LATE-VICTORIAN CELEBRITY CULTURE: THE INTERACTION OF CELEBRITY, MEDIA AND CONSUMERS

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by
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Abstract

This thesis argues for an amendment to the traditional scholarly visualisation of how celebrity culture functions. In making this argument it looks at the context of late-Victorian Britain, a space and time that I argue harboured the first mass celebrity culture. Instead of the cleanly divided triptych of celebrity, media, and consumers (as proposed most recently by Sharon Marcus), a more integrative model is proposed that seeks to reflect how the three central agents interact and merge seamlessly into one another. This merging of roles, I argue, is a result of the more indiscriminatory, ambiguous, and ‘liquid’ nature of celebrity fame that - unlike the more rigid fame of heroism - does not need to conform as much to pre-set cultural types. In making this argument the thesis looks at four late-Victorian celebrity activities (autobiography, biography, interviews, autograph collecting) that serve as both the central primary sources as well as chapter focuses. In each activity-based chapter the thesis investigates the complex interplay of the three fundamental agents of celebrity, particularly the ways in which they both conflicted and coalesced seamlessly into one another. By doing this, the thesis aims to help inter-disciplinary scholars of celebrity sharpen their theoretical conceptualisation of the phenomenon as well as demonstrate the necessity of accounting for celebrity culture in any thorough discussion of late-Victorian popular culture.
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Introduction: Amending our Visualisation of Celebrity

In October 1890 *Punch* featured a piece entitled ‘Wanted - A Society For the Protection of Celebrities’.1 Touching upon the huge success of the journalistic interview format and biographical market in the previous fifteen years, the article asked, ‘is it not high time that the Celebrities themselves had a slice or two out of the cake?’ The piece, though tongue-in-cheek, evidences the uneasy truce that existed between late-Victorian celebrities and the other parties involved in the construction of their fame. Celebrities needed the intermediaries of the media yet distrusted them. Intermediaries fawned over celebrities yet sought to unveil their secrets. This conflict extended to consumers. Celebrities needed their consuming public - for income, popularity, demand - yet often complained of being victimised by them. Christina Rossetti, though overjoyed to receive fan mail, suffered from predators looking to take monetary advantage of her charitable nature.2 The end result of such tense interactions in the first age of mass media - a careful tug-of-war between various self-interested parties - was celebrity.

From this summary we may be tempted, as numerous recent scholars have been, to conceptualise celebrity as a clearly divided relationship between the famous individual themselves, the media (including the various intermediaries that functioned within it), and the consumer. Yet such clean divisions - which have not been significantly probed at thus far in the literature - become blurred when we bring to mind the autobiographer who discussed fellow celebrities, the renowned biographer or journalist, the noted collector of autographs, or the celebrity who indulged in such activities of consumption. Applying each of these late-Victorian instances cleanly to one of the three categories can be difficult.

Accordingly, this thesis forwards two central arguments which, when combined, illuminate a largely ignored aspect of late-Victorian celebrity culture and indeed historical celebrity more

1 *Punch*, October 25, 1890.
generally. Firstly, that celebrity can be best conceptualised as a zone of conflict between three central parties (celebrity, consumer, media), and, secondly, that these parties are capable of becoming fused, coalescing seamlessly into one another throughout the interplay.Celebrities, the media, and consumers not uncommonly bleed into one another upon more minute analysis of the matrices of celebrity construction. Such fusion, I will argue, is the result of the distinctly fluid nature of celebrity, as opposed to other forms of fame such as heroism. Autobiographies, biographies, journalistic interviews, and autographs are utilised as the four central primary sources in making this argument. Each is conceptualised as an activity of conflict and coalescence between those looking to define publicity in the first mass celebrity culture.

Such an examination of celebrity not only contributes to the growing historical scholarship concerning a curious form of fame, it can also deepen our understanding of how late-Victorians thought, and how late-Victorian society operated. The general themes of celebrity are pertinent to current scholarly debates regarding the final decades of the nineteenth century. Alastair Paynter and Michael Taylor have envisioned late nineteenth-century Britain as wracked by a debate between individualism and collectivism, the importance of a singular person against the mass.3 Helmut E. Gerber, Suzanne Nalbantin, Frances Knight, and Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst have viewed the era as one of a crisis of values, of trepidatious cultural experimentation, and an uneasy transition from the early-industrial to the mass-industrial world.4 William Greenslade, David Daiches, and Benjamin Morgan have noted the near-ubiquitous contemporary concerns over moral and physical

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degradation arising from supposedly decadent civilisation, spiritual losses, and mechanisation.\textsuperscript{5} Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sandra Den Otter have observed the popular fascination with human psychology and the internal life of the mind, particularly as this relates to notions of selfhood.\textsuperscript{6} Celebrity - with its themes of public distinction, controversy, sensation, industrial reproduction, and the mass-commodification of selfhood - ties into all of these discussions.

Furthermore, just as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer examined celebrity in their larger post-World War Two analysis of America’s so-called ‘Culture Industry’, so the examination of late-Victorian celebrity can enlighten us to the dynamics of the era’s popular culture more broadly.\textsuperscript{7} In doing so I engage with the numerous studies conducted on the topic in the past decade and add to the list of angles taken, which includes that of literature, theatre, medicine, music-hall, leisure, and the supernatural.\textsuperscript{8} My insistence that the Victorian era contained a mass celebrity culture also engages with ongoing debates regarding the nature of the nineteenth-century British public and notions of national and imperial community.\textsuperscript{9} The investigation of consumer activity - largely through the chapter on autograph collecting - engages with recent studies on the culture of consumption and commodities in the late-nineteenth century which have emphasised the


hermeneutic autonomy of said consumers and the distinct ‘lives’ of their chosen commodities. By further understanding the late-Victorian construction of celebrity we can further our own understanding of the late Victorian.

The Periodisation of Celebrity Culture

Historians of celebrity are perhaps particularly wary of anachronism. In using such a term of contemporary ubiquity, one of the key points of disagreement between scholars studying the phenomenon regards its periodisation. The origins of celebrity culture have been conceptualised ahistorically as an inbuilt potentiality of the homo sapien, a product of modernity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as the sole production of late capitalism. Indeed, seeing the celebrity story as one of long-term continuity rather than modern disjuncture, Leo Braudy, Tyler Cowen, and Joseph Roach view the phenomenon as part of the long democratisation of fame via reproductive and communicative technologies such as printing, engraving, and photography, tracing a link from the beginning of recorded history itself to the contemporary era. These scholars represent fame - a goal asserted to be integral to human nature - ‘levelled-down’, brought within theoretical reach of all sectors of modern society. The history of celebrity is presented in almost Whiggish fashion as part of the collective moral and industrial growth of humanity. While the tracing of the roots of celebrity back to ancient and prehistorical times offers a coherent long view of the phenomenon, such grand studies - due to the necessary lack of specificity - sometimes suffer from ahistoricity and anachronism. The proto-celebrity of Ancient Greece is rendered fundamentally similar to the eighteenth-century literary celebrity, while nineteenth and twentieth-century

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celebrities are treated almost synonymously. For instance, Roach’s investigation of ‘It’ - that which ‘makes certain people interesting all the time’ - analyses what he conceptualises as the peculiar fame-granting quality existent within charmed individuals such as Charles II, Clara Bow, Princess Diana, and Johnny Depp with little concern for the differing contexts. The largely speculative investigation of what Cowen asserts to be ‘deeply rooted psychological phenomena’ across such long stretches of time can be fascinating, but modern historical specificities and developments are largely glossed over in favour of assertions regarding mankind’s desires in the abstract. Our historicising of celebrity’s origins requires sharper refinement.

Another prominent view has been the argument - made chiefly by sociologists and media studies scholars - that celebrity was an exclusively twentieth-century development. Perhaps the most famous of these contributors is Daniel Boorstin, known chiefly for his maxim, ‘a celebrity is a person who is well-known for their well-knownness’. Echoing Boorstin, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Francesco Alberoni, Barry Gunter, Richard Schickel, and Tom Payne have similarly envisioned celebrity as a sole production of the twentieth century’s media machine thrust upon a largely passive consuming public. Ellis Cashmore goes even further by asserting that the phenomenon began exclusively in the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries with the ubiquity of digital media and the arrival of the internet. Though noting the valuable theoretical conceptions contributed by such figures, historians in recent decades have largely discarded this short story of celebrity, seeing significant continuities from the fame cultures of the preceding eras. Incorrect historical assertions from the Boorstini school are not uncommon. Richard Schickel’s insistence - as Simon Morgan has noted - that a comprehensive means of disseminating portrait

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16 See Ellis Cashmore, Celebrity Culture (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).
images did not exist before the twentieth century, is simply false. While these scholars can tell us much about the machinations of the twentieth-century media machine, highlight the uniqueness of celebrity in opposition to other forms of fame, and demonstrate the complex interplay of celebrity within a broader popular culture, many of their historical positions require revision.

Recent historical consensus - shaped mainly by Tom Mole, Laura Engel, Robert van Krieken, and Antoine Lilti - asserts that the origins of celebrity culture lay in the eighteenth century. These scholars have emphasised the growth of the dense urban social environment, popular leisure pursuits, public visibility via communicative technologies, changing notions of the public and private spheres, developments in secularism and ideas of individuality, increased interest in life-stories for their own sake, the decline of the aristocracy in favour of a more meritocratic social system dependent upon the professions, as well as a burgeoning consumer culture. For these reasons, the eighteenth century is indeed an apt historical era in which to envision the seeds of celebrity culture, yet I wish to emphasise the century’s status as an awkward teething period. The phenomenon remained a novelty, a curiosity rarely explicitly referenced in popular media and that seemingly failed to pierce extensively into the British popular consciousness. Celebrity was in its adolescence.

Continuing the developmental metaphor, many have agreed that the nineteenth century - and particularly the late-Victorian era - saw the maturation of a process that had begun in the previous century; the first mass celebrity culture. These scholars, like John B. Thompson, use the term

'mass' in qualitative rather than quantitative terms, emphasising not necessarily the number of individuals receiving the product, but rather the fact that the products were available in principle to a substantial plurality of recipients.\textsuperscript{20} Popular media, correspondents, and public house patrons \textit{explicitly} discussed the celebrity culture surrounding them. The era’s mass communications, increasingly urban and educated populations, rising prosperity and consuming power, copious industrial innovations that enhanced reproductive technologies, and the debatable weakening of religious faith have all been highlighted as evidence of the great stride that celebrity culture is purported to have taken. Antoine Lilti, who, as discussed above, situates the phenomenon’s origins in the eighteenth century, labels the nineteenth century the first golden age of celebrity.\textsuperscript{21}

My own justifications for viewing the late-Victorian era as the first age of mass celebrity culture are fivefold. We may begin with etymology. The first noted usage of the term ‘celebrity’ - conceived as a fusion of the French \textit{celebre} (‘well-known, public’) and the Latin \textit{celere} (‘swift’) - was in 1565 by the leading Protestant reformer John Jewel, referring to the apostles’ glorification of Jesus.\textsuperscript{22} The term was thus initially associated with religious rites and ceremonies, but took on a new meaning in the mid-eighteenth century to designate the notoriety of an actor or a writer. The early nineteenth


\textsuperscript{21} Lilti, \textit{The Invention}, p. 276.

\textsuperscript{22} P. David Marshall, \textit{Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contempory Culture} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 4. The larger context of Jewel’s usage of the term was: ‘whereas he [Jesus] commanded them to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Sonne, and of the Holy Ghost, they [the Apostles] baptized in the name of Jesus Chistle Onely, intending thereby to make that be of more fame and celebritie’. [sic] Krieken, \textit{Celebrity}, p. 15.
century in particular saw a sharp increase in this secular understanding of the term. In the Victorian era the meaning of the word shifted from something that famous people had, to something that famous people were, with the first English usage of this style dated to 1849 and credited to Ralph Waldo Emerson’s descriptions of English high society. Within twenty years the term had become a mainstay in the press and cosmopolitan social circles, particularly its plural application. Consequently, though the origins of celebrity culture lie within the eighteenth century, there is reason to believe that the application of the term to that era - particularly references to individuals as being celebrities - may be considered anachronistic.

Secondly, the list of developments in communication technology from the Victorian era is famously a long one. It saw the advent of the postage stamp (1837), electric telegraph (1837), electrotetype process (1838), photograph (1839), half-tone block (1852), typewriter (1874), telephone (1876), linotype machine (1884), and wireless telegraph (1894), to name but a few. The establishment of such communicative technologies into the common consciousness can be seen in their extensive reference in popular novels such as Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1897). Due to such prolific rates of invention, Collette Colligan and Margaret Linley have argued that media itself was a creation of the nineteenth century, while Carolyn Marvin has perceived the century’s last quarter as harbouring the birth of the mass media. It was certainly a time of major development for the press, with an exponential growth from the eighteenth century in the amount of impressions and letters.

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23 Lilti, The Invention of Celebrity, p. 104.
capable of being produced per hour. These advancements, alongside the removal of the so-called ‘Taxes on Knowledge’ (taxes on periodicals and duties on paper) by 1861 and the introduction of a more sensationalistic human-interest presentation style called ‘New Journalism’, allowed circulations to soar by the final decades of the century. \(^\text{29}\) \textit{Lloyd’s Weekly}, for instance, gained a circulation in 1896 of about fifteen times that of leading circulation papers fifty years before, and the periodicals \textit{Tit-Bits} and \textit{Daily Mail} neared the million mark in circulation by the century’s end. \(^\text{30}\) Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and William Morris successively characterised the era as one of endless reproduction, ceaseless communication, and the shrinking of a formerly large and idiosyncratic world into a small and uniform one. \(^\text{31}\) William Thomas Stead observed in 1886 that ‘the telegraph and the printing-press have converted Great Britain into... [an] assembly of the whole community.’ \(^\text{32}\)

This affective shrinking of the nation, Wolfgang Schivelbusch has argued, was further influenced by the establishment of vast railway lines across the British Isles. \(^\text{33}\) Community was national.

Thirdly, intertwined with this growth in communication technologies was a corresponding extension in the number and influence of consumers that has been characterised by Thomas Richards, W. Hamish Fraser, and Lori Anne Loeb as the development of the first mass-consuming public - paralleling celebrity culture’s development cycle. \(^\text{34}\) The era saw a basically consistent rise in


\(^{36}\) A consumer public has been defined as one that focuses on an ethos of consumption rather than production. See W. Hamish Fraser, The Coming of the Mass Market, 1850-1914 (London: Macmillan, 1981);
real wages both for the working and middle classes, particularly in the last quarter of the century, causing a corresponding rise in consumer spending from a total of 371 million pounds in 1860/61 to 862 million pounds in 1900/01. The reduced working hours of the later-nineteenth century and the extension of the weekend granted people the spare time to indulge in numerous new recreational pursuits referred to as ‘crazes’ and ‘fads’. The complex profit-seeking apparatuses built around these activities led Wray Vamplew to situate the commercialisation of leisure-related consumption in the late-Victorian era. Literacy among working-class children had grown substantially during the first half of the Victorian era, but it received a major boost from the passages of Forster’s Education Act in 1870 (making publicly-funded education available to all children in England and Wales between five and thirteen) and the Elementary Education Act in 1880 (making elementary schooling compulsory until the age of ten). By the final decade of the century illiteracy was as low as ten percent. Reading material, prohibitively expensive and only seasonally published at the start of the nineteenth century, became increasingly convenient to access because of cheaper pricing options, rising prosperity, and free public libraries. These developments are why Philip Waller has characterised the late-Victorian era as the first and only mass-reading public, as later competitors such as radio and television would dilute consumption levels. This ability of the public to consume

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mass-produced items is highly relevant to this study as celebrity has been repeatedly described as
the commodification of the individual *par excellence*.

Fourthly, as H. J. Dyos and Drew Gray have shown, the urbanisation of the British population
created a progressively metropolitan and anonymous society where traditional social systems broke
down to be replaced by new frameworks. By 1851 the urban population outnumbered the rural
and by 1901 over three quarters of the thirty-six million strong population resided in dense towns
and cities. This growth, though certainly most pronounced in London with its four-and-a-half
million inhabitants, was not restricted to the capital, with Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham
each containing around 800,000 inhabitants. By 1887, Ferdinand Tönnies hypothesised that
industrialised societies like Britain had discarded a rural *Gemeinschaft* pattern (in which
relationships would be personal, particular, and stable) for a *Gesellschaft* pattern (in which
relationships would be impersonal, competitive, and erratic). The city represented the substitution
of immediate primary contacts for abstract secondary ones. New religious movements such as the
Evangelicals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Adventists, and Mormons opted to refer to each other in
explicitly familial terms (‘brother’, ‘sister’) partly as a response to such perceived urban
impersonality. This societal framework - as noted by James Vernon - combined with technologies
of mass mediation, replaced cheek-by-jowl physical intimacy with ‘familiar strangers’, mediated

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representations of prominent individuals one has never met, yet knows much about. Such uncanny
genre relations offered intimacy in what poet Laurence Binyan saw as the cold impersonality of 1890s
era urban life:

> A sudden consolation, a softening light
> Touched me: the streets alive and bright,
> With hundreds each way thronging, on their tide
> Received me, a drop in the stream, unmarked, unknown.

Celebrity offered a touch of *Gemeinschaft*.

Finally, with numerous scholars linking the supposed decline of religion to the rise of celebrity
culture, it is worth looking into the religiosity of the Victorian era. The traditional scholarly view,
known as the ‘Secularisation Thesis’, held that Victorian urbanisation, industrialisation, and the
evolutionary discoveries of Charles Darwin caused a shift in the popular psyche which struggled to
believe so firmly in the God of the medieval world. In recent decades this thesis has been called
into question. Keith Snell and Paul Ell hold that while there is clear evidence of secularisation in the
Victorian metropolitan areas, rates of religiosity remained strong everywhere else. Similarly,
Timothy Larson views the supposed ‘Crisis of Faith’ as a gross overstatement that generalises from
the experiences of a few public individuals. Responding to these revisionists, David Nash has rightly
called for scholars to go beyond a ‘Crisis of Faith’ and ‘Crisis of Doubt’ binary, towards a more

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53 For perhaps the most notable scholar to envision celebrity culture partly as a response to the supposed
‘Death of God’, see Rojek, *Celebrity*.
54 See *The Victorian Crisis of Faith*, ed. by Anthony Symondson (London: S.P.C.K., 1970); J. Hills Miller, *The
Disappearance of God* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1975); Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the
nuanced understanding of the Victorian era as a time of moral uncertainty and spiritual seeking.\textsuperscript{57} Likewise, Charles Taylor views the nineteenth century as part of a shift from a cultural space in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to when belief in God became merely one of the many possibilities of individual expression and worship.\textsuperscript{58} Walter Houghton, for instance, has viewed the era’s cult of hero-worship as such a practice. Similarly, Jean K. Chalaby has proposed that late-Victorian journalism offered a form of pseudo-religious fulfilment in its magical solutions and J. Jeffrey Franklin has recently noted the proliferation of alternative religions by the century’s end.\textsuperscript{59} Indeed, philosopher Ernest Belfort Bax anecdotally remembered the typical late-Victorian individual as far more inquisitive, discerning, and self-directed than their mid-century counterparts.\textsuperscript{60} Thus, in the context of a culture of psychological yearning, while it would certainly be crude and incorrect to state that celebrity culture \textit{replaced} religion, we may understand celebrity culture as being one of the newer avenues of individual self-expression and belonging in an increasingly anonymous society conscious of alternatives to more traditional forms of faith and community.

I tread familiar ground when I emphasise the exponential transformations of the Victorian era.

The period is known for being credited with a host of firsts. It has been labelled the first age of mass communications, the first age of mass media, the first age of the mass press, the first age of mass advertising, the first information age, the first information revolution, and the first era of media addiction.\textsuperscript{61} To this august list we may add the first age of mass celebrity culture, the flourishing of a

phenomenon begun in the century prior. Consequently, understanding how this culture functioned is vital both for tracing the greater story of the phenomenon as well as clarifying the late-Victorian worldview.

**Forms of Fame: Heroism and Celebrity**

Conceptual clarity is imperative if we wish to construct a sophisticated history of celebrity. In seeking this, we should be clear that celebrity is *not* synonymous with fame but is instead a form of fame. Another significant manifestation of fame, particularly for the Victorian era, is heroism. In desiring to be clear about what we mean by celebrity, these two branches of public visibility - in many ways diametrically opposed - can be contrasted.

The last decade has seen work by Max Jones, Edward Berenson, and Berny Sèbe on the Victorian cult of imperial hero-worship in both France and Britain. Among others, the national figures General Gordon, Henry Morton Stanley, and Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza have been examined, and attention has been consistently paid to the powers of the press and the consuming public in the forming of these public identities. Like me, these scholars are interested in how fame was constructed and commodified by the mass media of the late-nineteenth century, but their emphasis on heroism marks a key distinction. Indeed, they rightly separate their focus of analysis from celebrity. Berny Sèbe sees celebrity merely as one aspect of the construction of imperial heroes, linking the term to mediated interactions and the new capabilities of the mass media. Edward Berenson has asserted that, compared to celebrities, heroes possessed considerably more political, moral, and cultural

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weight, and were fused with Max Weber’s understanding of charisma. Similarly, in a special edition of *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Jones, Sèbe, John Strachan, Bertrand Taithe, and Peter Yeandle viewed the imperial hero - in contrast to the more morally ambivalent celebrity - as rooted in exemplarity, serving as predominantly masculine models of universal admiration and emulation. Recent work on the Victorian interest in ‘everyday heroism’ further evidences the term’s connotations of quiet virtue and antipathy towards self-promotion. Thus, the recent scholarship on the Victorian imperial hero correctly conceptualises its particular form of nineteenth-century fame as steeped in notions of masculinity, virtue, military prowess, and posthumous commemoration.

In contrast, the literature on Victorian celebrity associates its form of nineteenth-century fame with contemporary notions of femininity, artificiality, artistic production, curiosity, and moral ambiguity. Work on the Victorian celebrity, in contrast to the masculine military heroes, is overwhelmingly concerned with more feminine literary and theatrical figures. Society’s deviants, rather than its pillars, often fall under this less exalted publicity. This emphasis on the feminine

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67 For work on the deviant aspects of celebrity, see Matthew Buckley, ‘Sensations of Celebrity: Jack Sheppard and the Mass Audience’, *Victorian Studies*, 44:3 (2002), pp. 423-463; Ruth Penfold-Mounce, *Celebrity Culture*
celebrity partly represents a response to Claire Brock’s recognition that women, and men not of a hypermasculine mould, have been historically absent in the scholarship on fame.\textsuperscript{68} Yet, the goal of this scholarship has also been to examine how fame was produced, assessed, and communicated in the first era of mass media. Two key differences, however, are apparent. Firstly, as opposed to the Anglo-French imperial emphasis of the heroism literature, the celebrity literature bases itself more in the transatlantic literary sphere.\textsuperscript{69} Secondly, there is a difference in emphasis placed on which parties create fame. Fame is something that \textit{happens to} the hero (and justly so, it is thought), the celebrity intentionally - sometimes unbecomingly - \textit{performs} fame.

There were, of course, some figures associated with both types of fame. Henry Morton Stanley, a media-savvy, self-promoting journalist and hypermasculine adventurer, is perhaps the best Victorian example of such a fusion. But the celebrity literature has largely concerned itself with figures such as Sarah Bernhardt, Rosa Bonheur, Oscar Wilde, Lillie Langtry, Alfred Tennyson, Maria Louise Ramé (\textit{Ouida}), Margaret Oliphant, George Eliot, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, and Marie Corelli for the varying ways in which they participated in the construction of their contemporary public image both alongside and against the powers of the media and consumers. Unlike the scholarship on heroes which - without annihilating the individual’s involvement entirely - tends generally to look at the long view commemoration of posthumous fame such as the legacies of General Gordon and Captain Scott, the scholarship on celebrity considers far more the autonomy of the famous themselves (including when said individuals prepared for immediate posterity).\textsuperscript{70} The celebrity plays an active role in the moulding, setting, and consolidating of their fame.

\textsuperscript{68} Brock, \textit{The Feminization}, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{69} Joe Moran, \textit{Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America} (London: Pluto, 2000).
This link between celebrity and active participation on the part of the individual in constructing fame alongside the media and consumers, while granting autonomy, also brings to mind both contemporary and historical pejorative connotations of the term. Any evidence of premeditation in fame, as Leo Braudy has noted, is unseemly.\(^{71}\) Indeed, numerous scholars have touched upon this association between celebrity and cynicism, ephemerality and arbitrariness. Robert van Krieken, for instance, has noted the common juxtaposition of the ‘hero’ and the ‘celebrity’, between deep achievement by which fame arises absent-mindedly as a deserved result of exemplary virtue and shallow achievement by which fame arises via vapid personal ambition, omnipotent media manipulation, and transfixed audiences.\(^{72}\) Heroes, Robert Segal has similarly argued, are ideal - even sometimes ahistorical - abstractions, while celebrities are more awkward creatures grounded in modern history.\(^{73}\) Joshua Gamson offers an excellent summary of this dynamic:

This is the story of two stories. In one [heroism], the great and talented and virtuous and best-at rise like cream to the top of the attended-to, aided perhaps by rowdy promotion, which gets people to notice but can do nothing to actually make the unworthy famous. In this story, fame is deserved and earned, related to achievement or quality. In the second story [celebrity], the publicity apparatus itself becomes a central plot element, even a central character; the publicity machine focuses attention on the worthy and unworthy alike, churning out many admired commodities called celebrities, famous because they have been made to be.\(^{74}\)

Both heroes and celebrities are famous; yet to call a public figure a hero is a compliment, to call them a celebrity is more ambiguous.

**The Celebrity Triptych**

Celebrity can be best conceptualised as a triptych. The media, consumers, and celebrities themselves both cooperate and compete in seeking to construct, define, and consolidate publicity. Recognising this, Joshua Gamson calls celebrity a ‘Negotiated Celebration’, the end-result of arbitration and

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\(^{72}\) Krieken, *Celebrity Society*, p. 5.


\(^{74}\) Gamson, *Claims to Fame*, p. 15.
struggle between the three agents.\textsuperscript{75} This triple-sectioned imagining is sometimes performed covertly by privileging one point above the other two. Some, for instance, emphasise the overwhelming importance of the celebrity in constructing their own fame,\textsuperscript{76} some (usually those of a more sociological bend) view the media as the ultimate arbiter,\textsuperscript{77} and some view the consumers (sometimes conceptualised as audiences or fans) as the creators of celebrity in their active engagement with popular culture.\textsuperscript{78} Others are far more explicit in their engagement with this triptych. Tom Mole, in his study of Byron’s fame, asserted that celebrity is a ‘cultural apparatus’ consisting of a public figure, an industry, and a consumer.\textsuperscript{79} Preferring the term ‘celebrity ecology’, Pramod K. Nayar has similarly highlighted how celebrity is not the effect of one isolated force, but many interweaving factions. Like Mole, he imagines a basic tripartite at the root of celebrity: production (media-driven construction of the celebrity), text (celebrity as text, her or his representations, products and images), and consumption (all of which deal with the celebrity and celebrity culture).\textsuperscript{80} Most recently in 2019, Sharon Marcus has envisioned celebrity as a \textit{drama} between these three players, each seeking to assign value and meaning to celebrities. She uses the specific term drama because of her view of celebrity culture as suspenseful, interactive, and serial; none of the three players ever conclusively overcome the other two. The visualisation - and this is

\textsuperscript{75} See Gamson, \textit{Claims to Fame}.
\textsuperscript{76} As Richard deCordova has noted, many non-academic analyses of celebrity solely credit the individual’s qualities of charisma, beauty, and exceptional talent. See \textit{Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America} (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1990), p. 8. However, some academics have paid attention to what they claim are the important qualities of individuals. See Roach, \textit{It}; Rory Moore, ”‘The Penalties of a Well-Known Name’”; Boyce, Finnerty, Millim, \textit{Victorian Celebrity Culture and Tennyson’s Circle}; Martin Postle, ”‘The Modern Apelles”, in \textit{Joshua Reynolds: The Creation of Celebrity}, ed. by Martin Postle, pp. 17-33.
\textsuperscript{80} Nayar, \textit{Seeing Stars}, pp. 21-22.
where Marcus and me most differ - given is that of a triangle, with each agent taking up one corner (Figure 0.1).\footnote{For Sharon Marcus’ visualisation of celebrity construction, see The Drama of Celebrity, p. 4.}

Through the archetypal personage of French actress Sarah Bernhardt, Marcus wishes to emphasise the celebrity - the point of the triptych representing the famous individual - as an active agent in the construction of their fame. Marcus - who characterises much of the previous literature as overwhelmingly focused on the media as the ultimate arbiter - transcends the usual academic

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{matrix_of_celebrity_construction}
\caption{The classic triptych of celebrity construction utilised by numerous scholars.}
\end{figure}
focus on broad social structures and discourses by taking such an approach. While it is certainly fair to suggest that some (typically those with sociological or media-centred approaches) have emphasised the media as the apex power, it is incorrect to suggest that the individual aspect of the triptych has been entirely ignored. Marcus’ work is undoubtedly valuable in its emphasis on the top corner of the triptych, but it is not the first to take such a focus.

Such discussion of the different powers involved in the construction of celebrity culture may be seen as part of the attempt to answer Simon Morgan’s call – made in hopes of dispelling confusion surrounding the term - for the minute analysis of such broader power circuits:

If we wish to distinguish celebrity as a status that is distinct from other types of fame without making value judgements about its relative social worth, it is necessary to shift our focus away from the individual celebrity and their particular claim to fame to consider the mechanisms by which that fame is generated and spread... Individuals function as nodal points around which the broader apparatus of celebrity culture coalesces, before dissipating as they fade from the public eye. However, if we are to understand celebrity in systemic terms, it is crucial to get beyond the mere description of the system to establish the historical processes by which it developed and which continue to sustain it.

By focusing too closely on individual anecdotes we risk inconsequential analysis that fails to take into account the broader society. This call for a multifaceted analysis of the wider interweaving matrices of celebrity construction - as opposed to its isolated expressions - has been a common request over the past decade. The field is moving away from the isolated analysis of individuals to the more fruitful analysis of societal structures, activities, and trends.

