works, in particular *American Psycho* (1991). In Ellis' work, the theme of the 'dark side' is manifest in drug addiction, sexual promiscuity and rampant consumer culture, as I will discuss. King looks at the theme of the 'dark side' explicitly through a genre-specific manner. In this way, both Ellis and King have a particular focus on the 'dark side' of American life and consumerism, though in starkly different ways.

Brand Ellis

Bret Easton Ellis, author of the notoriously controversial work *American Psycho*, reignited interest in the concept of celebrity authorship and the novel for younger generations

following the publication of his debut work *Less than Zero* (1985), which he had first written while at university. Ellis, along with authors Tama Janowitz and Jay McInerney, emerged in the 1980s as the ironic, posturing, literary 'Brat Pack', a term affectionately bestowed upon them that was previously used to describe a group of young, popular actors in the 1980s, which included Emilio Estevez, Anthony Michael Hall, Rob Lowe, Andrew McCarthy, Demi Moore, Judd Nelson, Molly Ringwald, and Ally Sheedy. The term was associated with youth culture and the coming-of-age rhetoric both in the films of John Hughes and the novels of Ellis, McInerney and Janowitz, which frequently addressed the theme of wealthy, disaffected youth. Ellis, moreover, was cited as modernising and romanticising the rock and roll lifestyle for literature. As Grimshaw explains:

> Young, white, privileged, privately educated, a pop culture and media darling in his early twenties, running as part of a brat pack that helped restore the novel as hip, sexually ambivalent, diving nose first into drug culture Brett Easton Ellis seemed to embody all that was deemed as 'the next big thing'. He came across as Media savvy, aloof, disdainful, troubled yet excessive, his pen on the pulse of postmodern urban youth, a cultural critic and brand name junkie-whore who sought to transcribe transgressive thrills for readers either looking to re-read their own lives or experience a hyper-real *frisson* (2002: NP).

Ellis, McInerney and Janowitz were presented as the new, trendy faces of a postmodern literary movement, whose minimalist style was heralded as stylish and fashionable. They were often photographed at celebrity events with famous people, including Janowitz, who was photographed at an event with Andy Warhol, demonstrating a fusion of literature and celebrity culture. Although all members were popular writers, the emphasis on their grouping was more to do with their celebrity image than it was a complete reaction to their works. The writers would often dress in suits, mimicking the Jazz Age movement of the 1920s, with Ellis hoping to become something of a postmodern F. Scott Fitzgerald by emulating his style. Hemingway was a large influence on Ellis: 'When I was younger Hemingway was a big influence, as he is for so many young male writers. They think they can mimic what they mistake for simplicity' (Mendelsohn, 1999). Further, Helen Brown from *The Daily Mail* states:

Bret Easton Ellis made a bid to become his generation's F. Scott Fitzgerald with a debut novel called *Less Than Zero*. It was based on a crowd of beautiful and damned young Los Angelians whose hedonism was a desperate distraction from their emotional vacancy (2010: NP).

Less Than Zero was meant to be the postmodern generation's version of *The Great Gatsby* (Ellis later criticised Baz Luhrmann's adaptation of Fitzgeralds' book as a 'ghastly Illuminati prank' (Hooten, 2013)). Johannes Malkmes[65] furthermore argues that 'like Fitzgerald, Ellis deeply reflects upon a cultural period [that] he derives from' (2011: 85), and that the success of *Less Than Zero* earned him the role of spokesperson for what came to be known as the 'New Lost Generation' (85). However, in a 2014 interview with Ellis, James Brown argues: 'Having made his name as a sort of Scott Fitzgerald in Raybans, he then destroyed it by giving the world Patrick Bateman in the super-vilified *American Psycho*' (2015). It is in this same interview that Ellis states: 'Patrick Bateman was me. I was Patrick Bateman […] I never admitted it the first 10, 15 years after publication of that book, I was very defensive about it, but I was writing about myself' (2015).[66] In Ellis' pseudo-autobiography *Lunar Park* (2005), the author describes the cult of what the media described as the new brat pack:

It was the beginning of a time when it was almost as if the novel itself didn't matter anymore – publishing a shiny booklike object was simply an excuse for parties and glamour and good-looking authors reading finely honed minimalism to students who would listen rapt with slack-jawed admiration, thinking, I could do that, I could be them. But of course if you weren't photogenic enough, the sad truth was you couldn't. And if you were not a supporter of the Brat Pack, you simply had to accept us anyway. We were everywhere. There was no escaping our visages staring out at you from the pages of magazines and TV talk shows and scotch ads and posters on the sides of buses, in the tabloid gossip columns, our blank expressions caught in the dead

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[65] Johannes Malkmes provides a critical comparison of Ellis and Fitzgerald through the lens of consumer culture in his work: *American Consumer Culture and Its Society: From F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1920s Modernism to Bret Easton Ellis' 1980s Blank Fiction* (2011).

[66] As is common of literary celebrity, Ellis was frequently compared to his most notorious character, Patrick Bateman. American feminist Gloria Steinem was one of the many people opposed to the book's release, calling Ellis a misogynist. Steinem was also the stepmother of Christian Bale (while married to his father, David, from 2000-2003 – until his death), who portrayed Bateman in the 2000 film adaptation of *American Psycho*. The coincidence is mentioned in Ellis' pseudo-autobiography *Lunar Park*.

glare of the camera flash, a hand holding the cigarette a fan was lighting. We had invaded the world (2005: 47).

In this paragraph Ellis illustrates a lifestyle that is more synonymous with brand and celebrity culture than it is with literature in the traditional sense, privileging the author's glamorous status over the actual book they were famous for. Ellis captures the posturing of celebrity authorship that was characteristic of other authors in the 1980s. His observation that it was a time when it seemed as though the novel had become secondary to the author is a pivotal characteristic of the decade's hedonistic and postmodern obsession with image and celebrity. As Colby argues: 'the media objectification of Ellis, Jay McInerney, and Tama Janowitz ironically mirrored in reality the reification of the human subject into celebrity culture that occupies much of Ellis's fiction' (2011: 23). While his books – with their themes of drug-abuse, sex, materialism and youth violence – were popular and highly regarded, greater emphasis was placed on the author, suggesting a re-emergence of celebrity authorship in which the writer's life was just as fascinating, if not more so, than the writer's actual works.

Although Ellis' novel *Glamorama* (1998) is, of all Ellis' works, most strongly linked to the theme of celebrity culture and its dehumanisation of the human subject, it is Ellis' work *Lunar Park* that more accurately illustrates the relationship between the author and celebrity culture. The work features Ellis as the protagonist in what seems like an autobiographical work, but is in actuality a novel that disrupts the theme of testimony[67], in which Ellis presents a dramatised version of himself as the central character. As Colby writes, in *Lunar Park*, Ellis posits a fictional version of himself as a way in which to address mediated narratives of authorship: 'Bret, in *Lunar Park*, is the replacement self of Ellis, a self that has been reified into its media construction. Throughout *Lunar Park*, Ellis is concerned with the ethics surrounding the becoming of cultural and authorial fictions' (135). The public's conception of an author's identity has been a recurring element in authors and authorship, as seen with Byron, Rousseau and Hemingway. There is a strong resistance felt by many authors who feel as though their personas are usurped by the media industry. *Lunar Park* can therefore be seen to be Ellis' own critique of this practice of creating an author's own identity through the media, in a similar manner to Rushdie and his authorial alter-ego in *Joseph Anton*.

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[67] For an extended discussion on Ellis and the celebrity pseudo-autobiography, see my article 'Writing the Celebrity Pseudo-Autobiography: Hauntings in Ellis and Ellroy,' *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 5, pp. 679-689, 2014.

Although their celebrity image seemed to surpass their status as writers, the Brat Pack nevertheless came to be studied in the same academic field that had previously devoted scholarly attention to authors such as Pynchon and Mailer, and were subsequently seen as important components of a revised kind of postmodern fiction that focused on adolescent inertia. Daniel Grassian argues that the Brat Pack 'mark[ed] an important transition from the previous generation of American postmodern writers like John Barth, Thomas Pynchon and Robert Coover […] Ellis, McInerney and Janowitz wrote fiction that made literature relevant once more for a new generation of Americans' (2003: 12).

Brand Status

Arvidsson writes that 'although brands have a long history as a commercial institution, reaching as far back as the eighteenth century, their position as central components of the social fabric was established in the 1980s' (2006: 3). Ellis' fiction emerged in an era that celebrated the logo, the trademark, and the brand name; authors were not simply promoting their works but also themselves, seemingly more sellable than their own books.

Significantly, in *American Psycho*, Ellis embraces the notion of branding in a similar manner to King, using his characters to make a statement of the culture of brands, advertising and consumerism. His characters, part of the Yuppie cultural group of 1980s New York, exemplify this growth in brand name advertising. Ellis' protagonist Patrick Bateman, furthermore, represented the shift in the male relationship to consumer culture. As Leiss, Kline et al explain: 'If cultural consumption was the main area of competition, then males had to become more involved. The changing nature of work also contributed to this, since few [men] any longer got their hands dirty at work' (2013: 460). Leiss argues that designer brands were able to successfully promote their brands to yuppies, despite the fact that incomes were, in the 1980s, declining for many. The rise in debt notwithstanding, yuppies became 'more involved in the social interactions of white-collar work, which put more emphasis on "looking good"' (460). Ellis' novel offers a critique on the rise of branding and consumerism, aligning it with the superficial, and his work was published when the cult of the brand was not simply emerging but was becoming a mainstream part of culture. As Stephen Brown argues, *American Psycho* explores what he calls the 'dark side' of American culture, including instances of excessive consumption, drug culture and sexual promiscuity.

He also claims that the use of brand names throughout the work is a 'devious authorial device' (1995).

Despite instances of brands being interspersed through the novels of Stephen King, Arvidsson argues that Ellis' novel 'was arguably the first literary text where brand names played a prominent part. Ellis' characters are defined by the branded items that they wear […] Throughout the novel, people remain anonymous and distant; brands speak for them, define them and make them into what they are' (2006: 2). Thus Ellis' emphasis on the brand seems to stress society's negative relationship to the brand; as Patrick Bateman endlessly consumes, he also becomes consumed by the brand, becoming 'merely the sum total of his consumption habits and little else' (Norden, 2007, 10). The phenomenon of the brand can therefore be seen, in this way, as a form of replacement, and by extension a replacement of the self with manufactured, repetitive archetypes and logos. The concerns of Moran, English and Frow regarding the brand's association with authorship can therefore be seen to be validated, as the brand is seen as something that can replace the author's originality with a mere repeatable commodity.

Yet while *American Psycho* has been noted as Ellis' most brand-laden work – the first half of which focuses almost exclusively on popular brand names – his other works are increasingly gaining attention for their focus on brands and branding. For Annesley, Ellis' *Lunar Park* operates as a statement on brand authorship and celebrity culture. Annesley also observes that Ellis' brand status is a complicated artefact, as Ellis, compared to other, more recognised celebrities, is rather anonymous by comparison: 'The most obvious point is that when compared to instantly recognisable celebrities like Madonna, Tom Cruise, or Michael Jackson, Ellis is, in truth, a little anonymous' (2011: 144). However, Annesley argues that Ellis nevertheless functions as a celebrity author and brand, writing: 'Celebrated for his precocity, mocked for his commercialism, attacked for his violent imagery […] Ellis's brand is a many and varied thing' (145).

Lunar Park is, for Annesley, a work that 'mixes established fact with implausible fiction' (146), but develops 'into a suburban horror story that owes much to films like *Halloween* and *Nightmare on Elm Street* and the fiction of Stephen King. *Lunar Park* starts with the fictional Ellis trying to reorient himself after years of excess and literary celebrity' (146). Further still, Annesley explains: 'At the core of the novel is an intense self-consciousness about the nature of Ellis's own status as a writer' (146).

Ellis' brand authorship is not merely something that lends itself to commercial products, but something that focuses on his image as a celebrity author. As seen with Rousseau and Hemingway, an author's readership will often assume that there is a direct link between the author and their literary characters. In this way an author's image becomes romanticised by way of seeing an author and their often larger-than-life characters as one and the same. Discussing this intense fandom, Kurzman et al note: 'fans and nonfans alike treat celebrities as quasi-magical figures […] However, celebrity status has become its own niche: fame is lucrative. This form of status translates directly into financial benefit' (2007: 360). Ellis also notes that his own type of celebrity authorship, his brand, is flawed, claiming: 'I will always be known as this quasi-celebrity who wrote this certain kind of book' (2001: NP). Thus Ellis, similarly to English and Frow, notes that the kind of celebrity status experienced by brand authors is not seen as a legitimate kind of celebrity but something secondary to 'real' fame.

For English and Frow, as previously mentioned, brand authors do not function as authentic celebrities, correlating to both Kurzman and Ellis' belief that brand authors function as quasi-celebrities. This notion of the 'image' or 'self' is, of course, largely self-imposed by an author's willingness to brand themselves through an array of endorsement deals and appearances, but it is also constructed through audience reception and a reader's desire to 'know' an author intimately. As Lara Cain observes: 'Celebrities themselves may be read as texts: able to be interpreted in different ways by different audiences; or as signs that are part of a system of signs, therefore necessitating a reading that includes relational analysis of other signs and semiotic situations' (2005: 53). This idea of proximity relates to Benjamin's (1973) notion of art in relation to space and image. He writes: 'this image makes it easy to comprehend the social basis of the contemporary decay of the aura' (1973: 229). There is, he notes, a 'desire of contemporary masses to bring things "closer" spatially and humanely' (229). The 'contemporary masses', in this instance, are readers who seek to have closer access to details and knowledge about the author. Thus the concept of an authorial brand has an author constructing an image unto which thoughts, ideas and perceptions, often erroneous and inaccurate, are formed by readers and consumers.

Ellis' image similarly requires him being closely related to the characters he writes in regards to personality, which has become a vital component of his celebrity authorship. As Moran notes: 'The appropriation of the "private" by celebrity culture, then, is partly a result of the continuing commodification of the self in monopoly capitalism as described by Adorno

and Horkheimer and others, but is also a product of celebrity culture's own recognition that the image it presents of the star is somehow "false"' (2010: 63). Yet it is inaccurate to posit readers as gullible consumers who always align the image with the real thing. As Ian Collinson writes, readers have not wholly abandoned the author as a 'real' person: 'At the opposite pole on the continuum are the readers who follow a more overtly humanist perspective; the author is perceived as a "real" person who contributes more or less directly to their reading practice' (2009: 73).

In 2010, when Ellis visited Australia to promote his book *Imperial Bedrooms* (2010), the author commented on being 'quite taken' with Australian singer Delta Goodrem, which led to many of his readers decrying the author for essentially betraying his image as a celebrity-hating, disaffected and therefore credible author. A post on the website *Pedestrian TV* stated that the comments 'earned the discontent of Easton Ellis' Australian Twitter followers (*I've lost all my faith in this author, oh my god you can't be serious, your taste is shit, how could you like Delta?*) and the attention of Australia's most hyperbolic headline writers' (Ash, 2010). One such headline was 'American Psycho author Ellis obsessed with Delta Goodrem' (2010).

In response to this criticism, Ellis noted: 'The brand Bret Easton Ellis bumps up against the real man and this is what happens' ('Bret Easton Ellis in Australia', 2010). This phenomenon correlates with what Moran describes as 'the relationship between the "real" author and this mythicized image' (2010: 67). Ellis himself observes that his image as a celebrity author carries with it assumptions that are strongly associated with the characters he has written, and the lavish, hedonistic lifestyle of LA. In this instance his image does not allow for him to be fond of someone like Delta Goodrem, who represents a type of culture separate from that of Ellis' work. Further, in an early interview in which he discussed his rise to fame, Ellis stated that 'I was Bret Ellis before, and now I'm Bret Easton Ellis' (cited in Wang, 2001). This simple change in his literary name shows how subtle brand culture is in terms of authorship. The title 'Bret Easton Ellis' has greater connections to cultural and ideological icons and objects than merely 'Bret Ellis', and belongs to an entirely different kind of system outside of celebrity culture. In regards to linguistics, 'Bret Easton Ellis,' as a 'stage-name,' may have a successful psychological impact on memory and recognition that aids in securing his brand status. Discussing celebrities who operate in the industry with three-names, Cohen and Conway write that although memory retrieval often fails for fans of celebrities with three names, it also appears to make the names stand out: 'although having

three words in a name appears to hinder recall, it may improve recognition of a person's name as familiar because it makes the name more distinctive' (2008: 133).

Ellis continuously separates himself from what he sees as his brand, while also acknowledging that his brand has been aided by his hedonistic lifestyle:

> During that year it hit me that Bret Easton Ellis had become a brand. The real Bret Easton Ellis isn't that guy. I'm not that decadent, my family isn't that rich, I don't do the shit that's in the book – I'm more laid-back and funnier, but this Dark Prince Of Decadence is what I'm known for and what I'll always been known for. People still say I had one of those 'Brett Easton Ellis' nights (cited in Hilton, 2010).

This image is one that Ellis has utilised and explored throughout his fiction, and in so doing he strengthens his brand status by appearing to resemble the personality traits of many of his hard-living characters. Similarly to Ernest Hemingway in his ambivalent response to literary fame, Ellis has displayed sentiments that show him to be a detractor of the very celebrity culture he is a part of, while actively engaging in the mediated construction of his identity. For instance, in an interview with *The New York Times*, Ellis states: 'My work is really about a culture that pisses me off, and a world that we live in that values all the wrong things' (cited in Wang, 2001). However, Ellis later retracted this statement, saying: 'I criticise celebrity culture, but I'm also fascinated by it. I mean, I read magazines and wonder, "Well, what really did happen with Meg Ryan and Dennis Quaid?"' (2001). In a similar vein to Graeme Turner, Ellis himself observes that the celebrity industry is often driven by the visual and the attractive, rather than the substantial and enduring:

> Celebrities are projections of our own fantasies – what our ideal notion of our selves are: heroic, handsome, brave, cool, etc. and we react to them accordingly. I don't have a problem with celebrities, but our blind hero worship of them is problematic. And the fact that so little of our infatuation has to do with genuine accomplishment – but with what's basically known as "cuteness" – is ugly. The hypocrisy inherent in the media's portrait of celebrity – magazine covers and 6,000 word profiles on a girl with a nice bod – is really hard to deal with. Lately I've been thinking that maybe countries with the most leisure time are the countries that have the biggest fascination with celebrity ('Bret Easton Ellis', 2000).

Ellis' comments echo those of Daniel Boorstin, reiterating the notion that more contemporary celebrity is seen as an entitlement, rather than something to be earned. Moreover, Ellis' comments are illustrative of the continued ambivalence that authors have with engaging in celebrity culture, which they purportedly disavow. Ellis' continued self-promotional tours and endeavours align him more with the kind of exhibitionistic celebrity of Norman Mailer than they do with more 'reclusive' celebrity authors like Thomas Pynchon, and J.D. Salinger. His distaste for celebrity therefore can arguably be seen to form part of his brand status, one that is modelled on the characters that he writes of, most of whom are disaffected, wealthy, and cynical about consumerist culture.

Through the lens of excessive and blatant horror and brutality, both Ellis and King explore the social shifts in late twentieth-century American consumer culture, something which has allowed both authors to be considered in a more literary discourse. Their respective use of the 'brand', and of brand names, however, sees their careers as authors picked apart mercilessly by critics and readers alike. This illustrates that although Ellis and King have been successful in undermining traditional notions of authorship, their popularity as brand authors still impinges, somewhat negatively, upon their status as writers. As seen in Ellis' work, there is an underlying theme of self-consciousness when it comes to his status as a 'serious writer' and a celebrity author, while King has, time and again, encountered great criticism as well as exclusion from the field of what is ostensibly considered 'highbrow authorship'. The collective reaction to Ellis and King in a literary context is indicative of certain elite expectations that still persevere in late-twentieth and early twenty-first century literary celebrity. The author's engagement with the industry of branding is seen as potentially disfiguring for the literary author. As the theories of Moran, English and Frow attest, there is a fear that brand authors will be nothing more than marketable names, overriding the significance of literature itself, and as a result there remains a reluctance to accept the brand author as a so-called 'legitimate' author.

Chapter Nine: Jonathan Franzen, Toni Morrison, and Authenticity in the Twenty-First Century

The concept of commercialisation and authorship is particularly prevalent in the twenty-first century. Following on from the boom in brand authorship in the 1980s, a noticeable trend in the 1990s saw the literary industry becoming increasingly commercialised with developments such as Oprah Winfrey's Book Club, beginning in 1996, which had been launched as part of the host's television show. Oprah's Book Club was known to feature a variety of books that she recommended her audience read. While many saw Oprah's Book Club as improving literacy and interest in literature in America, others believed it trivialised reading and literature while undermining the integrity of authorship.

David Johnson's *The Popular & the Canonical: Debating Twentieth-century Literature 1940-2000* (2005), John Thompson's *The Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century* (2010) and Greco, Rodriguez and Wharton's *The Culture and Commerce of Publishing in the 21ˢᵗ Century* (2006) all discuss and dissect the growing trend in the twenty-first century that sees authorship and commercialism as becoming increasingly linked in both positive and negative ways. Authors in this environment have thus had to contend with a market that depends more heavily on the commercial rewards of publishing. As a result, the celebrity author has been thrust into a position where they must negotiate between their reputation as an author and their desire to be commercially successful in an increasingly competitive market. The rise of commercialism in the authorship sector is a significant development as it provokes re-examination of the values attributed to authors. As previously discussed, Moran notes that there exists a nostalgia in society for authors to embody anti-commercial traits within an otherwise debased culture. He writes that authors 'reproduce a notion, popular since the Romantic era, of authors and their work as a kind of recuperated "other", a haven for those creative values which an increasingly rationalistic, utilitarian society cannot otherwise accommodate' (2000: 9).

The increased attention being paid to the union between authorship and commercialism prompts debate as to the perceived integrity and authenticity with which authors are arguably meant to be associated. As Moran astutely notes, this concept of the author or artist as a struggling, anti-commercial figure stems from a distinctly Romantic rhetoric that sees the 'penniless author' trope as the favoured version of the author. This

idealistic image of the author has since been well sustained in popular discourse, from which commercialism becomes its predominant opposing force.

As Faye Hammill writes, the 'representation of authors and other kinds of artists becomes a way of channelling human impulses and desires which do not fit the patterns of capitalism and rationalism, so that authors acquire an almost priest-like status' (2007: 112). She furthermore notes that it therefore becomes 'essential to maintain the myth of [authors'] separateness from mainstream society' (112). Indeed, the notion that authors are inherently meant to exist and function beyond the trappings of commercial society is one well-propagated but not necessarily accurate or wholly embraced, and is a line of thinking that has been increasingly questioned or challenged in recent years. Despite this debate, many authors still warily adhere to these codes of authorship, as exemplified in their refusal or hesitance to engage in commercial endeavours, with Franzen being a prime example.

Often the risk of sullying one's reputation by appearing on television or in films or otherwise engaging in overtly commercial endeavours has proved too great, as celebrity authors are seen as being part of a wider problem of mass commercial publishing trends. Although many authors have encountered this cultural dilemma, American authors Toni Morrison and Jonathan Franzen are particularly useful cases in showing how demands of authenticity have continuously rivalled celebrity status. Franzen's attempts to disassociate himself from the celebrity culture of the 1980s 'rat pack' and appear authentic in the eyes of discerning reading publics has directly contrasted with his desire to sell his works, and as a result his case proves interesting from a contemporary understanding of literary celebrity. Morrison, on the other hand, has much more effectively manoeuvred through such a market, having been awarded the Nobel Prize while also having appeared on Oprah's program. In this chapter I will discuss Franzen and Morrison's careers and involvement with Oprah's television show in light of the increased commercialisation of books and book cultures in the twenty-first century. This has had an unprecedented impact on the relationship between literature, authorship, and celebrity.

Twenty-First Century Commercialisation

The twenty-first century has seen a renewed interest in the Victorian cult of the personality; certain theorists locate a link between Victorian era authorship and the twenty-first century. As Bradley Deane argues: 'the legacy of the nineteenth-century author refuses to be laid to

rest. In the twenty-first century literary marketplace, authorial cults of personality continue to drive production and consumption' (2003: ix). This has resulted in frequent comparisons between contemporary and historical authors. In her aforementioned article 'It's Tartt – But Is It Art?' (2014), Evgenia Peretz discussed the runaway success of Donna Tartt's novel *The Goldfinch* (2013), and the constant comparisons between Tartt and Charles Dickens. Peretz noted that many described the novel as 'Dickensian', leading other commentators to criticise the link as trivial. Francine Prose similarly discussed the term, asking: 'often missing from so-called Dickensian novels are the aspects of Dickens – his originality, his intelligence, his witty and precise descriptions, the depth and breadth of his powers of observation'. Peretz writes: 'Is Donna Tartt the next Charles Dickens? In the end, the question will be answered […] by whether or not future generations read her' (2014). While strengthening Dickens' own influence in contemporary culture, the constant use of the word 'Dickensian' detracts from contemporary culture's ability to exert itself above already-existing tropes. Rather than seeking to produce new kinds of authors and styles, distinct from earlier ones, the twenty-first century seeks to replicate them in a bid to cash-in on familiar styles and authors.

Various theorists have also observed a stronger link between authorship and the economy in the twenty-first century. Kirchknopf argues: 'This myth surrounding authorship has both economic and socio-political implications. If an author publishes a work that wins a literary prize, inspires a movie adaptation, or evokes sensationalist reactions, s/he acquires a celebrity position which puts her/him on the market' (2013: 50). Similarly, Greco, Rodriguez and Wharton note that one of the most noticeable changes and trends to have occurred in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century has been 'consolidation in the consumer book-publishing industry' (2006: 10). Further, they observe that the idea of consolidation is a growing concern amongst consumers. Based on their research with respondents, they observed that many consumers felt as though the publishing industry had become:

…so market driven that publishers published dumbed-down books, with the cult of celebrity and anti-intellectualism reigning. Book publishing was seen as reflecting the TV diet of reality shows, in which street smarts will get you further than school smarts […] According to one respondent, publishers don't want to take the chance of publishing a book that they fear has no market. It is all self-reinforcing and the result is dumbed-down books (2006: 187).

Thus the cult of celebrity is, despite evidence to the contrary, seen as being synonymous with an anti-intellectual society. Celebrity culture is seen as a symptom of a growing trend that prioritises financial success over quality books and authors, seen with the continued success of brand name authors over more ostensibly 'literary' ones.

A dominating critique of contemporary publishing trends sees the celebrity author as directly or indirectly contributing to the declining quality of literature. This explains why many contemporary authors, including Jonathan Franzen, express reluctance with being involved in commercial endeavours such as television promotional activities. The value placed on an author's literary reputation appears far greater in the twenty-first century than in previous generations, as the media environment has changed to accommodate other, more varied audiences and forms of dissemination. As Joseph Tabbi writes, there is a notable discrepancy between the media environment in the 1960s and 70s, and the one that contemporary writers experience in the twenty-first century:

> These older writers of the sixties and seventies – self-conscious "outsiders" though they are – momentarily benefited from a mass audience in large part created by nonliterary media that had become, for the first time in history, universal in the United States and Western Europe. Today, the same corporate structure appears to have little use for the representations of itself that one finds in meganovels of the mid-seventies (2002: 78).

A substantial change can be seen to have taken place between modernism and postmodernism regarding authorship; technologies such as the internet, however directly or indirectly, substantially altered the media environment for authors. 'The shift from modernism to postmodernism,' Alan Kirby writes, 'did not stem from any profound reformation in the conditions of cultural production and reception' (2006). Instead, Kirby argues: 'somewhere in the late 1990s or early 2000s, the emergence of new technologies re-structured, violently and forever, the nature of the author, the reader and the text, and the relationships between them' (2006).

Although authorship has always been involved with the politics of the commercial literary market, as discussed in the earlier chapters of this thesis, the association between literature, authorship and celebrity has, in recent decades, become much more scrutinised, and has considerably transformed since the mid-twentieth century. This has led to claims that books and authors are ideologically deceased. For instance, Sherman Young argues that the

209

book as a marker of literary value died sometime in the twentieth century, and that books today are nothing more than marketable objects. He writes: 'Those slender volumes with snappy titles […] are not books in any meaningful sense. They are throwaway slogans' (Young, 2007: 28). Furthermore, Michael Dirda observes that many books that are being written in the twenty-first century are 'commercial novels that are essentially screenplays-in-waiting,' (2005: xxiv) and that the bulk of books bought are '*The Da Vinci Code*, followed by (a) the latest movie tie-in and (b) whatever Oprah Winfrey has recommended lately' (2005: xxiii). In a similar vein, Franzen has called publishing a 'subsidiary of Hollywood' (cited in Gelder, 2005: 27), believing, among other things, that the rise of television is one reason for literature's decline.

The substantial growth in the number of film adaptations rapidly being made so soon after the publication of a book affirms both Dirda and Franzen's belief that many authors today are simply writing books that are meant to become Hollywood blockbusters, or that in a culture of DIY publishing, genuinely great authors are in decline. This is not to say that quality books are not being published. Yet the economic value in publishing certain popular, celebrity works inevitably proves appealing for many publishers. As Leff observes:

> As cultural institutions, though, often run by their founders' sons or grandsons, the older or "better" American publishers hoped that a large audience would buy the occasional book, but they would not grub for cash or customers: they dealt in substance, not surface; in authors, not stars. They were adherents of literature, conservators whose status hinged on an association with great, rather than go-getting authors (1999: xiii).

Greco, Rodriguez and Wharton similarly argue that one of the dominating trends of twenty-first century publishing was 'the sale of family-owned establishments' (2006: 10). Thus although the current literary climate sees quality works and authors still being published, a greater emphasis on the commercial potential of books tends to dominate publishing choices, stemming from the increasingly profitable film industry which the literary marketplace seems to be emulating. Rebecca Mitchell aligns this more recent practice with the popularity and effective marketing strategy of the Hollywood industry:

The present cult of celebrity suggests that sales of a novel would increase if a popular actor or actress were featured on its cover art. Film adaptations of novels do seem to create perfect opportunities for such intertextual promotion: combining the familiar face of a screen star with the familiar characteristics of a well-loved story invites new cinema-savvy customers to the literary canon. But in fact, the success of film-tie ins with novels is less straight-forward. Publishers must balance two competing desires: courting customers new to classic fiction for whom the familiar stills from a successful movie version would be a tempting lure, and preserving the loyalty of customers who may feel alienated by film imagery on the covers of "classic" texts (2000: 108-109).

Authors are thus expected, to some degree, to adhere to a potential sense of commercialism. While not every new work is invariably destined to turn into a Hollywood screenplay, it is inevitable that the growth in books that very quickly become films is having an effect on writers and their ability to produce books that will not be utilised for their commercial potential. This has had a profound impact on authors, who are now expected to comply with the demands of literary celebrity in order to become published. As Baker notes:

One wonders where the careers of slow starters like William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway might have gone under such conditions. John Updike, one of the few contemporary writers of quality to have achieved any degree of sales success, recently told us he thought it would be much harder for him to have made a career if he were starting out today; and John Irving frankly admits that in the current climate he doubts whether his own early novels would have been published at all, and he might have been discouraged from further efforts (1996: 43).

Indeed, Baker notes that the efforts of those in the literary industry to replicate the methods and strategies of the more commercialised film industry seem to be 'galloping away with them' (42). Furthermore, the ongoing trend of film and television celebrities writing (or, more accurately, ghost-writing) books and autobiographies has further complicated, or transformed, the distinction between authorship and celebrity. Such a trend has identified a notable difference between celebrity authors – film and television celebrities publishing an autobiography – and *literary* celebrities. While both kinds of autobiographies focus on the individual in question, they are invariably different in tone and approach, with the literary

celebrity's autobiography still attached to the domain and authority of authorship, while authorship is less of a concern for actual celebrities-turned-authors. The order in which the roles of 'celebrity' and 'author' appear is significant as it reflects a certain power dynamic, favouring literary celebrities whose authorship is fundamentally intertwined with the genre of autobiography. In contrast to literary celebrities, whose use of the autobiography relies on the experimentation with the actual genre itself, for celebrities-turned-authors the focus rests on their potential to increase their star power through the platform of the autobiography, with the actual genre deemed peripheral to the particular star on the cover. As Thompson writes:

The media are the milieu in which an actual or potential author creates a platform, that is, demonstrates their ability to reach an audience and becomes to some extent – however modestly – a visible and identifiable persona in the public domain. So-called "celebrity publishing" is simply an extension of this fundamental dynamic, a special case where the "author's" platform becomes not just one factor to be taken into account but the overriding factor, indeed the principal reason for publishing the book ("author" being in inverted commas because many celebrity books are in fact ghost-written by others) (2012: 204).

Further, Thompson also argues:

You don't have to be a cultural snob to see that a good number of the books that are being put together in great haste – often ghostwritten "autobiographies" of celebrities or heavily illustrated gossip along the lines of Paris Hilton's *Confessions of an Heiress* – and published quickly in the hope that they will help to fill a budget gap are not books that add much to the cultural well-being (or even, for that matter, the entertainment) of the human race (380).

These trends have continued to shape the current book culture, one which is often dictated by the demands of publishers and the audiences' desire for celebrity culture. This is not to say that literary authors are not in demand. Rather, the current culture surrounding literature offers an insight into the way in which authors are subsequently viewed in correlation with the commercial literary industry and marketplace. More so than ever, in a culture with a proliferation of diverse forms of media, authors have increasingly had to negotiate between

their literary reputation and celebrity status. While this has been a familiar case in earlier generations, the manner in which this has affected authors in contemporary instances is increasingly prominent.