In seeking to more thoroughly and accurately answer this common call for a survey of the circuits of power, this thesis seeks to refine the traditional visualisation seen in Figure 1. While certainly useful as a blunt analytical tool, it has been found that the sole triptych structure becomes

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82 The Drama of Celebrity, p. 14.
83 For those that have emphasised the media, see ref. 77. For those that have already emphasised the individual, see ref. 76.
insufficient upon close analysis of celebrity construction. The stark categories appear overly rigid when we come up against the late-Victorian celebrity-journalist, celebrity-biographer, fan-interviewer, fan-biographer, the collector who achieved celebrity through their impressive acquisitions, or the celebrity who participated in collecting. Because of these complexities of categorisation, this study suggests an amendment to the triptych, a softening of its stark approach to categorisation via a zone of coalescence that recognises the nuanced interconnectivities of the three parties (Figure 0.2). Through complicating Marcus’ presentation of the triptych, those awkward agents who fail to easily fit into the three categories of celebrity, media, or consumer can be placed appropriately in the visualisation, allowing for a more nuanced view of celebrity construction. Such convergent identities are a product of the type of fame that celebrity represents. Unlike heroism, which is typically bestowed upon rigid pre-set cultural types and exemplars, celebrity is a more fluid and ambiguous form of publicity that attaches itself indiscriminately to agents of many forms. While Marcus’ matrix remains eminently useful as a visual base, this thesis asks for a touch of nuance.
Sources and Methodology

In arguing for this amendment the originality of this thesis’ approach lies in two key areas; the structural viewpoint and the use of activities (autobiography, biography, interview, autograph collecting) as central primary sources in examining celebrity construction. The former aspect has been adopted in keeping with the current scholarship’s call for a broad surveying viewpoint which seeks to keep the analysis consequential, while the latter aspect has been adopted deliberately in
order to demonstrate the insufficiency of stark categorisation when envisioning celebrity
construction. In total, fifty autobiographies, seventy-six biographies, 252 interviews, and various
autograph collections and auctions have been examined both quantitatively (via analysis of
demographics and trends within each) as well as qualitatively (via analysis of the activities’ individual
texts, images, and hermeneutics) in order to dissect the dynamics of late-Victorian celebrity. This
dual methodology has been taken in favour of various other avenues explored by previous scholars.

Case studies of individuals, such as Ghislaine McDaytor’s analysis of Lord Byron - while certainly
fruitful for what they can tell us of the most notable historical instances of the phenomenon - are
necessarily somewhat limited in their broader statements regarding the machinations of the culture,
and, by their natural emphasis on one aspect of the triptych (McDaytor does touch upon Romantic
fan culture and the media but always with Byron as the clear centrepiece), struggle to fully examine
the complex interactions of the agents that this thesis is interested in.\(^86\) Marcus, who divided her
chapters by common thematic links such as sensation and intimacy from the nineteenth to the
twenty-first century - while drawing pertinent links between the differing eras and getting to the
core of the phenomenon’s cultural associations - loses a certain historical specificity (Muhammed Ali
and Sarah Bernhardt are analysed back-to-back) and engages little with the relative autonomy of the
three agents due partly to her laudable interest in the ultimate and wide-ranging effect of celebrity
rather than the minute details of its construction.\(^87\) Charlotte Boyce, Páraic Finnerty, and Anne-
Marie Millim, with their division of chapters around different members of ‘Tennyson’s Circle’ have
deftly highlighted the subtleties of the fame construction process, noting Juliet Margaret Cameron’s
fame-by-proxy and Hallam Tennyson’s notoriety as the trusted intermediary of Lord Tennyson.\(^88\)
However, the use of individual case studies from a relatively small mid-Victorian literary group again
necessarily limits the applicability of the findings to broader celebrity culture (being restricted to one

\(^{86}\) Ghislaine McDaytor, *Byromania and the Birth of Celebrity Culture* (New York: State University of New York
Press, 2009), p. 27.
\(^{87}\) See Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity*.
\(^{88}\) See Boyce, Finnerty, Millim, *Victorian Celebrity Culture and Tennyson’s Circle*. 
subsection of one professional demographic), while the blending of the agents is touched upon rather than significantly explored. This thesis’ focus on activities rather than individuals or themes allows for both a broad survey of celebrity while clearly evidencing the insufficiency of a simple triangular model lacking areas of integration.

Indeed, the dynamics of the triptych are shown to alter in every chapter’s activity, each of which is further subdivided into two sections that emphasise different aspects of celebrity’s conflicts and coalescences. The first chapter on autobiography examines the individual celebrity’s self-construction against the feared third-party definition of biographers and the deliberate framing of a relationship with their mass public. In the process of constructing themselves celebrities made taxonomies of their fellows in the public eye, situating themselves inside the larger corporate net of celebrity and ironically - given the purpose of such works - acting as gossiping intermediaries themselves. The second chapter on biography examines how intermediaries sought to define celebrities in posterity by writing about them, coming to own the life they described and thereby achieving fame by-proxy. Biographers were not neutral avenues through which the celebrity-subject simply passed through with their essence intact. Instead, they were actively constructed by their biographers and investigated with a close, often melancholic, and unprecedentedly psychological intimacy. In successful works of the era, intermediary and celebrity became indistinguishable. The third chapter on interviews again focuses on the attempt by intermediaries to define the celebrity, but while the latter still lived, with the celebrity themselves able to engage dialectically in the process. Interviewers and interviewees engaged in a careful tug-of-war with the former attempting to ‘draw’ out the latter while the latter attempted to self-promote and self-define without excessive disclosure. Finally, the chapter on autograph collecting will examine how consumers defined celebrities both contemporarily and posthumously through the hobbyist autograph hunters and the auction-room patronising mercantile collectors. Through these two forms of collecting, we can see how celebrity was constructed proactively and heterogeneously by consumers, as well as how such fame could be achieved by its very consumption.
Additionally, with the broad array of celebrities allowed by the methodology, the thesis will demonstrate how Victorian celebrity was not a phenomenon restricted to literary circles, in contrast to much of the literature’s emphasis thus far. Indeed, any celebrity that partook in the activities examined can be included, so long as they were contemporarily referred to as celebrities. This includes writers, poets, actors, lawyers, politicians, clergy, military officers, and socialites.89 There is, of course, a danger here in being overly broad and not accounting for the differing consumers or media outlets of the demographics. Yet, by using the specific activities as a common focal point and focusing on the minute matrices of construction surrounding each (for example, what the celebrity hoped to achieve with an autobiography, who they were addressing, how they were published), the analysis will be kept sharp and applicable. Though this thesis has deliberately taken a structural viewpoint that seeks to avoid the overuse of anecdotes, some particularly visible figures of late-Victorian celebrity culture are mentioned repeatedly. Writer Margaret Oliphant, theologian Benjamin Jowett, journalist Edmund Yates, actor John Lawrence Toole, and novelist Eliza Lynn Linton are but a few such names.

My focus also differs from previous historians of Victorian celebrity culture via its emphasis on the British Isles in contrast to the common transatlantic approach. This emphasis has been taken for three reasons. Firstly, due to the already broad reach of this thesis which covers celebrities of numerous demographics in four related activities, geographical limitations help keep the scope sufficiently sharp. Secondly, as discussed previously, this thesis seeks to inform - alongside the celebrity studies literature - broader debates about psychology, individualism, popular culture, and consumerism in late-Victorian Britain. A transatlantic approach would dilute its ability to participate significantly in such discussions. Thirdly, the activities discussed in this thesis often contained varying

89 Victorian discussions of celebrities, usually as a matter of course, referred to all these differing occupations, not just literary figures. See piece discussing the various ‘art, literature, and science’ celebrities, The Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette, Wednesday, August 12, 1885; Discussion of aristocrats as celebrities, Worcestershire Chronicle, March 06, 1886; Discussion of ‘political celebrity’, The Devon and Exeter Daily Gazette, May 15, 1886; Piece on ecclesiastical celebrity, Hastings & St. Leonards Observer, January 08, 1887.
cultural stories and styles between the British Isles and The United States of America. It would be clumsy to simply equate the British autograph hunter, interviewer, or any other participant, with their American counterparts. While broad overlaps and cultural cross-fertilisation certainly occurred (some British commentators believed interviewers and autograph hunters to be a scourge from America), such activities were far from homogenous across the two nations. The sole focus on the British Isles allows for a tighter and more culturally specific examination.

Alongside the four central primary sources already mentioned, like more recent historical scholarship on celebrity, this study utilises a diverse array of items that extend beyond the written text.\(^90\) Fan mail, cabinet photographs, *cartes de visite*, engravings, paintings, caricatures, advertisements, newspapers, diaries, scrapbooks, and auction catalogues have all been examined in order to substantiate the claims made via the central sources. My analysis of nineteenth-century newspapers and periodicals was channelled primarily through the Gale Primary Sources online archives. I made extensive use of the software’s wordsearch function, searching for relevant keywords that could link to my topics of interest (for example, searching for ‘autobiographer’ for the chapter on autobiography). In order to focus such clearly broad searches I utilised my prior knowledge of cultural events, publications, and anniversaries. For instance, in the month that Froude’s life of Carlyle was released I was able to check every single instance of the search term ‘biographer’, as opposed to adopting a more economical approach elsewhere.

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\(^90\) For older examples of historical celebrity scholarship that utilised virtually only textual sources from the press, see Marshall, *Celebrity and Power* [this work has a strong contemporary focus but its investigation of pre-twentieth-century celebrity is purely textual]; Ponce de Leon, *Self-Exposure*; Fred Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). For examples of more recent historical celebrity scholarship that has utilised a diverse array of sources including diaries, fan mail, trinkets, scrapbooks, advertising and photographs, see Boyce, Finnerty, Millim, *Victorian Celebrity Culture and Tennyson’s Circle*; Lilti, *The Invention of Celebrity*; Marcus, *The Drama of Celebrity*. 
Chapter One: Autobiography

Autobiography was one of the central - and final - means by which late-Victorian celebrities acted with initiative, took part in the public conversation about themselves, and attempted to gain control of their own image - both textually and visually. In the face of the Victorian era’s mass communications and the increasing psychological intrusiveness of contemporary biography, the form was utilised primarily as a means of crafting the life-narrative both for the contemporary public and for the reception of posterity. Disturbingly conscious of the free-floating nature of their public identities, as well as the power of intermediaries to impose their own form upon such loose moulds, celebrities utilised autobiography as a pre-emptive strike to construct and assert their life-narrative before mortality took away the opportunity.¹ As part of this attempt to self-define, autobiographers thoroughly embedded themselves within the larger late-Victorian celebrity Society, an exclusive community of the famous. The first section of this chapter will examine the use of the format to self-define in fear of such intermediaries, while the second section will demonstrate how autobiographers were keen to fit themselves into the larger constellation of celebrity culture, thereby inadvertently acting also as third-party intermediaries themselves.

Much of the literature on autobiography has stressed how historical manifestations of the form have continually conversed with shifting notions of selfhood. Linda Anderson’s analysis of autobiography in her comprehensive scholarship traces the history of the form from its inherently spiritual beginnings in early Christianity to its secularisation and formalisation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.² It was this secularisation that caused many to accuse its practitioners of vanity. Robert H. Bell’s investigation of the genre’s popularity in the eighteenth century finds manifestations of autobiographical writing in the works of famous public figures not ostensibly

autobiographical; Laurence Sterne’s novels for instance. Laura Marcus has also noted this fluidity of autobiography; its ability to weave through different genres both factual and non-factual. There has been extensive work on gendered autobiography in the Victorian era, particularly the female experience. Linda H. Peterson, for instance, has examined Victorian-era women who wrote their lives for a reading public and the interaction between the feminine domestic sphere and the masculine public sphere. This strand of public autobiography, the life-writing of famous Victorians presenting their narratives packaged and bound for a reading public that they explicitly addressed, is the focus of this chapter.

However, my conceptualisation of celebrity autobiographies as defensive acts seeking to exert influence over one’s image is not wholly novel. Leo Braudy has argued that eighteenth-century culture introduced the individual to an awareness that his life could be contemplated, defined, and sold. Both Laura Engel and Julia Fawcett, focusing on the eighteenth century, highlighted the autobiographies of Colley Cibber, George Anne Bellamy, and Charlotte Clarke as early archetypes of celebrity autobiographies written in search of image control. Heather Henderson conceptualised Victorian autobiography primarily as an avenue for defending abstract ideas; Cardinal Newman’s Apologia, for instance, being conceptualised as a defence of Catholicism. Lucy Bending has imagined Harriet Martineau’s autobiography as a tool to represent herself in a way that was not

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8 ‘How can,’ Fawcett asks at the start of her work, ‘the modern individual maintain control over his or her self-representation when the whole world seems to be watching?’ See Julia H. Fawcett, Spectacular Disappearances: Celebrity and Privacy, 1696-1801 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016); Laura Engel, Fashioning Celebrity: 18th Century British Actresses and Strategies for Image Making (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011).
infected by the interpretations of others.\textsuperscript{10} Trev Lynn Broughton has - similarly to my view of the form as a statement of individual control - imagined late-Victorian autobiography as a broader social and cultural activity rather than an exclusively literary event, as an act that engaged with contemporary notions of gendered publicity and posterity.\textsuperscript{11} Michael Millgate has examined the immediate final years of Victorian and modernist public figures’ lives (Browning, Tennyson, James, Hardy) for how these individuals - uncomfortably conscious of posterity’s judging glare - shaped their corpus for a public that would outlive them. He labelled such arrangements \textit{testamentary acts}.\textsuperscript{12} In contrast to Millgate, who looked at the comprehensive productions of such figures (including fiction, non-fiction, and poetry), my focus is exclusively on late-Victorian autobiography and covers a far broader array of figures than the four turn-of-the-century men he examined.

The activity of autobiography has both a long and short history. The OED credits Romantic poet Robert Southey with the first recorded usage of the term ‘autobiography’ in 1809.\textsuperscript{13} Yet, the phenomenon of life-writing dates back far earlier. The best place to begin in any discussion of autobiography, argues Linda Anderson, is with Saint Augustine’s \textit{Confessions} (397-400 CE), commonly considered to be the origin of western autobiography.\textsuperscript{14} After Augustine it is somewhat difficult to trace the progress of the form as there is much disagreement over what actually constitutes autobiography. The most common forms of life-writing in this admittedly substantial gap were stories of religious conversions and spiritual inspirations. Most of the authors of medieval autobiographies, for instance, were clerics and there are a few sparse examples of such texts


throughout Europe. The autobiography of fifteenth-century Christian mystic Margery Kempe is the earliest known example of autobiography in the English language. Clearly influenced by Augustine’s example, Kempe traced a spiritual narrative, interweaving discussions of her life with theological ruminations. In this vein, two centuries later John Bunyan wrote his religious autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), with some crediting this as the beginning of the English autobiographical tradition proper.

Despite disagreement over the origin of the practice in English, historians generally concur that it was during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England and on the continent that individuals began to consider their life stories to be potentially valuable to their culture. Peter Briggs has observed how audiences of the eighteenth century were increasingly interested in authors as ‘personalities’ rather than simply as artistic makers. Idiosyncrasies that had gone unreported in an earlier generation were now seized upon as symptoms of personal character. Consequently, by the later-eighteenth century it had become commonplace to assume that readers would be interested in the private lives of public figures. This culminated when Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Confessions* (1782) dramatically secularised the form that had been inherently linked to the religious life since Augustine. Rousseau, instead of following previous spiritual models, ushered in what Linda Anderson viewed as a new model of secular autobiography for the Romantic era, changing the ‘dynamic from a discussion of God... to a confession to the literate public.’ This was a fundamental shift in the intended audience. As Jean Starobinski similarly points out, for Rousseau,

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‘the confession is not for God, but for the human reader who needs a narrative.’\textsuperscript{22} Such an altering of the stated audience led, as will be explored in the first section, to accusations of vanity and egotism.

Rousseau elevated his unashamed honesty to a high virtue, as he rather bombastically stated near the beginning of his \textit{Confessions}: ‘I have resolved on an enterprise which has no precedent, and which, once complete, will have no imitator... the man I shall portray will be myself. Simply myself.’\textsuperscript{23} Though certainly ground-breaking, Rousseau was incorrect to assert that he would have no imitators as British autobiographers a century on would consistently look to him for a template. In the confession of his internal individuality, Rousseau was the first life-writer to draw a distinct line between his public and private selves.\textsuperscript{24} As early as the first preamble to the \textit{Confessions}, Rousseau announced a split: ‘there was a Rousseau in society, and another in seclusion who did not resemble him in the least’\textsuperscript{25} This dividing up of the person into two selves, public and private, and the subsequent humanising fusion of the two elements, is one of the defining characteristics of modern celebrity.\textsuperscript{26} Echoing Antoine Lilti’s assertion that Rousseau was the prototypical celebrity of the modern world, we may understand his \textit{Confessions} to be the first major celebrity autobiography.\textsuperscript{27}

Autobiography quickly gained popularity in early nineteenth-century Britain.\textsuperscript{28} ‘This class of literature has got into such repute within the last year or two,’ a journalist wrote in \textit{The Age} in 1827,

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\item \textsuperscript{24} Elizabeth de Mijolla, \textit{Autobiographical Quests: Augustine, Montaigne, Rousseau, and Wordsworth} (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), p. 83.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Rousseau, \textit{The Confessions}, p. 43.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Leo Braudy, \textit{The Frenzy}, p. 371.
\item \textsuperscript{27} See Antoine Lilti, \textit{The Invention of Celebrity}, transl. Lynn Jeffress (Cambridge: Polity, 2017).
\end{itemize}
'that it may be said to form the principal feature in the lucubrations of the reading part of the community.'

In 1826 publishers John Hunt and Charles Cowden Clarke launched a hugely popular series, entitled *Autobiography: A Collection of the Most Instructive and Amusing Lives Ever Published, Written by the Parties Themselves*, aiming to present ‘a diversified study of the human character’ via the self-constructed lives of the famous. ‘Autobiography is allowed, by common consent, to be one of the most universally agreeable kinds of reading’, asserted a reviewer in *Blackwood’s Magazine* in 1829. One year earlier, evidencing the wish to see renowned figures portray themselves, Thomas Carlyle mused, ‘what would we give for such an autobiography of Shakespeare.’

The market for such intimate texts from the famous had also been fed by the Romantic poets, who had created an appetite amongst the reading public for the exploration of subjective experience.

The Victorian era saw, as Laura Marcus has noted, the autobiographical format utilised in a wide variety of manners. Autobiographical it-narratives (stories featuring inanimate objects as emotive protagonists) were commonplace in periodicals, working-class autobiographies presented a sober take on contemporary life, and criminal autobiographies were serialised in newspapers. Demonstrating such willingness to experiment with the form as an avenue of expression, periodicals held contests on who could write the best autobiography on a given topic. In fiction, popular novels such as Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield* (1850), and George Eliot’s *Mill On the Floss* (1860) were written utilising autobiographical perspectives. Eliza Lynn Linton’s *The Autobiography of Christopher Kirkland* (1885) blurred the line between fictional

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29 *The Age*, February 25, 1827.  
30 Peterson, *Traditions of Victorian*, p. 28.  
31 *Blackwood’s Magazine*, March, 1829.  
34 *Bell’s Life in London*, November 26, 1854; *Liverpool Mercury*, October 26, 1857.  
35 *Boy’s Own Magazine*, March 01, 1861.  
and factual autobiography, addressing themes from the author’s own life in carefully shrouded form.³⁷ Autobiography had become a standard mode of expression in literature.

This was particularly true for this thesis’ central topic - celebrity. ‘Almost everybody’, journalist George Augustus Sala wrote in the introduction to his own memoir in 1895, ‘appears to be burning with the desire to let all the world know what he has been doing from the time of his birth downwards.’³⁸ Seven years earlier The Leeds Mercury had observed:

By this time it has become an accepted part of the nature of things that if any man or woman achieves a certain amount of celebrity the public is to receive, whether it ask it or not, an intimate account of that person’s life and career from the cradle till the moment of finding a ready publisher for the precious manuscript.³⁹

Self-portraiture of the famous had come to be expected as the crescendo of their career.⁴⁰

In making its argument that autobiography granted celebrities a means of self-defining alongside others of contemporary fame, this chapter has consulted fifty celebrity autobiographies published between 1875-1900 as its main source.⁴¹ I distinguish celebrity autobiography from other popular types of autobiography in the Victorian era such as working-class, it-narrative, or spiritual by insisting that the author lived a substantial part of their life in the contemporary public eye, engaged with their own fame in the piece, and - in keeping with the thesis’ broader criteria - were contemporarily referred to as celebrities. Despite the fact that the terms ‘autobiography’, ‘reminiscences’, and ‘memoirs’ are often used to refer to different styles of texts, I am using them synonymously as this correlates to how they were treated in the late-Victorian era (the consequences of this will be explored in the second section).

³⁸ Sala, The life, p. v.
³⁹ The Leeds Mercury, July 26, 1888.
⁴¹ Nine of these memoirs were explicitly edited by third parties, usually a friend or relative. Though there is no direct evidence that the rest had such a corporate construction, it is worth bearing in mind that close associates may have influenced the piece.
For information on individuals, volumes, publishers, dates of publication, and prices from a representative segment of the dataset see Figure 1.1. For a full table of the celebrity autobiographies utilised, see appendix 1. Twenty-seven of the autobiographies were single-volume, twenty consisted of two volumes, one contained five volumes (Augustus J. C. Hare’s *Story of My Life*), and one was only serialised in periodicals in the Victorian era (John Ruskin’s *Praeterita*). While the vast majority of celebrity autobiographies could be purchased outright in a society increasingly able and desirous to own rather than borrow its books, some, such as Matilda Betham-Edwards’ *Reminiscences*, were only originally available through subscription to lending libraries, institutions predominantly patronised by the middle classes. As may be seen, a typical price for a volume of autobiography was between five and fifteen shillings, with two volume works usually priced around thirty shillings in total. Such pricing - since working-class expendable income was between two and three shillings a week - would have generally restricted the audience to the lower middle class and upwards, who earned at least sixty shillings per week or roughly £150 a year. In terms of popularity in the broader market, celebrity autobiography and biography consistently played second fiddle to fiction. The genre was rarely mentioned in the new bestseller lists and was a rarer choice for library borrowers. Yet, as will be explored in the first section, autobiography could be a very profitable enterprise for both publisher and author, as well as granting cultural capital to the associated house.

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42 Ruskin’s autobiography could be purchased by direct application to publisher George Allen for one shilling each from 1885-1889 in twenty-nine intervals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Celebrity</th>
<th>Autobiography</th>
<th>Volumes</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S. C. Hall</td>
<td><em>Retrospect of a Long Life: From 1813-1883</em></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Richard Bentley</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>25s (for 2 vols)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir Archibald Alison</td>
<td><em>Some Account of My Life and Writings</em></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>William Blackwood</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>36s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam Black</td>
<td><em>Memoirs</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Adam and Charles Black</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>5s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Hastings Doyle</td>
<td><em>Reminiscences and Opinions</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Longmans</td>
<td>1886</td>
<td>16s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Powell Frith</td>
<td><em>My Autobiography and Reminiscences</em></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Richard Bentley</td>
<td>1887</td>
<td>30s (for two vols)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Adolphus Trollope</td>
<td><em>What I Remember</em></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Richard Bentley</td>
<td>1887</td>
<td>30s (for 2 vols)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Newton Crosland</td>
<td><em>Landmarks of a Literary Life: 1820-1892</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sampson Low, Martson</td>
<td>1893</td>
<td>7s 6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophia Elizabeth De Morgan</td>
<td><em>Threescore Years and Ten</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Richard Bentley</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td>8s 6d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs John Drew</td>
<td><em>Autobiographical Sketch</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chapman and Hall</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>6d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.1: Information on a representative segment of the dataset used for this chapter
The Terrors of the Intermediary: Textual and Visual Self-Definition

‘The motives under which men are induced to put on record the story of their own lives are various, but for the most part there has place amongst them the wish to vindicate themselves from unmerited aspersion.’

A consequence of an increasingly literate and communicative society was that information regarding public individuals circulated swiftly - leaving many celebrities feeling vulnerable in the midst of seemingly countless third parties. ‘I often have a feeling when reading memoirs [referring to biographies],’ observed a contributor to the 1881 Manchester Courier, ‘that the unfortunate subject of inquiry and discussion would decidedly object to such dissection of his private self, if he could have a voice in the matter.’ The journalist recognised this was a problem specific to the famous: ‘It is a consolation for being an entire nonentity that the world will not be concerned to take possession of and pull one to pieces after one is gone.’ This fear of easily disseminated gossip was made worse by the menacing contemporary imagining of the capricious public mass inherited then most-recently from the Romantics. Indeed, Byron, in the early-nineteenth century, found that the most vexing aspects of negative public opinion was its anonymous nature. Because there was often no clear and distinct originator of the aspersions, Byron was left, as he saw it, without any effective means of redress. His counterpart in controversy of a later era, Oscar Wilde, spoke sneeringly of ‘Public Opinion’ as the organised ignorance of the national community. The opinion of an individual may be attacked and found to be groundless; the indistinct chatter of thousands in an amorphous mass proved more difficult to hammer down.

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46 The Western Daily Press, November 16, 1876.
47 Manchester Courier, September 15, 1881.
Mid-Victorians, such as this 1849 contributor to *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, spoke of the subsequent burden of celebrity, the main fear being the dreaded biographer who was - as will be explored in the next chapter - increasingly interested in the melancholy intimacies of a subject’s life:

The ancients, who lived beyond the reach of the fangs and feelers of the printing press, had, in one respect, a decided advantage over us unlucky moderns. They were not beset by the terrors of biography. No hideous suspicion that, after he was dead and gone... some industrious gossip of his acquaintance would incontinently sit down to the task of laborious compilation and collection of his literary scraps... Under the modern system, we constantly ask ourselves whether it is wise to wish for greatness, and whether total oblivion is not preferable to fame... are we not right then, in holding that, under the present system, celebrity is a thing to be eschewed?

One’s life as a celebrity became yet more subject upon death to the ends of intermediaries. The article goes on to suggest how a celebrity might combat this evil: ‘One mode of escape suggests itself, and we do not hesitate to recommend it. Let every man who underlies the terror of the *peine forte et dure*, compile his own autobiography’. ⁵² A late-Victorian article in *Fraser’s Magazine* repeated this prescription, advising celebrities to ‘provide beforehand against the danger, by leaving behind us something more or less in the shape of an autobiography’. ⁵³

Such careful boxing up of one’s life for posterity was not historically unprecedented. In antiquity Cicero bemoaned the hauntings of futurity; in his ‘letter to posterity’ the fourteenth-century intellectual Petrarch extensively detailed his personal habits, Edward Gibbon vehemently declared that he was the only one qualified to write of his life, and Keats’ poem ‘This Living Hand’, wrote of the terror induced by a posterity one had little control over (that would ‘haunt thy days and chill thy dreaming nights’). ⁵⁴ However, I argue that the Victorian era - because of the developments in information and mediation technology noted in the introduction - made such preparation imperative

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rather than preferable. This was not the familiar fear of being forgotten but the complex fate of being remembered.

Indeed, public figures since the late-eighteenth century, and to the dismay of numerous Romantic figures, had been increasingly personally associated with their work.\textsuperscript{55} A corpus would not simply speak for itself, biographical notes ultimately informed the work produced, giving life-writing third parties significant influence over reputation. Consequently, the biographer was popularly envisioned as a scavenger - ominously reminiscent of the body snatchers of the earlier century - as ‘the insatiable biographer who haunts the graveyards’.\textsuperscript{56} ‘No sooner’, wrote journalist Charles Whibley of biographers, ‘is genius laid upon its bier than the vultures are ready to swoop’.\textsuperscript{57} Adam Black echoed this, utilising the common metaphor of the body snatcher: ‘The possibility of being anatomised, for the benefit of society, after life’s fitful fever, by some cruelly candid friend, may well be regarded as adding unspeakably to the terrors of death.’\textsuperscript{58} When traditional notions of Hell were being questioned, a new secular imagining had arisen.

Decrying such literature, George Augustus Sala observed the perversions of biographers:

Charles Dickens has been dead barely twenty-four years; yet the myths are steadily accumulating on his life-story... the wildest tales have obtained currency touching the youth, the maturity, and the evening of the life of the illustrious novelist. His habits, his appearance, his manners, his character have been presented from twenty diametrically opposite points of view; and I have met, in the course of reading and of conversation with otherwise well-informed persons, so many descriptions of a perfectly unreal Dickens.\textsuperscript{59} John Cordy Jeaffreson recalled the laughs he and his friends had in their London clubs over the many legends that had arisen in the public sphere surrounding them: ‘We were one evening gossiping about the inaccuracy and sheer falsehood of personal histories, when Robert Chambers observed

\textsuperscript{55} Jackson, \textit{Romantic Reputations}, p. 36.
merrily, [sic] “Nae doot biographies are for the most part highly seasoned with romantic inventions”, before going on to read a comically false story about himself in a periodical entering Edinburgh shoeless. \(^{60}\) Michael Millgate has medicalised such turn-of-the-century wariness of having one’s life written, terming it ‘biogrophobia’. \(^{61}\) Alfred Tennyson appears to have suffered from this pathology, remarking in horror on his death bed: ‘The press will have a hold of me now!’\(^{62}\)

Even sympathetic third parties represented a danger. A notorious instance was William Aldis Wright’s life of his friend Edward Fitzgerald, in which a letter of poor taste expressing relief at the death of George Eliot tarnished his posthumous reputation. \(^{63}\) An 1888 piece in The Belfast News-Letter by novelist Ouida (pseudonym of Maria Louise Ramé) entitled ‘The Desecrations of Biography’ echoed this complaint utilising John Dryden’s imagery of the biographical subject as a ‘poor reasonable animal’, a defenceless and naked creature:

> No greater enemy exists for us than our familiar friend when he or she indites memoirs which include us... [it is deplorable that] a friend should strip his corpse almost before it is cold to show here a malformation, there a bruise, yonder a cicatrix telling of concealed disease, and say, by innuendo, if not by statement, ‘here he is naked, a poor creature, you see, a poor creature enough, now that we have hoisted him on the dissecting table’. \(^{64}\)

Thus, autobiography became a corresponding inevitability, as noted by The Pall Mall Gazette in 1892: ‘Now the biographer’s business is gone; he has been driven out of the field by the autobiographer. A man likes to save himself not only from his friends, but for them.’ \(^{65}\) Just as Dorian Gray became his own portrait, uncannily preserving his physical integrity while his temporal self withered elsewhere, so late-Victorian celebrities sought to both portray and preserve themselves to avoid the warping of the intermediary’s pen. \(^{66}\)


\(^{63}\) Waller, Writers, Readers, p. 434.

\(^{64}\) The Belfast News-Letter, December 22, 1888.

\(^{65}\) The Pall Mall Gazette, November 8, 1892.

Direct statements of this defensive intent were common in the preface and introduction. Harriet Martineau hoped ‘this Memoir will discredit all the absurd reports which may yet be connected with my station and my doings in life, in the minds of those who know me only from rumour’. Archibald Alison echoed this notion in third person: ‘[Autobiography is undertaken] So that his memory may not be injured, as is too often the case, after his decease, by the indiscreet zeal of surviving friends, or the injudicious disclosures of partial biographers’. Actress Emily Soldene announced: ‘So many people have asked me, “What made you think of writing?” Self-preservation was my first incentive.’ The primary motive behind the writing of Margaret Oliphant’s autobiography was, in her words, ‘self-defence’. Autobiography, as the 1849 Blackwood’s contributor had suitably prescribed, was the antidote to biogrophobia.

The imperative of autobiography grew as mortality became increasingly tangible. ‘I fancy that I have not long to live,’ wrote journalist John Arthur Roebuck, ‘therefore, if I can leave anything behind me in the shape of a life history, it must be written in haste.’ This intrinsic connection between autobiography and mortality provoked the Daily News, upon hearing that James Payn was struggling to finish his memoirs, to suggest: ‘The autobiographer has only to get three-quarters drowned, and he will be rewarded with a lively flow of reminiscences.’ This need to arrange one’s life-narrative for death in part reflected Victorian ideas of mortality, which, Michael Wheeler has argued, viewed passing not as an end, but as merely a transitive state of passage into posterity.