Morrison as Popular Intellectual

Toni Morrison in particular embodies the notable tensions of literary celebrity, being seen as a strong, political voice for both the African American culture and also for female authorship, receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993. But she is also a popular author in mainstream culture, frequently appearing on Oprah's program as well as having her books promoted by Oprah, (most notably her works *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977), and *Beloved* (1987)). Pelagia Goulimari describes Morrison as: 'a major literary artist who has also enjoyed great popular success' (2011: 26), while Tessa Roynon calls Morrison a 'celebrity radical intellectual' (2013: 125), one who:

> …has not chosen an easy row to hoe, it must in no small part be mainstream culture's incoherence about identity politics, political correctness, and the relationship between art and society that has forced the author into the "damned if you don't, damned if you do" position in which she so often finds herself (2013: 125).

Morrison therefore is in a similar position to her literary celebrity contemporaries, particularly Jonathan Franzen. Although she has satisfied both the demands of the marketplace by appearing on Oprah's show and by being awarded the most prestigious literary prize, she continues to be criticised for not embodying the ideal celebrity author, an archetype which has no clear definition, but seems to stress the incompatibility of celebrity and literature.

Frequently branded with the title 'black woman writer' (Goulimari, 2011: 108), Morrison has become, as well as a successful literary artist and intellectual, an authoritative figure through which her works operate as a statement on race and society. As Jeremy Green writes in his work *Late Postmodernism: American Fiction at the Millennium* (2005), Morrison is presented as 'the teacher of her own texts, the source of illumination, rather than a voice participating in debate' (85). He also notes that Morrison's engagement with *Oprah* has significant implications regarding her status as a literary celebrity: 'The show featuring

Toni Morrison's *Paradise* revealed the difficulty of reconciling the incompatible demands of promoting the author as celebrity, on the one hand, and presenting the text as a record and mirror of experience, on the other' (85).

Significantly, Green's comments attest that even in late postmodernism, the role of celebrity and artistic, literary author are still in some way seen as ultimately incompatible by certain theorists. Although Morrison has seemingly managed to promote herself in both roles, she is nevertheless seen as an author who continues to struggle occupying both roles simultaneously without evoking some sort of criticism.

In a similar manner to Pynchon, Morrison's work is popular on two fronts: she is part of a thriving mainstream culture that reveres her work, while at the same time much of her work is described as too difficult or 'high-brow' for the masses, which has caused tensions to arise. In Kathleen Rooney's book *Reading with Oprah: The Book Club that Changed America* (2005), the author writes how Morrison's book *Paradise* (1997), selected for Oprah's Book Club in 1998, is one of the book club's 'unreadables' (81). She writes:

I found *Paradise* unnecessarily cryptic and impenetrable in its style and composition. In fact, upon *Paradise*'s selection in January 1998, so many readers wrote in to say that they didn't understand the novel that Winfrey arranged to have Morrison, a professor at Princeton, host an on-the-air master class attended by Winfrey, her best friend Gayle King, and twenty audience members who sat on the floor and couch while Morrison lead the discussion (2005: 82).

Indeed, *Paradise* – a story following characters from the all-black town called Ruby in Oklahoma – was heavily criticised for being too complex for mainstream readers. As Anne Mulrine notes: 'Initial reviews for *Paradise* have been less than stellar. While praising the book's lush lyricism, critics have noted heavy-handed foreshadowing and contrived plot devices' (1998: 22). Mulrine further argues:

Casual readers may struggle with Morrison's writing, which often combines the magic realism of Gabriel García Márquez with the convoluted plotting of William Faulkner. Even *Song of Solomon*, arguably her most straightforward novel, was deemed too hard by many when Oprah Winfrey tapped it for her book club (22).

Mulrine's comments unintentionally point to a disparity between perceived 'casual readers' and more scholarly ones. By being compared to Márquez and, more importantly, to William Faulkner, whose works are notoriously complex, Morrison is seen as belonging to a group of authors perceived as too complicated for everyday mainstream consumption. What this reveals is that even though Oprah's Book Club has been praised by many as a revolutionary endeavour in bringing a greater appreciation of reading to the United States, there is still inevitably a limit to which certain difficult, literary novels can be disseminated in popular culture. Discussing Toni Morrison's career and appearance on *Oprah*, Collinson observes that Morrison's position as a literary celebrity somewhat intrudes on socio-cultural tastes and expectations in the media sphere:

> The selection of *Beloved* is further prompted by the complex nature of Morrison and her novel's cultural location. Significantly, a novel like *Beloved* problematises the high/low cultural binary, exemplifying instead a mass-produced text that occupies multiple and, supposedly, for those arbiters of taste, contradictory positions within the socio-cultural world. From one position, Morrison is indisputably a "literary writer" […] Beyond but not disconnected from art and politics is Morrison as media celebrity and bestselling author (2009: 91).

Further, Collinson illuminates the central, cultural issue surrounding Oprah's Book Club when he states that the readers he interviewed attempted to 'reconcile two different cultural ideologies' (2009: 104) when reading books recommended by Oprah. He writes that readers see Winfrey as both beneficial to encouraging reading, but also as a dangerous 'populist' (104). He argues: 'that the Book Club has encouraged more people to read more books is to be regarded as a good thing. But such literary evangelism that in another form might be cause for celebration is compromised by its commercialism' (104). This observation astutely illustrates the persistent belief that an author, even a celebrity author already engaged in the politics of commercialism, cannot be entirely successful in engaging with ostensibly low-brow television programs such as Oprah's. According to arbiters of taste, these programs go against the entire stance of the author's role as a social, serious and solitary commentator. Although Morrison seems to have successfully negotiated her role as literary celebrity and frequent guest of Oprah's, what often goes

unnoticed is how the decisions and beliefs of readers are subsequently influenced or in some way problematically constructed by an association with the cultural branding of Oprah's network and program. As a reader in Collinson's book explained, defending Morrison's *Beloved*: 'even though it was on Oprah, it's still a good book' (104).

In spite of these issues, Morrison's own appearance on *Oprah* is seen to signal a potential shift in the cultural dynamics of celebrity authorship. By appearing on Oprah's program, Morrison transcends the cultural expectation of what authors, even those that have been awarded the most prestigious of literary awards, are capable of engaging in. John Young argues that: 'by constructing an audience built through popular, ostensibly low, culture for her serious novels, Morrison explodes the high-low divide that still holds for much of postmodern art' (2001: 182). However, Young and others have argued that despite Morrison's ability to merge high and low-brow cultures, the presentation and reception of her works on a program such as *Oprah* is of a much less critical and more superficial nature that therefore threatens to undermine the platform on which Morrison's work circulates.

For instance, although *Song of Solomon* was recommended by Oprah, of all Morrison's work it is her most accessible to a much wider audience, in comparison to Morrison's *Paradise* and *Beloved*, both of which are not as accessible to the same audience that fetishized *Song of Solomon*. Young further argues that although Morrison's work becomes popular through this endeavour, it is a popularity that is 'based more on Winfrey's appeal than Morrison's' (182), and, moreover, discussed in a commercialised environment, Morrison's *Song of Solomon* 'loses its vital political subtext, as the book club's discussion ignores the critique of American racial history' (182).

This gradual shift in culture that has seen the commercial market merging, ambivalently, with the canon, seems to lose something vital in the translation of canonical texts into commercialised environments. The more political aspects of Morrison's novels become secondary in a commercial context, while these aspects become the focal point of discussion in more academic environments. What this suggests is that the merging of two seemingly dissimilar cultures encounters various problems in which certain compromises have to be made; a more literary work in a commercial context is expected to lose some of its complexity in order to be consumed by a large-scale audience. Thus a well-respected novelist, such as Morrison, will have her work critiqued through the lens of popular culture, rather than through more complex analyses that involve issues of race, history and politics. As a result, discussion surrounding these more literary works becomes commercially diluted,

and authors find themselves negotiating with the allure of widespread popularity at the expense of in-depth critical analysis and reception that often seems to secure their reputations.

Although Toni Morrison is a fascinating case of where a literary writer successfully became a literary celebrity through *Oprah* (Collinson, 2009: 91), Jonathan Franzen's ambivalence about Oprah's Book Club, marked by his initial reluctance and later involvement, proves more intriguing in demonstrating the cultural anxiety of literary authors, something which has not been present in any explicit manner in Morrison's own career. Morrison's case shows how the cultural principles developed around more canonical authors are somewhat erroneous, while Franzen's case illustrates the more pertinent factor of authorial reputation and commercial pressure that still has an effect on certain authors and their decisions and relationship to claims of 'cultural authenticity'.

Oprah, Celebrity and Authenticity

Richard Dyer observes a notable link between celebrity culture and authenticity. He argues that there is 'a rhetoric of sincerity or authenticity, two qualities greatly prized in stars because they guarantee, respectively, that the star really means what he or she says, and that the star really is what he or she appears to be' (2004: 10). This is particularly evident in regards to the celebrity author, who, in light of the romanticisation of the author's role, is often expected to adhere to an authenticity that goes hand in hand with anti-commercial values. This phenomenon is evident in many authors' careers, most notably with Hemingway, who continually projected an image of struggle in order to gain the respect of his peers and readers. A celebrity author's authenticity is therefore often irretrievably linked to anti-commercial ideals of struggle. For instance, John Duvall argues that through her fiction, Morrison: 'seems to equate black authenticity with black poverty' (2000: 83). For Duvall, Morrison's work is predicated on modernist themes of authenticity, a notion that was earlier expressed by Anne E. Berkman, who stated, in her work *The Quest for Authenticity: the Novels of Toni Morrison* (1987): 'By showing us only failed quests for authenticity and wholeness, Morrison has made her first novel a harsh warning' (1987: 19).

While Morrison's concerns with authenticity are more often found in her fiction, Franzen's are more to do with his public identity in an increasingly pejorative media environment that has brought with it the same issues surrounding identity and authenticity

that occurred in the twentieth century. As Zadie Smith has argued: 'identity politics [are] the only authenticity to survive the twentieth century' (2009: 15). Franzen, in particular, as both a contemporary literary author and celebrity, has been embroiled in arguments concerning authenticity and credibility relating to his image as a literary author. This notion of authenticity belongs strictly to the same Romantic rhetoric that dictates the history of authorship and celebrity. Nathaniel Lewis writes, for instance, that the notion of authenticity: 'is often freighted with the burden of the golden past, a nostalgia for an earlier age that seems, in retrospect, more real' (2003: 5). Lewis also argues that the concept of authenticity appears to be the true condition of the West. Similarly, Julia Straub writes that ideas of authenticity are tied to medieval ideas of authority and Romantic ideas of originality and creativity (2012: 12). Ideas of authenticity indeed tie into Romantic discourses that can also be discussed alongside consumerism; Don Slater argues that a paradox of consumerism and Romanticism exists, which is useful in framing current debates about theories of authorship, celebrity and authenticity. He writes:

> Romanticism and the concept of culture that it produced were in many respects reactions against industrial, commercial, consumer society from Rousseau in the 1750s […] Yet paradoxically Romanticism also bequeathed to consumer culture many of the themes that we consider most modern or even postmodern […] Romanticism promoted ideas of personal authenticity with aestheticism and creativity (1997: 15-16).

Contemporary writers who have become increasingly concerned with limiting their exposure to the commercial industries have placed renewed importance on the notion of producing an authentic sense of self. Slater continues: 'The very idea that acts of consuming are seriously consequential for the authenticity of the self (as opposed to mere physical survival and social climbing) is an unintentional consequence of these early developments' (16). The desire for cultural authenticity is not something that has simply re-emerged in postmodernism, but has, as Moran notes, been sustained since the Romantic period, being felt acutely by the modernists: 'male modernists such as Joyce and Eliot could circulate stories of their disdain for consumers which masked their true desire for commercial success' (Young, 2001: 185). With the increase in literary consumerism, this desire for both commercial success as well as the cultural capital of an 'authentic image' has only intensified, and further problematises the celebrity author's role in an increasingly commercialised environment.

The concept of authenticity boasts a breadth of philosophical research[68]. Fundamentally, arguments about authenticity are at the core of Western conceptions of the sense of self – a crucial concept that defines the environment and development of literary celebrity and authorship in general. As Straub writes:

> Authorship and authenticity are concepts that, at first sight and despite shared epistemological roots, are defined by opposite qualities. Authorship says something about the historical or biographical identity of a writer […] The commonsensical conclusion would be that [authenticity] clashes with outward appearances, such as the playing of social roles and the wearing of masks, and that it remains unaffected by the exigencies of the marketplace (2012: 263).

The politics of authenticity as a result have obstinately framed authorship as a necessary performance that often needs to be devoid of the kind of elements with which celebrity culture is associated. Franzen's career as a novelist is particularly illustrative of this dynamic, especially with regards to his appearance on *Oprah*, perhaps the most well-known talk show of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

Yet the notion of authenticity is not the only factor that determines the outcome of a celebrity author's career in the twenty-first century; arguments surrounding the fluctuating status of television as a legitimate medium also prove significant when determining an author's reputation. Disparaging views of television – from reality to game and talk shows – abound. And this, coupled with the demands of authenticity, has led to widespread scrutiny of the author who appears on television, embodying the Romantically-inclined notions of authorship in contrast to the negative views of television culture. For instance, in his autobiography *Point to Point Navigation* (2006), late author Gore Vidal wrote of a dispute between fellow authors and friends Graham Greene and Anthony Burgess regarding mediated authors. Greene purportedly disapproved of Burgess's appearances on television where he promoted his books. According to Vidal, Greene stated scathingly: 'Burgess is on television all the time in France […] I never do television' (cited in Vidal, 2006: 230). Greene's comment illustrates how certain authors see this kind of promotion as beneath the dignity and beyond the credibility of an author. This belief has persevered into twenty-first century literary culture, with the fusion of television/celebrity and book culture provoking widespread

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[68] See Lionel Trilling's *Sincerity and Authenticity* (1971), and Theodor Adorno's *The Jargon of Authenticity* (1973).

criticism and judgment. As Mel Campbell writes, discussing Franzen: 'writers who promote cheerfully, boldly and successfully are disparaged as "shameless" hacks. Yet even writers' critiques of self-promotion are self-promotional' (2013: 63).

One particularly scathing analysis of television is Vicki Abt and Leonard Mustazza's book, published before the turn of the century: *Coming After Oprah: Cultural Fallout in the Age of the TV Talk Show* (1997). Discussing Oprah's Book Club, they write: 'The books chosen are usually "uplifting", though few of them are seriously critical of the culture that supports Oprah' (1997: 66). Yet as previously discussed, the books that have appeared on Oprah's Book Club list include literary works such as Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, as well as the work of Joyce Carol Oates. Thus the books that are chosen are not necessarily devoid of literary significance. But Abt and Mustazza's views are useful in underlying the perspectives that circulate around the culture of television and are indicative of contemporary views of a cultural hierarchy between books and television: 'Trashy television talk programs are attractive and comforting to these individuals because the programs typically showcase people who, in class and condition, are lower than they are on the social ladder, the diametric opposite of the celebrated rich and famous' (109).

Further, Abt and Mustazza note that Oprah's program did not feature the kind of celebrities or politicians found on other programs such as *The Today Show*, but instead featured real-life people discussing their lives and problems, emerging in an era of a burgeoning self-help culture which led to the increased social voyeurism of its viewers (59). In 1994, however, Oprah separated herself from her talk-show counterparts Donahue and Sally Jessy by incorporating more serious social issues into her show, including addiction, domestic abuse, and one episode which featured a group of white supremacists. Comparatively, Oprah's program offered more in-depth discussions than other talk-show hosts of the 1990s, but her program did still exist as a mixture of self-help and commercialisation, and thus the relationship between Oprah's Book Club and celebrity authors is an unstable, ambivalent one, notably illustrated in Franzen's relationship with the show.

Franzen and Oprah

In 2001, Winfrey had placed Franzen's book *The Corrections* on her Book Club list. Authors who made the list were thereafter requested to appear on her television program to discuss

their works[69]. However, when Franzen's work was placed on the list, with the famous sticker on the cover, the author criticised the choice, particularly having his work chosen alongside what he called: 'schmaltzy, one-dimensional [books]' (cited in Rooney, 2005: 80), furthermore expressing disdain at having the 'corporate logo' of Winfrey's name on the cover of his work. While Franzen claims the comments were taken out of context, they resulted in his work being taken off the list and Oprah withdrawing her invitation to have the author speak on her show, stating on her program that Franzen appeared uncomfortable and conflicted about having his work associated with her show. Franzen's comments prompted criticism from authors and fans alike, with fellow author Andre Dubus III decrying Franzen's assumption that 'high art is not for the masses, that they won't understand it and don't deserve it' (quoted in Rooney, 2005: 55). What followed was evidence of a social conflict; Franzen's comments were illustrative of a cultural trend that saw popular fiction as incompatible with literary, high-art fiction. Or, as Ribbat articulates, the event sparked a conflict between elitism and populism: 'In the Franzen/Winfrey controversy, it appeared as if a writer's distrust of the media could be read as anything but cultural arrogance' (2002: 558). Moreover, Ribbat argues that Franzen was more concerned with the 'dialectics of retaining artistic integrity while enjoying the book's commercial triumph' (559), despite the fact that Franzen himself admitted to the feeling of having 'sold out'.