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72 *Daily News*, December 14, 1883.
Consequently, the autobiography acted as a means of preparing for the passageway down the river Styx, for the metamorphosis from contemporary to posthumous fame – distinctions of renown that can be traced back to the classical era with the writings of Agesilus. Further evidence for this notion can be seen in updated editions. Harriet Martineau, Thomas Adolphus Trollope, William Ballantine, and William Powell Frith all lived longer than expected and thus updated their memoirs with additional volumes while they still had the chance. Martineau, for instance, was informed in the 1850s that she was suffering from a terminal disease, ‘and as soon after my return home as I had settled my business with my Executor, I began this autobiography.’ The celebrity participated in the conversation while they still had a voice.

Critics of such works clearly understood the form as a means of self-defence. ‘Sometimes a man,’ asserted an 1884 *Daily News* piece, ‘takes his life in his own hands and writes his autobiography.’ An 1888 piece in *The Leeds Mercury* observed that against gossip and rumour, ‘celebrities themselves come gallantly to the relief with their own authorised tittle-tattle.’ Both William Powell Frith’s and William Bell Scott’s autobiographies were described as forms of ‘counterblast’ against rumours. The offering of the autobiography as a means of providing to the public an official life-narrative echoed Rousseau’s assertion that the individual was the highest authority on their own life. Indeed, the Rousseauian ideal of autobiography – absolute truth and absolute authority – remained commendable in the late-Victorian era, even if some critics cringed at particularly unseemly revelations. Consequently, the autobiography was viewed as a document of prime authority – certainly more so than the productions of third parties. ‘Numerous “Lives of Garibaldi” have already been published,’ anticipated *The Standard* of Giuseppe Garibaldi’s memoirs, ‘but the

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76 *Daily News*, October 17, 1884.
77 *The Leeds Mercury*, July 26, 1888.
78 *The Pall Mall Gazette*, November 26, 1888; *Glasgow Herald*, November 29, 1892.
79 *The Evening Telegraph*, April 04, 1881. Editions of Samuel Pepys’ diary were similarly praised for their revealing lack of self-consciousness. For instance, see *The Morning Post*, June 25, 1896.
greatest interest will certainly attach to the volume which will be given to the public at the end of the present month... memoirs of Garibaldi written by his own hand.' Celebrities aimed to trump their intermediaries.

This appeal to oneself as the highest authority was ubiquitous within the autobiographies themselves. ‘I have followed Rousseau’s example,’ wrote theatre impresario John Hollingshead, ‘by telling the truth - the truth about myself.’ Though sceptical of Rousseau’s claims of internality, Anthony Trollope made similar claims of presenting the whole unvarnished truth: ‘But this I protest: - That nothing that I shall say shall be untrue. I shall set down naught in malice; nor will I give myself, or others, honour which I do not believe to have been fairly won.’ Painter Philip Gilbert Hamerton claimed, ‘I am the only person in the world who knows enough about my history to give a truthful account of it’, while Martin Tupper - though appreciative of the interest of well-written biography via the author’s own skill as a biographer (such appreciation will be explored in the next chapter) - asserted it was impossible for any ‘(however intimate) friend of a man to do it fairly and fully’. Critics generally agreed with this designation of ultimate first-person authority. ‘The autobiographer has ex officio two qualifications,’ stated an 1881 piece in The Blackburn Standard, ‘He is writing about a topic in which he is keenly interested, and about a topic upon which he is the highest living authority.’ ‘No man,’ concurred The Graphic in 1884, ‘can write a man’s life better than he who has lived it.’ Likewise, an 1890 piece in The Morning Post opined that for all the dangers of egotism and

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80 The Standard, January 18, 1888.
81 Morning Post, June 08, 1895.
82 Anthony Trollope, An Autobiography, 2 vols (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1883), II, p. 2. Trollope’s autobiography was praised for his Rousseau-like frankness in the press. ‘It is the author’s own account of his life and career, written with a frankness and fullness such as few men have ever had the courage to display, and from first to last appealing most powerfully to the sympathies of the reader’. Hampshire Telegraph, October 20, 1883.
84 The Blackburn Standard, April 09, 1881.
85 The Graphic, November 22, 1884.
vanity in autobiography, ‘the autobiographer is often a much better and even a more impartial recorder of his career than any other writer could be.’

Indeed, while granting ultimate authority to the autobiographer, critics - as suggested by the above quotation - were also quick to highlight any possible signs of vanity. ‘Few of us could,’ observed *The Graphic* in 1885 of the uneasiness of autobiographical writing, ‘even if we would, draw our own portraits without something of a pose’. Likewise, comedian George Grossmith lamented that the form was hampered by ‘having to be so egotistical’. Autobiography, a format that had only recently shaken off its theological concerns (the individual’s solitary relationship to God) in order to focus on the self (the individual’s social relationship to the public), seemed nauseatingly vain to many Victorians. Adding to this was the common belief (implicit in hero-worship as explored in the introduction) that truly-merited attention should come passively and without interjection by the individual, as well as the relatively novel use of proper names by authors in the nineteenth century, helping to create an environment which further highlighted the self-promotion inherent in the genre. By granting themselves what Braudy has called pseudo-aristocratic privileges, utilising their proper names, and betraying a belief that they were worthy of presenting their life-narrative ‘before the public’ - as the popular contemporary phrase went - celebrities opened themselves up to calls of vanity.

Reviewing William Bell Scott’s memoirs, the *Daily News* complained of the constant ‘references to the writer’s freedom from the defects which he feels it incumbent on him to point out in his

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86 *The Morning Post*, August 14, 1890.
87 *The Graphic*, February 28, 1885.
friends.’

‘We opened these bulky tomes with a feeling of wonder that so much could be written about any single man,’ wrote The Pall Mall Gazette in 1896 of Augustus J. C. Hare’s five-volume memoirs, ‘we close them with a gentle feeling of pity for a man who can attach so much importance to a life so trivial.’

An 1896 Huddersfield Chronicle piece covering the same memoir labelled it ‘a monument of egotism’. ‘Heavens, what a man!’ noted The Pall Mall Gazette sardonically in 1895 of William Beatty-Kingston’s autobiography, ‘[h]e can be anything and do anything he likes, except - be modest’. Such charges of vanity were particularly biting when applied to women, who were already stretching their ideally domestic role by publishing their life in the public sphere. Self-directed life-narratives of women were more comfortably situated within the ostensibly private diary and the autobiographical novel, causing explicit autobiographers such as Harriet Martineau to be struck by particularly biting charges of pompousness.

Conversely, critics stated when they thought autobiography was justified. An 1888 edition of The Leeds Mercury, after referencing his hugely popular theatrical career, wrote of comedian Richard Corney Grain’s memoirs: ‘He has a perfect right to favour the public with his reminiscences, and to assume that the world will pay for them.’ ‘If ever an autobiography was justified,’ asserted the 1896 Belfast News-Letter of George Augustus Sala’s memoirs, ‘most surely it was that of the great G.A.S.’

Accordingly, autobiographers utilised a number of methods in order to be considered ‘deserving’. As one Daily News journalist observed: ‘A public man, desirous of printing his own memoirs, may nowadays indulge his desire under the shelter of numerous conspicuous precedents without any

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92 Daily News, December 27, 1892.
93 The Pall Mall Gazette, November 11, 1896.
94 The Huddersfield Daily Chronicle, November 12, 1896.
95 The Pall Mall Gazette, November 9, 1895.
98 The Leeds Mercury, July 28, 1888.
99 The Belfast News-Letter, January 9, 1896. Complimentary critics often utilised the phrase ‘unaffected’ in their praise of such autobiographers. For instance, in this review of the autobiography of Mary Cowden-Clarke, Nottinghamshire Guardian, January 22, 1898.
serious impeachment of his modesty.\textsuperscript{100} William Jackson Barry, Mary Cowden-Clarke, Mary Howitt, and Henry Taylor all asserted that their memoirs were reluctantly produced in acquiescence to familial requests.\textsuperscript{101} Charles Godfrey Leland claimed to have written his for self-amusement and as a potential source for a trusted biographer, but only decided to publish it upon being approached by a publisher for a memoir.\textsuperscript{102} Renowned barrister William Ballantine explained the writing of his memoirs as starting from an innocent attempt to avoid boredom.\textsuperscript{103} Mrs Newton Crosland attempted to utilise the third person as much as possible in order to avoid the ‘obtrusive personal pronoun “I”’, while Writer Thomas Adolphus Trollope went as far as denying, in his autobiography, that he had written one: ‘I have no intention of writing an autobiography. There has been nothing in my life which could justify such a pretension... [this publication is] only the small records of an unimportant individual life.’\textsuperscript{104} By observing these justifications I am not implying that they were necessarily made in bad faith; the point is that such qualifications were made at all. Despite autobiography being primarily a form of image-control, it was also, ironically, a method easily capable of reflecting negatively upon the author.

As mentioned, the genre’s association with vanity was inherently tied up with the intended audience of the late-Victorian celebrity; the public. The celebrity who brought their life before the public - imagined as an increasingly homogenous mass as the decades of the nineteenth century progressed - addressed a mainly anonymous body of public rumour thought to have arisen in the

\textsuperscript{100} \textit{Daily News}, November 12, 1884.
\textsuperscript{103} William Ballantine, \textit{Some Experience of a Barrister’s Life}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} edn (London: Richard Bentley, 1883) (Original publication in 1882), pp. 397-398;
Romantic era. Clare Tuite has posited several reasons for the notorious capriciousness of the nineteenth-century public; its inherently self-expanding nature, the mobility and randomness of print culture, rampant sensationalism, and the increasing awareness in mass populations of an ability to affect change. Memoirs faced the challenge of appeasing such an amorphous and novel consumer. Lord Selbourne’s autobiography, for instance, was criticised for being of little interest to members of the public: ‘hardly anyone but a relative or a lawyer can be expected to tackle [it] for pleasure’. This intended mass audience of the reading public - as opposed to the older system of aristocratic patronage - had become explicit by the late-Victorian era. In autobiographical pieces of the late-eighteenth century to the early-nineteenth century, for instance, there were remnants of the older patronage system in which the memoirist prostrated before an aristocratic superior. This supports more recent scholarship that argues patronage continued into the nineteenth century rather than dying out completely in the eighteenth. Indeed, such aristocratic dedications dropped off in frequency very abruptly around the start of the Victorian era, and by the end of the nineteenth century celebrities regularly and explicitly constructed their readers as ‘the public’. As David Finkelstein observed, the emphasis changed ‘from pleasing patrons and elite opinion-makers to pleasing a mass audience’.

Journalist Henry Vizetelly, for instance, asserted that the ‘public will be the best judges whether the author of the following pages was well or ill-advised by partial friends to pen these rambling

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105 See Mary Poovey, Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation 1830-1864 (Berkeley: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Franta, Romanticism, p. 12.
107 Glasgow Herald, December 6, 1898.
108 Waller, Writers, Readers, & Reputations, p. 4.
Fellow journalist Charles Godfrey Leland promised in his first memoir that he would produce a second if it was met with ‘public favour’. Writer Percy Fitzgerald similarly cited the public as his master: ‘The grand moral, which is too often forgotten, is to find out, not what suits yourself, but what suits your public.’ Near the end of his life, pianist Henry Russell wrote warmly in his memoir that the best friends of his life were ‘my dear British public.’ Thomas Adolphus Trollope, upon introducing an additional third volume to his previously two-volume life, justified the continuation partly by insisting that it was demanded by his public:

But the Public has seemed to doubt whether it would live ten years - or at all events, more reasonably, whether my public - the public which has indulgently received the two volumes of old man’s chatter which I have given it - would survive ten years. For, by a tolerably general consensus of its accredited organs, it has said, ‘No! not ten years hence! Now!’ and where is the scribbler, young or old, who ever failed to respond to such a call?

The ubiquitous possessive clause (my public) suggests the paradoxical intimacy of celebrity described by many scholars. In resisting the media they looked to the consumer for support. As previously touched upon, such blanket references to the public as the consumer are reminiscent of early nineteenth-century notions of an unnervingly unspecific aggregate of citizens, yet the actual readers of said autobiographies - the typical purchasers and borrowers of such publications - would have been overwhelmingly lower middle class and upwards, though with an increasing reach into the lower classes by the century’s close.

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Late-Victorian publishers - the most common means by which celebrity autobiographers reached their public - were keen to publish such memoirs and build relationships with public names despite often rocky author-publisher relationships.\footnote{119} Publisher Elliot Stock, in a poem observing the difficult relations between authors (celebrities) and publishers (media), agreed with autobiographers in granting the audience (consumer) the ultimate power: ‘with you, Good Reader, rests his fate alone’.\footnote{120} Indeed, the value of a publication, in the view of an 1897 pamphlet on publisher’s accounts, ‘depends for its value, not altogether on any intrinsic quality, but on the considerations of the public taste’.\footnote{121} The autobiography of a famous name, in a market where most products did not turn a profit, was almost certain to sell.\footnote{122} ‘It would be safe,’ commented publisher S. Squire Sprigge on the attractiveness of famous autobiography, ‘to predict a sale of over 100,000 copies of Lord Beaconsfield’s memoirs in three months if they were produced now or soon.’\footnote{123} The major publishers - Bentley, Blackwood, Longmans, Macmillan, Bradbury and Evans, Chapman and Hall, and Smith, Elder - were, naturally, concerned with cultural as well as financial capital (partly because this is arguably a somewhat artificial distinction).\footnote{124} Association with a well-regarded name brought both. The contemporary phrase for publishers courting such established names was ‘building a list’.\footnote{125} The house of Richard Bentley was particularly known for its efforts to build a roster of celebrity attachments and published ten of the works from this chapter’s sample (the second highest being Blackwood with a distant three).\footnote{126}

\footnote{120} Elliot Stock, *A Publisher’s Playground* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1888), pp. 63-64.
\footnote{122} For example, the autobiography of Anglican priest Samuel Hole went through four editions in the space of only one year. *The Memories of Dean Hole* (London: Edward Arnold, 1893), p. np.
This connection between the author and publisher had been strengthened in the final decades of the century when law courts decreed that publishers could not plead ignorance from any work produced by their author; they were equally credible and liable. Creative connections were clearer in some instances than others. John Ruskin, for instance, had kept in continual consultation with his publisher George Allen throughout the writing of his memoirs. The presence of anticipatory ‘puffs’ in newspapers about upcoming memoirs - such as Blackwood’s advertisement of James Hedderwick’s *Backward Glances* - also demonstrate a close autobiographer-publisher relationship stemming potentially from conception. Others, such as Anthony Trollope and Edmund Yates, finished their autobiography and afterwards sought a lucrative deal with a publisher, the former gaining £1,000 and the latter £500 as up-front payments. Such substantial advances were very unusual and indicative of high demand in an industry that made three-quarters of all its authors make an up-front payment for their own publication. Thus, while being an important tool for a public figure in search of self-definition, the celebrity autobiography was also a lucrative business deal for both author and publisher. This more obvious attraction should not be overlooked.

Finally, in a nation increasingly knowledgeable of the likenesses of its famous, the life-narratives produced by celebrities were - by the late-Victorian era - not merely textual but also visual. Out of the fifty autobiographies consulted in this chapter, thirty-five contained at least one image of the autobiographer. Of these thirty-five portraits, eleven are engravings of paintings, seven are

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129 *The Pall Mall Gazette*, July 18, 1891.
132 ‘The autobiographer has the delight, if he publishes his book during his lifetime, of not only hearing all that others have to say of him, but of pocketing a handsome sum from the sale of his book’. *The Graphic*, November 22, 1884.
134 Thus, roughly seventy percent contained portraits, though this number regards first editions only. Some autobiographies, like Frances Power Cobbe’s, originally did not have a portrait but were later re-issued with
engravings of sketches, sixteen are half-tone reproductions of photographs, and the remaining portrait is the engraving of a coin profile of Percy Fitzgerald.\textsuperscript{135} With the popular metaphors of life-writing revolving around portrait painting, and one contemporary describing autobiography as ‘portraits “painted by themselves”’, the textual and visual were fused in the celebrity life-narrative.\textsuperscript{136} Just as an increasingly information-laden society demanded a corresponding increase in celebrities utilising autobiography as a means of textual control, so did an increasingly visual society demand visual self-presentation. ‘No biography’, asserted an 1873 review of the \textit{Vanity Fair Album}, ‘is complete without a portrait.’\textsuperscript{137}

Like the authority attached to textual autobiography, the images in an autobiography offered the promise of the authentic visual impression of a celebrity that intermediary reproductions could only hint at.\textsuperscript{138} It can be taken that celebrities participated at least to some extent in the choice and placing of these visual representations. This is because they were expected to do so in numerous media outlets covering them pictorially, and because many of the published images had previously been personally owned portraits handed over to the publisher. Henry Viztelly’s portrait, for instance, was a photograph taken almost thirty years earlier for private ownership (Figure 1.2). The sketched portraits of William Bell Scott in his autobiography were drawn by none other than himself (Figures 1.3-1.4). Even in the possible occasions when the publisher may have had more say on the placement of images, as Colleen Denney has noted, the celebrity’s superficially passive act of sitting for a portrait involved in actuality a large amount of choice regarding the taker, the setting, the tone, and the pose.\textsuperscript{139}

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\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Saturday Review}, 22 March, 1873.

\textsuperscript{138} Coombe, \textit{The Cultural Life}, 102.

\textsuperscript{139} Denney, \textit{Women, Portraiture}, p. 7.
\end{flushleft}
Figure 1.2: Personal photograph of Vizetelly that he submitted for inclusion in his autobiography.

Vizetelly, Glances Back, I, p. np.

Figures 1.3-1.4: Sketches of William Bell Scott by himself included in the two volumes of his autobiography.

See Autobiographical Notes of the Life of William Bell Scott, And Notices of his Artistic and Poetic Circle of Friends 1830 to 1882, ed. by W. Minto, 2 Vols (London: James R. Osgood, 1892).
The contemporary concern that life-narratives should be told not just textually but also visually can be seen in re-issues of earlier autobiographies. For instance, An Apology for the Life of Mr Colley Cibber, originally published in 1740, was re-issued in 1889 by John C. Nimmo featuring numerous newly-engraved portraits of Cibber. Indeed, by the late-nineteenth century imagery in published narratives had become central to shaping the cultural imagination. This belief in the ability of the image to thicken a story reflected the contemporary popularity of physiognomy; the practice of assessing a person’s inward traits from their outer appearance which took on almost universal penetration into the Victorian consciousness. The human face was particularly, in the words of Walter Pater, believed to contain ‘the utmost secret, the occult message, from all the phenomena of Life and Being.’ ‘The small portrait fixed to this volume,’ a phrenologically-orientated reviewer noted of George Biddell Airy’s autobiography, ‘gives a good idea of his strong, slightly rugged features, firm mouth, powerful brow, and keen glance, with which his calm and assured method of speaking was completely in keeping.’ Similarly, The Leeds Mercury noted the ‘hale, venerable, and patriarchal face in the photographed frontispiece’.

The importance attached to including such portraits in late-Victorian autobiography represented a century-long shift towards the increasing democratisation and proliferation of the portrait image. Auto/biography and portraiture had developed in tandem through the eighteenth century, culminating in the nineteenth century when technological advancements made image creation and reproduction available to sections of society beyond merely the upper classes. The photograph

140 An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber Written by Himself, ed. by Robert W. Lowe, 2 vols (London: John C. Nimmo, 1889) (Original publication in 1740).
143 Walter Pater, Essays in Fortnightly Review (1869); Cited in Catherine Maxwell, Second Sight: The Visionary Imagination in Late Victorian Literature (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 6.
144 The Standard, November 28, 1896. A critic of Anthony Trollope’s autobiography noted it was ‘adorned by a very successful portrait-etching of the novelist, which adds considerably to the interest of the book’. The Derby Mercury, October 17, 1883.
145 The Leeds Mercury, May 9, 1885.
particularly, in a society increasingly conscious of historicity, was attractive for its seemingly miraculous ability to capture and preserve time - something figures looking to posterity would naturally be interested in. As Richard Le Gallienne remembered of the 1890s: ‘Illustrious presences, now rapidly becoming mythological, walked the streets, visible Immortals’. The uncanny feeling of recognising one’s favourite novelist in a bar, not dissimilar to the way one might cautiously recognise a distant family member, had become an increasingly standard aspect of metropolitan existence.

Late-Victorian society disseminated likenesses in numerous ways. Madame Tussauds’ celebrity wax museums garnered huge popularity in London, pictorial institutions directed at the working class such as the South London Gallery allowed theoretically universal access to famous faces, a growing industry of photographic portrait studios encouraged participation, periodicals emerged devoted primarily to presenting images of public figures, representations of celebrities were aligned with consumer products in order to increase sales, a trend of hanging up the portraits of celebrities as home decorations emerged, and the photographic portraits of public figures were collected by enthusiasts in both carte de visite and cabinet forms. One of the ways in which Mrs Bennet Wyse, the protagonist of Frank Moore’s 1894 novel One Fair Daughter, knew she had achieved celebrity

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was when ‘her portrait had been published in every newspaper.’ It was possible to compare a figure in the flesh to their reproductions. Upon meeting activist John Burns, for example, Arthur Warren stated: "I knew you, John Burns, I knew you. Your photographs are like you.' This common knowledge of famous likenesses gave power to esteemed caricaturists such as Max Beerbohm who both repeated and highlighted distinctive aspects of the celebrity’s frame, while the fad of ‘lightning cartoonists’ - street illustrators who drew virtually any well-known face in under thirty minutes - evidences the knowledge of such likenesses within the lower classes also (Figures 1.5-1.9)."
Figures 1.6-1.7: An 1888 printing of famous likenesses. The consumer can guess the identity and learn the answer on the back.

Taken from an 1888 printing by the company of Thomas White Smith featuring the likenesses of numerous ‘Great Men’, with a legend on the back explaining who was who. Kew National Archives. Ref: COPY 1/392/295

Figures 1.8-1.9: Caricatures of Rudyard Kipling and George Bernard Shaw by Max Beerbohm.

See Max Beerbohm, *Caricatures of Twenty-Five Gentlemen* (London: Leonard Smithers, 1897).
Consequently, as with textual, public figures felt a lack of control in their visual image. An 1893 piece in the *Glasgow Herald* observed of the famous: ‘They are never at ease but perpetually under the kodak’. Indeed, ‘to Kodak’ had become a verb for snatching a portrait. Women’s periodicals ran series assessing the clothing and general appearance of ‘well-known faces’ in Society. Charles Dickens had struggled to enter any public place without being assailed by strangers, Eliza Lynn Linton complained that if she ‘went into a public place, I heard people whisper my name and stare’, and Marie Corelli would avoid metropoles and dress in concealing clothing to keep her likeness little-known. Late-Victorian stage-performer Lydia Thompson wrote a satirical poem about this lack of control:

I’ve been photographed like this,
I’ve been photographed like that,
I’ve been photographed ‘mid falling snow

In a large and furry hat.
I’ve been photograph-ed standing

With my hands behind my back,
But I never have been taken
Like a raving maniac.

The autobiography represented an opportunity to present oneself before the public in exactly the image desired.

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154 *Glasgow Herald*, November 18, 1893.
156 *The Women’s Penny Paper*, February 08, 1890.
As Harry Beegan has noted, the placing of visual reproductions (be they halftones or engravings) in different environments fundamentally alters their meaning. By their placement in an autobiography, images both informed and were informed by the narrative taking place textually. Annie Besant’s autobiography, for instance, included numerous portraits of herself taken at various stages in her life (Figures 1.10-1.11). The images plot a young, meek, and depressed girl developing into a proud, free-thinking, and independent woman. Similarly, William Powell Frith was represented as a generically dressed and seated boy in his first volume, before being portrayed stood up in a dignified manner with art materials in the second (Figures 1.12-1.13). Augustus J. C. Hare, in his notoriously lengthy life, offered an equally exhaustive pictorial history virtually from the cradle to the grave (Figures 1.14-1.19). Theatrical celebrity Emily Soldene was presented both as herself in the frontispiece and subsequently as numerous different characters she played throughout her career (Figures 1.20-1.22). The presence of in-character portraits, as Richard Dyer has observed of twentieth-century film stars, helped stress the reality of the out-of-character portrait. Such inclusions functioned as visual interjections into the conversations surrounding them.


Figures 1.10-1.13: Visual representations showing Besant’s and Frith’s development in their autobiographies.


Figures 1.14-1.19: Cradle to grave images of Augustus J. C. Hare.

Figures 1.20-1.22: Images of Emily Soldene as ‘herself’, and as the various characters she played.

See Soldene, My Theatrical and Musical Recollections.
Though certainly not the sole motive (financial and artistic considerations were far from negligible), both the autobiographies themselves and the larger culture into which they were published envisioned the celebrity memoir as a primarily defensive act. In the face of a frighteningly amorphous and anonymous public, where information could circulate throughout the entire nation within twenty-four hours via newspapers, public figures utilised the autobiographical format as a means of controlling their life-narrative - particularly as the terrifying lack of agency brought on by death approached. Being blessed - or cursed - to be remembered in posterity, the memoir represented a way of talking from the grave, of partaking in the discourse concerning oneself, of shaping the course of one’s legacy. This shaping was not only textual, but visual, with public figures attempting to ensure their physical portrait was not warped along the way. Yet, this concern with the self did not stop memoirists from discussing others.

**Belonging to Celebrity Society**

Despite being primarily a means of self-definition, late-Victorian celebrity memoirs referred almost as much to other famous figures as they did to their author, blurring the distinction between celebrity and intermediary, becoming the very enemy the form was constructed as a defence against. Autobiographers defined their individuality by fitting themselves alongside others in the public eye. Of the fifty autobiographies examined in this chapter, forty-one contained significant social reminiscences of fellow celebrities.162 This commonality led an 1893 piece in the *Freeman’s Journal* to state that celebrity autobiography had become virtually synonymous with ‘reminiscent gossip’.163 Broughton observed this facet of Victorian self-representation: ‘the act of reminiscing

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162 By ‘significant social reminiscences’ I am referring to consistent and usually systematic discussion of other celebrities in social circumstances. The discussion of the philosophical or literary ideas of famous figures, without reference to personal social interaction, are not included.

163 *Freeman’s Journal*, December 25, 1893.
about others was inextricable from the process of remembering the self’.\(^\text{164}\) Accordingly, this section will examine how late-Victorian celebrity autobiographers sought to consolidate and legitimise their own standing - with the memoirist’s natural view towards posterity - by embedding themselves within the larger sphere of celebrity Society existent in the final decades of the nineteenth century.

The inherently corporate nature of celebrity culture across numerous eras has been noted by various scholars.\(^\text{165}\) Richard Schickel, for instance, wrote:

> Among the most visible perquisites of celebrity is access to one’s fellow celebrities... there is a small and seemingly cohesive group of well-known individuals of both sexes, of all ages, of several pleasant, profitable and high public occupations who as a result of success - or anyway notoriety - in their fields share close communal ties with one another at the high centre of public life.\(^\text{166}\)

Peter Briggs goes as far as asserting: ‘one celebrity is a contradiction in terms: celebrities must exist in the plural in order to be socially recognisable, for they acquire whatever meanings they have by implicit reference to one another’.\(^\text{167}\) Indeed, the first usage of the root ‘celebrity’ as a being rather than a status was in the plural when Ralph Waldo Emerson spoke of the ‘celebrities of wealth and fashion’ (1848).\(^\text{168}\) Celebrity has always been a corporate phenomenon.

\(^\text{164}\) Broughton, *Men of Letters*, p. 25. Reginald Auberson noted that late-Victorian celebrity autobiographer always tried to ‘impress the reader with the fact that the writer has never moved in any but what are snobbishly termed the “upper” circles’. *The Nineteen Hundreds* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1922), p. 19.


In the late-Victorian era this community of national celebrities was referred to as Society ‘with a big “S”’.169 This group - closely followed and monitored for gossip by ‘Society Papers’ - was London-centric, busy, and incorporated a wide variety of professions (partly explaining this thesis’ emphasis on celebrities not just in the literary sphere).170 Unlike the overwhelmingly aristocratic and sparse elite society of the earlier century, late-Victorian Society included, as Beatrice Webb observed, a mixed cosmopolitan bag of politicians, military personnel, academics, the ‘racing-set’, artists, reviewers, and entertainers.171 The loose criteria for inclusion, as J. F. C. Harrison sees it, was that the individual must have had some form of power over other people - be it socially, financially, politically, or visually.172 The *North American Review* commented on this eclecticism in 1892:

> London has become the centre of the civilized world... anyone with any pretence to social smartness finds his engagements so numerous that his only way of seeing acquaintances is by inviting them to the house, where, packed together in a hot room, much too small for half their number... [they] try to find enjoyment in the fact that they are in a room with a large number of people more or less interesting and distinguished... in whose existence they never interested themselves till it became the fashion to invite the lions and make them roar.173

Society was hierarchical, self-policing, and competitive. Any individual tainted by controversy or disgrace would be excluded immediately as every member was only the sum of their associations.174 ‘London closed the parenthesis and exhibited him in relations,’ wrote Henry James of his protagonist Neil Paraday upon achieving membership, ‘[i]n this establishment, the animals rub shoulders freely with the spectators and the lions sit down for whole evenings with the lambs.’175 Accordingly, the late-Victorian era was highly concerned with correct social rules, conventions, and skills, as can be

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169 The use of the big ‘S’, a common way of distinguishing what one meant by the common word, used by Grossmith, *A Society Clown*, p. 15.
175 Henry James, *The Death of the Lion*, repr. edn (London: Martin Secker, 1915) (Original publication in 1894), p. 34.
seen by the many self-help publications on the topic. Painters, most notably Walter Wilson and Frank Walton, depicted the parties of this exclusive Society, including many recognisable faces of actual renowned contemporaries - further evidencing the common knowledge of likenesses as discussed in the previous section (Figures 1.23-1.24). Photography studios also captured this group, with companies such as Barraud producing composite photographs of ‘400 Portraits of Celebrities and Society People’ (Figure 1.25).

Figures 1.23-1.24: *The Lawn at Goodwood* (1886) and *The Procession* (1895). The latter features a representation of Oscar Wilde in the famous crowd.

Leonore Davidoff has argued that this late-Victorian Society arose from the shift away from the patronage system, increased geographical mobility, and the centring of social life primarily in private homes. With the residential nature of such a social unit, many famous figures lived in the same areas. Edmund Yates wrote that Frederick Leighton’s ‘neighbourhood is a colony of painters, architects, and musicians.’ Helen C. Black wrote of the home of novelist Jean Middlemas: ‘Nearly every house in Brompton Square is associated with the names of men and women who have left their mark in the history of London, chiefly of those who belonged to the theatrical and musical professions.’ Similarly, Harry How wrote of sculptor Hamo Thornycraft’s garden:

To think of standing in a garden and being able to throw stones - carefully, of course - on to the green lawns of Sir Frederick Leighton, Mr Val Prinsep, R.A., Mr Satts, R.A., Mr Marcus

Stone, R.A., and Mr Colin Hunter, A.R.A., whilst, from the roof of this particular house, those gifted in aiming straight might pitch a pebble amongst the bushes belonging to Mr Burgess, R.A. and Mr Luke Fildes, R.A.180

‘Where one celebrated man sets up his rest,’ concurred Henry Taylor, ‘there will always be other celebrities coming and going.’181 This concentration of celebrity reflected a more general urban concentration of the population by the century’s final decades, prompting the wealthier segments of the populace - of which virtually all celebrities were a part of - to move out to the new middle-class institution of the suburbs.182

Though residentially situated, Society’s home away from home was in the clubs of the capital city, of which there were 200 by the century’s end.183 ‘Clubland’, as this scene was often termed, was populated by a wide cross-section of the male business, professional, and white-collar population (though with modest female penetration by the century’s end).184 The most prestigious institutions were a hive of famous figures.185 These major clubs - of which one had to gain the privilege of being invited by current members - included the Saville, Garrick, Athenium, Lambs, and Savage, who regularly invited the famous of the outer world to give speeches.186 Reminiscers of the late-Victorian era considered it to have been a necessity to join such a club if one wished to achieve success and the protagonist of Arnold Bennett’s A Man from the North (1898) looked excitedly towards these London networks as his key to winning renown.187 Writer Guy Boothy travelled all the way from Australia in order to make connections in the clubs and advance his literary celebrity.188

180 Strand Magazine, July, 1893.
Fitzgerald, John Cordy Jeaffreson, and William Bell Scott, to name but a few examples, reminisced fondly in their memoirs of the excitement and opportunities such spaces offered. Since an individual had to be bureaucratically approved by one’s fellow famous in order to join, membership of a club represented a clear sign that somebody had ‘arrived’.

It was this celebrity Society that autobiographers consistently sought to embed themselves within. Such social reminiscences came in various structures. Thomas Adolphus Trollope, John Cordy Jeaffreson, and William Bell Scott arranged chapters around particular celebrities. Mrs John Drew, John Hollingshead, and William Glover loosely sprinkled their linear narratives with regular anecdotes of their connections with other names. Camilla Toulmin, Samuel Hole, and Frances Power Cobbe arranged their reminiscences of celebrities thematically, dividing them by their occupations (artists, authors, actors). Generally speaking, the remaining memoirs that did not significantly discuss social lives - such as that of John Ruskin and Annie Besant - were more experimental literary pieces. The two autobiographies just named, for instance, focused more on philosophical and literary concerns than social acquaintances.

For the majority that did engage on the topic of celebrity Society, the ability and intention to discuss their eminent fellows - like the desire for self-definition - was usually stated in the introduction. ‘I have met a great many persons,’ stated James Payn, ‘as the phrase goes, “worth knowing,” heard very excellent stories, been regaled with a great deal of wit’. ‘It has been my great good fortune’, Henry Russell wrote, ‘to have met in my time a good number of the greatest

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190 Trollope, What I Remember, I; Jeaffreson, A Book of, I; Autobiographical Notes of the Life of William Bell Scott, II.
192 Crosland, Landmarks; Hole, The Memories of Dean Hole; Life of Francis Power Cobbe by Herself, 2 vols (London: Richard Bentley & Sons, 1894) I.
men and women of the century.' 194 Percy Fitzgerald promised to give his ‘impressions’ of all the famous he had come into contact with throughout his career.195 ‘I have met or seen or corresponded,’ stated Charles Godfrey Leland, ‘with about five hundred of the three thousand set down in “Men of the Time,” and been kindly classed among them.’ 196

Yet, such statements of intent that the wider social life would be discussed, usually given alongside the standard half-apology for engaging with the form, were also a means of deflecting the cries of vanity explored in the previous section. To return to Leland:

The practice of writing real autobiographies is rapidly ceasing in this our age, when it is bad form to be egoistic or to talk about one’s self... Now-a-days we have good gossipy reminiscences of other people, in which the writer remains as unseen as the operator of a Punch exhibition in his schwassel box, while he displays his puppets.197

By making such social references the celebrity could lessen accusations of vanity while consolidating their place within the corporate body of celebrity. William Glover also noticed this phenomenon, stating that the terms ‘memoir’ and ‘reminiscences’ - previously distinct terms referring to discussion of the self and others respectively - had become synonymous in an era keen to avoid excessive public self-concern.198 Critics often appreciated such a blend. Anton Rubenstein, for instance, due to his autobiography’s near-sole emphasis on Society reminiscences, was praised for being ‘the least egotistical of men, since never was an autobiography written which contained less about the autobiographer.’199 Though late-Victorian memoirists resembled Rousseau in their claim to absolute authority, they differed in the more extroverted and social nature of their reminiscences.

As stated, beyond the preface’s standard justification for autobiography, authors differed in how they made such links. While the first volume of Samuel Carter Hall’s memoir saw him remembering

194 Russell, Cheer Boys, pp.6-7.
196 Leland, Memoirs, I, p. vi.
197 Leland, Memoirs, I, p. x.
198 Glover, Reminiscences, pp. 1-2. Roy Pascal has stated that the terms ‘autobiography’, ‘reminiscences’, and ‘memoir’ refer to different types of life-writing, however, these were very much blurred in the late-Victorian era. Design and Truth in Autobiography (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 5.
199 The Morning Post, March 31, 1891.
events from his life, the second volume was devoted almost entirely to third parties. The first three sections of this latter part were recollections of famous authors, artists, and actors. These sections were further bordered into individual celebrities. Hall explained that he met Robert Southey, for instance, at the house of renowned botanist Allan Cunningham, before offering a phrenological investigation of his physical features and describing the house in which Southey lived and died.\footnote{Samuel Carter Hall, \textit{Retrospect of a Long Life}, 2 vols (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1883), II, p. 31.}

The next two sections of this volume were based around place, with recollections of Scottish and Irish celebrities. For instance, in the recollections of Scotland, Hall remembered meeting publisher Robert Chambers, artist William Allan, and author Hugh Miller.\footnote{Hall, \textit{Retrospect}, pp. 279-281.} Matilda Betham-Edwards, who did not neatly separate her own life-narrative from her famous remembrances, vividly described her entrance into Society:

> What a change from the Suffolk village! Instead of farming folks and farming ways, pastoral scenes and a tide of tranquil monotonous existence, the sudden plunge into the intensest [sic] life of London, the life of Letters, Art, and Science! Instead of colloquies upon barley sowing and artificial manuring, wheat threshing and pig feeding, I now enjoyed the historic conversaziones at George Eliot's, the hardly less historic breakfasts of the late Lord Houghton, Madame Bodichon's cosmopolitan gatherings, and how many more rare, delightful and most fruitful experiences!\footnote{Matilda Betham-Edwards, \textit{Reminiscences} (London: George Redway, 1898), pp. 207-208.}

Others, like William Chambers, while avoiding the stiff separation of Hall, crammed their celebrity Society links into more concentrated segments, simply listing off eminent associates:

> From this time, business transactions took me frequently to London, where I enjoyed the acquaintance of Richard Cobden, Sir James Kaye Shuttleworth, Sir James Clark, Dr Neil Arnott, David Roberts, R.A., Douglas Jerrold, Mark Lemon, Charles Knight, the Rev. Sydney Smith, Samuel Rogers, and others. At the house of Sir James Clark, Bart., first in Hanover Street, Hanover Square, and afterwards in Brook Street, I was a frequent visitor. I may say the same thing of the house of Dr Neil Arnott in Bedford Square. At both, there were particularly choice parties, literary and scientific.\footnote{William Chambers, \textit{The Story of A Long and Busy Life} (Edinburgh and London: W. & R. Chambers, 1882), p. 70.}

Such remembrances, as stated, killed two birds with one stone. The celebrity - with their historically curious late-Victorian mix of memoir and reminiscences - was able to put forth their favoured life-
narrative which dodged the egotism of the genre while placing themselves in the constellation of the renowned.

This corporate view of the famous can be traced back to Alexander Pope’s poem ‘Temple of Fame’ (1711) - itself based on Chaucer’s ‘Hall of Fame’ - which described the ‘ranks [that] adorn’d the temple’s outward face’, grouping the noted names of western civilisation together in one communal monument. This collective notion of fame persisted in the late-Victorian era. The funerals of eminent figures were regularly attended by a mass of fellow celebrities whom would be listed in newspaper reports. Westminster Abbey acted as a communal resting place for national public figures, reserving certain spots for particular categories of the renowned, such as Poets’ Corner. The Dictionary of National Biography (1880), Celebrities of the Century (1890), and prosopography more generally aimed to generate comprehensive groups of famous names, with the DNB described as ‘the history of perhaps the most numerous list of celebrities under our name that could be compiled’. Autograph collectors like John Horne organised their specimens by occupations such as ‘Eminent Painters’, ‘Famous Singers’, and ‘Famous Actors.’ Such groupings were also regularly made visually. The Album periodical, for instance, presented portraits of celebrities through categorised series such as ‘In Bookland’ (writers), ‘In Stageland’ (actors), and ‘The Sporting World’ (athletes) (Figures 1.26-1.27). The craze of composite cartes de visite - taking place between the 1860s and 1900s - also organised public names and faces into distinct groups based on occupation

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206 His Son, Alfred Lord Tennyson, II, p. 432.
207 For instances of more general prosopography, see Ernest Daudet, French Celebrities, transl. Francis W. Potter (New York: Frunk & Wagnalls, 1883); Jerom Murch, Biographical Sketches of Bath Celebrities (London: Isaac Pitman & Son, 1893); George Makepeace Trowe, Certain Men of Mark: Studies of Living Celebrities (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1880); The Leeds Mercury, July 11, 1888.
209 As we have seen, autobiographies constructed these same taxonomies. Samuel Hole, for instance, separated his celebrity acquaintances into ‘archers’, ‘artists’, ‘cricketers’, ‘ecclesiastics’, ‘authors’. The Memories of Dean Hole.
and gender (Figures 1.28-1.38). To be a famous individual was to be - literally or figuratively - with other famous individuals. No celebrity was an island.

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Figures 1.26-1.27: Features on celebrities from particular demographics from *The Album*.

Figures 1.28-1.32: Cartes de visite produced between 1860-1880 featuring large quantities of both historical and contemporary collections of celebrities.

All from The National Archives, Kew. Photograph of One Thousand Living and Historical Celebrities. Ref: COPY 1/4/180; Photograph of Many Modern Celebrities. Ref: COPY 1/1/233; Photograph giving portraits of living celebrities. Ref: COPY 1/1/184; Photograph of 53 Celebrities. Ref: COPY 1/1/413; Photographic Portraits of 70 Men, Eminent in Arts, Sciences and the Fine Arts. Ref: COPY 1/14/793.
Figures 1.33-1.38: *Carte de visite* of celebrities organised into taxonomies.

Because of this interconnectivity in autobiography, it was possible to read a memoir in hopes of learning about a third party. The same eminent names cropped up across numerous works, one of the most common references being Charles Dickens. Anthony Trollope recalled working with Dickens in the periodical *Household Words* and quoted many private letters from the novelist, W. P. Frith remembered him and Dickens discussing the trouble of autograph hunters, and William Glover spent a full chapter telling anecdotes about him.\(^{211}\) Another common personage was W. M. Thackeray.\(^ {212}\) John Cordy Jeaffreson remembered an anxious man behind the ‘attractive and winning personality’, Rudolph Lehman recalled discussing *Vanity Fair* with Thackeray in a tavern, and Percy Fitzgerald remembered the jests and amiable sarcasm of the writer.\(^ {213}\) This connection to broader celebrity Society occasionally appeared visually, with ten of the autobiographies from this study (mainly theatrical memoirists) containing images of other public figures. Mrs John Drew’s life, for instance, contained images of Edwin Booth and Fannie Kemble.\(^ {214}\)

Advertisements and puff-pieces often focused more on the third parties discussed in the autobiography than the ostensible subject - the author. An anticipatory piece for Edmund Yates’ autobiography, for example, emphasised how he ‘had known every actor and actress of his time’ and could produce ‘abundant stories and sketches of artists, authors, lawyers and “men of lighting and leading”’.\(^ {215}\) Frances Power Cobbe’s memoir was advertised similarly:

She knew George Eliot, Mrs Somerville, and Fanny Kemble. Among the most interesting men of whom she writes are Walter Savage Landor, and Sir Charles Lyell. Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold, John Stuart Mill, Theodore Parker, Mr Jowett, Mr Gladstone, Lord Shaftsbury, are mentioned, with more or less detail in the forthcoming book.\(^ {216}\)

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\(^ {212}\) Artist Marcus Stone even mocked the ubiquity of such Thackeray anecdotes in an interview with *The Idler*: ‘Some more reminiscences? Did I know Thackeray?’ *The Idler*, July, 1894.


\(^ {214}\) *Autobiographical Sketch of Mrs. John Drew*.

\(^ {215}\) *The Graphic*, October 18, 1884.

\(^ {216}\) *Daily News*, September 5, 1894.
A review of that same book praised these elements: ‘no small part of the merit of the book lies in its faithful portraiture of the society in which she moved... her narrative forms a delightful panorama of notables.’ Willert Beale’s autobiography, also advertised with heavy emphasis on public figure links (Figure 1.39), was praised by a reviewer as he, ‘either as friend or employer, has been brought in contact with most of the artistic and literary celebrities of the last fifty years.’

Indeed, one of the most common features of positive reviews was the appreciation of such reminiscences. ‘The reader will find himself taken into the midst of a varied company,’ wrote The Inverness Courier of James Hedderwick’s memoir, ‘famous editors, literary celebrities, actors, statesmen, artists, inventors, scions of royalty, jostle one another in Dr Hedderwick’s pages.’

‘When it is stated that at least the names of three hundred men and women,’ concurred the Aberdeen Weekly Journal, ‘are spoken of, one must see that Dr Hedderwick’s book must be one of no small interest.’ Vizetelly has much to say that will be most attractive to lovers of gossip of the “Society” class,’ wrote the Birmingham Daily Post of his memoir, ‘It helps us know better than any other work of some famous and very interesting persons who are well worth knowing.’ Ostensibly about Vizetelly, it was regarded also as a leading source on others in his network. Critics, mimicking

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217 The Standard, September 24, 1894. The Leeds Mercury thought Cobbe’s autobiography was ‘marked by little egotism’ largely because of her extensive discussion of famous contemporaries. The Leeds Mercury, September 26, 1894.

218 Review from The Morning Post, December 27, 1890.

219 The Inverness Courier, October 02, 1891.

220 Aberdeen Weekly Journal, October 6, 1891.

221 Birmingham Daily Post, November 17, 1893. [My emphasis]
the exhaustive detail of celebrity funeral reports, often simply listed the notables mentioned: ‘Then follow chapters on,’ noted The Pall Mall Gazette on W. P. Frith’s autobiography, ‘Dickens, Edward Lanseer, Mr. Sala, John Leech, Shirley Brooks - who contributes some capital letters - Mrs. Maxwell, and a host of other interesting people.’

The importance placed upon third parties sometimes overtook interest in the author. ‘It is what the autobiographer says of others’, plainly stated The Pall Mall Gazette of Isaac Pitman’s memoirs, ‘rather than what he says of himself that gives an interest to this book.’ The Cheltenham Looker-on similarly deemed that Matilda Betham-Edwards’ reminiscences were only worth reading because of her friendship with George Eliot, and The Leeds Mercury suggested reading Henry Taylor’s autobiography solely for its authentic portrayals of Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Southey. Human-interest features on public figures frequently utilised these memoirs as sources. The autobiography of Sir William Gregory was quoted in The Newcastle Weekly Courant for its anecdotes of Benjamin Disraeli, W. Beatty-Kingston’s autobiography was referenced for its anecdotes of Bismarck’s daily regime, while Justin McCarthy’s reminiscences were utilised for a discussion of Charles Kean.

Many ostensible reviews, particularly in more provincial newspapers, did little more than repeat celebrity anecdotes from the life. The Huddersfield Daily Chronicle, for instance, spent the bulk of its coverage of The Life and Adventures of George Augustus Sala relaying humorous anecdotes concerning J. L. Toole and J. B. Buckstone.

Such personal discussions of third parties inevitably led to the thing memoirs were intended to quell - controversy. William Bell Scott’s autobiography, for instance, became ‘the chief topic of conversation in literary circles’ and caused ‘much excitement among those who claimed to be

222 The Pall Mall Gazette, November 26, 1888.
223 Speaking of the autobiographer, the review noted, ‘we have to look elsewhere for a description of what he was and what he did’. The Pall Mall Gazette, May 17, 1892.
224 The Cheltenham Looker-on, March 26, 1898; The Leeds Mercury, May 9, 1885.
225 The Newcastle Weekly Courant, November 10, 1894; The Evening Telegraph, December 07, 1895; The Western Times, May 13, 1899.
226 The Huddersfield Daily Chronicle, January 22, 1895.
behind the scenes’ for his gossip of Christina Rossetti, prompting Algernon Charles Swinburne to prepare an article as a ‘counterblast’. Similarly, an 1882 *St James Gazette* piece criticised Archibald Alison’s claim that the Queen had cried upon the autobiographer’s refusal to sit next to her: ‘These are just the sort of stories which, in days so voracious of gossip as ours, are sure to be printed and reprinted all over the country.’ Likewise, Francis Pigou’s *Phases of My Life* was criticised in the 1898 *Pall Mall Gazette* for having misstated some of his stories, citing an incorrect attribution of an incident to the late Archbishop Thomson. By acting as mini-biographies of often many contemporary third parties, autobiographers contributed to the increasingly swift and broad circulation of celebrity information which had prompted many of them to write up their lives initially. Depending upon one’s point of reference, such autobiographies may be framed as either the celebrity or the intermediary, the first-person response or the third-party gossip.

**Conclusion**

The celebrity of the late-Victorian era was in numerous ways unenviable. The preservation of themselves after death - fulfilling Jeremy Bentham’s morbid call for auto-icons earlier in the century - was a mixed blessing. Subjected to intense scrutiny, discussed without their knowledge in private and public institutions across the country, photographed, caricatured, and collected by an increasingly large consumer populace - these public figures were largely helpless against the opinions that an increasingly connected society generated and amplified. The autobiography - a textual and visual narrative of the life deemed official by the supremely authoritative input of the subject’s own hand - was one of the key ways in which celebrities could hope to directly influence the conversation taking place about themselves, both contemporarily and in immediate posterity. With almost every celebrity of the era producing such a statement, the memoir had by the late-Victorian era become the perfectly sculpted crescendo of the life in the public eye. It represented an

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227 *Glasgow Herald*, November 29, 1892.
228 Reproduced in *The Nottingham Evening Post*, December 29, 1882.
229 *The Pall Mall Gazette*, November 9, 1898.
antidote to the terrifying prospect of a public which survived a celebrity, one in which they would have even less of a voice. Yet, as investigated above, autobiographies also ironically functioned as further circulators of gossip.

The next chapter will examine one of the main prompts of autobiography - *biography*. We will investigate how psychologically intrusive such lives were, and how much the biographer came to own the life of the subject for themselves. In looking at how subjects became a part of the life-writer’s corpus (rather than a definitive narrative in-and-of-itself), we can further understand the anxiety of a celebrity culture that would outlive them, an afterlife in which they were not upheld gloriously in the classic posthumous tradition, but subject to the varying interpretations of their public successors who were able and eager to achieve renown themselves. Indeed, this sense of a lack of control underpins the celebrity experience more generally, both contemporarily and historically, provoking the defensive measures of memoirs, appointed biographers, guardedness towards interviewers, and the denial of autograph hunters. The notion of fame - particularly the contemporary hot flash of celebrity fame - as a mixed blessing, a desire best left unfulfilled, can be understood through this notion of subjection to the unrelenting public light of the modern mass media.
Chapter Two: Biography

Victorian biography reflected the individual framed in less conspicuous typeset at least as much as the ostensible subject. In writing the lives of recently deceased celebrities, late-Victorian biographers - the dreaded intermediary of the previous chapter - placed themselves in the spotlight, marking their claim on the interpretation, even ownership, of the public figure’s life-narrative. Thomas Carlyle was not remembered in a vacuum, but as the production, the percolation, the pet of James Anthony Froude. This was doubly troublesome for celebrities fearful of third-party definition as late-nineteenth century biographies - contrary to the established assumption of dull and uncritical panegyrics - were so psychologically intrusive. Life-writers did not shy away from constructing and revealing to readers what John Dryden called, in the preface to his edition of Plutarch, the ‘poor reasonable animal.’ Consequently, Victorian biography spoke to the right of readers to learn such ostensibly classified information, as well as the power of intermediaries to transcend their middle-man status and become celebrities in-and-of themselves.

Victorian biography has acquired the notorious reputation of being, at least in the main, made up of uncritical hagiography. The first section of this chapter will directly challenge this view of the era as a Dark Age between the Boswellian innovations of the eighteenth century and the modernist experiments of the early-twentieth century, demonstrating the unprecedented interest in personable Life of Johnson-style narratives, with an increased emphasis on the socially-withheld internalities of the subject’s private life to a depth that Boswell never reached. This intimate interest was strengthened by both the popularity of the journalistic interview format and the Victorian sense of scientific historicity which stressed the secularity and universality of historical laws that everyone was subject to, even figures as edified as Jesus Christ. The second section of this chapter - in contrast

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to the first which focuses on the treatment of the subject - will focus on the activities and power of the third-party intermediary, the biographer. I will demonstrate how late-Victorian celebrity biographies were self-conscious literary productions not dissimilar to novels in their careful planning and pacing, as much a reflection of the biographer utilising the life as the subject being discussed. Through biography the subject became owned by the author, a part of their broader literary corpus.

Like autobiography, biography has both ancient and modern origins. The western biographical tradition is usually taken to originate with Plutarch’s *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, written between 98 and 125 CE.³ Plutarch marked a clear distinction between his internally focused work and the more externally focused discipline of history:

> I am not writing history but biography, and the most outstanding exploits do not always have the property of revealing the goodness or badness of the agent; often, in fact, a casual action, the odd phrase, or a jest reveals character better than battles involving the loss of thousands upon thousands of lives.⁴

Plutarch’s distinction between biography and history was a dialectic that continually interacted in the forthcoming centuries and one that, I argue, became fused in the Victorian era. As with autobiography, biography becomes difficult to trace through the middle ages. Harold Nicholson views the hagiographical writings of Aldhelm (709 CE) as one of the few clear early examples.⁵ Paeans became the rule for much of the era, usually devoted to successful secular rulers or saints.⁶ This lack of interest in the unique human life-story was caused by the age’s general preoccupation with broad patterns as opposed to individual shapes, archetypes rather than idiosyncrasies.⁷ In the early-modern period, the first biography in English is often taken to be Thomas More’s 1513 *History of King Richard III* which has been credited with bringing a new depth to the biographer’s art through

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³ This is if we ignore ancient ‘ur-biographies’ such as that of Jesus, Socrates and Moses. Hermione Lee, *Biography: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 21. From the beginning, emphasis has been placed on the power of the intermediary in constructing lives. They are Plutarch’s lives.


its use of a great deal more first-hand information than had usually been favoured. In the seventeenth century the word ‘biography’ came into general use - first with Fuller’s use of ‘biographist’ in 1662, then with John Dryden in his 1663 introduction to Plutarch, of ‘biographia, or the history of particular men’s lives’. Biography, by the beginning of the modern era, had begun to be explicitly discussed as a genre.

Samuel Johnson, the subject of James Boswell’s highly-influential biography and a prolific biographer himself, stands, by general consensus, as the most important figure in the development of the genre in eighteenth-century England - and perhaps modern biography more generally. Johnson’s sympathetic and intimate account of the life of Richard Savage, published in 1744, showed that biography - even of somewhat unsavoury and minor figures - could be compelling. The real value of an individual was now to be sought in the ‘minute details of daily life’, those more viable outward social indications of personality and merits. ‘More knowledge may be gained of a man’s character,’ wrote Johnson, ‘by a short conversation with one of his servants, than from a formal and studied narrative, begun with his pedigree, and ended with his funeral.’ This was part of the broader Romantic movement of interest in the individual and their essential uniqueness, particularly in the creative process, with Edward Young’s *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759) asserting that men are born ‘originals,’ that ‘no two faces, no two minds, are just alike.’ Since every man was idiosyncratic, every man was a potential source of novelty. The popularisation of obituary notices in both France and England demonstrated this. Donald A. Stauffer noted this shift of biographical subjects in the eighteenth century from royalty, statesmen, and the clergy to more ‘ordinary’ individuals such as journalists, doctors, and merchants. He argued that this interest was in part

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9 Lee, *Biography*, pp. 33-34.
14 Lilti, *The Invention*, p. 73.
caused by the increased popularity of the novel format with its emphasis on the complex interiority of the character’s psyche, being neither wholly virtuous nor wholly evil.\textsuperscript{15}

Accordingly, Boswell did not present Johnson as a character type, bland Great Man, or stainless saint, but a man with idiosyncrasies and charming imperfections. He intended to make the reader feel that they knew Johnson as well as he knew him, revealing eccentricities such as his ever-present tics (now recognised as Tourette’s syndrome) and foibles, such as his weakness for drink earlier in life, as well as his warm sense of humour. Boswell presented the man in process, the novelistic development of a human life, as he wrote in a letter to Bishop Percy: ‘It appears to me that mine is the best plan of biography that can be conceived; for my readers will, as near as may be, accompany Johnson in his progress, and, as it were, see each scene as it happened.’\textsuperscript{16} This humanisation of a revered figure brought down-to-Earth by reference to their somewhat mundane daily interactions with others is one of the central aspects of celebrity culture, and the \textit{Life of Johnson} may be taken as one of the first major celebrity biographies.\textsuperscript{17} The late-Victorian era would pierce further into the interiority of biographical subjects, beyond this preoccupation with social conviviality.

Yet the popularity of the Boswellian method of social intimacy with the subject and the careful transcriptions of ostensibly private conversations caused much concern for those fearful of biographers. As a certain Mr Vicesimus Knox wrote near the end of the eighteenth century:

\begin{quote}
Biography is every day descending from its dignity. Instead of an instructive recital, it is becoming an instrument to the mere gratification of an impertinent, not to say malignant, curiosity... I am apprehensive that the custom of exposing the nakedness of eminent men of every type will have an unfavourable influence on virtue. It may teach men to fear celebrity.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} For other early celebrity biographies, see James Currie, \textit{The Life and Works of Robert Burns}, 4 vols (Edinburgh: Macredie, Skelly, and Muckersy, 1815); J. G. Lockhart, \textit{Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott}, 7 vols (Edinburgh: Robert Cardell, 1837).
Similarly, The Morning Post wrote of Boswell’s 1785 preview to his Life of Johnson, The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides: ‘Had Dr. Johnson been blessed with the gift of second-sight, how it would have tortured him to have known the base advantages which have been taken of his celebrity to make money.’¹⁹ Many wished for a return to the older, more impersonal and reverential forms of biography.²⁰ Into the early-nineteenth century, public figures of the Romantic tradition such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge were horrified that contemporary life had supposedly become ‘the age of personality’ and deplored ‘this mania of busying ourselves with the names of others’. He declared it a crime to ‘introduce the spirit of vulgar scandal and personal inquietude into the Closet and the Library.’²¹ Likewise, in 1816 Wordsworth complained that the Life of Johnson ‘had broken through many pre-existing delicacies, and afforded the British public an opportunity of acquiring experience, which before it had happily wanted’.²² To ‘boswellize’ became a standard term for a number of biographical practices such as the minute recording of conversations and stated views. Thomas Love Peacock described Byron as, ‘haunted in his retirement by varieties of the small Boswell’.²³ Boswell was blamed for a loss of prelapsarian innocence. The previous sanctity of the metaphysical dressing room had been violated.²⁴

Partly from such early-nineteenth century concerns, the Victorian era is notorious - at least among non-specialists - for being a time of repression and regression in biography. ‘How delicate, how decent is English biography,’ remarked Thomas Carlyle sardonically, ‘bless its mealy mouth.’²⁵

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²² Wordsworth’s Literary Criticism, p. 208; Cited in Reed, English Biography in the Early Nineteenth Century, p. 130.
Scholars have expressed similar views. John Garraty insisted that the Victorian era was one of reversion to the old medieval biographical tradition of bland types, Paul Murray Kendall argued that the era’s biography found expression through fiction rather than non-fiction because of restrictive social mores, A. O. J. Cockshut perceived a persistent attempt to establish semi-divine heroism in biography throughout the age, and Harold Nicholson dates the downfall of the biographical format in the nineteenth century from 1844, the year in which Arthur Stanley published his hagiographical *Life of Arnold*.26

However, this stereotype has been challenged more recently by scholars specialising in the century’s life-writing. In 2010 Juliette Atkinson placed the blame for the relative paucity of work on Victorian biography largely on the criticisms from modernists such as Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey, who derided the biography of the preceding era as dull, preachy, and unduly reverential. Contrary to such perceptions, Atkinson highlighted the popular interest in ‘hidden’ and obscure lives, the biographies of missionaries, clergymen, surgeons, schoolmasters, temperance workers, and other such comparatively mundane roles.27 Similarly, envisioning biography as the more intimate sister genre of history (a connection I myself will explore), Barbara Caine has emphasised the intense interiority of Victorian biography, particularly through the notable examples of Gaskell’s life of Charlotte Brontë and Froude’s life of Carlyle.28 Building on the revisionist insights of these two scholars, this chapter will demonstrate both how late-Victorian biography actually went further than Boswell ever did in investigating the ‘domestick privacies’, as well as how aware contemporaries were of the genre being a contrived production, a reflection of the intermediary as much as the subject.29

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27 See Atkinson, Victorian Biography.
28 See Barbara Caine, Biography and History (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
29 Johnson, The Rambler, No. 60.
This chapter has consulted seventy-six celebrity biographies published between 1875-1900 (see appendix 2 for a full table of the celebrity biographies utilised), numerous lives from earlier Victorian decades for contextual discussion, as well as the *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB) begun in 1880 as its primary dataset. Many of these celebrity biographies were identified using Peter Bell’s *Victorian Biography: A Checklist of Contemporary Biographies of British Men and Women Dying Between 1851 and 1901* (1993). I have included both genders (fourteen women and sixty-two men) and the occupations of the subjects are deliberately wide-ranging (covering clergymen, journalists, novelists, actors, explorers, and more) in keeping with the survey emphasis of this thesis and in

![Figure 2.1: Many celebrities were involved in a few different occupations but I have listed them under the role that most brought them fame. ‘Writer’, as opposed to novelist or poet, refers to individuals who produced well-known works of numerous genres that are thus difficult to assign to one speciality.](image)

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30 Bell’s compilation features roughly 2,500 biographies published on subjects that died between 1851 and 1901. Many of those included are public figures - and I have focused on the most contemporarily renowned of these - but there are also more obscure lives such as Juliette Atkinson discussed (e.g. late children, ministers, working-class labourers, tradesmen and professionals). In contrast to such ‘hidden’ lives, my interest is solely on the publicly visible and my dataset is, I hold, representative of late-Victorian celebrity biography if not entirely exhaustive.