Oprah, by catering to an audience primarily interested in celebrity and issues concerning popular culture, seems to represent the complete antithesis of an author's traditional, or at least idealised, image: that is, distinctly anti-commercial. However, nine years after Franzen criticised the Book Club, he apologised to Oprah and subsequently appeared on her program to promote his new work, *Freedom* (2010), prompting both renewed scepticism and criticism of what was seen as an almost unforgivable gesture. As Halford wrote in response to the author's appearance on the program: 'Oprah and Franzen are not terribly compatible personalities [...] they could not speak to each other, inhabitants as they are of different worlds' (2010: NP). These different worlds, one can argue, refers to the distinction between Franzen's more literary status, and Oprah's popular, consumer culture associations. Moreover, Franzen's choice to appear on Oprah's program illustrates the dilemma of a celebrity author's career. By appearing on a hugely popular television program

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[69] One such author was Cormac McCarthy, author of *The Road* (2006), who appeared in an interview with Oprah at the Sante Fe Institute in 2007, his first ever television interview. Austen Allen argues: 'After what happened to Jonathan Franzen, someone […] must have told McCarthy that this was an interview request he couldn't refuse' (2012). For a more in-depth analysis of McCarthy's presence on *Oprah*, see 'Oprah Winfrey, Book Critic', by Jennifer Szalai (2013) in *The New Yorker*.

often associated with popular, commercial culture, the sales of an author's work inevitably rise, yet their image as a serious, non-commercial writer is expected to be somewhat compromised.

In the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 2012, journalist Malcolm Knox reviewed Franzen's collection of short stories, *Farther Away* (2012). Knox labels Franzen a 'reluctant celebrity' (2012: 32), before discussing the author's relationship to success. He writes that while Franzen had the potential to be a great novelist of 'vigour and talent, even genius, ignored by the wider world' (2012: 32), Franzen's popularity ultimately undid any sense of the author's literariness: 'It also seemed a kind of betrayal that Franzen was benefiting from the herd mentality, the winner-take-all generation of publicity [...] but nothing could protect him from his own popularity' (2012: 32). Knox's comments support the notion that supposedly 'great authors' must remain somewhat unknown, or 'ignored by the wider world', while equating popularity and celebrity with a loss of prestige.

Oprah's Book Club, despite the criticism it may garner from purportedly more 'legitimate' writers, greatly affects the sales of books, which is inevitably seen as a positive development. Thompson writes of the effects that Oprah's show and club has had on an author's success:

> There is nothing quite like Oprah or Richard and Judy when it comes to triggering an upsurge in sales. A book that might be trundling along in relative obscurity will suddenly acquire a kind of prominence and visibility that publicists could imagine only in their wildest dreams [...] The books picked by Oprah invariably experienced a huge surge in sales. Steinbeck's novel [*East of Eden*], 51 years old when it was picked by Oprah, immediately shot to the top of the *New York Times* paperback fiction bestseller list and remained there for seven weeks. Similarly, when it was announced at the end of March 2007 that Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* would be the next book in the Oprah Book Club, it went straight onto the paperback fiction bestseller list and remained there for 19 weeks (2012: 271).

Thompson calls Oprah a 'trusted cultural intermediary whose selections reduce complexity in a saturated marketplace' (272). Yet, as previously argued, an author placed on Oprah's Book Club faces the dilemma of cultural integrity versus sales success. Therefore it is expected that an author should wish to pursue all avenues possible to sell their work, including appearing

on a television show such as Oprah's which will, in turn, assure that their work will sell. Yet the demand for cultural integrity, and the aesthetic pressures on an author's image are also prevalent aspects of an author's career. As Collinson observes:

> Attitudes toward Winfrey are ambivalent to say the least […] The removal of the book club imprimatur appears as a symbolic attempt to separate the television celebrity from the novel, an act of cultural decontamination, an attempt to re-establish a cultural hierarchy that the Book Club has, to some degree, blurred. It is this blurring of the lines of cultural distinction that led to Jonathan Franzen's refusal to allow his novel, *The Corrections*, to be chosen as a Book Club selection; Franzen was concerned that his position within the high-art tradition would be compromised if his novel were subject to such blatant commercialism (2009: 103).

York, moreover, claims that, for Franzen, 'reluctance was a way of handling a sense of being obstructed in [his] search for particular levels of cultural capital' (2014: 7). Franzen's choice to apologise to Oprah after criticising her Book Club, and thereby having his book put on her list, is indicative of the ambivalent climate of celebrity authorship. While a sense of popularity can be regarded as unfavourable, even damaging to an author's image, or brand, sales success is still regarded as important to many writers, both struggling and successful. Yet while many authors aspire to have sales success, this success, especially through popular and commercial routes such as Oprah's Book Club and other promotional avenues, is at once seen as desirable and deplorable, at least by the estimation of a selective reading audience.

In his article *Was Oprah Bad for Literature?* (2012), Timothy Noah analyses the success of Oprah's Book Club:

> Although Winfrey was remarkably successful in getting people to buy the books she touted (and also, to some extent, other books written by the same authors), she did not make readers out of non-readers. Rather, she provoked what's known in the marketing world as brand-switching […] It would take a stony heart indeed to conclude that the Oprah Book Club, which was just about the most successful book-marketing experiment in modern times, wasn't worth it. Getting people to read better stuff – including a lot of indisputably great literature like *Anna Karenina* and *The Sound and the Fury* and *Great Expectations* – was an accomplishment of which Winfrey should be

proud. Perversely, though, in raising ever so slightly the literacy of the American public she made it ever so slightly more difficult, during the life of her book club, to publish latter-day Tolstoys and Faulkners and Dickenses (or anyway, contemporary writers who matched as closely as they could the accomplishments of these masters) (2012: NP).

Oprah undoubtedly has had a significant if not profound impact on not simply the sales of otherwise neglected works, but on increasing interest in quality books. However, in contrast to Noah's claim that Oprah did not make readers out of 'non-readers', R. Mark Hall writes: 'Thanks to her celebrity status, Oprah Winfrey has become a powerful literary sponsor, persuading many otherwise reluctant readers to pick up a book' (2003: 664). Indeed, Oprah's celebrity status has been used to bridge mainstream America with hitherto obscure works of fiction. Echoing Richard Schickel's theory of the illusion of intimacy, Hall states: 'This illusion of intimacy is important because it plays a central role in granting Winfrey the authority to tell millions of viewers what to read' (651). Grant McCracken, furthermore, argues that Oprah's effect on the contemporary culture of literature has been more beneficial and successful than any of the scholars involved in elite academia: 'Oprah has earned her regard by being clear, timely, thoughtful, frank, and, yes, charismatic. Consumers have been given a choice: a woman who is charismatic versus scholars who are, well, really more numismatic' (2005: 14). McCracken's comments show that rather than being seen as commercialist and unintelligent, Oprah is in fact seen as a better communicator than scholars who are often seen as elitist and intentionally obscure. Cecilia Konchar Farr, furthermore, criticises the divide between economic value and high culture that emerged in Franzen's dispute with Oprah. In her work *Reading Oprah: How Oprah's Book Club Changed the Way America Reads* (2005), Farr argues:

What was lost in the media hubbub was that Franzen was not the first intellectual to respond to Oprah's cultural clout with measured enthusiasm, to grumble about the erosion of high culture in an MTV world. The real news was that he crossed a line in questioning Oprah's economic clout, calling the Book Club seal a corporate logo (2005: 77).

Further, Farr argues that the common and widespread assumptions surrounding Oprah's program have inevitably influenced the opinions and choices of literary audiences:

Oprah's endorsement of *The Corrections*, some thought, tarnished Franzen's golden image […] I have observed that many arguments condemning Oprah's aesthetic choices are, like this one, arguments on economic principle – and generally uninformed ones. Readers who trash Oprah Books usually can't name more than one title. Literary prize-winners? Respected by other writers? You would never know from the widespread assessment of the Book Club as kitsch. Franzen must have feared being painted with that same brush (78).

However, Stephen J. Burn disagrees with the popular and widespread consensus that Franzen's initial actions were illustrative of a cultural, reputational dispute, suggesting that Franzen's reluctance to appear on Oprah was part of a larger motive. Burn argues: 'Too many of these writers – unfamiliar with Franzen's first two novels and the arc of his career – have failed to see how the roots of this dispute emerge not necessarily from a particular antipathy to Oprah Winfrey' (2008: 46). Instead, Burn writes, the dispute emerges from 'a fundamental division that stretches across all his work […] Franzen [had previously] described his [debut] novel for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in terms that clearly prefigure his discomfort over the divide between popular and literary books' (46).

Reviews of this debut novel, *The Twenty-Seventh City* (1988), were quite favourable upon publication, and saw Franzen as a gifted writer. In a 2010 interview for *The Paris Review*, conducted by Burn, however, Franzen talks of the criticisms of his earlier novels, including *Strong Motion* (1992), describing *Freedom* as his attempt to fix the material used in his earlier works. In the same interview Franzen discusses the importance of status: 'The reason I seized on those words is that status has another, more common meaning in this country – "status symbol," "literary status," and so on' (cited in Burn, 2010). The impression that one then gets from reading Franzen's critique and reflection of his own works is that he is, despite his talent, continuously wary and self-conscious in regards to his writing and mediated, literary status. The way in which Franzen attempts to navigate through the media sphere unscathed from criticisms of either elitism or selling out is perhaps indicative of a growing trend that sees authors treat cultural and literary status very delicately, more so than in previous generations. This intense instance of self-consciousness between literary prestige and economic value has nevertheless persisted despite various efforts to undermine such

developments and ideas of 'authenticity'. In Stephen Burn's *Conversations with David Foster Wallace* (2012), Franzen writes:

> I remember this being a frequent topic of conversation […] [Wallace's] notion of not having an authentic self. Of being just quick enough to construct a pleasing self for whomever he was talking to. I see now he wasn't just being funny – there was something genuinely compromised in David. At the time I thought, "Wow, he's even more self-conscious than I am" (2012: 172).

Ken Gelder calls Franzen a good example of an author who remains ambivalent about his fame and popularity. Discussing Franzen's dislike of 'popular fiction', in which the author claims that the 'dollar is now the yardstick of cultural authority' (2003: 62), Gelder writes that this is a particularly *literary* anxiety (2005: 25, own emphasis). He argues: 'Franzen seems to think that [Scott Turow] and Stephen King can only be on the cover of *Time* because they make lots of money, a fact which then allows him to think that this once-great national magazine has now lost its literary credentials' (25). Gelder notes how vehemently Franzen attempts to distance himself from the threat of the 'blockbuster novel' (27), evidently characterised by high sales and popularity with fans, seemingly the opposite of what a literary novel embodies. Gelder argues:

> Franzen remains uncomfortable about literary fame and uneasy about his popularity, such as it is: this is why his collection of essays is titled, perhaps rather cynically, "how to be alone". The sentiment expresses not just a disavowal of readerly interest. It also asks that the literary writer be left alone by industry: by those cultural industries, in particular, that would seem to have nothing to do with Literature at all (27).

Franzen's essay collection *How to Be Alone* (2002) also revisits themes of the 'solitary writer' trope that is highly valued in traditional notions of authorship. As previously discussed, while Lorraine York examines this notion in terms of the 'solitary scribbler', Ede and Lunsford discuss it is terms of the writer as an 'isolated, often alienated, hero' (1992: 73). In a time when authorship is so heavily affiliated with celebrity culture, Franzen's title may be a sly reference to his fear that authors are no longer the credible, solitary heroes they once were perceived to be.

Interestingly, in 2010, Franzen was featured on *Time* magazine's August cover. In the accompanying article, Franzen is described as being part of a 'perennially threatened species, the American literary novelist' (Grossman, 2010). But Grossman identifies that Franzen's self-consciousness is an advantage to the author's career: 'Franzen's self-consciousness is part of what makes his writing so good, because he is painfully conscious not only of his own self but of your self too' (2010). In this manner, Franzen shares notable similarities to authors of previous generations who often self-consciously contended with their literary reputation, underscoring the ambivalence that marks the careers of many literary celebrities. From the 'nostalgic self-consciousness of the romantic period' (Lang, 1988: 15) to Edgar Allen Poe's 'generic self-consciousness' (McGill, 2003: 163-164), authors have undeniably felt vulnerable to the discernment of their audience. Even with Charles Dickens, one of few writers to have attained great popularity alongside respected literary status, had the same self-consciousness. Lynn Cain, for instance, observes Dickens' 'self-conscious exploitation of himself in his fiction' (2008: 14). Yet in an era of pervasive media industries, this self-consciousness has become intensified as audiences are not merely invisible, undifferentiated reading publics, but have attained greater power in influencing the outcome or apparent 'validity' of an author's career. The celebrity author therefore becomes somewhat alienated from their audience for whom the author must apparently work to appease. As Mark Conroy argues, this appears evident more so for American authors than for their European counterparts. He states:

> One reason why American writers seem more aware of their alienation from the public than do comparably serious writers in France or England is that for the latter authors there really is an alternative, however unrewarding, to popularity – and that is very palpable prestige. In the United States, by contrast, there is scarcely even prestige awaiting the impecunious author. The aristocratic stance of a Gustave Flaubert or Charles Baudelaire, so definitive of the modern artist and writer, is less available to Americans (2004: 10).

The romanticisation of the penniless writer then seems particularly European in origin, with writers ranging from Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Willem Bilderdijk advocating the esteem and prestige of the struggling writer, a trope that would be replicated in the Victorian era and modernism. Yet famous authors in the United States nevertheless adhere to these ideals of

literary authenticity that are so often attached to images of poverty, struggle, solitariness, and anti-economic attitudes, as evidenced most prolifically in Franzen's career. Thus, the tensions still present in literary celebrity irrevocably lead to instances of self-consciousness, ambivalence, and the pressure to appear authentic in the public arena.

The early-twenty first century media and publishing environment is dominated by a sense of fragmentation and ambivalence. The respective ways in which Franzen and Morrison approached their celebrity status is evident of this uncertainty with regards to one's literary status. While Franzen disparaged Oprah's program before being the recipient of endless criticism regarding his reputation as a serious, 'literary' author, Morrison, in contrast, has not experienced the same amount of reputational conflict as Franzen. Yet even in Morrison's case, the author's literary status as popular bestseller and Nobel Laureate is still received somewhat ambivalently by her audience. What is more, Morrison's career testifies to the notion that certain complex, high-brow works cannot adequately be disseminated throughout popular culture, showing that there is an inevitable limit to which literary fiction and mass readership can effectively co-exist without compromising one or the other.

The different trajectories of Franzen and Morrison's careers in the twenty-first century is indicative of a greater fragmentation in the literary industry, in which many writers and readers express ambivalence over issues such as celebrity, authenticity and the overall status of literature. Although Franzen was criticised for being elitist, fuelling ostensibly anachronistic ideas of culture and taste, he nevertheless also became criticised for his eventual appearance on Oprah's program, leading yet again to claims that an author must agonisingly cultivate their literary status. With the rise of supposedly low-brow media formats such as reality television and social media, links have automatically been made between the cult of celebrity and the decrease in quality artistic production. As a result, the celebrity author in such an environment is often seen as contributing to the demise of great literary works by adhering to an industry solely devoted to profit. It has invariably become much harder for a celebrity author to operate effectively in a culture that has come to idealise authorship and preserve Romantic ideals of authenticity. As previously noted, Joe Moran has explained that there is great nostalgia for the anti-commercial author who writes for the sake of art rather than for either popularity or financial gain. Although such ideas are indeed anachronistic and idealistic, they have nevertheless continued to shape the contemporary media environment that appears more obsessed than ever with maintaining traditional ideas and attitudes regarding the author's position and role in society.

Chapter Ten: Dave Eggers, David Foster Wallace, and the New Sincerity

Post 9/11 literary celebrity

While little has been written specifically on post 9/11 authorship or celebrity, studies have examined aesthetics in literature and culture in a post 9/11 context. Following the collapse of postmodern literary celebrity, celebrity authors took on more serious issues relating to global politics in a post 9/11 world. As Kristiaan Versluys argues: 'The shallowness of postmodern irony gives way to a new seriousness' (2009: 148), something which is readily apparent in contemporary authorship and literary celebrity. Rather than literary celebrity being enacted and used for the purposes of the author's own career and legacy, the global influence of celebrity is being employed more for exploring social consciousness and philanthropic endeavours.