31 To be more specific is to get into the difficult area of empirically quantifying fame, which can be an enormously time-consuming exercise, as evidenced by Earl Blackwell’s and Cleveland Amory’s 1959 International Celebrity Register which literally weighed the press clipping related to each celebrity. Charles J. Ponce De Leon, *Self Exposure: Human-Interest Journalism and the Emergence of Celebrity in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), p. 11.
Yet, we need to be conscious of the numerous subtle distinctions between varieties of celebrity biography - the subgenre this chapter is interested in. Whether the piece was written by a close friend or stranger, was motivated by personal reasons or a publisher’s commission, affected the biography produced and its life in the market. These differences can, for analytical purposes, separate the subgenre into two broad groups - interim and official.\textsuperscript{32} Lives produced swiftly by publisher-commissioned, professional biographers for overtly commercial reasons have been called ‘interim biographies’ by Helena Langford.\textsuperscript{33} Many such interim biographers were jobbing writers with management agents and no personal connection to the subject in an increasingly regulated labour force that rejected the gentlemanly anti-professionalism of Johnson’s day.\textsuperscript{34} They aimed to fulfil a need in the market not met by a more lengthy, expensive, and time-consuming definitive life - hence ‘interim’. The new demographic of readers - the intended audience of interim biographies - had been appealed to in similar ways by publishers like George Newnes with his \textit{Penny Library of Famous Books} and Henry Morley’s \textit{Universal Library}.\textsuperscript{35} The objective was, in the terminology of David McKitterick, to stock the poor man’s library.\textsuperscript{36} Though, as noted in the previous chapter, non-fiction always came behind fiction in sales and borrowing throughout the Victorian era.

Publishers of such works were often not the established names (Bentley, Longmans, Sampson Low) which produced official biographies, but often more specialist, miscellaneous, and recently formed houses (Walter Scott, Elliot Stock, Houlston). Unlike official biographers such as Froude, who - as premium clients - were paid in royalties (implying ownership of the life), commissioned

\textsuperscript{32} The distinction between ‘interim’ and ‘official’ is not meant to be a strict categorical one, merely a general guideline for distinguishing the kinds of celebrity biography produced.
biographers would have been paid in lump sums. Additionally, these works usually lacked the melancholic intimacy of the official biographies (to be explored in the first section), taking a more externally focused approach using publicly available sources such as newspapers rather than previously unpublished correspondence. Howard Angus Kennedy, in his interim biography of Professor Blackie (subtitled a ‘Popular Life’ in newspaper notices), explicitly advertised that his was the cheaper alternative for the many while mentioning the bulkier and more authoritative life by name:

This is a small book about a great man. A biography not indeed complete... Miss Anna Stoddart has produced, from plentiful stores of authoritative information, a work to which I hope many readers of these pages may be induced to turn. Indeed, it is not for those who can obtain the larger work that the smaller has been written, but for the many who cannot.

Likewise, Barnett Smith, in his life of Victor Hugo explicitly aimed for ‘a rapid and popular sketch of the great man dashed off to satisfy a temporary craving of the public to know something of so distinguished a personality.’

The intended audience of these interim biographies, as mentioned, were lower down the social scale, the working and lower middle classes (the latter understood as new white-collar salaried occupations such as school teachers and commercial travellers). Mark Pattinson, for instance, claimed that his life of Milton was written for ‘a different class of readers’, those ‘who cannot afford to know more of Milton than can be told in some two hundred and fifty pages.’ This slim volume sold for a mere two-shillings-six-pence while David Masson’s mammoth six-volume life of Milton

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40 *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, February 25, 1886. [My emphasis]
42 *The Examiner*, February 14, 1880.
sold for twenty-one-shillings per volume.\textsuperscript{43} G. T. Bettany’s life of Charles Darwin - said to have been ‘produced for those without too much leisure’ - sold at one shilling, far cheaper than the official three-volume biography by Darwin’s son which sold for twenty-seven shillings in total.\textsuperscript{44} Likewise, Edward Jennings was commissioned by a publisher to swiftly produce a life of Tennyson which sold at one-shilling-six-pence, while the official two-volume biography of Tennyson written by his son and published in 1899 sold for ten-shillings per volume (Figures 2.2-2.3).\textsuperscript{45} These cheaper interim works would have been affordable for many in the working class - whose weekly expendable income after alcohol and tobacco has been reckoned to be between two and three shillings a week\textsuperscript{46} - and eminently so for the lower middle classes whose weekly income, as already noted, has been very roughly estimated to be at least sixty shillings.\textsuperscript{47}

Thus, celebrity biography by the late-Victorian era was an increasingly transparent money-making exercise for both biographers and publishers, particularly with the dramatic increase in literacy rates and purchasing power of the British population. This is not to suggest that profit had been a secondary consideration prior to this period, merely that commercialism had become a far more overt and pronounced motive. In the context of the broader late-Victorian debate about the purpose of published writing, interim biographers would have sided with the likes of Walter Besant who saw literature as a trade, whereas official biographers would have sided with Henry James in viewing their work more as an artistic vocation.\textsuperscript{48} With this clarification of the late-Victorian market for celebrity biography having established the differing ‘levels’ of lives that were published, we will now discuss the treatment of the subject.

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{The Pall Mall Gazette}, January 9, 1880; \textit{The Pall Mall Gazette}, April 8, 1881.
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Sheffield & Rotherham Independent}, August 11, 1887; \textit{Glasgow Herald}, December 23, 1887.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{The Inverness Courier}, March 27, 1891; \textit{The Standard}, December 01, 1899.
\textsuperscript{48} Cross, \textit{The Common Writer}, pp. 204-205.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official Celebrity Biographies</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Price (per vol)</th>
<th>Volumes</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frederic John Goldsmith, <em>James Outram: A Biography</em></td>
<td>Smith, Elder &amp; Co.</td>
<td>16s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1880</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alfred Henry Huth, <em>The Life and Writings of Henry Thomas Buckle</em></td>
<td>Sampson, Low &amp; Marston</td>
<td>16s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaric Alfred Watts, <em>Alaric Watts</em></td>
<td>Richard Bentley</td>
<td>12s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Bulwer, <em>The Life ... of Edward Bulwer</em></td>
<td>Kegan Paul, Trench &amp; Co.</td>
<td>16s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compton Reade, <em>Charles Reade</em></td>
<td>Chapman Hall</td>
<td>12s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Oliphant, <em>The Life of Laurence Oliphant</em></td>
<td>William Blackwood</td>
<td>11s 6d</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1891</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alfred Thomas Story, <em>The Life of John Linnell</em></td>
<td>Richard Bentley</td>
<td>14s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1892</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbot &amp; Campbell, <em>Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett</em></td>
<td>John Murray</td>
<td>16s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1897</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas Edgar Pemberton, <em>A Memoir of Edward Askew Sothern</em></td>
<td>Richard Bentley</td>
<td>16s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1899</td>
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<tr>
<td>John William Mackail, <em>The Life of William Morriess</em></td>
<td>Longman</td>
<td>16s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1899</td>
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Figures 2.2-2.3: Tables to compare the publisher, volume quantity, and prices of official biographies to interim biographies. Prices are taken from contemporary newspaper advertisements of the works. Note how the definitive article ‘The Life’ is more common in official biography and how terms like ‘recollections’ or ‘sketches’ are often utilised in interim biography.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interim Celebrity Biographies</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Volumes</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mark Pattison, <em>Life of John Milton</em></td>
<td>Macmillan</td>
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<td>John Wellwood, <em>Norman MacLeod</em></td>
<td>Oliphant, Anderson &amp; Ferrier</td>
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<td>John Ritchie Findlay, <em>Personal Recollections of De Quincey</em></td>
<td>Adam and Charles Black</td>
<td>4s 6d</td>
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<td>G. T. Bettany, <em>Life of Charles Darwin</em></td>
<td>Walter Scott</td>
<td>1s</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edward Jennings, <em>Tennyson: A Biographical Sketch</em></td>
<td>Chatto &amp; Windus</td>
<td>1s 6d</td>
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<td>Arthur Wollaston Hutton, <em>Cardinal Manning</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>G. Barnett Smith, <em>General Gordon: Christian Soldier and Hero</em></td>
<td>S. W. Partridge</td>
<td>1s 6d</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1896</td>
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<td>Howard Angus Kennedy, <em>Professor Blackie: A Biographical Sketch</em></td>
<td>James Clarke</td>
<td>3s 6d</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Arthur Lawrence, <em>Sir Arthur Sullivan: Life Story</em></td>
<td>Duffield</td>
<td>6s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa Newmarch, <em>Tchaicovsky: His Life and Work</em></td>
<td>Grant Richards</td>
<td>6s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Intimacy, Secret Melancholy, and Historicisation

‘Formerly we used to canonize our great men, now-a-days we vulgarize them.’

The complaints of the Romantic poets regarding intrusive biography and the ‘age of personality’ still rang in the ears of the Victorians. The most notorious instance of such controversy was James Anthony Froude’s Life of Thomas Carlyle in 1882. Objections came from both the Carlyle family and the public that Froude had not used his stewardship as Carlyle’s chosen biographer correctly.

Reacting to what she saw as the most notorious ‘biographical betrayal’ of the era, fellow famed-biographer Margaret Oliphant published an article in The Contemporary Review - since much quoted in order to evidence the supposed Victorian antipathy towards intimate biography - entitled ‘The Ethics of Biography’, arguing that:

To bring a man, who has lived in the common daylight without reproach during the course of his life, to the bar of the world’s opinion after his death, is in itself a painful act... the dead have no such safeguard [as the living]; they have no longer any privacy; their very hearts, like their desks and private drawers and cabinets, can be ransacked for evidence to their disadvantage.

Besides echoing the complaints of posterity-fearing celebrities discussed in the last chapter, such an instance of moralistic concern is why Robert Gittings felt justified in labelling Victorian biography an ‘art of concealment.’ Yet such a stance ignores the wealth of more complex biography and the common distaste for hagiography in the late-Victorian era. Accordingly, this section will make a case for the notion that the final decades of the nineteenth century actually saw a considerable desire for candid, interiorly-focused biography, motivated primarily by unprecedented interest in Boswellian biographical methods, developments in fiction and styles of reading, as well as a new ‘scientific’ sense of historicity that shaped approaches to life-writing. The late Victorians made biography more

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49 *The Pall Mall Gazette*, April 18, 1887.
52 Gittings, *The Nature of Biography*, p. 35.
psychologically intrusive than it had ever been and the defensiveness of those in the public eye becomes thereby more understandable.

The aforementioned Froude - perhaps the emblematic biographer of the late-Victorian era - rallied against simplistic approaches to lives: ‘The biographies of the great men of the past... are generally useless. They are idle and incredible panegyrics, with features drawn without shadows; false, conventional, and worthless.’ Froude was not alone amongst his peers in a desire for such a complex portrayal. ‘If we write biographies,’ Alfred Storey, the biographer of John Linnell, asserted, ‘we should at least write them truly and boldly,’ condemning ‘false portraiture’ that softened ‘down harsh features’. ‘Excessive eulogy is another serious defect,’ concurred an 1894 piece in The Morning Post on the pitfalls of biography-writing, ‘[i]t is absurd to write of men of exceptional abilities either as if they were or ought to be entirely devoid of the ordinary weakness of their race.’ Editor of the DNB Leslie Stephen - counterpoint of Froude in being perhaps the definitive prosopographer of the era - stressed the necessity of including unsavoury details: ‘A man's infirmities are, after all, part of him; they cannot be put aside like his coat or his shoes; and very often they suggest the only excuse for his shortcomings.’ Antagonism towards simplistic portrayals of subjects often went hand-in-hand with praise for Boswell’s Life of Johnson, which reached a popularity it had never before attained in the final decades of the nineteenth century.

An 1895 piece, for instance, in The Yorkshire Evening Post wrote of Boswell’s magnum opus:

It is a wonderful book - almost the most wonderful book ever written; witty, wise, entertaining, grave, pathetic and realistic. The building up of small details, so industriously garnered by Boswell and seemingly trivial in themselves, resulted in a monumental work which has revealed to us the true disposition of Johnson.

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55 The Morning Post, June 14, 1894.
57 The Yorkshire Evening Post, May 20, 1895.
Similarly, an 1888 contributor to The Western Daily Press stressed his view that Boswell remained the undefeated king of biographers.\textsuperscript{58} Biographers often referenced Boswell’s paradigm-shifting methods in tones of childlike awe and the opus was included as one of the must-read non-fictional texts by James Baldwin in his 1886 prescription for book-lovers.\textsuperscript{59} Lionel Tollemache, in his 1898 Talks with Gladstone, explicitly wished to imitate the master of conversational transcription from a century earlier.\textsuperscript{60} The Life of Johnson was consistently re-published with numerous editors hotly debating the correct approach.\textsuperscript{61} Critics such as Thomas Babington Macauley and Percy Fitzgerald raged with indignation when they felt editors had misrepresented Boswell’s masterpiece.\textsuperscript{62} A late-Victorian biographer of Boswell claimed that his life of Johnson had been ‘merely a work of entertainment’ upon release in 1791, and ‘not until some fifty years had passed over, was it accepted seriously as a really great book’.\textsuperscript{63} Boswell’s Life of Johnson - though a production of the late-eighteenth century - found its most sympathetic reception in the Victorian era.

With Boswell’s candidness held aloft, it is perhaps unsurprising that one of the most striking commonalities of interest in late-Victorian biography is the conspicuous presence of melancholy - usually private, secretive melancholy. The biographer of poet and journalist Alaric Watts, for instance, spoke of his subject’s mercurial moods, particularly his capacity for irascibility and insecurity in social scenarios, explaining this peculiarity in extreme detail:

> This irritability of temperament had in it a quality of periodicity linking it, as it seems to me on looking back, with some obscure form of disease more or less akin to hysteria. Its processes would be pretty much in this wise. All would be bright and well with him, and no

\textsuperscript{58} The Western Daily Press, November 27, 1888.


\textsuperscript{60} See Lionel A. Tollemache, Talks with Gladstone (London: Edward Arnold, 1898).


cloud visible on the horizon, when a very nice observer might remark as strange, so slight an
indication as to be scarcely a degree removed from the unnoticeable, of a look at things on
his part as it were aslant, or askew, instead of, as usual with him, directly and distinctly to
the point. A getting hold of the wrong end of the stick, so to speak, on some unimportant
matter that might form the subject of casual conversation in his domestic circle.⁶⁴

The minuteness of the above description is striking; Watts’ uneven temperament was dissected in
almost clinical detail by his biographer-son. Charles Reade’s biographers (both also familial relations)
noted his bitterness from his long bachelorhood enforced by his Oxford fellowship: ‘He was the
victim of the Cloister, if ever man was.’⁶⁵ Similarly, Evelyn Abbott and Lewis Campbell used a lot of
ink investigating the reasons for Benjamin Jowett’s end-of-life melancholia, putting it down largely
to his sense of professional failure arisen from perfectionism as well as personal loneliness.⁶⁶ William
Gibson Lockhart was similarly shown to have suffered from fitful appearances of the ‘Black Dog’
throughout his life.⁶⁷ Melancholia was near-ubiquitous in late-nineteenth century celebrity lives.

Many authors posited that their celebrity’s inner sufferings may not have been visible to social
acquaintances. This interest in the solitary internal life, in the lonely subject separate from their
larger network, reflected a broader developing sense of internalised selfhood understood to be a
product of a unique personal history.⁶⁸ Indeed, from mid-century onwards, the human mind was
conceived less as a barren space of discrete sense impressions and more as a colourful scene of life
in itself.⁶⁹ This was particularly true in the case of psychic illness, with Susan Sontag identifying
suffering in nineteenth-century discourse as a state that indicated that an individual was ‘more
conscious, more complex psychologically’.⁷⁰ This emphasis on the subjective psychological
experience was further hardened by the solipsistic aesthetes of the 1890s, for whom nothing existed

⁶⁴ His Son, Alaric Alfred Watts, Alaric Watts: A Narrative of His Life, 2 vols (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1884), II, pp. 77-78.
outside of such internal flushes. Biographical interiority also reflected Victorian criticisms of eighteenth-century fictional characterisation, which, in the eyes of the likes of Charlotte Brontë, focused too much on the superficial exteriors, ignoring 'the human heart.' Much late-Victorian realist fiction, spearheaded by the imports of Émile Zola in an increasingly formalised international market, pushed this interest in interiority - particularly depressive interiority - further, forcing some to complain that such works had put an 'end to reticence.' The academic discipline of psychology, though it had begun to establish itself by the end of the century, remained unformalised and very much open to lay discourse from the likes of such writers. Another contributing factor may have been the increased privacy, domesticity, and silence of the act of reading in the century’s later decades, contrasting with the practice of reading texts out loud and discussing them socially which had remained common until the mid-nineteenth century. A text intended to be consumed silently - even in the solitary night thanks to the popularity of the paraffin lamp from the 1870s onwards - and held in the caverns of the skull is naturally predisposed to exploring such arenas. Boswell retold the charming conversations of his subject, biographers a century later attempted to grasp at the cognitions behind such social performance.

This Victorian discourse of duality between the social and asocial self was particularly prominent after 1880 in which the popular and academic literature of psychopathology posited the existence of

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two fundamental selves - represented most famously in the literary form by Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). Along these lines, founder of the Society for Psychical Research, Frederick W. H. Myers, stressed the multifaceted nature of human personality, postulating in 1886 the existence of the subliminal self; the portion of an individual’s personality that lies beyond the reach of their awareness. This split between selves tied into contemporary notions of the domestic home and the competitive urbanity of public life. Most of the descriptions of secret melancholy referenced took place in the celebrity’s home, with the front door to the street closed, safe in what John Tosh called the ‘peace, seclusion and refuge’ of the middle-class home to take off their social mask. The fact that biographers aimed to present this domestic reality of the celebrity not only contradicts the common scholarly assumption that Victorian biography lacked psychological depth but also suggests a belief that readers had a right to know about the domestic interior, both psychologically and spatially.

Indeed, like the contemporary journalistic interviewer to be explored in the next chapter, biographers sought to peek beyond the celebrity’s social façade. ‘Though this happier side of [James] Thomson’s nature is well worthy of attention,’ wrote the poet’s biographer of his hidden misery, ‘it must not be forgotten that the gloomy side existed also, however little he might let it appear in his manner or conversation.’ Likewise, Annie Coghill, editor of Margaret Oliphant’s autobiography, wrote in the lengthy introduction to that work: ‘Whatever sufferings might be lying in wait to seize upon her solitary hours, there was almost always a pleasant welcome and talk of the very best to be

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81 For an explicit discussion of the Victorian era’s supposed lack of psychological depth in biography (that this chapter obviously denies), see Arthur Pollard, *Mrs Gaskell: Novelist and Biographer* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1965), p. 146.
found in her modest drawing-room."\(^{83}\) Clement Scott and Cecil Howard, in their biography of
dramatist Edward Blanchard, made a similar claim to authority on the subject, beyond what even the
closest friends knew:

Few people will be more astonished at the details of the busy, painstaking, perplexing,
honourable, and affectionate life contained in these interesting pages, than the most
intimate friends of Edward Litt Leman Blanchard. I claim to be one of them. I knew him
intimately, from the time that I changed from boyhood to manhood until the hour of his
death. I was for many years his constant companion in business and in pleasure also... I am
certain at any rate of this, that I did not know the suffering man. I did not know what intense
disappointment and perplexity he was concealing under the mask of his sunny garrulity. I did
not see the fox gnawing at the vitals of this brave and honest gentleman... His heart might
bleed when at work in his own lonely chambers; but he did not bring his misery outside his
own street door.\(^{84}\)

H. Sutherland Edwards, despite being a good friend of Tennyson, admitted to reading the life of him
in order to find out his true emotions beneath the pleasantries.\(^{85}\) Paula Backscheider commented on
this tendency of the modern biographer to feel a paramount sense of intimacy with their subject:
‘they become closer than mother, wife, school friend; they see through the subject’s eyes, try to feel
exactly what hurt about each painful event.’\(^{86}\) The reader, by extension, is invited into this
paradoxical club of open secrets by the biographer, of intimacy denied to close friends but open to
the public. Such a relationship between celebrity and public only became widely possible in the mass
communication and mediation of the late-Victorian era.

Critics were highly appreciative of being invited into this club. A reviewer of a life of Bishop
Wilberforce by the subject’s son observed that he ‘has revealed Wilberforce to us in a character so
mean and contemptible that we question whether his reputation for true greatness is worth a
week’s purchase.’ Like in the above examples, the reader is granted an unflattering and
curmudgeonly view of the subject that ‘he concealed even from his intimate friends’.\(^{87}\) Likewise, a

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\(^{83}\) *The Autobiography and Letters of Mrs M. O. W. Oliphant*, ed. by Annie Coghill (Edinburgh and London:


\(^{87}\) *The Pall Mall Gazette*, December 22, 1882.
reviewer of Samuel Longfellow’s life of his father Henry Longfellow presented a more sombre subject than was popularly perceived, particularly in the revealed private journals in which the contributor saw more profound work than was ever published: ‘He put none of his sorrow into song. In his journal recur here and there fragments of a greater poet, of the poem which is the comfort of the world.’\(^{88}\) Most biographers who granted such access to the private life were lauded - indeed the reaction of Margaret Oliphant towards Froude seems to have been something of an outlier. In a review of Thomas Reed’s life of Isaac Pitman, for instance, the contributor admired that the ‘effect of reading through the work is to make one feel almost as intimately acquainted with the subject of the narrative, and with his struggles and triumphs as the biographer himself.’\(^{89}\) The biographer throughout the review was assumed to be the ultimate authority on matters relating to the subject - both intimate and external - and their relaying of such information was praised rather than berated.\(^{90}\)

Even the biographies most notorious for plain panegyric - those written by family members - were often unafraid of investigating the less flattering aspects of the subject’s private existence (as has already been seen by the examples in the previous paragraph).\(^{91}\) The son of writer Edward Bulwer aimed for the representation of his father to be a complex, multi-dimensional portrayal of a human with all the corresponding idiosyncrasies:

The individuality I have attempted to describe was many-sided... Neither in the portraiture of my father’s character, nor in the record of his conduct, have I sought to reduce a single feature, or suppress a single incident, that seems to me less admirable than the rest.\(^{92}\)

\(^{88}\) *Daily News*, March 30, 1886.

\(^{89}\) *Freeman’s Journal*, November 28, 1890.

\(^{90}\) Biographers were often viewed as the ultimate source on a subject in the late-Victorian era. They were, for instance, asked to write the introductions to catalogue auctions of the subject’s belongings, be present as guests in ceremonies commemorating the subject, and headed appreciation societies.


Bulwer lived up to this claim, showing his father to be an often strange and neurotic man, prone to anger and depressions throughout his life. Likewise, Edith Heraud, in the biography of her journalist father John Heraud, made no secret of his pettiness, lack of skill with money, and stalled careers throughout his life.\(^9^3\) Scholars such as those referenced in this chapter’s introduction have consistently ignored the wider corpus of family-biography, focusing disproportionately on two unrepresentative works, Mrs Kingsley’s life of her husband and George Henry Lewes’ life of George Eliot.

Biographers also explored their subject’s daily habits and routines. Such interests are reminiscent of contemporary journalistic interview topics and the two styles of life-writing were often linked. Indeed, interviewers were regularly referred to as biographers and Boswell’s famous transcriptions of conversations were likened to the scribbling interviewer.\(^9^4\) The key difference was that interviews were for the living, while biographies were for the dead (indeed, biographies of the still-living were met with curiosity by the press).\(^9^5\) The legacy of the early-nineteenth century hierarchy of fame - Coleridge’s division between posthumous, eternal ‘fame’ and contemporary, transient ‘reputation’ - necessitated that the two categories of a public figure’s life be treated in separate genres.\(^9^6\) Yet the forms still inevitably bled into one another. As an instance of such interview-style intrigue, Stuart Dodgson Collingwood gave, in rather tedious detail, his uncle Lewis Carroll’s usual day in Oxford:

> He always rose at the same early hour, and, if he was in residence at Christ Church, attended College Service. He spent the day according to a prescribed routine, which usually included a long walk into the country, very often alone, but sometimes with another Don, or perhaps, if the walk was not to be as long as usual, with some little girl-friend at his side.\(^9^7\)

This interest extended to everyday conversation. For instance, the biographers of Thomas de Quincey - John Ritchie Finlay and James Hogg - both filled their lives with pleasant, non-specific

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\(^9^4\) *Punch*, August 24, 1895; *The Pall Mall Gazette*, January 3, 1890.

\(^9^5\) Piece on Bernard O’Reilly’s *Life of Leo XII*, *Daily News*, November 9, 1887.


chatter, emphasising the subject’s unique mannerisms.98 Such idiosyncratic reminiscences of liveliness reinforce the peculiarity of the celebrity while simultaneously - through the banality of the actual subject matter - emphasising their indistinctiveness.

To be sure, not every demographic of celebrity biography contained such intimacies. The discourse circulating the biographies of heroes differed substantially from that of celebrities. Lives of great national heroes such as David Livingstone, General Gordon, and Henry Morton Stanley rarely pierced deeper beneath the shining externalities.99 Even those that promised to investigate the interior, such as William Garden Blaikie’s *The Personal Life of David Livingstone*, did not go much beyond exploring the subject’s devotion to Christianity (hardly a scandalous revelation).100 The most common instances of late-Victorian intimate biography were in the intellectual and artistic spheres; literary, academic, theological, and theatrical celebrities. This in part reflects a continuation of melancholic themes in artistic biography from the long-eighteenth century,101 but, also, the nationalistic and hypermasculine (and therefore necessarily more public-oriented in the Victorian dichotomy of gender spheres) nature of the lives of national heroes, which were mainly interested in glorifying idols of imagined communities.102 Intellectual and artistic celebrities lacked both the hypermasculinity and nationalism of these figures and were thus more open to private-sphere investigation, a domain more associated with femininity.103 As touched upon in this thesis’ introduction, modern celebrity - as opposed to the idealised masculinity of hero-worship - had

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always been a more feminised domain. Claire Brock has discussed how fame, which had previously been associated with posthumous political and religious glories, became feminised in the late-eighteenth century when renown became a more contemporary affair concerned with social gossip. Alexis Easley has also touched upon this, noting the association of Victorian celebrity with ephemerality and femininity. In the DNB, for instance, the term ‘celebrity’ is utilised virtually always in the context of the arts - poets, painters, and actors especially - and is disproportionality used to describe women.

This prevalence of intimate, complex biography throughout the Victorian era also existed within less conventional forms of life-writing such as collective biography, or, prosopography. While being perhaps the most hagiographical form of all, Victorian prosopography still placed a considerable emphasis on intimacy, idiosyncrasy, and moral complexity. Numerous scholars have noticed in the DNB, for instance, a surprising humanity that focused often on more minor, eccentric, and controversial figures (considering the endlessly grandiose style of both foreign counterparts and previous British biographical dictionaries). Many of the articles in the large collection were far from paean.

A nice example of this is the entry in volume XXXVII for William Maxwell - whose primary occupation was listed simply as ‘a friend of Dr. Johnson’ - which offers an almost wholly private view of the subject and his near-obsession with Johnson, whom he copied 'in wig, general appearance, and in manner.' Reflecting the fluidity of celebrity publicity, the subject was included solely

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because of his eccentric private life and association with a renowned figure. Similarly, many entries contained considerable pathos and unsavouriness in their narratives. Wesleyan Methodist preacher James Crabb was noted for his end-of-life personal miseries caused largely by his wife’s periodical depressions. James Gordon, listed simply as an ‘eccentric character’, was an attorney who fell into alcoholism, becoming a ‘confirmed sot’ after numerous drink-related embarrassments, surviving on a few guineas lent from cousins until his painful death in a workhouse. The late-life controversies of Thomas Paine were thoroughly explored, namely his reputation as a seducer, drunkard, and a man of ‘disgustingly filthy habits,’ while the entry for painter George Vincent stressed his consistent pecuniary difficulties, largely a consequence of intemperate ways. The revelation of such unflattering details, as well as the inclusion of interview-style explorations of personal hobbies and social activities (which critics very much appreciated), demonstrate the DNB’s anti-hagiographical goals in the presentation of its subjects, as its second editor Sidney Lee lectured on biography: ‘The lives of saints were not for the most part interesting... we should never tolerate those writers who depicted their subjects as ever at devotion within the sacred precincts of a church.’ Such intimate prosopography was not limited to the DNB, but its stature as the emblematic collective biography of the era may be taken as representative.

When looking for an explanation of this late-Victorian interest in candid biography, one of the central causes - alongside those touched upon earlier such as increasing interest in Boswellian

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114 *Country Life Illustrated*, June 02, 1900, p. 674.
115 *The Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, October 31, 1892.
116 Other examples of such late-Victorian intimate prosopography include George Makepeace Towle, *Certain Men of Mark: Studies of Living Celebrities* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1880); Curtis Guild, *A Chat About Celebrities* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1897).
methods and shifting trends in both reading-styles and fiction - was, I propose, the development and consolidation of a new sense of historicity.\textsuperscript{117} This historical consciousness, as it relates to biography, can be perhaps most vividly perceived through the numerous lives of Jesus Christ published throughout the Victorian era, which painted him humbly as a historical man (inside of, and subject to, history) - a great man, but a man nonetheless. David Friedrich Strauss - whose 1835 life of Jesus was translated into English in 1846 by George Eliot - aimed to present a new mode of considering the Messiah in the place of what he called ‘the antiquated systems of supranaturalism.’\textsuperscript{118} Strauss sought rational explanations for seemingly supernatural events such as the visit of angel Gabriel and speculated with great interest on the psychological life of Jesus. Paradoxically, he stressed that it was Jesus’ non-divinity that made him divine. This stance, Strauss argued, ‘in a certain sense retained for Jesus the character of a divine manifestation,’ which, ‘placed him far higher, and moreover embodied the strongest motives to practical piety.’\textsuperscript{119} If Jesus was divine - went the argument - then his achievements become nullified due to the lack of struggle. Such a view arose out of what many have characterised as the nineteenth century’s move towards secularisation, as explored in this study’s introduction. Coleridge applauded such scholarship, agreeing that the Bible and its central personage should be approached with ‘the same piety which you freely accord on other occasions to the writings of men.’\textsuperscript{120} Thus, this approach to public figures began to disseminate.

Two decades later Ernst Renan produced a similar life of Jesus, rejecting a life of miracles and arguing that the presentation of Christ as a flesh-and-blood historical man was not blasphemous but ironically edifying due to the same intriguing logic. ‘He was not sinless; he has conquered the same

\textsuperscript{117} This historical consciousness has also been given credit for the development of realism in Victorian fiction. Caroline Levine, ‘Victorian Realism’, in \textit{The Victorian Novel}, ed. by Deirdre David (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 85.


\textsuperscript{119} Strauss, \textit{The Life of Jesus}, p. 414.

passions that we combat; no angel of God comforted him, except his good conscience; no Satan tempted him, except that which each one bears in his heart.'

Such representations were unsurprisingly controversial and response biographies sprung up to re-assert the traditional divinity of Christ, but the existence of such grounded portrayals of the central theological character of the culture evidences an ability and desire to conceptualise man as a decidedly historical figure. These corporeal lives of Jesus were both influenced by, and reinforced, the aforementioned new historical consciousness. They demonstrate how Victorians increasingly viewed humanity - even the central figure of Christ himself - as products of immutable historical and natural laws, applicable equally to every individual.

John Stuart Mill, as early as 1831, had seen this increasing historical consciousness as the ‘dominant idea’ of the age. Carlyle had offered the study of history, with a particular focus on biographical narrative, as a possible solution to some of the theological anxieties of the day, while Darwin’s evolutionary findings further cemented a non-divine view of mankind. After decades of debate as to whether it was a viable subject, the study of history as a stand-alone university discipline began from the 1870s onwards, soon becoming a leading choice amongst undergraduates. Professional historians such as J. R. Seeley and Professor Prothero of Cambridge praised the virtues of this ‘scientific’ historical method. The author of an 1896 piece in the Northern Echo entitled ‘The Abuse of History’, emphasised the immense responsibility of the

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historian to tell the ‘plain, unvarnished truth, however unedifying’ this may be.  

While mid-Victorian historians could simply republish their literary works verbatim, late-Victorian historians had to continually update their editions in the wake of new research. This critical emphasis existed even within popular periodicals which ran series such as ‘Legend or History?’ and ‘Mythology versus History’, aiming to dissect popular, usually overly idealised, notions about the past. This wider dissemination was helped by popular novels such as Robert Elsmere (1888) by Mrs Humphrey Ward, in which the protagonist vicar loses his faith in a supernatural Christ through his historical studies. Indeed, by the last decades of the century, to ‘have a history’ became a euphemism - often in discussion of celebrities - for having a blemished past. History had become critical, ideally ruthless, in a gloriously scientific search for truth. This bled over into its sister-genre biography.

Indeed, as genres, history and biography, in the late-Victorian period, were increasingly grouped together. This can be seen in Mudie’s Circulating Library, the new public libraries (the Dewey Decimal System classified biography as a branch of history), and newspaper notices. The old clear Plutarchian distinction between history (public) and biography (private) began to break down, with the terms often being treated as synonymous. To put something into biography was to put it into history. ‘The struggles of Johnson have long been historical,’ asserted an 1888 contributor to The Evening Telegraph, ‘those of Carlyle have just become so’. This connection between the historicity of Victorian culture and celebrity biography becomes clearer when we remember that many of the major biographers of the era - Forster, Froude, Oliphant, Hodder - were also historians, and that the

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127 Northern Echo, January 10, 1896.
129 ‘Legend or History’, North Wales Chronicle, May 8, 1880; ‘Mythology Versus History’, Western Mail, August 30, 1895.
133 The Evening Telegraph, June 21, 1887.
most famous biographical subject of the late-Victorian era, Carlyle, included biographer and historian among his many literary roles.

Thus, when late-Victorian celebrity subjects were pictured in a matter of fact or imperfect manner - that is, as a human subject to human laws like everybody else - they were, in a sense, being historicised as Jesus was. And as we have seen, this normalisation was in itself viewed as a kind of counter-intuitive glorification. As Renan said of his historicisation of Jesus, ‘His glory does not consist in being relegated out of history,’ so Victorian celebrity biographers believed they did more justice to their subjects by grounding them in an intimate reality that rejected ideal and ahistorical abstractions.  

“‘A great imperfect man,’ his latest biographer calls him,’ observed an 1888 Atalanta piece on Froude’s life of Carlyle, sounding remarkably similar to Renan’s appraisal of his historical Jesus, ‘yes, let us acknowledge that too; in doing so we admit that he is but human, and we acknowledge our own brotherhood.’ The glory resided in the very lack of glory. This granted a warm commonality of feeling, just as, in the views of many scholars, celebrities are appreciated precisely because of the indistinct features of their private personhood. Like Jesus, to portray a celebrity as human was to do them justice in the Victorian philosophy of history.

The Biographer’s Life

Though the ostensible focus of the work, the subject - the individual whose life was to be narrated - was always of less importance than the biographer in determining how a biography came together. The power of definition in Victorian biography - as opposed to autobiography - lay in the hands of the third-party intermediaries surveying the deceased for a subject. Biographers could attach their name and interpretation to the celebrity’s legacy - most famously in the case of Boswell and Johnson - and illuminate themselves through the narration of others, just as autobiographers covertly reflected themselves in their ostensible discussion of their fellows in Society. The life did not simply

134 Renan, Jesus, p. 34.
135 Atalanta, February 1, 1888.
pass through a neutral agent ready-made but was actively interpreted and formed by the mediator for a particular purpose. Accordingly, biographers of the late-Victorian era were recognised for their distinctive styles, themes, and approaches, with their works viewed as literary constructions in their own right, nearly irrespective of the subject. Eventually many such biographers became celebrities themselves and their corpus of lives could form a kind of loose compilation of pseudo-autobiography. Accordingly, this section will examine the Victorian celebrity biographer - as opposed to the subject. I will demonstrate how conscious both late-Victorian biographers and reviewers were that life-writing was a craft, how the power dynamics between biographer and subject played out, and how authors came to own the lives of their subjects. Just as the controversial biographers of the Messiah constructed their own personal Jesus, each celebrity-biographer presented their original and distinctive interpretation of a life - presenting their life as much as the subject’s and thereby fusing the roles of intermediary and celebrity.

Competition between biographers to present the life of a celebrated figure (thereby gaining their own renown) goes back to the genesis of modern celebrity biography in the late-eighteenth century. Donna Heiland has noted ‘the grimly competitive industry’ that grew up around the figure of Johnson. ‘Boswell,’ astutely observed an 1857 piece in The Elgin Courant on the motivation of such biographers, ‘in erecting a pillar to Johnson... was building a Monumentum Aere Perennius to himself.’ This flock of Grub Street writers had ballooned into a full-blown industry by the beginning of the nineteenth century. The major heroes of the age such as Nelson, Bonaparte, and Byron were heavily treated. The early-to-mid Victorian era saw a notorious bout between John Forster and James Prior’s interpretations of the life of Oliver Goldsmith, the former communicating

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138 The Elgin Courant, October 23, 1857.
139 Reed, English Biography, pp. 19-22.
to the latter: ‘No man can hold a patent in biography or in history except by a mastery of execution unapproached by competitors.’\textsuperscript{140} With every year that the subject lay deceased, the story would shift, moulded by the developments of the proceeding times and the personal interests of the individual biographers. This is how, for instance, Arthur Wellesley Wellington was portrayed as a cold military commander, an indefatigable national hero, a hyper-masculine public-school ideal, as well as an avuncular encourager of the youth.\textsuperscript{141}

Moving to the late-Victorian era, contemporary commentators were very aware of biography as such an art - an act of deliberate and laboured interpretation by a third party - a consequence as much of the biographer as the subject. Crafting metaphors of ‘sketching’, ‘portraiture’, and ‘drawing’ were ubiquitous in press notices on textual biographies.\textsuperscript{142} Portrait painters were known as ‘art biographers’ (reflecting the similarity of both textual and visual construction) and interest was taken in the actual task of biography-writing as an artisan activity.\textsuperscript{143} Leslie Stephen, responding to this intrigue, produced a popular series entitled \textit{Studies of a Biographer} between 1898 and 1902, transparently investigating the common issues, excitements, and headaches of the life-writing pursuit.\textsuperscript{144} With this interest in the conscious creation of the life, notices of biographies in the press commented on the challenges that particular biographers faced in their research and planning, such as a subject who left no autobiographical memos, no correspondences, or who had left a glut of notes for posterity.\textsuperscript{145}

\textsuperscript{140} John Forster, \textit{The Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith}, 4\textsuperscript{th} edn (London: Chapman and Hall, 1863) (Original publication in 1848), p. xi.
\textsuperscript{142} Hastings & St. Leonards Observer, May 16, 1896; \textit{The Illustrated Household Journal}, December 01, 1880; \textit{The Standard}, February 16, 1880; \textit{The Graphic}, August 16, 1884.
\textsuperscript{143} \textit{The Dover Express}, August 07, 1896.
\textsuperscript{145} For contemporary media interest in the practical construction of biography, see review of \textit{The Life of the Rev. Sir F. A. G. Ousley}, \textit{The Pall Mall Gazette}, May 27, 1896; Review of \textit{The Life of Edward Lord Hawke}, \textit{John Bull}, March 17, 1883, p. 170; Commentary on \textit{The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll}, \textit{The Yorkshire Evening Post}, December 03, 1898.
Similarly, the biographer’s plan, structure, and approach were dissected. A review of David Masson’s life of John Milton, though praising the vast array of content presented, lamented the ‘radically bad’ structure of the work and ‘total want of grace or appropriateness in the design, as well as of skill in the execution.’ Similarly, Andrew Lang’s life of John Gibson Lockhart was criticised in The Standard for having ‘accumulated such a mass of detail as only a great master of narrative could handle with ease and perspicuity’, thus producing a meandering narrative. ‘It is often difficult,’ opined the reviewer, ‘to follow the thread of his argument, or to feel sure of the exact conclusion which he means to draw from it.’ This last sentence in particular evidences how keenly late Victorians believed that good biographers should not simply relay a clumsy heap of sources, but had to produce a constructive thesis of the life. Such a desire for purposeful writing in biography was reflective of changes to journalistic style at the end of the century, where journalists increasingly sought not merely to report the news factually, but to interpret it and present a unified response with a distinctive authorial input.

Indeed, reviews of biographies would usually spend at least a third of the text dissecting the research, planning, structure, and pacing of the work - similar to how critiques of novels commented not just on the plot but on plot-construction also. One may even suggest that the subject becomes virtually incidental in such discussions. Percy Fitzgerald’s life of John Wilkes was praised for being ‘the best of recent works from the same hand’, focusing the review on comparisons with the author’s former biographical works. Likewise, a highly-favourable review of Thomas Wemyss Reid’s life of Lyon Playfair in which the critic called for Reid to produce yet more lives, noted that ‘all who have read the judicious compilations in which he has presented Lord Houghton and W. E. Forster are aware of his skill in dealing with a mass of biographical material.’

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146 The Examiner, February 28, 1880.
147 The Standard, October 15, 1896.
149 The Graphic, July 28, 1888.
150 The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent, December 27, 1899.
Richard Burton was lauded as if it was fiction, for its ‘drama with constant changes of scene, of ambitions, of characters, and with the most surprising transformations and episodes’, the reviewer asserting that ‘it would not be easy for the most imaginative of novelists to invent a story surpassing in interest such a biography as this.’

Publisher S. Squire Sprigge suggested the writing of biography to the author ‘who possesses something of the dramatic spirit.’ This emphasis on the treatment rather than the subject is reminiscent of contemporary art theory which viewed the critical focus on ostensible subjects as philistine. Along these lines, the particular motivations of biographers in their works were investigated. Frederick Joyce’s life of musician Frederick Ouseley, Henry Bell’s life of Charles Whitehead, and John Thackeray’s life of Edward Craven Hawtree were all acknowledged by reviewers for their desire to help the subjects avoid posthumous oblivion. Effective biographies - as suggested by the earlier-referenced review of Lang’s Lockhart - were theses with a such a purpose.

Along with their motive, many authors were transparent about the nature of their sources and methods of research - seemingly in part to evidence their authority. Sources of information came in five general varieties; recollections of the subject by the biographer, recollections of the subject by fellow celebrities and intimates, information already published such as in newspapers or previous works on the subject (this being the main source for the interim biographer), correspondence, and - for the particularly official biographers - the subject’s diary. Prefaces were utilised to specify the

153 Stokes, In the Nineties, ch. 2.
sources of information, thanking those who offered such avenues and aided them practically. For interim biographers research was a more publicly-orientated process. H. S. Salt, for instance, an interim biographer of James Thomson, admitted:

I could wish that the duty of writing this biography had been entrusted to one who had enjoyed the advantage of personal acquaintance with James Thomson. As, however, no such biographer was forthcoming, I have done my best to put together the scattered records already published, and to collect such further information as could still be obtained.

With such challenges, some biographers simply made appeals for information through public organs.

G. S. Layard, biographer of Eliza Lynn Linton, made an appeal in *Country Life Illustrated* for letters and portraits of the subject, Philip Bagenal asked for information in the *Liverpool Mercury* regarding politician Ralph Bernal Osborne, while a hopeful biographer of Carlyle appealed for sources in his book attacking Froude. This transparency regarding the discovery, compilation, and practical utilisation of primary sources brings to mind the epistolary fiction of the late-Victorian era in which the narrative was splintered into interweaving perspectives arising directly from documents. It also keenly demonstrates the laborious and practical process of biographical research - similar to the process of its sister genre history. The biographer, like the increasingly critical historian, was not an omniscient being needless of sources and suspended in air above the subject’s life, but a senior investigator working alongside the reader, helping them through what could be located of the life.

Alongside the type of sources presented, biographers could gain authority via appeal to their previous biographical work. The choice of John Morley to be the biographer of William Ewart Gladstone, in an 1898 *Pall Mall Gazette* article, was praised as ‘eminently a proper one, for Mr. Morley in his “Cobden” and in his ‘Walpole’ has given proof of aptitude for unfolding an eventful career and analyzing [sic] a complex personality.’ Newspapers approved of the choice, reporting

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156 Mary Bryce, for instance, thanked her subject’s sister for gathering and arranging the material for the life. *Memoir of John Veitch* (London: Blackwood and Sons, 1896), p. v.


160 *The Pall Mall Gazette*, November 4, 1898.
both on Morley’s careful research methods as well as his personal relationship with Gladstone. Such evidence of previous success was why Queen Victoria personally wished that Margaret Oliphant would be her biographer. Thus, the quality of sources compiled, skill in utilising such documents, closeness with the subject, as well as the evidence of previous success, were all used as means of authorising the biographer as the celebrity’s life-narrator. Trust in the intermediary and their particular interpretation had to be earned.

With such critical attention surrounding the construction of celebrity lives, there was pressure to create a life worthy of their chosen subject, as an 1891 Evening Standard article observed (note the description of the celebrity subject as a ‘character’, a thing to be put to use by the author):

To write the life of a well-known ‘character’ is no such easy task as it appears, and when that same character has fathered upon him all the newspaper chestnuts of half a century, the biographer’s task is not to be envied... If he fails, the comment is ‘what a botch he has made of a splendid chance.’

Contented reviewers expressed relief that a biographer had ‘lived up to’ or ‘done justice to’ a subject. The biographer of Lord Shaftesbury, for instance, was believed to have ‘discharged his task most admirably’, while T. E. Thorpe’s life of Humphry Davy ‘cannot be denied the merit of doing justice to the character of Davy’. A review of Andrew Lang’s life of Lord Iddesleigh observed that ‘Lang has a delightful subject for a biography, and has done justice to it’. Conversely, a common refrain in unfavourable reviews was the notion that the subject had been let down by an unfit biographer who had failed to fulfil what many viewed as their ‘duty’ to the celebrity. A reviewer of Charles Reade: Dramatist, Novelist, Journalist, for instance, heavily criticised the ‘injudicious and ill-written’ piece, lamenting that ‘Charles Reade should have a biographer who can at least write

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161 ‘How Mr. Morley is Writing Mr. Gladstone’s Life’, The Cheltenham Chronicle, December 30, 1899.
163 The Evening Telegraph, April 27, 1891.
164 The Western Daily Press, May 20, 1891; Glasgow Herald, September 24, 1896.
165 Daily News, October 23, 1890.
decent English.' Critiquing a life of Steven Arthur Blackwood, a contributor asserted that ‘the book cannot be described as a good biography; it is rather a quarry in which the good biographer would find many stones shaped to his hand, though he would have to dig and delve elsewhere to do justice in every respect to such a career.' Likewise, a biographer of actor William Terriss was described as ‘unworthy’, releasing a compilation of anecdotes ‘so pointless and so puerile’ as to posthumously embarrass the subject. Another review of the same biography decried how the author had somehow made a ‘trifling and tedious’ work out of an inherently interesting life. The intensity of such pressure on the author was proportionate to the fame of the subject - the higher the subject the greater the biographer fell.

As paradoxical as it may seem - and as was touched upon in the previous section - one of the most common ways in which late-Victorian reviewers felt that a biographer had let their subject down was in being too hagiographical. By overpraising the celebrity, the author performed a clunky disservice to their character. ‘Mr. Mackey can hardly be congratulated on his success as a biographer,’ commented The Leeds Mercury, ‘his estimate of Bishop Forbes is disfigured by too obvious hero-worship’. ‘It is a pity,’ observed a reviewer of the life of Sir George Burns, ‘that his biographer’s generous enthusiasm for his subject is not tempered by a due sense of proportion.’ ‘It is a very sweet picture of a very lovely life’, communicated novelist Eliza Lynn Linton to a friend, ‘but of course it is imperfect because of what it does not say. No man’s character is entirely without shade’. A review of James Sutherland’s life of William Wordsworth similarly criticised the saccharine tone: ‘It is always well for a biographer to have a large amount of sympathy with his hero... but really Mr Sutherland’s adoration almost passes bounds, and is rather trying to men of sober judgments.’ The reviewer even mocks Sutherland’s near-divine separation of his subject from

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167 The Graphic, May 7, 1887.
168 The Leeds Mercury, June 8, 1896.
170 Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper, June 19, 1898.
171 The Leeds Mercury, February 27, 1888.
172 The Standard, March 27, 1891.
the rest of mankind: ‘He even thinks it necessary to tell us, gravely and solemnly, that Wordsworth was “a man of like passions with ourselves, subject, too, to temptation as we are.”’\(^\text{174}\) Such a qualification is reminiscent of Renan’s presentations of Jesus, again demonstrating attempts to historicise - even if clumsily - subjects.

The ideal attitude most reviewers seemed to have desired in biographers was one of carefully qualified appreciation; of ‘great but not undue admiration’, ‘tenderness and truth’, judging ‘sympathetically but not unconscientiously’, one who ‘neither patronises his hero nor blindly worships him’.\(^\text{175}\) As went Margaret Oliphant’s prescription for effective biography: ‘sympathy regulated by judgment.’\(^\text{176}\) A few decades earlier John William Cole expressed a similar sentiment on the ideal feeling of the biographer towards their subject; they should be an ‘honest friend’ - as opposed to a worshipping stranger or malicious enemy - someone who is affectionate of the subject but unafraid of highlighting less savoury elements of their personage.\(^\text{177}\) By the final decade of the century this view seems to have become the prevalent stance to the point where reviewers were able to state confidently that ‘hero-worship... is none too common in a biographer nowadays’.\(^\text{178}\)

Yet, demonstrating the increasing autonomy and renown of biographers in the late-Victorian era, there were instances where commentators felt that biographers had selected subjects unworthy of them. In these scenarios, the famed biographer - rather than hanging parasitically off them - stooped down to aid the subject. ‘One would hardly anticipate that the biography of a Scottish clergyman,’ wrote an 1896 contributor to The Pall Mall Gazette on the surprising interest of Margaret Oliphant’s life of Thomas Chalmers, ‘would readily reach a second edition... [but] when his biographer is Mrs

\(^{174}\) Birmingham Daily Post, May 21, 1888.


\(^{176}\) Northern Echo, June 1, 1885.


\(^{178}\) Glasgow Herald, July 9, 1896.
Oliphant, one of the most charming of contemporary writers, the mystery explains itself.\textsuperscript{179}

Likewise, a John Bull reviewer of The Life of Philip Henry Gosse wondered whether, even in ‘this age of universal biography... the deceased naturalist was a man of sufficient mark to require that his story should be told at length’. However, the final view was that the subject’s life had been worth telling simply because of the literary skill of biographer Edmund Gosse: ‘All that he writes is sure to be pleasant reading, and we venture to think that his father’s biography is likely to be more widely read for the sake of the author than for the sake of the subject.’\textsuperscript{180} A County Gentleman piece observed the peculiar truth that ‘the modern celebrity finds it at times difficult to live up to his biographer’.\textsuperscript{181} To be chosen by such renowned biographers, to become a part of their larger corpus, was a privilege, a signifier of success.

As part of this increasing recognisability of the biographer, towards the end of the century and into the Edwardian era, they themselves increasingly became the subjects of lives and were included in the celebrity Society discussed in the previous chapter. John Gibson Lockhart, John Morley, John Forster, Leslie Stephen, Thomas Wemyss Reid, James Anthony Froude, and, of course, the Victorian king-of-biographers James Boswell, all received treatment.\textsuperscript{182} To be sure, many of these figures had various roles - Froude was also a historian, Lockhart a journalist, Oliphant a novelist - but their primary, or at least equally pronounced, public identities were as biographers. In Oliphant’s case, her biographies - unusually - sold more than her fiction and it was the genre that both she and her publisher preferred to produce.\textsuperscript{183}

\textsuperscript{179} The Pall Mall Gazette, October 3, 1896.
\textsuperscript{180} John Bull, January 17, 1891, p. 36. [My emphasis]
\textsuperscript{181} The County Gentleman, June 16, 1888.
Indeed, the popular press contains ample evidence of such biographer-celebrity. Wemyss Reid, for instance, appeared in The Leeds Times series 'Mems. About Celebrities', with a brief appraisal of his biographical works and an illustrated portrait. Additionally, his photograph and autograph were published in a collection put together by W. T. Stead (Figure 2.4), and his lecture tour - mimicking the popular attractions by writers such as Oscar Wilde - on the practice of biography-writing was a success. David Lang was also included in a celebrity reminiscence piece entitled ‘Literary Men I have Met’ in The Scots’ Magazine, described as ‘the veteran biographer’ by the contributor. John Forster - presented solely in his identity as biographer - was included alongside other celebrities such as Thackeray and Cruikshank in a Young Folks Paper piece narrating a walk through Kensal Green Cemetery, the renowned resting place of the famous. Forster was also interviewed about his life-writing skills by Edmund Yates in 1876 for The World under the title ‘A Biographical Master’. The biographical works of Froude - a popular target of autograph hunters - were included in an 1890 self-education publication for aspiring writers by George Bainton entitled The Art of Authorship, with his name listed alongside greats such as David Hume, Walter Scott and John Ruskin. Biographers were regularly included in celebrity-interest series such as ‘Obituary of the Week’ from The Graphic and ‘Men of the Week’ from The Newcastle Weekly Courant. In the 1885 celebrity obituary, for instance, it was written of Lord Houghton, ‘though himself a poet, [he] will be remembered chiefly as the biographer of Keats.’ The famous celebrity biographer - exemplified in the archetype of Boswell and mirrored in the celebrity interviewer as will be explored in the next chapter - became a mainstay in celebrity Society in the final decades of the century.

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184 The Leeds Times, January 03, 1891.
185 The Leeds Mercury, November 14, 1894.
186 The Scots’ Magazine, April 01, 1897.
187 Young Folks Paper, July 17, 1886. Forster must have been considered particularly worthy as ‘many other celebrities whom space has not permitted me are interred here’.
190 The Graphic, August 2, 1884; The Newcastle Weekly Courant, May 8, 1885.
191 The Graphic, January 2, 1886.
This emphasis on the primacy of the biographer over the subject - at least when the author was an established name - stretched into actual ownership of the subject in the popular vision (there even existed instances, as with John Forster’s life of Walter Savage Landor, in which the biographer was granted the copyright of the subject’s works).\textsuperscript{192} Samuel Johnson, many late-Victorians held, owed his continuing fame to this very style of authorial ownership. It was Boswell’s Johnson that was famous through the nineteenth century, not Johnson himself.\textsuperscript{193} The subject owed the biographer his fame. In reviews and advertisements it was made clear through the use of the possessive apostrophe that what was being commented upon was the biographer’s particular construction of a subject, rather than the pre-existing subject in a vacuum. The emphasis on the biographer’s name - as opposed to a pseudonym or more corporate identity - reflected the increasing use of proper

\textsuperscript{192} James A. Davies, \textit{John Forster: A Literary Life} (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), p. 149.

\textsuperscript{193} \textit{The Graphic}, June 4, 1881.; Johnson’s fame persisted ‘thanks largely to the scribblings of Boswell’, \textit{The Leeds Mercury}, August 10, 1887.
names by the end of the nineteenth century in all kinds of public discourse (fiction, life-writing, journalism, theatre), driven in part by the increasing visibility of the author’s physical likeness via portraits - as explored in the previous chapter.\textsuperscript{194} In posthumous compilations of biographers’ works, such as in the cases of John Forster and Margaret Oliphant, their lives were listed alongside their other works (be they fictional or non-fictional), demonstrating ownership of the lives as any contemporary novelist would lay claim to their protagonists (Figures 2.5-2.15). William Wordsworth’s hope that great men would live in posterity untainted by intermediaries proved to be false, such third parties were as important, if not more so, in the posthumous shaping of the life-narrative.\textsuperscript{195}

As touched upon, the celebrity-subject became a kind of recognisable pseudo-fictional character running through third-party narratives looking to use the identifiable profile. It had been in the late-eighteenth century, fuelled partly by the popularity of the novel-biography - explicitly half-fiction, half-fact stories of public figures - that fictional characters began to take on lives of their own independent of their authors.\textsuperscript{196} The most famous late-Victorian instances of this blending of fact and fiction were the fan letters that addressed Arthur Conan Doyle as Sherlock Holmes.\textsuperscript{197} This merging of forms becomes yet blurrier when it is remembered that most Victorian novelists claimed that the inspiration for their characters came from real individuals, often in the public eye.\textsuperscript{198} The Victorian celebrity somewhat resembled this in their role as protagonists of various biographers. Indeed, biographers and novelists had both been recognised as authors in the Romantic sense developed in the early-nineteenth century, as the unique and original producer of a ‘new element

\textsuperscript{196} Hamilton, \textit{Keepers of the Flame}, p. 66.
into the intellectual universe’, a ‘panorama of images... a storehouse for thoughts... a whirling scene of ever-changing incidents’ - a notion further strengthened across Europe in the last third of the nineteenth century with the spread of Persönlichkeitsrecht, an author’s privileged moral right and insight into their work. 199 Just as it was believed that an individual would inevitably betray their individuality through their handwriting (as we shall see in the fourth chapter), popular writers like Marie Corelli asserted the ‘fact that every author’s “style” is different; precisely for the reason that no two men think alike on the same subject.’ 200 This notion particularly held water in the Victorian era as laws protecting the publicly-identifiable attributes of famous figures did not properly materialise until the twentieth century, as well as the international popularity of the ‘No Two Men’ legal copyright principle - heavily influenced by Romantic ideas pronounced by the likes of Edward Young - that insisted the same topic could be approached virtually innumerable times since each individual would inherently produce an individual result. 201 ‘It is not the subject chosen,’ asserted an 1897 publisher’s pamphlet on copyright, ‘but originality of treatment. Subjects which have already been dealt with can again be utilised provided new considerations are introduced, or a new definite plan of treatment, or an adaptation to an entirely new purpose.’ 202 The legal and customary structure of late-Victorian society supported the biographer’s ownership of their subject.


Figure 2.5: The possessive apostrophe demonstrates the ownership of the subject by the biographer. Advertisement for Thomas Wemyss Reid’s life of Lord Houghton. *The Pall Mall Gazette*, December 11, 1890.

Figure 2.6: Discussion of Edward Dowden’s life of Robert Southey. *The Examiner*, February 21, 1880.

Figure 2.7: Discussion of James Anthony Froude’s life of Lord Beaconsfield. *Northern Echo*, October 27, 1890.
Figure 2.8: An advertisement for the biographer’s work featuring the subjects as a part of their corpus (John Forster’s works in this example)

The Pall Mall Gazette, February 12, 1876.

Figure 2.9: Advertisement for The English Men of Letters series.

The Pall Mall Gazette, December 22, 1882.

Figure 2.10: Advertisement for Margaret Oliphant’s works.

The Pall Mall Gazette, August 6, 1897.

Figure 2.11: Advertisement for Margaret Oliphant’s works.

Glasgow Herald, July 1, 1897.
Figures 2.12-2.15: Novels, similar to biographies, were commonly titled under the namesake of the protagonist in the late-Victorian era.

Both this reverence for the biographer’s position and the acute appreciation of their complex craft inevitably led to recognisable distinctions of subject choice, style, and themes for each biographer, just as novelists repeated similar tropes. ‘Cordy Jeaffreson,’ asserted a section in the *Daily News* announcing his latest life, ‘as all the world knows, is a biographer who deals only in “real” people,’ referring to the author’s tendency to produce more intimate portraits of subjects. Departures from previous styles were noted, such as when a journalist at *The Evening Telegraph* expressed his surprise that Andrew Lang, known for his literary biographies, was planning to move into political life-writing. Biographers developed recognisable back catalogues of work, their lives with their particular flair. The development of such a distinctive corpus of lives became increasingly possible the more that a biographer grew in reputation, as publishers granted authorial freedom in direct proportion to the pre-existing fame of the writer. Additionally, as the business model for most publishers was not to profit from an author’s single publication (this was actually rare), but instead to continually republish and exploit a larger body of work under the author’s name in numerous editions, biographers were naturally encouraged to construct such a corpus of lives. This is why literary advertising by the end of the century increasingly pushed the author and their greater brand more than their individual works.

Two key themes, for instance, ran through the biographies written by Margaret Oliphant; devout religiosity - a theme shared disproportionately by fellow female celebrity-biographers and fiction writers such as Florence Barclay - as well as womanhood, particularly maternity. Her lives of three stridently religious men (Edward Irving, Laurence Oliphant, Count De Montalembert) explored the

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203 *Daily News*, November 16, 1887.
204 *The Evening Telegraph*, November 05, 1890.
challenges, pleasures, and ultimate nobility of faith, particularly Catholicism. Oliphant - who had lost three of her six children in infancy - also focused on the bond between mother and son. Discussing the death of Irving’s young son, Oliphant wrote that ‘no other event of his life penetrated so profoundly the depths of his spirit’, before going on to hint of her own such experience (‘Those of us who know such days of darkness’). In writing of her subjects’ tragedies she wrote of her own - thus making her corpus of biography a form of subtle and indirect autobiography.

Conversely, we can see how multiple biographers approached the same subject by using Thomas Carlyle as a case study. Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Carlyle, an interim biography published in the same year as the subject’s death by self-confessed enthusiasts Richard Shepard and Charles Williamson, utilised mainly third-party reminiscences and correspondence already published. The two are quick to defend their idol from the controversy caused by Froude’s swift posthumous publication of his reminiscences, in which Carlyle - guilt ridden and remorseful - admits his many sins against his long-suffering wife Jane. Shepard and Williamson maintain that Froude misinterpreted the emotional Carlyle’s demands, emphasising the love he felt for his wife as evidenced by his tomb-stone devotion.Originally published a year later (1882), Froude’s two-part biography of Carlyle was a famously candid portrait, particularly of his troubled married life. Though ultimately admiring in numerous respects (this facet is often overlooked), Froude’s judgements could be striking. The biography is almost as much about Jane as it is about Thomas, with Froude consistently presenting her as a brave and tortured figure. Carlyle is largely blamed for her suffering, depicted as curmudgeonly and even occasionally pathetic. In the second book covering Carlyle’s life in London, Froude introduces himself into the narrative as a fellow writer on a par with the

subject - suggesting an equal-footing biographer-subject relationship dissimilar to the fawning life by Shepard and Williamson. Like Boswell’s Johnson or Forster’s Dickens, Froude employed himself as a prominent character in the narrative he set out.