In 'Art and Atrocity in a Post-9/11 World' (2004), Thane Rosenbaum asks: 'Is there a proper role for the artist, and specifically the novelist, at this time in our nation's history? Can we make art in a time of atrocity?' (130). Rosenbaum notes that 'unlike the fiction writers of other nations around the world, American novelists have not been known for writing serious political novels' (130) – until more recently, that is. Rosenbaum suggests that perhaps, prior to 9/11, America was 'relatively immune to political crises' (130). The attacks on the World Trade Centre had an unprecedented and undeniable impact on American literature following the postmodern era, with writers shifting their focus onto post 9/11 issues from terrorism to race, media and technology. Mark Osteen, for instance, writes of the author's social role in contemporary society, and their 'analysis of the symbiosis between terrorism and the media' (2010: 501).

The predominant authors associated with literary celebrity in the latter half of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century – Jonathan Franzen, Zadie Smith, David Foster Wallace, Dave Eggers, Jonathan Safran Foer – put their focus into exploring themes of war, race, terrorism, identity, suicide, and technology, using their literary celebrity beyond merely their own careers for philosophical and philanthropic causes and themes. For Eggers and Wallace in particular, authorship is not merely an abstract social construction that singularly serves the author, but is in fact an instrument for greater causes. Post-9/11, authorship no longer retained a distinctly disaffected postmodern outlook in the tradition of Bret Easton Ellis, but served a vital social and political necessity, focusing on issues relating to a twenty-first century society, including surveillance, technology, and terror, with books

such as *Incredibly Loud and Extremely Close* (Jonathan Safran Foer, 2005) *Zeitoun* (Eggers, 2009), *Bleeding Edge* (Pynchon, 2013), and *Purity* (Franzen, 2015) leading this trend.

Hence this period regained much of what Glass feels was lost following Norman Mailer's career as a literary celebrity; a strong political subtext arose alongside celebrity culture in a way that saw authors using their public persona to publish works with a critical edge.

The New Sincerity

In the late 1990s and early twenty-first century, the movement known as New Sincerity[70] gained momentum, giving a renewed focus on sincerity in literature, film and television, and moving away from the postmodern ideas such as irony, pastiche and satire that dominated late twentieth century thinking and art. The New Sincerity movement, which gained strength following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, emphasised issues relating to the human condition and global social concerns that the postmodern movement had ignored or dismissed as trivial. Authors affiliated with this movement include, most notably, the late David Foster Wallace, Dave Eggers, as well those considered marginally postmodern such as Zadie Smith, Jonathan Safran Foer, and Michael Chabon.

In his 2012 *Atlantic* article 'Sincerity, Not Irony, is our Age's Ethos', Jonathan D. Fitzgerald argues:

> Looking back all the way to the 1950s and tracking the trajectory of pop culture, I do see an over-emphasis on irony for sure, but early in the aughts I see a change. Maybe it was September 11, and maybe it was that combined with the pendulum swing of time, but whatever the case, around the turn of the century, something began to shift. Today, vulnerability shows up in pop music where bravado and posturing once ruled […]

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[70] The term's usage, according to Christy Wampole (2012), dates back to the 1980s. Svetlana Boym, in her work *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (1994), discusses the term with reference to Russian literature, arguing that the late Russian writer and artist Dmitri Prigov 'is the advocate of the "New Sincerity"' (210). She notes that sincerity 'is merely the voice of an unfashionable provincial *intelligent* who […] still desperately hopes to participate in the euphoric public sphere […] Prigov's new sincerity is at once an act of defamiliarisation and of unadmitted nostalgia for a certain kind of pure-hearted and naïve first-person discourse' (102, author's emphasis). Boym's description of sincerity as 'unfashionable' is important considering the continued criticism that the New Sincerity has garnered in recent years for being too sincere and earnest. Her point on nostalgia for a certain type of 'pure-hearted' discourse mirrors the sentiments of Joe Moran and the nostalgia for an anti-economic, transcendent author.

Television sitcoms and "bromance" movies depict authentic characters determined to live good lives. And respected literary authors like Jonathan Franzen, Zadie Smith, and Michael Chabon write sincere, popular books with a strong sense of morality (2012).

Fitzgerald continues, stating: 'All across the pop culture spectrum, the emphasis on sincerity and authenticity that has arisen has made it un-ironically cool to care about spirituality, family, neighbours, the environment, and the country' (2012). Indeed, issues such as the environment and the family unit have reclaimed their place in social consciousness and literary projects. Following September 11, a spate of articles emerged which proclaimed the end of irony[71].

This attack on irony has persisted, with a number of articles in recent years expressing discontent with ironic work and sentiments in favour of more sincere, moral themes and expressions[72]. As blogger Jesse Thorn writes in 'A Manifesto for the New Sincerity' (2006): 'Irony died not in a fiery explosion, but slowly, quietly, of old age. And it wasn't replaced by a return of the old guard. This time around, there's a new cultural paradigm, itching to get in the ballgame. This radical new ethos has a name. It's called: The New Sincerity' (2006).

The New Sincerity movement mirrors certain aspects of the Modernist (and Romantic) era, stressing the importance of the author as creative genius and honest, sincere individual. New Sincerity authors, in particular Wallace and Eggers, were, and are, valued for their role as impassioned artists engaged heavily in philanthropic endeavours. These authors incorporated greater emotional depth and sincerity through their works, and indeed their careers, utilising their fame for more than just their own image and self-promotion, but for more humanitarian purposes.

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[71] These include: 'The Age of Irony Comes to an End', Roger Rosenblatt, *Time* Magazine, September 24, 2001; 'Irony is dead, long live irony!', David Beers, *Salon.com*, September 25, 2001; 'The final irony', Zoe Williams, *The Guardian*, June 28, 2003. The topic of the 'death of irony' remained popular a decade later, with two examples being: 'Irony, the End of', Michael Hirschorn', *New York* magazine, August 27, 2011, and 'The "Death of Irony" and its Many Reincarnations', Eric Randall, *The Wire*, September 9, 2011. R. Jay Magill Jr. argues that the rivalry between irony and sincerity has had an even longer history, in his article: 'We've Been Arguing About Irony vs. Sincerity for Millennia', *The Atlantic*, November 26, 2012.

[72] One of the most notable of these discussions is Christy Wampole's op-ed for *The New York Times* 'How to Live Without Irony', (November 17, 2012), in which she discusses the rise (and apparent death) of New Sincerity, and aligns the New Sincerity movement with the work of Foster Wallace. Jonathan D. Fitzgerald, in his aforementioned article, strongly disagrees with her argument that the New Sincerity is already over.
Others articles on this topic include: 'Sincerely Ours: Glee's Success Cements Age of Geeky "New Sincerity"', Angela Watercutter, *Wired*, September 21, 2010; '"Dialectic of Sincerity": Lionel Trilling and David Foster Wallace', October 17, 2014, and 'Irony, sincerity, normcore: Jon Stewart, Stephen Colbert, David Foster Wallace and the end of rebellion', R. Jay Magill Jr., *Salon.com*, May 19, 2014.

In this chapter I discuss the work and careers of Wallace and Eggers in particular, focusing on the way in which they have placed the author at the centre of discourses surrounding 'creative genius', once again. Wallace's legacy, in particular, stresses the role of author as tragic, melancholy genius, a trope that was supported in Romanticism with Lord Byron and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Eggers, on the other hand, has used his celebrity for philanthropic purposes, working with children and literacy programs and pioneering several organisations of his own, including the independent quarterly *McSweeney's*. Yet both Wallace and Eggers have since been criticised, to different degrees, for what some have called their excessive sincerity, illustrating a certain discontent among readers for the author's involvement in philanthropy. This furthermore shows a notable and ironic shift from the reader's nostalgia for authorial integrity, as seen with Franzen, to collective disparagement of an author's philanthropic endeavours. Such a shift reasserts Tessa Roynon's claims, as discussed in Chapter Nine, that the author is often forced into the 'damned if you don't, damned if you do' position. While postmodern authors were criticised for disregarding sincerity, New Sincerity authors have since been disregarded for their excessive sincerity.

This development notwithstanding, Wallace and Eggers are still valued for becoming public intellectuals, and have moreover helped to re-emphasise the author-as-genius rhetoric that was championed in Romanticism and is at the core of literary celebrity. In this way the author remains a powerful and intriguing figure of contemporary society; the Romantic conception of the author – that the author is a sincere, revered figure of spontaneity, honesty and genius – has been sustained and further celebrated in a more contemporary context, showing that the author-as-genius is still very much a powerful discourse.

Wallace and The New Sincerity

As a reaction to the postmodern movement's values of cynicism and irony in the arts, the New Sincerity movement returned to a state of consideration, seriousness and sentimentality in their work, aiming to move beyond postmodern playfulness and nihilism and towards a renewed sense of emotionality in their work.

Initially used as a term to describe alternative rock bands from the 1980s onwards, the term New Sincerity was not applied to a specific movement until the twenty-first century, and has been variously applied to several different fields including film, music and art since the mid- 1980s. As a movement in literature, New Sincerity steadily gained momentum from the 1990s onwards. In his now-famous essay on the influence of television of US fiction, 'E

Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction', written in 1993, David Foster Wallace predicted that a new literary movement would emerge in the wake of postmodernism's slow demise, a prediction that has since been deemed the defining manifesto of New Sincerity:

The next real literary "rebels" in this country might well emerge as some weird bunch of anti-rebels, born oglers who dare somehow to back away from ironic watching, who have the childish gall actually to endorse and instantiate single-entendre principles. Who treat of plain old untrendy human troubles and emotions in U.S. life with reverence and conviction. Who eschew self-consciousness and hip fatigue. These anti-rebels would be outdated, of course, before they even started. Dead on the page. Too sincere. Clearly repressed. Backward, quaint, naive, anachronistic. Maybe that'll be the point. Maybe that's why they'll be the next real rebels. Real rebels, as far as I can see, risk disapproval. The old postmodern insurgents risked the gasp and squeal: shock, disgust, outrage, censorship, accusations of socialism, anarchism, nihilism. Today's risks are different. The new rebels might be artists willing to risk the yawn, the rolled eyes, the cool smile, the nudged ribs, the parody of gifted ironists, the "Oh how banal." To risk accusations of sentimentality, melodrama. Of overcredulity. Of softness. Of willingness to be suckered by a world of lurkers and starers who fear gaze and ridicule above imprisonment without law. Who knows (1993: 192-193).

Wallace's argument aptly describes the sensibility of the New Sincerity ethos and its movement away from postmodern cynicism, towards a fiction that rejects irony and instead focuses on earnestness in writing. By emphasising sincerity in literature, Wallace also emphasises a renewed interest in social and cultural values, making him a significant figure of public intellectualism in the process. New Sincerity sees the re-emergence of the 'Romantic Genius' as a result, as by a return to sincerity in fiction, music and film, the values attributed to the individual figure, the writer, the artist, become re-established, perceiving the author as a genius once again.

The kind of celebrity figure that both Wallace and Eggers have become is more strongly related to ideas of sincerity and emotionality, rather than their postmodern predecessors who were considered playful, ironic, and humorous. In renewing interest in sincerity in writing, Wallace and Eggers have become celebrities in something of a Romantic sense, being perceived as geniuses through their works, their personas, and their humanitarian

work. Wallace, especially, has risen to the status of genius since his untimely death in 2008, cementing his image as a significant, revolutionary writer. But they have both also become criticised by some critics and readers on the grounds that they have overemphasised sentimentality and 'niceness' in their works, making authorship unfavourably sentimental in the process.

David Foster Wallace's Posthumous Genius

In comparison to Eggers, Wallace has achieved the status of 'genius' in recent years. In Wallace's case, similarly to Kerouac and Hemingway, his death as untimely and the result of suicide has in turn catapulted him into a kind of fame that is aligned with the status of genius. Arguably his fame is greater in death than it would have been in life.

Born in Ithaca, New York in 1962, Wallace completed a degree in Philosophy and English at Amherst College, before being awarded a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from the University of Arizona. During his adolescence, Wallace was also ranked as a junior tennis player, a theme which appears in *Infinite Jest* (1996). After suffering from depression for over twenty years, Wallace committed suicide on September 12, 2008, aged 46. At the time of his death, Wallace had left his posthumous work, *The Pale King* (2011), unfinished, having arranged parts of the manuscript just before he killed himself. Lev Grossman of *Time* magazine stated: 'if *The Pale King* isn't a finished work, it is, at the very least, a remarkable document, by no means a stunt or an attempt to cash in on Wallace's posthumous fame. Despite its shattered state and its unpromising subject matter, or possibly because of them, *The Pale King* represents Wallace's finest work as a novelist' (2011).

Various tributes were written for Wallace by friends and fellow writers, including Jonathan Franzen and Zadie Smith. At his memorial service on October 23, 2008, in New York City, Franzen read out an elegy for the author, discussing Wallace's notorious reclusiveness and unease with fame. Discussing a party that was held for Wallace, Franzen stated: 'The second party he had no choice but to stay for, because it was celebrating the publication of *Infinite Jest*. He survived it by saying thank you, again and again, with painfully exaggerated formality' (2008). Franzen also describes his and Wallace's definition of literature that parallels the overall themes of the New Sincerity movement:

Dave loved details for their own sake, but details were also an outlet for the love bottled up in his heart: a way of connecting, on relatively safe middle ground, with

another human being. Which was, approximately, the description of literature that he and I came up with in our conversations and correspondence in the early 1990s […] But that "neutral middle ground on which to make a deep connection with another human being:" this, we decided, was what fiction was for. "A way out of loneliness" was the formulation we agreed to agree on (Franzen, 2008).

Ever since his death, Wallace is still seen as the defining individual of the New Sincerity movement. As Adam Kelly notes: 'David Foster Wallace affirmed and embodied sincerity as a crucial value in his life and work, perhaps even as that work's defining feature […] Since Wallace's early death, this attribution of sincerity has become particularly ubiquitous' (2010: 131). Wallace was particularly reverent of 'the good old modernists', whom he felt 'elevated aesthetics to the level of ethics' (2006: 272). Kelly writes of this respect for modernism in Wallace's work, stating:

Wallace's project ended up even more far-reaching than he claimed it would be […] from *Infinite Jest* onward [his project] became primarily about returning to literary narrative, a concern with sincerity not seen since modernism shifted the ground so fundamentally almost a century before' (133).

Kelly identifies what he calls a 'modernist legacy' (134) in the New Sincerity movement that was helmed by Wallace, but nevertheless asks: 'is there something fundamentally new about Wallace's sincerity, a re-working of the concept as a complex and radical response to contemporary conditions?' (131). Although influenced by the modernist conception of 'genius', or what Kelly calls 'the modernist idea of artist as aloof genius' (132), Wallace's own brand of sincerity was different to the modernist idea of sincerity, and was evidently created through different cultural conditions and preoccupations[73]. New Sincerity has also come under greater scrutiny than modernism. Yet the legacy of not only modernist ideals, but of the modernist conception of the individual, is particularly acute in Wallace's work, prompting appreciation for the figure of the writer as an impassioned, expressive individual, once again. Thus, this particular aspect of literary celebrity is notably enduring.

Wallace's profile rose substantially after his death. There is a strong relationship between celebrity and death, in which death elevates the star-status of the author who has

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[73] See my essay 'The Afterlives of Modernism', *Philosophy Now*, Issue 108: 'Art', for a more in-depth discussion on the contemporary preoccupation with Modernism and its relationship to the New Sincerity.

died. As previously discussed with Hemingway and in particular Lord Byron, the death of a celebrity author removes their mortal status as celebrity and instead replaces it with an immortal sense of genius. Death, for the celebrity author, therefore serves to bestow the mere celebrity with a status of genius and legend. Such was the case for Wallace, whose death by suicide, in a similar vein to Hemingway, created for him a legendary status.

In 2015, a David Foster Wallace biopic, *The End of the Tour*, was released, with Jason Segal in the title role. Wallace's family stated that they disapproved of the film, which is loosely based on transcripts of an interview between Wallace and *Rolling Stone* reporter David Lipsky. Wallace's family insist that the author would never have agreed to such a film, yet the companies involved nevertheless 'persisted in capitalising upon a situation that leaves those closest to David unable to prevent the production' (cited in Flood, 2015).

The film was a critical success, with Segal considered an 'Academy Award contender for his portrayal of Wallace as a sceptical, ambitious, modest, hyper-self-conscious, depressive, and fundamentally generous figure of genius' (Mead, 2015). Brett Arnold writes that the film 'is a more personal, meditative examination of the tortured artist that has enough wisdom and profundity to appeal to fans and novices alike' (2015). According to Arnold, the film celebrates 'Wallace's genius' and sees 'Wallace [come] face-to-face with the idea of his own mythos' (2015). These comments illustrate the extent to which the tortured, genius writer, stemming predominantly from the Byronic Hero archetype, is still a very popular identity in the collective imagination of twenty-first century audiences.