Reacting in astonishment to this portrayal of Carlyle, David Masson in 1885 produced Carlyle: Personally and in His Writings, discussing Froude as much as the ostensible subject. Viewing Froude as a deceitful Judas going along with the intrusive fashion of the day, Masson criticised his decision to publish the most intimate letters, bemoaning - while simultaneously appealing to his own closeness with the subject - the fact that he ‘should have lived to hear the great and good man I had myself the privilege of knowing characterised offhand by many, immediately after his death, as "a boor and a brute."' Released a year later, Andrew James Symington’s Some Personal Reminiscences of Carlyle is structured into small, anecdotal segments for easy digestion, but the key mark of distinction in comparison to Froude here is Symington’s decidedly unsympathetic attitude towards Jane. Thomas, he argued, was always loving towards his spouse who was ‘scarcely content to play second fiddle, even to him’. Symington even recalled being snubbed by Jane after an invitation to tea. David Wilson’s 1898 Mr. Froude and Carlyle represented a step-by-step attempt to dismantle Froude’s biography of the great literary figure. Wilson insulted Froude’s historical work, described his life of Carlyle as a ‘book of blunders,’ and, like Symington, saw the source of any marital problems as Jane. Wilson suggested that Froude undertook the work in a cynical grasp for fame himself (‘he saw a glorious opportunity for Boswellism’), asserting that Carlyle found him dull. These last three works, focused as much on Froude as Carlyle, demonstrate how thoroughly the biographer had become embedded in the subject’s life-narrative. It was impossible to discuss the latter without reference to the former. Carlyle in posterity was Froude’s Carlyle.

217 Symington, Some Personal, p. 56.
218 Wilson, Mr. Froude p. 134.
219 Wilson, Mr. Froude p. 314.
Consequently, biographers were not uncommonly criticised for producing ostensible lives of others that functioned much more as pseudo-autobiographies of themselves. Wilkie Collins saw biography as nothing more than a ‘pedestal on which the writer or speaker can present himself to the public in a favourable light,’ while an 1896 piece in *The Dundee Courier* lamented the ‘growing practice of biographers to interpose themselves between their hero and their public’.\(^{220}\) *The Derby Mercury* in 1880 claimed that when Forster’s *Life of Charles Dickens* was given to the world it was said that the work was more of an autobiography of Forster than anything else - its popular nickname being ‘The Autobiography of John Forster with Recollections of Charles Dickens’.\(^ {221}\) Such claims were ironic since Forster had himself criticised Boswell for ‘pushing his way into every salon, inflicting himself on every celebrity.’\(^ {222}\) Likewise, an 1888 life of Leo XIII was criticised for being merely a mouthpiece for the author’s particular interpretation of contemporary Catholicism, while an 1898 life of Charles Stewart Parnell was disparaged for being a thinly veiled excuse for the author to expound his political viewpoints on the Irish problems.\(^ {223}\)

**Conclusion**

From the recognisable themes, concerns, approaches, and structures, as well as the more overt imposition of authorial voice upon the life, we can see how celebrity biographers exposed both their subjects’ lives and their own. Every biography produced - certainly with widely renowned official biographers - represented a section of a greater, multi-volume pseudo-autobiography. The celebrity subjects became a tool of the biographer, their life utilised to represent an intermediary and push a particular narrative. The unprecedented interiority of Victorian biography made such ownership a yet more severe intrusion; the secrets of the internal life could now be claimed as well as the social mask. Celebrities who turned to autobiography as a means of self-definition in the face of posterity

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\(^{221}\) *The Derby Mercury*, March 3, 1880.

\(^{222}\) Forster, *The Life and Times of Oliver*, p. 228.

\(^{223}\) *The Standard*, January 04, 1888; *The Standard*, November 10, 1898.
feared such ownership by a psychologically curious intermediary - a daunting figure who wished to reveal more to the public than the subject had ever let their closest friends know - the prospect of becoming not themselves but the biographer’s subject.

The next chapter on interviews will investigate how third parties constructed the celebrity during their lifetime and the power dynamics that existed between participants in the media ritual. Despite this key temporal distinction between the two forms (contemporary and newly posthumous), a critical nature informed both activities. Just as biographers were more than willing to investigate the moody, impatient, and despondent aspects of their subjects, so interviewers were willing to touch upon the dull, prideful, and small (meaning distinctly human) sides of their interviewees. This similarity between the manifestations of late-Victorian celebrity culture speaks to the critical nature of celebrity existent both then and now, a feature that distinguishes it as a form of fame subject to greater cynicism than, say, heroism. It was acceptable, even desirable, to make a contemporary small, as to not do so constituted ‘robbing us the sight of the human face’.

Such a desire for the human face - the unpolished, pockmarked, or even unremarkable face (this last banality perhaps being the worst) - represented a key dynamic of this form of fame, a fame that both sanctifies and grounds - as per Renan’s Jesus - the individuals that it shines its spotlight upon.

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Chapter Three: The Interview

The late-Victorian interview - ostensibly a jovial tete-a-tete - harboured a covert tug-of-war between the journalist seeking to relay the immediacy and authenticity of oral communication, and the interviewee seeking to self-construct while avoiding unseemly revelations. Consequently, the form represented a minefield of mutual attraction and conflict between the celebrity and the interviewer, with the latter becoming increasingly renowned themselves as the century neared its end. The first section of this chapter - primarily interested in published periodical writing and illustrations - will explore the journalist-reader relationship; how the interviewer acted as interpreter and often stand-in for the periodical’s carefully constructed reader. The second section - primarily interested in larger extra-textual and pre-publication dynamics - will explore the complex back-and-forth of the celebrity-journalist relationship and how active as participants many interviewees really were.

The bulk of work on the late-Victorian celebrity interview has investigated the form’s goal of locating the true self of the interviewee. Richard Salmon and Gowan Dawson have argued that the celebrity interview was conceived as a hermeneutic practice: as a medium through which both the journalist and the reader might hope to discover the authentic nature of famous individuals.¹ Deborah Cohen places a similar emphasis on the relation of celebrities to the objects of their homes and how, by the end of the nineteenth century, it had become difficult to decouple an individual from their possessions.² The first section of this chapter will engage with such analyses, taking the position that journalists pursued a threefold hermeneutic approach that - like the contemporary biographer - not only relayed the subject but proactively created them in a psychologically intrusive manner.


Others have examined the broader cultural and social reflections of interviews. Studying interviews in women’s periodicals, Rosemary T. VanArsdel sees the format as a pragmatic means of encouraging emulation and of increasing circulation via the intrinsically interesting and somewhat sensationalistic human-interest story.³ Philip Waller emphasises the prevalence of female interviewers in the practice, employed because of what was believed to be their inherent interest in gossip and the private life, while Marianne Van Remoortel’s recent work on interviews from The Women’s Penny Paper/Women’s Herald argues that the interview’s voyeuristic preoccupation with the domestic lives of individuals paradoxically enabled the periodical to establish itself as a clearing-house for emancipatory thinking and to promote early British proto-feminism.⁴ My conceptualisation of the interview format as predominantly a tug-of-war - which will be primarily investigated in this chapter’s second section - is relatively novel, though not entirely unprecedented. Waller has touched upon the often subtly combative elements of the format, while John Stokes has noted the collaborative nature of the interview exchange, despite the protestations of celebrities like Oscar Wilde who claimed passivity.⁵ However, this study is the first to thoroughly dissect this facet of the form.

The first known journalistic interview is thought to have taken place in America in the 1830s.⁶ The practice eventually gained popularity in Britain in the mid-1870s through The Pall Mall Gazette and The World.⁷ Like autobiography and biography, the format was not limited to celebrities. There were also pseudo-ethnographic interviews with individuals of foreign nations and habitats, discussions with people of alternative ways of life such as travellers, brief fact-based questioning of politicians on

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⁵ See Waller, Writers, ch.10; John Stokes, In the Nineties (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), ch. 6.
current issues, conversations with ordinary working men, quirky it-narrative interviews of inanimate objects, and consultations with defendants on trial. This chapter will focus solely on interviews with celebrities (denoted as usual by explicit reference) produced originally for periodicals.

This study has constructed the most comprehensive dataset of Victorian celebrity interviews yet investigated, having consulted 252 examples (see appendix 3 for full table) gathered both from compilations by individual journalists such as Harry How, Raymond Blathwayt, F. J. Gould, and Helen C. Black as well as pieces from popular newspapers and periodicals such as Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper (1842-1901), The Penny Illustrated Paper (1861-1901), The Pall Mall Gazette (1865-1901), The World (1874-1901), The Women’s Penny Paper/Women’s Herald (1888-1893), Strand Magazine (1891-1901), The Idler (1892–1901), and Windsor Magazine (1895-1901). Memoirs of prominent late-Victorian interviewers, as well as miscellaneous and satirical articles in publications such as Punch (1841-1901), Fun (1861-1901), Judy (1867-1901), The Review of Reviews (1890-1901), and Chums (1892-1901) have also been consulted. The occupations of the interviewees - in keeping with this thesis’ deliberately broad emphasis and in contrast to the sole literary interest of most previous studies on interviewing such as Salmon’s work - vary widely, the most common professions being actors, artists, politicians, and writers (Figure 3.1). Unlike biography, there was a distinct cosmopolitan interest in interviews, particularly cross-Atlantic (reflecting perhaps the fact that interviews were originally an American development). Forty-four of the subjects in the set are of non-British nationality (Figure 3.2) and men are the slight majority with 137 interviews.

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8 The Star, April 28, 1881; North & South Shields Daily Gazette, May 21, 1881; Glasgow Herald, February 17, 1881; Daily News, March 3, 1896; Hull Daily Mail, September 21, 1893; Punch, May 15, 1897; The Illustrated Police News, March 30, 1872.
Figures 3.1-3.2: The occupational and national demographics of the interviewees investigated.
The Journalist-Reader Interpreter: Reading Speech, Body, and Environment

‘The interviewer... is the observer, the interpreter, the philosopher, and the psychologist... He who would look into the heart ought to be sagacious, truthful, sincere.’

‘The secrets of personality cannot be kept, and a man’s nature betrays itself without his knowledge of the betrayal.’

The interviewing late-Victorian journalist - confident in the ubiquitous positivist understanding that the internal could be understood through the external - sought to play the detective and bring out for the middle-class periodical reader the discrepancies of identity reachable and evident in the private sphere; the side of the individual that acts in more unguarded ways. In an era which Richard Sennett has identified as particularly troubled by the possibility of involuntary disclosure, the late-Victorian celebrity was put under examination by the scrutinising journalist looking to intrigue the readers he consciously constructed, as contemporary illustrations satirised (Figure 3.3). Thus - after discussing the journalist’s building of a textual bridge to the reader - this section will successively analyse how interviewers of all periodicals read signs in three key areas: speech, the body, and the home. As a contributor to The Pall Mall Gazette noted of such piercing analysis: ‘All is laid bare, witheringly bare and naked. Every trivial word and action, each little household god, every sacred home detail becomes manifest to the gaping world.’ As late-Victorian selves, the essence of celebrities bled through the pores of their words, twitches, and decorations.

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13 The Pall Mall Gazette, January 3, 1890.
Journalists of the late-nineteenth century - differing from the older paternalistic tone - increasingly related and consciously referred to their readers as equals - sometimes even as indistinguishable others connected to themselves. ¹⁴ Most interviewing journalists - notably including Edmund Yates, Harry How, and V. R. Mooney - regularly made use of the pluralis modestiae nosisms ‘We’ and ‘You’ (‘We are standing in the hall’, ‘You turn out of one pathway only to enter a diminutive forest’, ‘as you perceive at a glance on entering’). ¹⁵ These were deliberately inclusive terms used in the majority of late-Victorian interviews that sought to fuse the journalist and reader, as opposed to acting as the editorial and deliberately distancing ‘We’ of earlier nineteenth-century journalism (designating the corporate body of the publication). ¹⁶ ‘We’ and ‘You’, by the century’s final decades, signified a knowing journalist-reader conglomerate. Similarly, throughout his interviews M. A. Belloc made consistent references to ‘the visitor’, an abstract amalgamation of both him and his readers towards

¹⁶ Waller, *Writers*, p. 121.
which he prescribed appropriate thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Intermediary and consumer were thus affected as one. Outliers such as Raymond Blathwayt utilised the nominative ‘I’, thereby distanced himself as a distinct entity from the periodical consumer. However, he still referred warmly to ‘my readers’ at least once per interview, intimately connecting if not directly fusing himself with the reader. Whether by linking the interviewer’s identity with the reader or by explicitly referencing consumers as a convivial and close third participant, journalists established a clear textual connection with their periodical audience. Two agents of the triptych were united in dissection of the third. Having established this framing, we may now see how journalists went about interpreting their subjects.

Firstly, perhaps the most overt way in which the journalist could interpret a celebrity for the reader was through the often-stated ostensible purpose of the interview - conversation. The more informal term, ‘chat’, was regularly utilised to designate such discourse. Through such performatively casual discussion celebrities regularly offered to the journalist-reader - intentionally or not - parts of themselves that brushed up awkwardly against, or did not spring naturally from, the persona advanced via their public work; thereby revealing both melancholy and charming discrepancies between Regions. The connotations of immediacy surrounding the oral mode - a ubiquitous style of transcription in late-Victorian periodicals that has led Amy Ruei Wong to locate the advent of a ‘secondary orality’ within its popular culture rather than in the twentieth century - seemed to support the authenticity of such betrayal. The representation of the typical distinctions of immediate face-to-face spoken-word interaction - little space-time distanciation (a facet heightened by the standard journalist-reader fusion), mutual spatial-temporal referents, immediate and seemingly unconscious responses to local stimuli - created the impression of an atmosphere of

19 Two such examples are, ‘I sat down to chat’, *Strand Magazine*, January, 1893; ‘...our chat took place’, *The Windsor Magazine*, December, 1897. ...
candidness. Journalists diligently recorded the stutters, hesitations, and pauses of both them and their subjects in seeking to effectively relay this orality. Acting as attaché for their reader, the interviewer translated and transcribed the spontaneity of this oral exchange, applying the principles of the halftone method by attempting to remove the unseemly marks of mediation, even writing (via pluralis modestiae) as if mediation had not occurred.

Through such conversations, though discrepancies were the rule, interviewers were occasionally relieved to report a lack of distinction between their subject’s public and private spheres. Comedian John Lawrence Toole, in his interview for The World, demonstrated that his private self happily correlated with the projected image:

> For to the question, ‘What is Toole like off the stage?’ there can be but one reply, ‘Funnier (if possible)’ - exalted authority will be quoted presently for the words in parentheses - ‘than he is on it.’ Fun is a feeble word to express the overflowing, energetic, and inexhaustible humour with which our prince of low comedians is endowed. Dine with him, walk, talk, ride, or sit with him and you hear dramatic and other stories of the best kind told in the best manner, and with such marvellous mimetic power that you come away with the feeling that your list of personal acquaintances has been enormously increased, and that human nature is a more eccentric thing than you had supposed.

Likewise, the interviewer of judge Francis Jeune happily reported a similar continuity: ‘to watch Sir Francis in his court and to observe him in his home results in a conviction that his geniality and justness are as thorough and thoughtful in the one place as in the other.’ The comedian and the judge were as funny and fair - if not more so - at home as in the space of public work. Likewise, journalist Robert Barr received a thank-you letter from a reader for confirming that his interviewee - writer Bret Harte - had similar concerns in his downtime as that suggested by his fiction. Such rare

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22 “‘I suppose, Mr Fraser, I suppose -’” and here I hesitated, for I knew I was treading on delicate ground - “‘I suppose, that is’.” Interview with John Foster Fraser, *Strand Magazine*, December, 1898.
25 *Strand Magazine*, January, 1894.
alignment between the two spheres - still not identical as the known facet of the public sphere was usually just more pronounced in the private (as with Toole) - aroused universal admiration. Late Victorians however, as we saw in the previous chapter, expected and sought duality.27

Indeed, mirroring the piercing intention of contemporary biography that sought to reveal the internal machinations of the psyche, more often than not, significant discrepancies were discussed. Sometimes these resembled the sombre tone of posthumous life-writing. Comic actor William Sydney Penley, for instance, revealed during his interview with The Idler that he grew up wanting to be a respected singer, was deeply uncomfortable with the profession he became famous for, and wished to change occupation if it was not too late.28 Montagu Williams admitted to Strand Magazine that he found his position as a magistrate tiring and uninspiring.29 Likewise, actress Florence Fordyce, in a piece with The Penny Illustrated Paper, admitted that she found acting in farces ‘absolutely trying’, despite that being one of her key genres of performance.30 Prominent late-Victorian interviewer Chris Healy noted such odd revelations of the private sphere in his memoirs:

Gladstone was prouder of his scholarship than he was of his political success; Huxley, discontented with his eminence as a man of science, posed as an instructor of theology; William Morris held his poetic and artistic fame as naught, and pined to be a man of the people, smoking shag tobacco and drinking ‘four ale’... A great man might be bored by his own special talent or genius, but one could always approach him on the side of his foible, his hobby, or his weakness.31

The lauded informality and spontaneity of chat revealed such dual identities.

Just as the biographer claimed to reach depths that the closest intimates never did, so the interviewing journalist aimed at such unparalleled penetration. As a contributor to The Morning Post in 1886 wrote: ‘Everyone, in fact, under the genial influence of a really accomplished interviewer

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28 The Idler, January, 1894.

29 Strand magazine, July, 1891.

30 The Penny Illustrated Paper, February 09, 1895.

comes out in a new light, and reveals “hidden fires” little suspected beforehand by either friends or foes.\footnote{The Morning Post, November 15, 1886.} The implication was that any interview which did not reveal discrepancies was a result more of poor journalism than a genuine consistency of selfhood on the subject’s part. Admissions of personal and formerly private unhappiness reflected this revelatory aspect. As this extract from an interview with Émile Zola evidences:

Do not imagine that I do not frequently suffer deeply, that I am not wounded, and that I do not feel mortified and become discouraged... These are passing clouds, but they are not pleasant, I can assure you.\footnote{The Idler, July, 1893.}

In a \textit{Cheltenham Chronicle} piece, Lillie Langtry, when asked about the status of her six brothers - four of whom had died young - began weeping and had to put the interview on pause (the journalist’s choice to mention rather than gloss over the pause evidences the performatively un-performed nature of the published exchange).\footnote{My use of the term ‘performatively’ is not to necessarily suggest cynicism on the part of the journalist, merely being a compromise to reflect the virtual impossibility of reading such intent. The \textit{Cheltenham Chronicle}, August 29, 1882.} Similarly, in an interview with the \textit{Edinburgh Evening News}, Gladstone began weeping when he read, in his own library, a book narrating the occupation and submission of the Irish by the British.\footnote{Edinburgh Evening News, March 03, 1891. This performance undoubtedly ties in with Gladstone’s broader political career, but the overt performance of emotion, the ‘loss of control’, is striking.} Open performances of passion are striking considering the moral emphasis placed on the ‘management’ and ‘cultivation’ of the feelings promoted within broader Victorian culture.\footnote{Charles Bray, \textit{The Education of the Feelings}, 4th edn (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1872) (Original publication in 1838); Cited in Gesa Steadman, \textit{Stemming the Torrent: Expression and Control in the Victorian Discourses on Emotions}, 1830-1872 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2002), p. 137.} Interviewers - unlike the biographer who sought to retrieve for history such sombre emotions once the subject had passed - eagerly provoked, recorded, and transcribed lively demonstrations of pathos.

Anxiety surrounding public work was a common source of complaint. Hilda Spong revealed, in an interview with \textit{The Penny Illustrated Paper}, that she suffered dreadfully from stage fright: ‘suppose they don’t like me?’\footnote{The Penny Illustrated Paper, September 12, 1896.} Similarly, pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski - in wording that (consciously or not)
emphasised the paradoxical nature of such open secrets - confessed to *The Woman at Home*, ‘although it is *not noticeable to the general public*, I am a martyr to nervousness.’

Dorothy Stanley admitted to awful anxiety around her artistic work and public life, producing a common sensation of ‘cold water running down one’s back’. Such concessions of unease surrounding the public professional life were particularly pertinent in a culture that drew direct and meaningful lines between creative output and personal selfhood - the analysis of Shakespeare’s face and habits were thought to inform his plays at least as much as the actual text did. Consequently, the nervousness of an actor or painter was not an incidental novelty but was directly relevant to how such creative productions were to be interpreted and received. The interpretation of a painting was incomplete without knowing how anxious the artist was in creating it.

Clearly having entered interviews with this hermeneutic approach that saw no distinction between life and work, in 1891 an unnamed journalist for *The Women’s Herald* talked about the dangers of meeting literary celebrities because of such discrepancies discovered via chat:

> Writers, as most of us have discovered to our disappointment, are not always as delightful as their works. We meet the man whose novel has been greeted by the critics with a chorus of praise, and possibly find that, as far as externals go, he is the most commonplace of mortals. His words are neither wise nor witty in a pre-eminent degree, he is an unattractive, quiet person like ourselves, who sends would-be hero-worshippers home with the feeling that the gilt has been taken off the gingerbread and that it will henceforth be impossible to read the ‘book of the season’ with as whole-heart a relish as when the writer was unknown.

An amusing novelist was expected, by virtue of his professional life, to radiate wit naturally in his everyday speech - just as John Lawrence Toole was pleasingly found to be comical off-stage. This supposition of convergence helps explain Chris Healey’s disappointment upon finding that Émile Zola

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38 ‘Paderewski: An Illustrated Interview,’ *The Woman at Home*. [The Gale 19th Century UK Periodicals database offers no more information on this piece, though it must be from between 1893 and 1901 as the periodical started in the former year and the database ended in the latter]. [My emphasis]

39 *Woman’s Herald*, November 21, 1891.


41 *The Woman’s Herald*, January 03, 1891.
was slow and dull in conversation. Yet, the discovery of the disparate self (the ‘Mr Hyde’ so-to-speak) via conversation was not exclusively a cause for disappointment. The interview was not as overbearingly morose as its posthumous counterpart due both to the lack of grandiosity brought on by mortality as well as the celebrity’s far greater ability to participate in their presentation. There is a lightness of tone not found in the morbid biographies of the era.

Indeed, the usual discoveries of a divided self could serve as a source of amusement rather than concern, a cheerful avenue through which to discover the interviewee’s ‘personality’ - a relatively new psychological concept denoting the irreducible essence of individuals that unconsciously expressed itself externally via interests and behavioural traits. Raymond Blathwayt, aware that Cardinal Manning carried the cold nickname of ‘The Marble Arch’, found the clergyman to be surprisingly warm and friendly in their meeting. H. Rider Haggard, in his discussion of anything but literature, was revealed to be ‘a country gentleman by profession and a novelist by accident’. An 1898 interview with biographer and historian J. Beattie Crozier revealed that he himself had little interest in reading such intellectually challenging works, preferring more low-brow fun in his free time. Spontaneity - ‘talking about almost everything under the sun’ - was thought to get to the heart of personalities. This was a cause for complaint among some celebrities such as writer Ouida, who despised the interviewer’s apparent need ‘to know what any famous person eats, drinks, and wears, in what way he sins and in what manner he sorrows, than it does to rightly measure and value his picture, his position, his romance, or his poem.’ Yet, the inclusion of such apparently incidental details in narratives directly informed professional output, highlighted the fractured aspect of the late-Victorian self, and - as touched upon by Susan Stewart and Roland Barthes

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42 Healey, Confessions, p. 128.
44 Blathwayt, Interviews, p. 103.
45 Strand Magazine, January, 1892.
47 Quotation from a journalist interviewing for The Penny Illustrated Paper, August 10, 1895.
through their work on the effects of ‘excessive’ description in narratives - injected a specific historicity, a fixed temporality, that heightened the sensations of orality and authenticity.\textsuperscript{49} In only a real lived experience would such specificities be recorded. Concordantly, this interest in the small commonalities of the otherwise marked celebrities paralleled the post-Romantic notion that genius was paradoxically personal and universal, eccentric and representative, ubiquitous yet vanishingly rare.\textsuperscript{50} The late-Victorian celebrity - through their public and private self respectively - was similarly both extraordinary (public) and extra-ordinary (private).\textsuperscript{51}

Consequently, a high capital was placed on the pleasantly mundane aspects of the private sphere. Lord Chief Justice Cockburn was revealed to love the opera, actor Johnston Forbes-Robertson recalled his joy in painting and collecting art treasures, while painter Hubert Von Herkomer pursued cycling and croquet.\textsuperscript{52} Many proudly presented their pets for illustration and photographing.\textsuperscript{53} The topic of diet was regularly broached. Astronomer George Biddell Airy admitted to loving pork and pease-pudding, while performer J. W. Craig made much of his fondness for a regular midday stout alongside his heavy potato-laden lunch.\textsuperscript{54} Along these lines, harmless indulgences (‘in what ways he sins’) were also discussed. The Bishop of London, for example, excused his love of smoking tobacco through a self-diagnosed nervous temperament, while George Augustus Sala’s taste for cigars was framed as a passion of selective refinement.\textsuperscript{55} These wide varieties of interests, leisure activities, and passions were - in the ‘self-culture’ discourse of the broader society - thought to construct a well-


\textsuperscript{52} Edmund Yates, \textit{Celebrities at Home: Third Series}, p. 113; \textit{Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper}, February 24, 1895; \textit{Strand Magazine}, April, 1900.

\textsuperscript{53} For instance, Morell Mackenzie’s dog ‘Morwitz’ and Ellen Terry’s dog ‘Fussie’. See \textit{How, Interviews}.

\textsuperscript{54} Edmund Yates, \textit{Celebrities at Home: Third Series}, p. 18; \textit{The Penny Illustrated Paper}, August 19, 1893.

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Strand Magazine}, November, 1899; \textit{How, Interviews}, p. 188. Such a view into the particular tastes and vices of famous figures, as Barry King has observed, furthers the process of humanisation. ‘Stardom, Celebrity and the Para-confession’, \textit{Social Semiotics}, 18:2 (2008), p.124.
rounded individual; cultured yet worldly. 56 This cultural totem, the polymath for whom ‘[e]verything they attempt to do they do it well’, functioned as a marker of both personal and professional success that rejected excessive emphasis on any single aspect of life. 57 Benjamin Stone, a member of the House of Commons, was not just a politician but also ‘a traveller, a writer, and a scientist’. 58 Celebrities presented and were represented as such multi-dimensional figures; the fractured self par excellence.

Naturally, for the journalist seeking to bring out their subject’s day-to-day expressions, conversation turned to the topic of daily routines. Such discussions of the everyday were inevitably somewhat prescriptive, particularly with the Victorian tradition of self-help via exemplar, but, like other such details, they also suggested the existence of a fully realised human-being; dynamic in his spheres and grounded in temporality. 59 For instance, Cardinal Manning revealed that his long day began at half seven and ended at half eleven, with dinner at one-thirty and tea at seven. 60 Sir John Hutton’s day, by contrast, began at the office from ten-to-seven, followed by two hours extra work at home in preparation for the multitude of committees he chaired. 61 This emphasis on the more humdrum daily activities was particularly apparent in interviews with female celebrities, where minute details of the private domestic sphere - the domain of women - took clear precedence over the public activities they were famous for. 62 The conspicuous absence of servants in all interviews - as will be discussed later on - further emphasised the domestic role of the female interviewee. She, rather than any hired hand, was the spiritual heart of the home.

57 Article on ‘Self-Culture’, The Evening Telegraph, January 06, 1881.
58 The Windsor Magazine, December, 1897.
60 Strand Magazine, July, 1891.
61 The Penny Illustrated Paper, December, 1895.
Careers played second fiddle to raising children. ‘Mrs. Reeves,’ noted her interviewer, ‘is essentially a domestic woman, spending far more time on her decorating taste, children and needlework skills than her writing career.’ 63 ‘She devotes herself entirely,’ *Windsor Magazine* wrote of Edna Lyall, ‘to the little ones and their games, and enjoys it as much as any of them’. 64 Mrs Ormiston Chant, in an 1888 interview with *The Woman’s Penny Paper*, was portrayed as only feeling truly fulfilled and at peace in the domestic hearth. Her famous career, the cause of her celebrity, was imagined almost as a burden: ‘The one drawback which Mrs Chant feels about her life as a speaker is the time that it obliges her to spend away from husband and home’. 65 Unlike the male interviewee who was generally allowed more continuity between the selves, stark and conflicting discrepancies of identity between the famous public sphere and domestic private sphere act as key identifiers of the female interview.

These various miseries, joys, interests, habits, and identities of celebrities revealed in interview chat - labelled ‘scoops’ - were regularly circulated in newspapers across the country. 66 Series such as ‘Five Minutes with the Famous’ in *Chums*, ‘Chat of the Gossips’ in *The Penny Illustrated Paper*, ‘Notes Mainly Personal’ in *The Evening Telegraph*, ‘Personal Pars’ in the *Western Mail*, ‘Gossip On Men and Things’ in *The Hampshire Advertiser*, ‘Told of Celebrities’ in the *Hampshire Telegraph*, ‘Fashions and Celebrities’ in the *Coventry Herald*, and ‘Chit Chat’ in the *Evening Telegraph* disseminated the revelations mined by interviewers. 67 The type of tea that Ellen Terry liked to drink, as revealed in an interview, was notoriously pronounced in many papers. 68 The words of H. G. Wells in an interview

64 *The Windsor Magazine*, January, 1895.
65 *The Women’s Penny Paper*, December 01, 1888.
67 *Chums*, March 06, 1895; *The Penny Illustrated Paper*, March 13, 1886; *The Evening Telegraph*, May 19, 1891; *Western Mail*, May 22, 1891; *The Hampshire Advertiser*, October 24, 1891; *Hampshire Telegraph*, September 22, 1894; *The Penny Illustrated Paper*, January 09, 1892; *Coventry Herald*, December 23, 1892; *Evening Telegraph and Star*, November 01, 1894.
68 *The Lancaster Gazette*, March 08, 1884.
were used in an advertisement for Schweitzer’s *Cocoatina*. Contemporary advice books on conversation and social skills encouraged readers who struggled with informal chat to research in newspapers and discuss ‘small details about personages great either in position or intellect’ for a topic of common ground. A. G. C. Liddell, an Edwardian autobiographer who had been heavily involved in late-Victorian Society, recalled how such snippets of information from interviews would be passed around the social network at parties as a matter of common knowledge. Indeed, as Lauren Mccoy has noted, interviewing journalists deliberately utilised the informal discourse of personal gossip in their writing styles, relaying open secrets to readers as a whispering intimate. Joshua Gamson has described twentieth-century celebrities as ‘neighbours whom nearly everyone knows’, and this framing is similarly apt for Victorian figures. As art critic Gleeson White noted in 1895: ‘a new public takes the old interest in scandal and tittle tattle; but thanks to increased opportunities, its scandal-loving gossip concerns a nation of celebrities and nobodies instead of being limited to a parish.’ Discoveries made via chat spread through chat on a national scale.

Secondly, another, more covert, way in which the journalist interpreted the private for the public was through the reading of personality via the celebrity’s physical frame - particularly the face. As noted in the first chapter, the practice of physiognomy (or phrenology when concerned solely with the facial features) was a popular means of locating the unique and inherent essence of a subject beyond the stifling impositions of societal norms. Such a technique of internal interpretation suited the interviewer perfectly. ‘Mrs. Ward need not have told me that determination was one of her characteristics. If determination were ever written on a face, it is on hers,’ remarked Ralph W.

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69 *Daily News*, October 7, 1899.
71 Contents of magazines were discussed in shops, homes, and pubs. Beegan, *The Mass Image*, p. 23.
Maude in an interview for *Strand Magazine*.76 ‘John Burns carries his better qualities written in his face’, asserted Raymond Blathwayt, ‘[i]t is a charming face, strong, rugged; a face with history written in deep lines upon it and withal a handsome cheery, breezy face.’77 Unlike in conversation, such assessments could be made for the reader before a single word was uttered.