Beaumont-Thomas calls the film 'another posthumous addition to the Foster Wallace legend' (2013), as well as stating that the author's profile since his death 'has arguably grown greater' (2013). This includes the 2009 film adaptation of Wallace's short story collection *Brief Interviews with Hideous Men* (1999), and D.T. Max's 2012 biography of the author: *Every Love Story Is a Ghost Story* (2012). Trevor Quirk similarly writes: 'From a publishing perspective, [Wallace has] been busy since his death in 2008' (2013). In fact, writing on the confusion and comparison between Wallace and Australian author David Foster, Susan Wyndham writes in the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

> When Wallace's *Infinite Jest* appeared in 1996, the same year as Foster's Miles Franklin-winning *The Glade Within the Grove*, Foster knew he was "deader than a plate of Irish Cabbage". After Wallace's suicide in 2008 it was Foster who vanished in the rush of posthumous praise (2014: 35).

Indeed, Wallace's fame has only intensified following his death, with Wallace becoming more well-known as a literary figure in death than he arguably would have been in life. Wallace has since cemented his role as a posthumous genius in the same vein as his celebrity author predecessors, a label which, many of his friends and contemporaries note, would have sat uncomfortably with the ordinarily shy and reserved writer. In an interview with Wallace's widow Karen Green, for instance, she states that Wallace's death, which intrigued the media, turned Wallace into a reluctant celebrity even in death. She states: 'I know journalism is journalism and maybe people want to read that I discovered the body over and over again, but that doesn't define David or his work. It all turns him into a celebrity writer dude, which I think would have made him wince, the good part of him' (cited in Adams, 2011). Similarly, Charles B. Harris argues:

> While a part of him enjoyed the fame *Infinite Jest* generated (a part, he once quipped, he didn't let drive), he mostly distrusted that fame. He was acutely aware that his publisher's marketing of this scathing satire of a market-driven entertainment state depended to a large extent on marketing *him* – on constructing and selling a persona that only tangentially resembled the man who wrote the book. As a result, he worried that his work, while purchased, would remain largely unread (2010: 175).

Harris' comments relate to the common concern of authors who feel as though their celebrity, while promoting their work, damages their reputation as serious, credible authors. As it was with Franzen, Ellis, and even to a significant degree, King, Wallace's work makes a scathing critique on the very market he is depending on to ensure his work is not only disseminated, but widely read.

Following the author's death, various theorists and, of course, fans and bloggers, have noted the stark difference between and shift from the reviews of Wallace's work when alive, to the posthumous praise he has since garnered. One post written in 2011 by Ramon Glazov notes the discrepancy between the reviews of Wallace's *Infinite Jest* before and after the author's death. For instance, Eggers has himself been accused of changing his review of Wallace's *Infinite Jest*. The 2006 re-print of Wallace's mammoth work features a glowing review from Eggers, while a recent article titled 'The Infinite Jest Review that Dave Eggers Doesn't Want You to Read' (Champion, 2014), shows the disparity between the foreword

that appears in the *Infinite Jest* re-print, and an earlier review of Eggers' that appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1996. In the 1996 version, Eggers writes: 'Besides frequently losing itself in superfluous and wildly tangential flights of lexical diarrhoea, the book suffers under the sheer burden of its incredible length' (Champion, 2014). In contrast, Eggers' foreword to the 2006 re-print reads:

> The book is 1,079 pages long and there is not one lazy sentence. The book is drum-tight and relentlessly smart, and though it does not wear its heart on its sleeve, it's deeply felt and incredibly moving. That it was written in three years by a writer under thirty-five is very painful to think about (2006: 3).

Although written two years *before* Wallace's death, Eggers' revised review (as well as the very act of writing the book's foreword), is indicative of the public's increased interest in the author shortly before his death, compared to his earlier fame, suggesting that as an author's fame gains momentum, so does the praise they garner. Of Eggers' foreword, Glazov writes: 'As usual, Eggers is lying like a dog,' (2011), while stating: 'In the *New Yorker*, Jonathan Franzen is tactful enough to deny that Wallace was a saint' (2011). He also writes: 'This is where [Wallace's] suicide has really paid off – without a corpse, it's harder to convince your audience that insincerity qualifies you for victim status' (2011).

Established authors have also taken to criticising Wallace since his death. In 2012, Bret Easton Ellis openly decried Wallace on twitter, which led many to criticise Ellis for being disrespectful to Wallace since his death. Ellis tweeted: 'the solemnity of the David Foster Wallace myth on a purely literary level [is] borderline sickening' (cited in Gupta, 2012). He also stated that Wallace was 'the most tedious, overrated, tortured, pretentious writer of my generation' (cited in Flood, 2012). An evident rivalry existed between the two, as Wallace also voiced his displeasure of Ellis in an earlier interview, stating that Ellis's work *American Psycho*: 'panders shamelessly to the audience's sadism for a while, but by the end it's clear that the sadism's real object is the reader herself' (cited in Gupta, 2012). In 2014, Ellis continued his attack on Wallace, stating:

> I think David Foster Wallace is a complete fraud. I'm really shocked that people take him seriously. People say the same thing about me, of course, and I've been criticized

for saying these things about Wallace due to the very sentimental narrative attached to him since he killed himself (cited in Olah, 2014).

Ellis is at least accurate in his acknowledgement of what he calls the 'sentimental narrative' attached to Wallace's identity, particularly in light of the author's death. That Wallace was depressed and suicidal only adds to this narrative. The feud between Ellis and Wallace is furthermore indicative of the rivalry in aesthetics between the postmodern movement and the New Sincerity, between postmodernism's disavowal of anything genuine and emotional, and New Sincerity's criticism of postmodernism's lack of any perceivable value system. The feud also serves to somewhat prove Wallace's prediction that the New Sincerity movement along with its 'anti-rebel' artists would be mercilessly criticised for their excessive sincerity.

Yet in the majority of cases, Wallace's renowned self-consciousness has since been endearingly referred to in retrospect by Wallace's critics and contemporaries. This particular narrative far outweighs the critics who align this sentimental narrative with popular culture's habit of posthumous praise. His self-consciousness is not seen as something that defeats his reputation, as in the case of Franzen and, as I will argue, Eggers. Instead, his self-consciousness, an element that is strongly linked to the New Sincerity movement, is discussed in light of the author's depression. Because of the author's large body of work despite his long struggle with depression, he has since become all the more respected, as the large body of scholarly work dedicated to Wallace attests. In his work *The Ecstasy of Influence* (2012), for instance, Jonathan Lethem refers to Wallace's greatness through an admiration of the author's well-known self-consciousness:

David Foster Wallace deserves to be remembered as a great writer not because he was capable of doing PhD-level philosophical speculation as well as shunting fictional characters (slowly) through a well-described room but because he mastered a certain remorse at the fact of self-consciousness. Wallace's way of loading up this indistinct area with scrupulous depiction made a lot of people feel less lonely; meanwhile the possibility that being the depicter made Wallace feel more lonely has become a widely circulated armchair-shrink's allegory for the non-usefulness of self-consciousness (2012: xvii).

Wallace's self-consciousness, coupled with the author's sense of increased loneliness and depression, has in turn been utilised as a device through which his readers feel they can relate, thereby boosting the reputation of New Sincerity amongst readers. Part of Wallace's intellectual legacy is that he represented or embodied, for many, the important role of the suffering writer, the suffering intellectual, a trope that has been the driving force behind the popularity of the celebrity author since Byron and Rousseau. This particular individual is one who is intensely popular but confined to their own personal demons. In death, furthermore, Wallace has shone an unintentional but nonetheless powerful spotlight on the impact of depression not just for famous writers, but for struggling individuals everywhere. However, for Wallace, he has the added significance of operating as an American author, and therefore occupies a role in which American values are magnified and reflected. In this sense Wallace's legacy is also used to perpetuate certain American narratives about struggle and genius. For instance, Paul Giles argues:

> …the work of David Foster Wallace mediates self-consciously on what it means to be an "American" writer at the turn of the twenty-first century. Wallace's writing […] emerges out of an intellectual heritage invested in quite traditional Americanist values […] At the same time, Wallace's acute responsiveness to new digital environments, within which liberal individualism has become a shadow of its former self, creates in his narratives an inherently ironic framework, one that explores the mythic romance of America even while recognising how such assumptions are coming to appear increasingly strange and unfamiliar (2012: 4).

Although, for many, Norman Mailer was seen as the last great, consequential writer to emerge within a defining generation of writers, Wallace carries with him the responsibility of re-emphasising the importance of the writer's role in society. Wallace was (and still is) expected to replace postmodern irony with a renewed emphasis and interest in sincerity for readers disillusioned with the postmodern nihilism. As Giles argues: 'despite Wallace's own intense sense of self-protective privacy, he was paradoxically committed as an author to the idea of his work as expressing the concerns of a public intellectual' (2012: 4). If Eggers' turn as public intellectual is any indication, it can be argued that Wallace's death saves him from the same kind of scrutiny that has befallen Eggers.

Eggers and Celebrity Public Intellectuals

Before discussing Eggers' career as both a celebrity author and public intellectual, one must consider the scholarly debate around the role and status of the public intellectual, and how this informs one's success and position as an intellectual.

Both Wallace and Eggers can be seen as exemplary public intellectuals in contemporary literature, Wallace for his inadvertent impact on issues such as depression and anxiety, and, more notably, Eggers for his various philanthropic endeavours. But it is Eggers who more clearly represents the ambivalence of the idealised public intellectual, torn between embracing celebrity culture to secure greater awareness of his works, and the self-conscious desire to be perceived as a 'literary' author who is adamantly uninterested in profits and commercialism. But as Blum et al note (2012), public intellectuals in the contemporary media sphere are inevitably associated with celebrity culture: 'younger authors, members of the "MTV generation" like David Foster Wallace and Dave Eggers, try to re-imagine a utopian frequency that parlays into the immediacy of media' (2012: 758).

While celebrity authors have historically utilised their celebrity and their writing to promote their work, other authors, particularly in a more contemporary setting, use their status as a writer, whether as celebrities or not, to promote political and social issues. These include Peter Carey, Arundhati Roy, Patrick White, J.M. Coetzee, Toni Morrison, and, of course, Dave Eggers. As a public intellectual, the author's role both differs from and shares similarities with that of the celebrity author. While celebrity authors attend functions, talks and readings to promote themselves and their works, writers as public intellectuals can attend functions and appear publically, though for the sake and purpose of addressing and debating certain causes and issues. As Cain observes: 'the social construction of celebrities suggests that their role is to help the population make sense of its social world. Thus, if readers use a novel to make meaning of their own lives, they desire an author/celebrity who is 'qualified' to speak about pertinent concerns and issues' (2005: 11). Therefore, there is a certain level of authority that authors are seen to possess by their readers, authority that they are subsequently expected to utilise.

There are several ways of attempting to conceive of the public intellectual. For example, in *Literary Activists* (2009), Rooney observes that writers engage in public intellectualism 'in a myriad of ways' (2009: xxii). These can be, as theorist Edward Said notes, through 'writing, teaching, [and] appearing on television' (Said, 1996: 13), all of which Eggers has done thus far. Thus in the contemporary media sphere, writers as public

intellectuals do not simply perform their role through writing and/or public events, but through the media itself, on television and now increasingly online. Becker, moreover, discusses the role of the intellectual in terms of the artist, outlining the criteria of public intellectual as a 'socially concerned citizen of the world, as a person who could help determine, through vision and wisdom, the nation's political course' (1995: 388). Similarly, as academic Paul Dawson notes, the public intellectual is a 'thinker and writer who is able to speak to a general audience on a range of public issues from a base of specific disciplinary expertise' (2009: 150). Thus there is a distinctly Romantic ideology with which certain theorists conceive of the public intellectual, in which intellectuals operate, as Said argues, 'on the margins of society' (cited in Jennings and Kemp-Welch, 1997: 1-2). In a more contemporary setting, this margin separates celebrity culture and sincere 'literariness'.

Various theorists follow a similar pattern of splitting the public intellectual into two seemingly distinct categories (Said, 1996; Gramsci, 1999; and Scalmer, 2007). Said distinguishes between the intellectuals that simply 'represent the information that they were trained to pass along, and those who are innovative, daring, and public in their re-presentation of their own reality' (Becker, 1995: 391). Similarly, Gramsci writes of the distinction between 'organic' and 'traditional' intellectuals (1999: 131), while Scalmer distinguishes between 'normative' and 'materialist' intellectuals (2007: 37). The 'organic' and 'normative' intellectuals, respectively, are characterised by a high moral status of daring, going beyond one's role as a writer to engage with and bring something to the public. As Said elaborates, his preferred intellectual is characterised by 'commitment and risk, boldness and vulnerability' (1996: 13). The 'traditional' and 'materialist' categories, on the other hand, while not identical, are regarded as types of a public intellectual that simply perform their role within social institutions and without much sense of 'authentic' consideration. What these theories show in relation to the emergence of the celebrity-author intellectual, is that there is a tendency to preserve a special, authentic type of public intellectual, in the same way that there is a desire to preserve a special type of author. As a result, Eggers' position as both celebrity and author, both thoughtful activist and 'hip' celebrity, existing between postmodern irony and sincere sensibility, is fraught with claims of insincerity, incompatibility, and inauthenticity. Eggers is seen as embodying too many ostensibly contradictory traits to allow his role as public intellectual to develop without criticism.

However, other theorists and novelists have argued that the role of the public intellectual should engage and include writers and novelists. As novelist Arundhati Roy

argues, writers should automatically be considered intellectuals or activists through their work and ability to talk to the public (2002: 186-187). Similarly, as Mitchell writes, the distinction between the roles of the artist and the critic can be collapsed into the role of public intellectual, thereby creating a figure that incorporates both of these elements 'without the need for hybridity', since it is based on a vision of 'social agency' (2006: 39). Roy and Mitchell's arguments show how the author as public intellectual does not have to be restricted to one role or another, but can in fact be looked at as automatically encompassing other roles simultaneously.

There has been increasing scholarship around the status of the public intellectual, particularly in light of the growing prominence of celebrity culture (Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals*, 1987; Posner, *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline*, 2000; and Etzioni & Bowditch, *Public Intellectuals: An Endangered Species*, 2006). Many of these texts prioritise the intellectual as divorced from celebrity culture. Pinsker's article 'The public intellectual as beleaguered celebrity' (1995), for instance, directly engages with the debate surrounding the emergence of intellectual-as-celebrity, and the criticisms that this subsequently caused amongst several elite publications. Pinsker notes that in the 1980s and 90s, society witnessed: 'the elevation of the public intellectual into something approaching celebrity status' (1995: 15). But he distinguishes between celebrity intellectuals and celebrities: 'intellectuals are not celebrities in the sense that Tom Hanks, Madonna, and Michael Jordan are celebrities' (15). Discussing the criticism of the celebrity intellectual in publications such as *The New Republic* and *The New Yorker*, Pinsker argues: 'Intellectuals have good reasons to fear the glare of the public spotlight' (16). He explains that those interested in celebrity intellectuals are often not actually interested in their ideas, but rather their personal life, which makes it no surprise that they are often criticised for their perceived hypocrisy or lack of authenticity. Dave Eggers in particular has become a target of such assumptions; having successfully gained critical attention for his philanthropic causes through his celebrity, he is paradoxically criticised for being hypocritical *because* of his status as celebrity, being simultaneously praised and criticised for his philanthropic efforts.

Dave Eggers and his Staggering Genius

Dave Eggers' career is marked by the same self-consciousness and ambivalence regarding celebrity culture as Jonathan Franzen's. Although he has become a commercialised author, Eggers has frequently attempted to distance himself from such a culture by engaging in philanthropic endeavours. Fittingly, Eggers first emerged in the literary industry with his debut work *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* (2000) at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and his career would have a particular influence on writers of this era. The book is marketed as a memoir and tells the story of the death of Eggers' parents, and his subsequent struggles to raise his younger brother Toph (Christopher Eggers). The book was received exceptionally well upon release, and Eggers was immediately recognised for his frantic lyricism, the title of 'genius' being both ironically and endearingly bestowed upon him by a number of critics. But the book is also seen to embody the same ambivalence that would eventually mark Eggers' career. As novelist, journalist and editor Keith Gessen notes, '[*A.H.W.O.S.G.*] manages both ostentatious reticence and fame-seeking, though ultimately is forced to choose fame.' (2004: 54).

With a deliberate nod to Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, Sarah Mosle in her *New York Times* review of Eggers' book, stated: '"A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius" is, finally, a book of finite jest, which is why it succeeds so brilliantly. Eggers's most powerful prose is often his most straightforward, relying on old-fashioned truth telling for its punch' (2000). Further, Hamilton and Jones write how *A.H.W.O.S.G* exhibits characteristics of both postmodern irony and New Sincerity:

> The book's earnest sentiments are leavened and at times rendered yet more poignant –
> by postmodern writing techniques and a self-reflexive style employed throughout […]
> But as in the work of the late David Foster Wallace, such encompassing irony is
> ultimately re-purposed here in the service of sincerity (2010: 110).

Eggers' work therefore oscillates between postmodern, metafictional playfulness (with the book chronicling Eggers' attempt to get a spot on MTV's *The Real World*), and New Sincerity self-consciousness. Adam Begley, in his *Guardian* review of the book, writes: 'Eggers tried hard to break into television – he wanted a part in MTV's Real World. He documents his audition and turns it into a postmodern commentary on his own self-conscious self-promotion' (2000). Begley also argues that: 'Eggers has talent as a writer – but his true

genius is for PR' (2000). The combination of the terms 'genius' and 'PR' is particularly interesting, since the Romantic conception of 'genius' does not, as previously argued, accommodate the notion of PR and would ordinarily demand a steadfast withdrawal from public life.

Almost from the beginning of his career as a prolific writer, which rapidly gained momentum following the publication of his very first book, Eggers was resoundingly criticised by the reading public: 'Thanks to his sudden celebrity, Dave Eggers, his family, and compatriots were exposed to an increasing amount of scrutiny' (Hamilton and Jones, 2010: 178). Hamilton notes that 'unlike [JD] Salinger, [Eggers] never proceeded with his threat to withdraw from public life, instead seizing the reins of literary celebrity' (2010: 1). From this observation and comparison between Salinger and Eggers, one can ascertain that readers still have more respect for the traditional view of the author as a 'solitary scribbler' (York, 2007: 5-6), than they do for those who are seen to seek out celebrity while simultaneously mocking it. Because of Eggers' perceived hypocrisy – criticising fame while also courting it – various reviewers and theorists found Eggers to be ambivalent and contradictory. As Hamilton notes: 'When Eggers's book *A.H.W.O.S.G* was published in 2000, he distinguished himself from the majority of first-time authors by courting publicity while also mocking it' (Hamilton, 2010: 3).

As a public intellectual, Eggers has established many organisations and often speaks out about issues of social concern. In 1998 Eggers founded the independent publishing company *McSweeney's*, named after his late mother's maiden name. As well as this, in 2002 Eggers founded the charity *Valencia 826*, an organisation that helps children with their writing and reading skills. This initiative has grown beyond the US with various locations around the world launching similar projects, such as the Sydney Story Factory. As a result, Eggers has become an integral part of the contemporary public intellectual scene, appearing as a speaker for TED talks in 2008, where he discussed schooling and education. As well as this, Eggers appeared in Sydney, Australia on September 3, 2014 as part of an extension of the Sydney Writers' Festival, where he discussed the achievements of the Sydney Story Factory, from which he invited a student to come up on stage and read excerpts from their own creative work.

By focusing on issues such as schooling, literacy and education, Eggers places renewed significance on the act of reading and the role of the book in an increasingly digital era, especially for those with lower socio-economic status. In so doing he becomes one of the

most significant figures in contemporary literary celebrity, bridging together celebrity power with literary, intellectual pursuits. In this way, Eggers, like Wallace, embodies the ethos of the New Sincerity movement in focusing more on important issues such as literacy and education rather than just his own fame.

As well as his public philanthropic endeavours, Eggers' fiction can also be seen as a vehicle for activism. His work *Zeitoun* (2009) follows the accounts of Abdulraham and Kathy Zeitoun, a couple who survived Hurricane Katrina. In the book, Eggers writes 'The Zeitoun Foundation will serve as a grantor of funds generated from this book' (Eggers, 2009: 337), before he lists the ten separate non-profit organisations that also benefit from his work. As well as this, in 2006 Eggers published his book *What is the What?*, an autobiographical account of Sudanese refugee Valentino Achak Deng. As with much of Eggers' work, all of the profits and author fees go to a particular foundation, in this instance, the Valentino Achak Deng foundation, which builds schools and educational centres in Sudan. Hamilton and Jones describe *What is the What?* as combining: 'Eggers' literary work with the worlds of philanthropy, advocacy and education that have become a significant part of [Eggers'] contribution to literature beyond writing' (2010: 111). Thus Eggers is seen to extend his role beyond literature, frequently and earnestly contributing to philanthropic events.

But this emphasis on philanthropy and education has had a detrimental effect on Eggers' reputation. For example, by informing his readers that the proceeds go to this foundation and his donations to charity, Eggers is seen to align himself with aspects of celebrity activism that is self-congratulatory and promotional. Perhaps as a result of this link, Eggers is eager to reject such celebrity, appearing dismissive of profits:

> Do I care about this money? I do. Will I keep this money? Very little of it. Within the year I will have given away almost a million dollars to about 100 charities and individuals, benefiting everything from hospice care to an artist who makes sculptures from Burger King bags. And the rest will be going into publishing books through McSweeney's (Eggers, 2000: NP).

Much of the criticism directed at Eggers appears to come from what appears to be his self-satisfied air of being charitable. Yet, by appearing uninterested in profits, Eggers conforms to the idealised image of the public intellectual (Said, 1997; Turner, 2006; and Furedi, 2006), one who operates on the margins of society. Eggers, as previously argued, is eager to detach

himself from celebrity culture, correlating to what O.M. Heynders articulates as the politically engaged and detached writer as public intellectual (2009). From this perspective, Eggers is an idealised public intellectual who is at once engaged and separate from his position as public intellectual, but is also derided for this decision by fans. A reviewer on the blog *Powell's Books*, for instance, writes: 'Eggers's excessive sincerity, excruciating self-consciousness, and obsession with minutia, his effort to elevate digression to a form of art and to make cleverness an end in itself, just don't interest us' ('I. Don't. Like. Dave. Eggers', NP). Further, in his article 'Why the Hipsters have Finally Turned on Dave Eggers' (2013), Russell Smith writes:

> Eggers became a hero to [readers] – and to the rest of the literary world as well – for his many creative projects that included art, idealistic philanthropy, activism and a literary publishing house and magazine that were both intellectual and quirky. These things made him enviable to the kind of educated person who was on the cutting edge of social trends and technology. Exactly the same kind of people, in other words, who are lining up to pillory him now (2013).

Indeed, Eggers' philanthropic aspect to his fame seems to have garnered more ridicule than favour. There has been considerable criticism over what Hamilton describes as Eggers' image as 'a scruffy, self-satisfied pose of independent, romantic can-do-ism' (2010: 101). Journalist James Sullivan notes that: 'Dave Eggers treats his celebrity like a gold lamé suit: It's amusing, absurd and, in his mind, not quite appropriate' (Sullivan, 2001), while, in her reading of Eggers' *You Shall Know Our Velocity* (2003), Hamilton states that the central characters Will and Hand 'resemble the credibility-obsessed younger Eggers torn between longing for celebrity and legitimacy' (2010: 82). Ultimately it is seen that these two aspects are hopelessly and stubbornly incompatible, the desire for legitimacy constantly at odds with an engagement in celebrity.

Indeed, throughout his career, it appears as though Eggers has had a long obsession with credibility as well as a fear of 'selling out'. In 2000, Eggers was interviewed for the *Harvard Advocate*, in which he discussed the concept of a person 'selling out', after which he wrote a 'rant' in an email correspondence between himself and Saadi Soudavar. After discussing society's constant labelling of 'sell-outs', Eggers writes:

And now, I am also a sellout […] First, I was a sellout because *Might* magazine took ads. Then I was a sellout because our pages were colour, and not stapled together at the Kinko's. Then I was a sellout because I went to work for *Esquire*. Now I'm a sellout because my book has sold many copies. And because I have done many interviews. And because I have let people take my picture. And because my goddamn picture has been in just about every fucking magazine and newspaper printed in America (Eggers, 2000).

Yet Eggers emphatically claims that his idea of what a 'sellout' constitutes was marred by his views in adolescence, and that he no longer thinks the same way. Furthermore, Eggers argues that authors, musicians and artists who engage in any form of overt commercialism have been considered, at one time or another, 'sell-outs.' In contrast to authors such as Salinger and Pynchon, whose pictures were scarce in the media landscape, Eggers' picture being widely distributed and available somehow imparts a sense of selling out that has in turn been criticised. Of Eggers' rant, Hamilton argues:

As a pejorative term, 'sellout' would seem to imply that the problem stems from the exchange of art for capital, however, closer analysis of the term's deployment in popular culture suggests that the anxieties of selling out do not concern increased wealth, so much as the popularity that comes with it. For instance, in his rant, [Dave] Eggers catalogues a range of misdemeanours that consumers often use to determine if an artist has 'sold out' (2010: 60).

Of the various ways in which an author can 'sell out', Eggers included appearances on television, featured articles in popular magazines, mainstream movements, associations with celebrities, and 'any kind of creative work done in exchange for money' (60). As Hamilton argues, the sell-out factor ultimately has more to do with the movement away from unknown (and thus valued) cultural trends such as the avant-garde and underground scenes toward the mainstream (61), and less to do with actual financial benefits. This suggests that the loss of cultural prestige is a more important factor in becoming mainstream than the actual accumulation of wealth. What it also suggests is that various methods, events and schemes that authors have undertaken in order to sell their works can all, at one time or another, be associated with this rubric of 'selling-out'. Evidently, Eggers is trying to bridge a gap

between celebrity and intellectualism that many of his readers are not willing to accept, and he is constantly criticised for it. This also shows that a degree of obscurity in one's literary career is culturally desirable.

Furthermore, Tom Scocca of *Gawker* magazine criticised Eggers' rant and the New Sincerity movement, calling Eggers: 'the most significant explicator of the niceness rule – the loudest Thumper of all, the true prophetic voice of anti-negativity' (cited in Gladwell, 2013). In December 2013, Malcolm Gladwell discussed the criticisms against Eggers in his *New Yorker* article 'Being Nice Isn't Really So Awful' (2013). He writes: 'According to Scocca, appeals to civility have become the newest weapon in the arsenal of the privileged. The injunction to be nice is used to deflect criticism and stifle the legitimate anger of dissent' (2013). Responding to Eggers' rant, Scocca dismisses 'the scolding, the gestures at inclusiveness, the appeal to virtue and maturity. Eggers used to be a critic, but he has grown out of childish things' (Gladwell, 2013). Gladwell argues:

> Eggers, Scocca concludes, is "full of shit," and with that he is off, for many thousand more words […] But Scocca has larger ambitions: he wants to argue that the tyranny of niceness is the defining feature of our age, and he wants to make Dave Eggers the poster child for this movement (2013).

As Wallace predicted, these sentimental 'anti-rebels', of which Eggers is the poster child, are heavily criticised simply for their 'niceness'. Jonathan Franzen, too, has been discussed with reference to the increasingly popular trend of 'sincerity'. In a review of his novel *Purity* (2015) in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Adam Rivett notes that Franzen's novel features elements of what he calls 'unfashionable sincerity', and that 'when we hear a minor character hold forth on the current day's woe […] the initial temptation is to roll one's eyes' (2015: 35). This seems to stress that discourses on authorship persistently favour a sense of aloofness and a dignified air of obscurity that is perceived as being more 'genuine'. This has led many authors, particularly Eggers, to discredit celebrity culture, due to its unfavourable associations. Yet Eggers cannot successfully condemn or navigate his way out of the industry that has been predominantly responsible for his career as a celebrity author.

Furthermore, Hamilton writes that by using his 'high profile' status to promote something other than himself, Eggers' actions reflect that of contemporary Hollywood, in which celebrities invest their popular identities with social and political significance and

charity (2010: 80). Hamilton also argues, somewhat ironically, that Eggers' fame and public intellectualism has illustrated the 'insincerity' of the author's claims to be above celebrity culture (2010: 31). As such, Eggers' attempt to be detached from celebrity culture is symptomatic of popular and conventional discourses on authorship and public intellectualism, in which writers are viewed as separate from commercialism.

There is still an attempt by some theorists to keep celebrity and public intellectualism separate, seeing the two concepts as distinct from each other, rather than able to operate simultaneously. As Oslender writes: 'the intellectual's celebrity status has often come hand in hand with a loss of critical position and an eroding, radical edge in public interventions' (2007: 118). Similarly, Richard Posner, as previously stated, observes that there is a tendency for a public intellectual's 'media celebrity to be inverse to [their] scholarly renown' (2001: 7).

Thus it is perhaps no surprise that throughout his career, Eggers has emerged ambivalent with regards to his role as a celebrity author, New Sincerity spokesperson, and enthused activist. But even this perceived ambivalence has been cause for criticism. In a 2001 article in *The New York Times* titled 'Ambivalent Writer Turns His Memoir Upside Down: Denouncing Profits and Publishers While Profiting From Publication' (2001), journalist David Kirkpatrick writes how Eggers' approach to the re-issuing of his debut memoir *A.H.W.O.S.G* (2000) highlights his 'agonizingly ambivalent' and contradictory feelings in regards to his writing (2001: NP). Eggers' thoughts on re-selling his book are starkly similar to those given in the previously mentioned 2000 interview: 'You can't claim that I give a whoop about sales or money. [I have] given away just about everything I've gotten so far' (Kirkpatrick, 2001). Eggers' desire to be a literary writer while also selling his work commercially is seen in Vaessens's analysis of Eggers' work *What is the What?*. Vaessens writes how Eggers' work operates as both a novel and an autobiographical account. He explains: 'in an interview [Eggers] said that he wanted America to know what every immigrant to the US, whether legal or not, is going through now' (2011: 62). Vaessens points out how Eggers then began to fictionalise the work in order to make it more commercially viable:

What's necessary to make a book compelling is shaping it in an artful way […] I wanted […] the book to come alive, and not be dry, so […] I decided the important thing was to tell the story well and bring an audience that might not otherwise come to

it if I had written only what Deng could remember […] and so I made it a novel (cited in Vaessens, 2011: 62).

Therefore, Eggers still adheres to a commercial sense of authorship, wherein he acknowledges that in order for the book to sell, a book which can be considered a work of public intellectualism, it needs to be compelling from a marketing point of view, as well as literary. Guy Reynolds develops this idea further, stating: 'Authorship [for Eggers] thus possesses a political necessity, even if the act of making fiction remains flagrantly central' (2008: 7). Thus Eggers' work illustrates an underlining sense of ambivalence towards his role as both literary writer and celebrity author, and the demands of commercial publication and the expectations of public intellectualism which are constantly levelled against him in a particularly relentless way.

Eggers' celebrity is partly defined by the burden of his liveliness, that is, both by his 'excruciating' sincerity and philanthropic energies, as well as his status as a living, breathing writer. As discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, many theorists felt that the appreciation of Lord Byron's work was actually hampered by the author during his lifetime, and that death was needed to ensure Byron's genius emerged. Despite all of his achievements – both literary and philanthropic – Eggers is constantly burdened by the comparisons between him and Wallace, whose death has catapulted the late author to overwhelming prestige.

Despite his intentions (or perhaps because of them), Eggers' activism has notably harmed his image rather than helped it, which reiterates the notion, as developed in this thesis, that authors are often meant to present something of a solemn, aloof, serious, and even melancholy persona to garner favour with their readers. Just as Lord Byron projected an image of acute melancholy to his readers, others such as Faulkner and Hemingway were partly popular due to their turbulent personal lives. Eggers, in contrast, does not exude the 'tragic artist' trope that his predecessors were known for, and his lively, pleasant, and 'nice' philanthropic image has been cause for ridicule amongst readers simply because it is seen as another pursuit that confronts conventional notions of 'serious' authorship. Eggers' ambivalence regarding his own celebrity has also brought the author great criticism in a manner similar to Franzen's own career.

A crucial element that is seen to be missing from Eggers' career that defined the careers of authors such as Byron, Salinger, and Wallace, is a sense of reclusiveness, separation from society, or melancholy. This not only shows that the Byronic hero trope has

persevered through generations of authors but also that ideals about public intellectuals have been sustained through the notion that a genuine intellectual, such as Wallace, must operate on the margins of society.

Members of the New Sincerity movement have been greatly criticised and discredited, mainly since their own brand of sincerity is seen as too 'nice', their writers too amiable and charitable to be taken seriously as authors, in comparison to the scandalous and somewhat egotistical authors of previous generations.

Both Wallace and Eggers have received a large amount of criticism, mostly brought about through what is perceived as an excessive devotion to sincerity and emotional literature, an overly sentimental drive that is actually seen to sully the occupation of authorship. Due to his suicide, however, Wallace is received by the public and his critics more favourably than the living, philanthropic Eggers, suggesting, once again, that death is a crucial process in the phenomenon of literary celebrity. The extent to which Wallace's life was intensely dissected once again illustrates how the suffering, depressed author reigns in discussions of literary celebrity. The divergent responses to the careers of Wallace and Eggers underscores society's continued preference for the reclusive, aloof author, one who is keen to separate themselves from anything remotely commercial, thus cementing their integrity as artists. Wallace's own legacy furthermore illustrates the extent to which an author's career is used to lionise narratives of American life and identity, as well as the narrative of the tragic artist.

Conclusion: Beyond 'Literary Celebrity'

Resisting the Death of the Author

Throughout this thesis I have demonstrated that Romantic ideals of authorship persist, in which authors who are exceptional, unique, pained, individualised and considered 'outsiders' are revered, respected, and considered genuine based on the standards of cultural commentary. Stuart Glover put it succinctly when he noted that we still conceive of the author in their most Romantically individuated form, that is, circulating around the idea of 'genius'. One need only view the excitement and fervour that accompanies various authorial promotions, publications, and appearances to acknowledge that the Romantic conception of the author has endured with great enthusiasm. The author remains a figure who is singled out as much for their intellectual capabilities as they are for their larger-than-life personas and internal struggles. While the author is a normal, real person, the contemporary media has elevated the author's persona to nourish the romanticisation of authorship, in the same way that reading publics did in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Dugald Williamson's work, *Authorship and Criticism* (1989), shows that Romantic ideals of authorship have greatly persisted in contemporary discourse; the prominence of the author, as Williamson notes, has extended into various fields, including 'literary and film criticism' (18). He observes, however, that literary theory has routinely challenged this popular conception of the author. As Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia have argued: 'much professional literary criticism has reduced the text to an object and in so doing obscures both the text's and the critic's real relations with power' (2009: 19).

Yet the attempts of the poststructuralists, namely, Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, to remove the author as a significant, revered figure of literary curiosity, and of textual and cultural authority, have been met in broader social and cultural discourse with disagreement, if not complete indifference. Their respective attacks on the figure of the author have been acknowledged only as a negligible aspect of poststructuralist theory, and have not been embraced on any significant scale. Barthes' and Foucault's theories have been accepted only as a minor historical viewpoint, rather than as something that has affected modern conceptions of authorship and the author's relationship to their creative work. The author has thus proved to be of great social fascination, and the author's place and status in contemporary culture is just as strong as it was in the eighteenth century, if not more so. The

popularity of literary celebrity, which has grown steadily since Romanticism, is evidence of the author's continued prominence in both social discourse and the popular imagination.

Literary Celebrity: A problematic term

Although the author has remained a popular figure in contemporary culture, their increased association with the celebrity industry has proved questionable insofar as it has been habitually aligned with the disrepute of literature as a result. Hence, literary celebrity remains a contentious phenomenon; by its very name it has provoked numerous discussions on the antagonistic relationship between literature and celebrity culture. Or, as Pierre Bourdieu put it, there is an 'antagonistic coexistence' between what he calls 'pure art' and the economy (1996: 142). We may understand literature as belonging to a certain discourse that prohibits celebrity culture, since celebrity is often understood as being a purely economic industry.

Despite the innumerable instances in which authors have engaged in celebrity culture quite harmoniously, the assumption still persists that celebrity culture, which is often associated with a 'dumbing down' of society, is incompatible with that of the respected, even revered domain of authorship. Or, as Loren Glass puts it, society has routinely worked under the assumption that 'great literature is somehow beyond or outside the logic of the market' (2004: 2). As a result, Joe Moran argues that literary celebrities are controversial because 'they have a contentiously intermediate position in relation to literary production as a whole' (2000: 7).

Yet many authors are successfully undermining this assumption; as my research shows, authors such as Toni Morrison and Thomas Pynchon in particular are either unaware of this assumption, or otherwise completely dismissive of it. Their respective careers, in fact, work to significantly weaken this belief. As Moran's comments at the beginning of this thesis attest, the bourgeoning industry of global celebrity has not had a completely adverse impact on the literary publishing industry; literary merits are still valued, and one's celebrity need not be to the detriment of one's literary renown, and vice versa. Charles Dickens, Gertrude Stein, and more recently Toni Morrison and Thomas Pynchon, are evidence of a growing symbiosis between celebrity and literature. Yet discourses on authenticity and on a perceived 'authentic author' persist, but this need not wholly preclude celebrity. Thanks to the careers of certain authors such as Morrison and Pynchon – both of whom have appeared frequently on television (or in Pynchon's case, in cartoons) – the 'authentic' celebrity author can indeed

partake in the accoutrements of celebrity culture and the media at large, destabilising previously rigid systems that circulate around the expectations of so-called 'literary' authors. But there is still a way to go in completely dispelling these popular myths regarding the author's involvement with celebrity culture in contemporary society.

As I have shown throughout this thesis, the celebrity author continues to be plagued by arguments of contradiction and hypocrisy in one form or another, arguments which have obstinately defined literary celebrity as a whole, contributing to an overarching 'narrative' of literary celebrity. There exists great ambiguity, both for authors and the public, as to what, exactly, is the function of the author, and, moreover, the celebrity author. As a result of this assumption, discussions of literary celebrity continue to circulate around particular 'canonical' authors, evading more nuanced figures in the process. What this shows is how discourses of literary celebrity, particularly ones focused on the 'solitary hero' and 'melancholy genius' still favour predominantly male authors. The 'paradoxical author' archetype is seen most often in the careers of Anglo-American male authors, suggesting that non-Anglo-Saxon female authors are all but excluded by discussions on integrity, authenticity, and literary prestige. This is the manner in which the Romantic legacy of the author has been most aggressively sustained.

As discussed in chapter one, Romanticism began conceiving of the author as a figure separated from the rest of society, elevated above society as a revered figure of creative spontaneity, genius and, above all, honesty and integrity. A great sense of melancholy was attached to this conception of the author, which, among other things, carried on into successive discourses on authorship, throughout the twentieth and well into the twenty-first century.

The trope of the author as 'struggling artist', though frequently discredited by theorists and authors alike, has persevered and has eagerly been sustained by a public that holds dear these ideals of the respected author. Finding its footing in the careers of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Lord Byron in particular, authors were meant to be uncomfortable with the fame that their work garnered. The 'Byronic Hero' concept, which still has a certain importance where contemporary authors are concerned (notably with David Foster Wallace), sees the author as some sort of sacrificial figure whose work is undertaken with great pains, and to the detriment of the author's psychological health. Lorraine York discusses this in terms of our idealisation of the author as 'solitary scribbler' (2007: 5), while Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede argue that popular social thought has conceived of the author as an

'isolated, often alienated hero' (1992: 73). These respective views of authorship are often seen as being inconsistent with the visibility and exposure that celebrity culture celebrates.

This conception of the author as 'hero', moreover, was maintained throughout the Victorian era, with authors Charles Dickens and Mark Twain exemplars of this persevering value. The hero-worship that these authors encountered in the Victorian era was criticised on the grounds that it began celebrating notoriety over genuine fame earned through 'intellectual qualifications' (Kitton, 1900: 81).

It was in the Victorian era that the author became more than a writer: they were essentially performers. Dickens performed his work at public readings, while Twain was considered a literary lion whose persona was as famed as his work, with both authors putting emphasis on stories of the working-class. The cases of Dickens and Twain in particular undermine the assumption that the author as a public 'personality' is restricted to a modern understanding of authorship and celebrity.

Yet as literature and, more broadly reading, became more widely consumed with the increase in mass literacy in the nineteenth century, a general assumption about the decline of quality literature began to surface, as it was previously considered reserved for the elite class.

The Author and the Media

As this thesis has illustrated at length, the author has had a long historical connection to the celebrity and fame industries. The modernist period saw the author as retaining this romanticised sense of 'genius', with figures such as Hemingway, Stein and Fitzgerald noted and celebrated not only for their literary talents but also for the circulation of their personas in the popular press. Hemingway, in particular, remains firmly ingrained in the popular imagination of contemporary culture, showing the extent to which historical authors are still revered as intellectual heroes and geniuses of literature.

Yet the reception of celebrity significantly changed from the early twentieth century to the early twenty-first century, which had an adverse effect on the reputation of celebrity authors. As I discussed in Chapter Five, the reception of celebrity authors in the Romantic, Victorian, and Modern periods was not nearly as sceptical or indeed disapproving as late twentieth and early twenty-first century audiences. In the post-war period the emergence of more efficient technologies which enabled faster and wider dissemination of famous figures contributed to the pervasiveness of celebrity in a globalised setting.

Within this increasingly mass mediated environment, authors and publishers undoubtedly favoured the ease with which these media facilitated the growth and circulation of a well-established author. The author's appearance on mediated formats signalled a shift in the landscape of both authorship and celebrity, what Charles Carmello calls the 'media event' (1983: 84), of which Norman Mailer was a forerunner.

Following on from Hemingway, whom he greatly admired, Mailer blatantly engaged in the new mass media formats, utilising these forms – the television show, the magazine, and his numerous public appearances – to cultivate a larger-than-life mediated persona. Mailer was subsequently criticised by a number of critics and theorists for wasting his talent through over-emphasising his hyper-mediated persona. Writer Michael Wolff writes that Mailer's media 'whorishness', his rampant participation in the media, and his flamboyant, 'show-off' style 'have no place in the present, earnest, literary world' (2013). Even Mailer's journalism, Wolff argues, 'would likely get a sour and resentful Twitter reaction today' (2013).

Thus Mailer is one of the more important authors in the study of literary celebrity since he exists as a transitional figure between the revered authors of the modernist project and the inclusion of the author in media which has since been understood as prompting a growth in celebrity publishing. For Mailer, as it was for Andy Warhol, the self was seen as something that had become an image. Yet Warhol took this concept to greater heights, seeing the artist as celebrity, in contrast to earlier conceptions of authorship that saw the artist as a struggling figure.

In light of Warhol's Pop Art work in the 1960s, which was considered by many to be crude and shallow and nothing more than a pseudo-event, the notion of celebrity began to take on another dimension based on surface, appropriation, commercialism, and lack of talent. Daniel J. Boorstin's significant work on the human pseudo-event is useful here. The post-war period that saw the self as becoming another commodifiable object reminds us of Boorstin's views on the development and tarnation of fame. For Boorstin, genuine fame was aligned with achievement, while celebrity culture referred to one who is known for their 'well-knownness', a concept arguably more familiar in contemporary celebrity culture with DIY celebrities.

Warhol's belief that anybody could do what he did, that anybody could, in fact, be him, was a distinctly postmodern way of viewing the self which subsequently infected many conceptions of the popular individual circulating throughout the media and the attainment of fame. Along with his concept of '15 minutes of fame', Warhol was an integral figure in

shaping views of celebrity in the latter half of the twentieth century, which would invariably affect conceptions of literature and publishing as a result.

The concept of 'celebrity', then, garnered a more unfavourable reputation within the increasingly commercialised arts and literary sectors throughout the twentieth century; as numerous critics observed, publishing houses were seen as becoming increasingly market-driven, to the extent that, as Greco et al noted, readers felt as though publishing houses were more inclined to publish 'dumbed-down books', with the cult of celebrity reigning (2006: 187).

As Leff's comments in Chapter Nine suggest, the author and the celebrity were hitherto considered fundamentally separate in publishing industries, with publishers catering to quality work and writers. Leff notes that gradually this ratio shifted to accommodate lucrative publishing possibilities that circulated around the author's fame, in contrast to those earlier family-owned publishers who 'dealt in substance, not surface; in authors, not stars', and who were associated with 'great, rather than go-getting authors' (1999: xiii).

John Thompson's comments on the celebrity publishing industry parlay into this discussion, as he argues that the author's persona was no longer just one factor to be taken into account in terms of publishing, but 'the overriding factor, indeed the principal factor' (2012: 204).

Indeed, while publishing has always relied on a degree of commercialism, the growth in popularity of celebrity culture transformed the publishing market to the extent that an author's mediated appeal became a more important factor than the strength of their work, resulting in an industry less concerned with quality work.

The Various Kinds of Celebrity Authors

Within this 'celebrity-soaked' environment, certain authors have managed to capitalise not on their visibility in the media, but on their so-called 'reclusiveness'. Joe Moran's work on this concept is particularly useful in understanding how the reclusive author is received in contemporary culture, in light of the circulation of the celebrity individual in mass media. J.D. Salinger and Thomas Pynchon in particular belong to this group of 'hidden celebrities'. These authors are all the more intriguing (and, by extension, respected) for their absence from the media. Because a famous person's absence from the media is so out of phase with both generalised conceptions of celebrity, and the prevailing culture that unapologetically

celebrates constant visibility and exposure, these authors are useful figures in discussions on the phenomenon of literary celebrity. Pynchon is particularly useful (if not the most useful celebrity author in this thesis), since he nevertheless engages in celebrity culture, but in a playful manner.

Pynchon shatters the division between highbrow and lowbrow culture, embracing both elements in what may be an attempt to undermine assumptions about celebrity culture and authorship. Instead of being an author who resides outside of the status quo of celebrity culture, Pynchon simply remains a celebrity without being seen, undermining the notion that celebrity must automatically be aligned with visibility and constant cultural commentary. Pynchon is therefore a particularly useful figure in literary celebrity studies as he disrupts conventional notions of what it means to be both a celebrity and an author.

This image of the serious, anti-media celebrity author has been well-maintained by those authors for whom literature exists above and beyond spaces of consumerism. Jonathan Franzen and Don DeLillo, for instance, are the two most notable authors who seek to preserve and promote the image of the author as a solitary hero. Their view follows that the author must be separated from the media since, for them, literature represents the antithesis of mass media, and vice versa.

Because of this assumption, authors such as Stephen King and Bret Easton Ellis have notably been criticised for not only engaging in commercial endeavours but for being associated with brands and branding. The emergence of the 'brand name' author in the 1980s and 90s signalled another shift in the literary celebrity marketplace that saw authors becoming more of a product than even their work. The brand culture of this period emphasised and celebrated the author's persona and presence in the media over that of their literary contributions.

In light of these debates, it is unsurprising that authors who are somewhat detached from celebrity culture are more respected than those authors who are heavily engaged in the media, showing that however anachronistic it may be, the 'solitary author' trope is still highly favoured.

David Foster Wallace is arguably the most significant figure in the literary celebrity industry in the last decade, due to the fact that his struggle with depression and untimely death have subsequently elevated his status to that of legend, in a manner starkly similar to that of Lord Byron, Ernest Hemingway, and others such as Sylvia Plath and Virginia Woolf.

For these authors, depression and suicide were incorporated into the narrative of their lives and careers as authors, again emphasising the association between an author and their work.

Since his death, Wallace has continuously been labelled a genius, reiterating the Romanticised conception of authorial behaviour and existence. As I discussed in Chapter Ten, Wallace has affirmed what Adam Kelly argues is the 'modernist idea of artist as aloof genius' (132). Despite the instances where this is not the case, where an author is less aloof than they are engaging and prolific in the mediasphere, there certainly remains, in the popular imagination, the idea that authors are special individuals who are at once revered and troubled, and somehow separate from society. What this suggests is that there is not one type of celebrity author. As this thesis shows, there are a number of different ways a celebrity author can operate within the media, whether directly, discreetly, playfully, ambivalently, provocatively, or indifferently.

Throughout this thesis I have attempted to map the progression of the author's role and their engagement in the industry of celebrity culture. Although the role and status of the author has noticeably changed with each successive era, one of the most notable continuities is that they are regarded as a paradoxical figure.

While the Romantic conception of the author persists, so too does the assumption that literature and the media are, however modestly, at odds with each other in terms of cultural expectations. Such an assumption is evidenced in each of the case studies that I have presented throughout this thesis. Many of the authors I examine exemplify the uncertainty that operates at the core of literary celebrity. The curiosity with which the celebrity author is constantly analysed in the media and cultural commentary is illustrative of the notion that such a liaison between authorship and the media remains strange and peculiar. This shows why literary celebrity as a field of research has been enduringly popular in the last few decades as the media industry has continued its global reach.

Presently it is still assumed, to a degree, that the more an author is engaged in the media environment, the more their perceived 'integrity' will be compromised. But certain authors are successful in undermining this anachronistic belief. While there are authors who remain ambivalent about their place in the media, including Jonathan Franzen, Bret Easton Ellis and Dave Eggers, others, such as Salman Rushdie, Thomas Pynchon, and Toni Morrison, do not subscribe to the idea that an author does not belong in the industry of celebrity culture. These authors are therefore useful and significant since they directly

challenge established notions of what it means to be an author in contemporary society. What these case studies furthermore show is that the term 'literary celebrity' may be insufficient or redundant in understanding the celebrity author's place within an increasingly mediated environment. Considering the extent to which the celebrity author has remained a prominent figure from Romanticism onwards, it may be more accurate and useful to think of celebrity as an integral part of authorship and the author's career, and vice versa. As a result, the celebrity author emerges as an important figure in reshaping a number of conceptions about literature and its place within the media.

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