And, as in conversation, the celebrity betrayed aspects of themselves not necessarily intended. Melancholy discrepancies came to light; the guiding principle of psychological duality (existent in all forms of late-Victorian third-party life-writing) ensured that truths of greater metaphysical depth existed beyond the obvious and explicit social presentation. Unlike Boswell, Victorians were not happy to cease their investigation at tavern banter. An interviewer of Edmund Yates, for instance, wrote: ‘He may smile when telling you of some sorrow. He doesn’t want you to know he feels it - but his eyes speak the truth.’78 ‘The gentle, quiet face’, Helen C. Black wrote of Mrs Riddell, ‘tells its tale of early struggles, heavy burdens, severe trials’.79 In Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s interview for *London Society*, her facial movements were read as betraying profound and multi-faceted artistic creativity behind a simple front:

The expression of her face suggests an amiable temperament and a kindly nature; and, like all authors who are at work on an engrossing book, there is in her eyes an occasional suggestion of introspection, which means that their owner for the moment is thinking of her work, taxed unexpectedly with a sudden idea, or worried with the vagaries of one of the fictitious characters she has created and cannot altogether control.80

The backs of hands - a popular sight of character betrayal in both contemporary painting and the practice of palmistry - were also searched for deeper suggestions of values and habits.81 Features - harbouring aspects of the self hidden even perhaps from the individuals themselves - would speak to

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76 *Strand Magazine*, October, 1898.
77 *The Idler*, January, 1893.
78 *Strand Magazine*, July, 1893.
the interviewer-reader conglomerate even if the interviewee was verbally reticent. The less explicitly a sign spoke and the more layers of interpretation required, the more revealing a claim seemed.

This analysis often blurred the line between figurative and literal expression. In a larger phrenological examination, for instance, it was said of Augustus Harris: ‘No man has a keener eye than he; no man scent a bargain quicker.’ Likewise, Helen C. Black said of Eliza Lynn Linton: ‘Her personality may be described thus: tall, upright, and stately.’ This covert reading was satirised in an 1896 piece in *Punch* when a celebrity, thinking they had given well-formed answers to the journalist’s questions, was shocked to find his representation in the paper was decidedly negative. When the celebrity confronted the interviewer, the latter explained: ‘I photographed the workings of your brain, and thus learned the secrets you would have hidden from me!’ Interviewers sought those intangible yet weighty truths which so interested contemporary biographers - the internal and independent psychological life of the mind, particularly when it contrasted with external social presentation.

Recently developed technologies of image reproduction were heavily utilised by such interviews for presenting the face to the reader for examination. With physiognomic analysis being a popular lay pursuit, the reader was invited to do some interpreting themselves: ‘He has the kindest face you ever saw’, a *Strand Magazine* interviewer wrote of actor Henry Irving, ‘but - you must look into it first’. Reinforcing the connection between visual and textual celebrity discussed in the

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82 For a contemporary investigation of the possibility of the self unknowingly containing numerous aspects, see R. Osgood Mason, *Telepathy and The Subliminal Self* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trbner & Co., 1887).
83 *Strand Magazine*, July, 1891.
85 *Punch*, February 22, 1896.
86 *Strand Magazine*, July, 1892.
autobiography chapter, of the 252 interviews consulted, 154 contained at least one visual image of 
the interviewed celebrity - usually a simple head-on or profile shot (Figures 3.4-3.7).  

87 The interviews which did not contain visual representations were generally published earlier, such as The 
World's 'Celebrities at Home'.
Figure 3.4: Bishop of Ripon
*Strand Magazine*, November, 1899.

Figure 3.5: Marion Terry
*The Penny Illustrated Paper*, January 19, 1895.

Figure 3.6: Rhoda Broughton Black, *Notable Women Authors of the Day*, p. 37.

Figure 3.7: Frank Lockwood
*The Idler*, January, 1894.
Thirdly, interviewers interpreted the home of the celebrity, viewing it as an extension of their interviewee’s selfhood, a private region to be mined for meaning. ‘A poet’s staircase,’ quipped an 1895 piece in *Punch* regarding such intrigue, ‘is more memorable than his stanzas.’ The close connection of the celebrity to their home was reflective of the increasing importance attached to the house as a representation and extension of the private individual during the Victorian era, as scholars such as John Tosh and Lori Anne Loeb have investigated. Indeed, from the mid-century onwards the Victorian middle class had become decidedly home centred, romanticising the supposedly safe space of the nuclear family shut off from the harsh outside world. The Victorian house, Michelle Perrot argues, was like a private kingdom over which the owners reigned and were protected. The household, increasingly deprived of the private economic function it served in century’s past, was valued for its negative freedom from public control, as a ‘refuge from the terrors of society’. As mentioned, servants - considered by some to be a marker of middle-class status (of which virtually all celebrities held) - were noticeably absent from interviews, reflecting the division of the home into clearly delineated master and servant sections, periodicals’ desire to address the middle-class reader, and the wish to present the celebrity as the unmediated heart of the home. Indeed, to be ‘at-home’ was a popular expression that denoted being at-ease, relaxed, and genuine. Interviewers accordingly talked of being invited into their interviewee’s ‘sanctum’,

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88 *Punch*, March 09, 1895.
94 Non-interview series like ‘Celebrities at Home’ from the *Hampshire Telegraph* discussed the relaxed personalities and hobbies of the famous, seemingly safe from the performance of the outside world and its *Theatrum Mundi*. 
‘sanctuary’, or ‘nest’.95 ‘When we come home,’ wrote J. A. Froude on the ability of the Victorian home to enable a dualistic existence, ‘we lay aside our mask and drop our tools, and are no longer lawyers, sailors, soldiers, statesmen, clergyman, but only men.’96 Concerned with the possibilities of psychological division, interviewers accordingly favoured the home as a site of discovery.

Yet, like the face, this private habitat did not just contain a lively internal life but also acted as a projection to the outside world, the embodiment of attitudes of mind and social behaviour.97 Paralleling the modern phenomenon of celebrity itself, late-Victorian middle-class homes represented a curious fusion of public projection and private revelation. As Robert Browning’s 1876 poem ‘House’ satirised:

Invite the world, as my betters have done?
"Take notice: this building remains on view,
Its suites of reception every one,
Its private apartment and bedroom too98

From the early 1870s the number of publications about home décor increased markedly in Britain, with such activity becoming a popular leisure hobby for men and increasingly women by the century’s end.99 Professional decorators promised to help the dweller express their individuality in the home while remaining contemporarily fashionable.100 Accordingly, a near-ubiquitous sentiment among interviewers entering the home was the notion that it ‘reflected its owner’s cultured and

95 Interview with John Burns, The Penny Illustrated Paper, November 26, 1892; Interview with Rhoda Broughton, Black, Notable Women, p. 40; Interview with George Jacobi, The Penny Illustrated Paper, May 25, 1895.
refined taste’ and was ‘distinctly characteristic’ of the owner’s ‘refinement and personality.’\footnote{First quotation from interview with Henrietta Muller, Woman’s Herald, November 28, 1891; Second quotation from Interview with Edna Lyall, The Windsor Magazine, January, 1895.} An interviewer, for instance, asserted that within Mark Twain’s custom-designed house, ‘dwell more humour and gravity commingled than probably there is to be found in any other house in the world.’\footnote{Blathwayt, Interviews, p. 182.} As a result of this connection, a small industry of tourist investigation surrounding the homes of the famous sprang up.\footnote{‘House of Interest’ series in Hearth and Home. The arrival of celebrities’ houses on the market were widely reported. Report of J. A. Froude’s former house on the market, The Standard, September 19, 1896. Publishing houses released many works investigating the former or current homes of the famous. Mary Monica Maxwell Scott, Abbotsford: The Personal Relics and Antiquarian Treasures of Sir Walter Scott (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1893); Francis Richard Cruise, Thomas À Kempis, Notes of a Visit to the Scenes in which his Life was Spent (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1887); Elbert Hubbard, Little Journeys to the Homes of Good Men and Great (New York and London: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1895); The Suburban Homes of London: A Residential Guide to Favourite London Localities, Their Societies, Celebrities and Associations (London: Chatto & Windus, 1881). For more on this, see Alison Booth, Homes and Haunts: Touring Writers’ Shrines and Countries (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).}

Due to this broader cultural connection between home and self, descriptions of the house weaved seamlessly into discussions of the interviewee. This was true for both male and female interviewees as the decoration of the home was a largely unisex activity (though increasingly feminine by the century’s end).\footnote{Cohen, Household Gods, p.99.} Harry How referred both to Morell Mackenzie and his home when he stated: ‘the distinctly dismal impression created by "outside appearances" disappears when once the door has been opened and opportunities are afforded of exploring the "interior."’\footnote{How, Interviews, p. 198.} An interviewer for The Pall Mall Gazette observed of Lillie Langtry’s drawing-room: ‘That room, like its mistress, is original and unique’.\footnote{The Pall Mall Gazette, October 29, 1892.} ‘It is the home of a man who wants to work,’ an interviewer of artist Henry Stace Marks commented, ‘[t]here is not a room in the place that is not characteristic of the man who uses it.’\footnote{How, Interviews, p. 233.} Fun magazine, in an interview with Sarah Bernhardt, described her new London home: ‘Though she had been in London but 48 hours, it was already permeated, so to speak, with her presence.’\footnote{Fun, June 11, 1879.}
This connection was also represented in images showcasing the subject embedded in the minutiae of the home (Figures 3.8-3.12).\textsuperscript{109} In such shots, though present, the celebrity is not the centrepiece of the image, merely another object contained within the often-cluttered rooms that represented their larger metaphysical self. This fusing of the two - a visual manifestation of the break down in distinction between the figurative and literal - was reflected in the contemporary popularity of the term ‘household’, which, in the words of artist William Bell Scott, seemed to make the inhabitants ‘a part of the domicile itself’.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{109} How, Interviews, p. 116; How, Interviews, p. 245.

\textsuperscript{110} Autobiographical Notes of the Life of William Bell Scott, And Notices of his Artistic and Poetic Circle of Friends 1830 to 1882, ed. by W. Minto, 2 vols (London: James R. Osgood, 1892), I, p. 25.
Figure 3.9: Charles Haddon Spurgeon in home.
*The Review of Reviews*, V, 1892.

Figure 3.10: Marcus Stone in home.
*The Idler*, July, 1894.

Figure 3.11: Baroness Von Zedlitz in home.
*The Woman at Home*, [[date unknown, between 1893-1899]].

Figure 3.12: Ellen Terry in home.
Bolstered by positivist axioms, the interviewer played psychologist, phrenologist, detective, and interpreter for the reader, with whom they made sure to consistently establish a clear and intimate textual connection. The signs raised via conversation, facial movements, and the environment of the home were all transcribed and dissected for their meaning, presented to a consumer imagined either as interchangable with the journalist or as a close confidant. The journalist - playing the contemporary life-writer, the counterpart to the posthumous biographer - utilised these externalities to grasp at the internalities, the essence of the interviewee in an era increasingly concerned, as we saw in the previous chapter, with the solitary psychological life capable of clashing with public presentation. Discrepancies between public and private spheres in particular were an avenue through which to discover the personality, the unconscious expression and extension of the inherent self - the secular soul. Yet, despite such seemingly invasive and liberal interpretation, it cannot be presumed that the celebrity interviewee was merely a passive victim in the proceedings. Accordingly, the next section will examine how autonomous and influential the intermediary and celebrity were in the production of these media rituals.

Attraction and Tension in the Celebrity-Journalist Relationship

‘The new journalist talks as much about himself as the events he is describing.’

This section will look at the power dynamics of the interviewer-interviewee relationship, the cautious tug-of-war engaged in by both parties. In particular, we will examine how the meetings were set up, the popular pejorative image of the intrusive journalist, the ways in which celebrities - in contrast to the passive image proposed by some - acted with autonomy in the interactions, and how interviewing journalists had by the final decades of the century become celebrities in their own right. In contrast to the stronger influence of the biographer writing of a deceased celebrity explored

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111 Nineteenth Century, XLII, 1897; Cited in Beegan, The Mass Image, p. 132.
in the previous chapter, this section will demonstrate how the interview - in many ways the Victorian biography of the still living - was a far more collaborative process that allowed for input (even occasionally direct editorial input) by the subject. Though adversarial at times, interviewers and interviewees needed each other and cooperated in a symbiotic interdependence.

The simplest way for a journalist to arrange an interview was to apply directly via letter. In such happily straightforward instances, the journalist often began the published piece mentioning the celebrity’s acceptance of their application. For instance, an interviewer for The Windsor Magazine expressed her ‘unfeigned pleasure’ at sculptor Alice Chaplin’s ‘courteous consent’ for an interview.112 Such direct applications were most often successful when the journalist already knew the celebrity in some personal or professional realm - such as when Frank M. Boyd arranged an interview with his personal friend the Bishop of Rochester.113 Yet, it was often not so simple. Rejection was not uncommon, meaning journalists had to be wily in their requests. Arthur Lawrence, journalist for Strand Magazine, explained how he managed to arrange a rare interview with novelist Marie Corelli (who rejected out-of-hand most applications) by framing it as a favour for her, in which he would ‘do something to negate the extraordinary caricatures of the charming novelist which so many of my “friends” on the press have so industriously circulated.’114 Lawrence wisely framed his request in terms beneficial to his celebrity. As a leading interviewer observed of this need to appeal: ‘Most “celebrities” are busy people, and though they might be quite willing for an interview to appear because the advertisement they received thereby would be beneficial to them... [they] would not care to make the necessary sacrifice of time’ for an interview unlikely to be published in any major periodical.115 The interaction’s potential benefit for the subject had to be made clear.

112 The Windsor Magazine, July, 1895.
114 Strand Magazine, July, 1898.
115 Atalanta, April 01, 1897.
Writer Charlotte Riddell, for instance, used her interview with Helen C. Black to advertise her upcoming novel *Grays Point*. Sarah Bernhardt, assailed by peculiar rumours that she had abused her pet cat, agreed to an interview with a journalist as a deliberate stunt to prove how much she cared for her animals. Journalist Robert Sherard recalled a few instances of such calculated interviews, mimicking the primary aim of the defensive memoir: ‘I pointed out to him that some sort of statement was expected of him, and that by making me the agency through which it was given to the world he would put a stop to all the inventions which were being published in connection with his name.’ The never-failing medium of the ubiquitous interviewer granted publicity, platform, and appraisal, a means of communicating to their public as autobiography was. Especially since - as noted in the previous section - excerpts from interviews were regularly quoted in national gossip columns. ‘He is their critic,’ as journalist Philip Gibbs wrote of the original late-Victorian interviewer, ‘their judge, to some extent their creator. He it is who - as a man of letters - makes them famous or infamous.’ Just as the celebrity could utilise the autobiography to self-define in posterity, the interview could also be used as a medium to influence the contemporary conversation surrounding them.

Of the celebrities that did reject interview applications it was almost invariably those in the premium levels of Society. Only they - inundated with requests from applicants of all varieties - could afford such a luxury. Sarah Bernhardt - notwithstanding the odd circumstances of the previous paragraph’s example - was so often plied with requests that, as a means of filtering out the horde, she eventually declared that she would not be interviewed by anybody that did not speak fluent French. An 1894 contributor to the *Hampshire Telegraph* touched upon this demand-supply

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116 Black, Notable Women, p. 21.
118 Sherard, Twenty Years, p. 348.
119 The Pall Mall Gazette, August 31, 1881.
120 ‘Theatrical Gossip’, featuring a quote from Madame Modjeska from an interview, The Era, December 29, 1883.
122 The Sheffield Daily Telegraph, January 19, 1892.
dynamic: ‘There are two periods in the life of successful persons - the first when they are anxious to be interviewed, the second when people are anxious to interview them.’

G. B. Burgin, remembering his late-Victorian years as a writer, recalled so many minor celebrities who would ‘vainly wait for the footstep on their uncarpeted stair of that Herald of Fame who puts them in touch with their public.’ Only later, when firmly established, could a celebrity afford to be selective in their choice of interviewers. An 1898 contributor to Atalanta, offering advice to incoming journalists, admitted this difficulty in accessing the higher-grade names: ‘The people who are best worth interviewing are by no means easy to catch, their very exclusiveness, their desire to avoid publicity, renders them the more valuable and often it is only by very circuitous routes and circumstances that they are finally captured.’ Any journalist applying for an interview with a leading celebrity was in competition with their many fellow aspirants. Accordingly, it was generally advised to start with those lower down in the pecking order of fame, leaving the bigger names to the established interviewers.

Touching upon this challenge, an 1899 piece in the Hampshire Telegraph entitled ‘The Interviewer’s Woes’, discussed at length the journalist’s typical troubles in acquiring subjects for his or her interviews. An interviewer, the contributor bemoaned, could write a letter of application, a ‘masterpiece of suppressed epigram’, only to be rejected in third person by the great man or lady’s private secretary. Plain requests without hyperbolic praise or starry-eyed awe were, the writer asserted, a waste of time. Even if an interview was arranged and a date set, ‘they wire, “to-morrow annual hair cutting; solemn function; impossible postpone; writing.” All of which is a sore trial for the interviewer, hungering and thirsting after “copy.”’ The contributor went on to list the numerous potential miseries of the interviewer: harsh weather, silent subjects, and the disdain of many

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123 Hampshire Telegraph, August 11, 1894.
124 Burgin, Memoirs, pp. 105-106. [My emphasis]
125 Atalanta, February 01, 1898.
cultural commentators. The interview process and the intricacies of its power dynamics began long before two individuals sat in a house.

If a direct application was not successful, a more roundabout method was to arrange an interview via connections with another member of celebrity Society. Harry How, for instance, managed to attain an interview with renowned actress Ellen Terry through a previous interview with fellow actor Henry Irving in which How had asked him to enquire with her whether it would be possible. Likewise, a journalist for The Penny Illustrated Paper managed a meeting with General D. S. Dodgson via friends in his social club. Demonstrating connections to celebrity Society legitimised the prospective interviewer. In other instances - usually when aware that a pre-arranged meeting was simply unfeasible - the interviewer would ‘ambush’ their celebrity at their place of work or in their daily commute. In these scenarios, journalists narrated how they ‘happened on’ or ‘found’ their subject. An 1883 interviewer for The Pall Mall Gazette, for example, ‘found’ actress Lotta Crabtree in the lounge area of a London hotel. Similarly, an 1893 interviewer for The Penny Illustrated Paper managed an interview with Albert Chevalier after a performance by going up to his back-stage dressing room to congratulate him on a success. With the pleasantries over the journalist launched seamlessly into more general enquiries. Some arrangements fell into the middle ground between pre-arranged and spontaneous, such as actress Valdine Egnal’s piece with The Star, arranged in panicked compliance before she was due to appear on stage that very night.

With competition fierce, some interviewers would go to rather extreme lengths. After being ordered by his editor to prove his journalistic prowess by arranging a piece with the notoriously

126 Hampshire Telegraph, June 3, 1899.
127 Strand Magazine, July, 1892.
128 The Penny Illustrated Paper, October 03, 1896.
129 The Penny Illustrated Paper, May 25, 1895.
130 The Pall Mall Gazette, December 22, 1883.
131 The Penny Illustrated Paper, February 11, 1893.
132 The Star, September 05, 1893.
press-avoidant Alfred Tennyson, a young journalist decided that it was best to be forceful in his application:

The young man, nothing daunted by the proverbial dislike of the Poet Laureate of any form of publicity, took up his quarters in an inn near Mr Tennyson’s home, and wrote him a letter to this effect - ‘I, too, have to live by my pen. If I can see you in your home, and you will permit me to write about what I see, my journalistic prospects will be enhanced. I will call on you tomorrow morning and send in my card, I hope you will not turn me away.’

Tennyson was impressed by the candidness of the applicant and made a rare allowance. Yet some extreme measures had less success. The Countess de Bremont, an independent interviewer, sued dramatist William Gilbert for libel after he published her terse response to his rejection to an interview request. Gilbert defended himself by stating that he had simply requested his usual fee for an interview (twenty guineas) and Bremont had refused to pay for the privilege.Explicit hostility was not uncommon.

Indeed, some famous individuals reported being tricked by journalists into giving interviews against their will. Sometimes the interviewee was not even aware that a conversation they had had with a stranger would be subsequently published, as Māori King Tāwhiao complained in an open letter to the editor of The Pall Mall Gazette:

On Saturday last a young man, who gave the name of John Morley, apparently of twenty years of age, who said that he was the personal representative of the Pall-Mall Gazette called at my present place of residence, and asked to see me... He did not tell me that my conversation would be printed in the newspaper, or that he intended to make any public use of it.

Similarly, under the impression that he could help a young man struggling with his faith, Lewis Carroll invited a correspondent to his rooms in Oxford only to discover - to his anger - the deceitful stranger was a journalist with ‘the usual questions’.

Likewise, Harry Furniss, upon admitting his

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133 The Evening Telegraph, October 17, 1892.
134 The topic of paying for an interview was rarely explicitly broached by both interviewers and interviewees. The Leeds Mercury, December 20, 1895.
135 Reproduced in The Standard, July 18, 1884.
real name to a tour guide, found his hotel room visited by an interviewer early the next morning.\footnote{Harry Furniss, \textit{The Confessions of a Caricaturist}, 2 vols (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901), II, p. 67.} American politician James G. Blaine hid in his London hotel room from a journalist who would make a show of accidentally walking into him and attempting to nonchalantly start the interview after apologising, even going so far as to get a room in the same hotel.\footnote{Sherard, \textit{Twenty Years}, p. 262.} With such instances it is clear why the earlier-referenced 1898 \textit{Atalanta} piece envisioned interviewed celebrities as ‘captured’.  

Reverend Croke, following such an interaction with an undercover interviewer who had committed the additional crime of misquoting him, wrote in a terse letter to the editor of the paper that published the piece his corrections of all of its mistakes: ‘I never was a lawyer, nor was I a missionary at the Fijis, nor Bishop of Sydney.’\footnote{\textit{Freeman’s Journal}, December 23, 1885.} Government minister Alfred Milner similarly complained that his interviewer had not just misinterpreted him but had put entirely false words and sentiments into his mouth.\footnote{\textit{Daily News}, November 23, 1899.} Others spoke of being harassed at the door of their own home. As renowned public executioner William Marwood experienced:

\begin{quote}
In a letter to a Lincolnshire paper he bitterly complains of the unwarrantable intrusion on his privacy to which he is subjected at his quiet home in Horncastle by people of all sorts. Hundreds of people - both men and women - are constantly knocking at his door ‘under all kinds of absurd excuses,’ their obvious desire being, however, to indulge in a comfortable chat with him about ‘one portion of his business.’\footnote{\textit{The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent}, December 30, 1878.}
\end{quote}

It is thus unsurprising that the 1890s saw, in the Anglo-American sphere, a discussion around laws concerning an individual’s ‘Right to Privacy’.\footnote{William Cornish, ‘Personality Rights and Intellectual Property’, in \textit{The Oxford History of the Laws of England}, ed. by Keith Smith, Raymond Cocks, William Cornish, 13 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), XIII p. 847.} The legal structure, it was felt, had failed to keep up with the exponential developments of mass communication. Such concerns over the misuse or
misrepresentation of private information mimicked the terror of the biography, with The Pall Mall Gazette recognising this link in the forms of life-writing.\footnote{143}

Such violations of privacy and trust inevitably led to backlash from certain areas of the press. The term ‘nuisance’ became intrinsically connected to the interviewing phenomenon, with many articles - even those generally favourable of the practice - acknowledging its potential to intrude.\footnote{144} The role of interviewer carried connotations of sleaze and immorality, being perceived as indicative of a New-World lack of manners.\footnote{145} English interviewers were, according to The Evening News, ‘comparatively diffident’, but still uncouth.\footnote{146} When citing information from ‘the interviewer’ inverted commas were often used by British periodicals as a knowing mark to designate its perhaps questionable nature.\footnote{147}

Leslie Stephen, though a prominent advocate for the importance of releasing private materials of posthumous celebrities, nevertheless regarded the contemporarily minded interviewer as pursuing a vulgar indulgence capable of becoming an ‘intolerable nuisance’.\footnote{148} Henry James decried the ‘invasion, the impudence and shamelessness, of the newspaper and the interviewer, the devouring publicity of life’.\footnote{149} Likewise, Oscar Wilde asserted that ‘private life should not be for public consumption.’\footnote{150} Accordingly, detractors personified the interviewer as Paul Pry - a rude intruder to whom, in the words of Eliza Lynn Linton, ‘nothing is sacred, and for whom concealment does not exist’.\footnote{151} Even some journalists, such as Reginald Auberon, regarded the practice as ‘unfit for anybody who does not happen to be a Peeping Tom by nature.’\footnote{152}

\begin{itemize}
\item [\footnote{143}] There are men who loathe the thought of the memoir-writers as much as others loathe the interviewer.’ The Pall Mall Gazette, September 28, 1899.
\item [\footnote{144}] The Huddersfield Daily Chronicle, February 27, 1893; The Leeds Times, April 20, 1878.
\item [\footnote{145}] Birmingham Daily Post, August 25, 1874. Indeed, British celebrities were warned to be particularly wary of American interviewers, Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper, May 23, 1880.
\item [\footnote{146}] The Evening News, December 07, 1883.
\item [\footnote{147}] The Pall Mall Gazette, October 15, 1886.
\item [\footnote{149}] Henry James, correspondence with a friend, 1888; Cited in Richard Salmon, Henry James and the Culture of Publicity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 3.
\item [\footnote{151}] Edinburgh Evening News, July 17, 1889.
\end{itemize}
that nodded both to the popularity of interviewing and the determined nature of competing
journalists, The Album periodical named their interview series ‘The Inevitable Interviewer’.153

Satire made much of Paul Pry. Physical depictions of the interviewer envisioned him as grasping
and intrusive, leering over covetously at their celebrity-victim (Figure 3.13). In an 1893 issue of
Funny Folks - reflecting the extra-verbal interests explored in the previous section - the pushy
interviewer demanded portraits of the subject’s entire extended family for analysis, unhappy with
the details released first-hand by the subject.154 Likewise, a poem in an 1891 edition of Fun invoked
this image of the vicious pariah:

Like pussy crawling on her way
The unsuspecting mouse to slay,
So in pursuit of wished-for prey;
The interviewer glides.155

A similar comical poem appeared in an 1894 edition of Moonshine:

‘may I step into your parlour?’
the interviewers cry
reversing the beginning of ‘The spider and the fly.’

tho’ when they get a victim - well, they suck him quite as dry.156

Interviews, in such depictions, were a one-way street.

153 The Album, April 22, 1895.
154 Funny Folks, April 15, 1893.
155 Fun, February 18, 1891.
156 Moonshine, March 03, 1894.
Indeed, a popular metaphor for the interview process was that the interviewer was attempting to ‘pull something out of’ the celebrity, to ‘draw’ details from them. These attempts to get something out of the subject despite themselves contained numerous similarities to the ‘dodges’ of the autograph hunters we shall explore in the next chapter. As an interviewer for *The Penny Illustrated Paper* admitted in a piece with the sibling owners of the Adelphi theatre: ‘Over a cotelette piquante and a glass of Geldermann’s Gold Lac, I endeavoured to draw out the Brothers Gatti.’  

Similarly, leading practitioner Frank A. Burr stated that a good interviewer ‘must know how to make him talk in spite of himself.’  

*The Era*, reporting on actress Ellen Terry, utilised ‘information, which has recently been extracted from the comedian by the irrepressible interviewer.’  

Frederick J. Higgingbottom and Albert De Courville, both reflecting on their late-Victorian experiences of interviewing, found that it was important to avoid taking notes of the conversation with the

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158 *Daily News*, September 4, 1890.  
159 *The Era*, August 20, 1887.
celebrity, that way the interviewee would be less on-guard and disclose more freely. Henri Stephan De Blowitz found that when an interviewee did reveal an important - perhaps controversial - piece of information, the journalist should remain with them some time after but change the conversation into something more banal. This stopped the celebrity from becoming nervous about the information revealed and asking the journalist not to relay it. Elizabeth Paschal refused interviews specifically because she feared the drawing power of such deliberate tactics. An 1898 poem in Funny Folks satirised this fear of the celebrity in being drawn, speaking from the point of view of a subject in the middle of an interview:

Ask me no more: the moon may draw the sea,
The bacchanal a cork, the bold and brave,
Belligerent a sword, but, wily knave,
‘For Heaven I’ll not be further drawn by thee.

With the employment of these tactics, the conversation between interviewer and interviewee - so prized for its seeming spontaneity - resembled a battlefield.

Consequently, an 1892 piece in Fun portrayed interviewers as brutally cynical and manipulative, feigning sympathy and offering crocodile tears to their interviewee in hopes that they would give up their scandalous secrets (Figure 3.14). The interaction between the two parties played out like a cautious game of chess. A line from a Strand Magazine interview with the Lord Bishop of London was telling: “‘what do you want to know?’ said his Lordship, as we stepped on to the grass. “Everything”’, said the interviewer. Interviewers would ambush their converser with unexpected queries and behave in ways that many thought overly abrasive (Figure 3.15). J. P. Blair of Strand Magazine, while ostensibly interviewing John Foster Fraser for his cycling achievements, changed

163 Funny Folks, July 08, 1893
164 Strand Magazine, November, 1899.
the subject to his new romance, prompting the interviewee to cry: “Look here... that isn’t fair; we were to talk about cycling round the world, not my matrimonial experiences.” Female interviewers were commonly said to have had an upper hand at ‘drawing’ the celebrity, since they more naturally induced a feeling of ease and trust.166 This may explain why, besides his support for women’s suffrage, W. T. Stead employed as many female interviewers as men in The Pall Mall Gazette and The Review of Reviews.167 In 1897 the Society for Women Journalists was treated to a two-act vaudeville featuring ‘Dora’, who sang:

    With my pencil and my pocket book
    I’m ready for the fray,
    And I make a note of everything
    That comes along my way.
    What’s that? Down it goes,
    It never must be missed,
    It’s naughty, but it’s copy for,
    The lady journalist.168

Even practitioners did not shy away from the piercing nature of their work.

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165 *Strand Magazine*, December, 1898.
Figures 3.14: A depiction of the sympathy the interviewer would feign in order to get a celebrity to confess a controversial scoop.

*Fun, January 13, 1892.*
With this commonly-imagined adversarial relationship, ideas developed on how to best deal with the intrusive interviewer, such as this admiring piece in the *Evening Telegraph* regarding a popular American spiritualist: ‘A gentleman of the Press called upon him and asked him whether he wished to deny the current reports. “He replied that he had nothing to say, wished me “Good Evening,” and showed me the door.”’¹⁶⁹ Christina Rossetti, upon being asked for an interview regarding her poetic influences, responded in a combative mood: ‘The difficulty will encounter you - if, that is, you ever

¹⁶⁹ *Evening Telegraph*, October 30, 1888.
nerve yourself to encounter it - one stage further on, when even your skill as an interviewer may fail to discover my poetic schooling.'\textsuperscript{170} Chinese politician Li Hongzhang would scare away interviewers by aggressively interviewing them back.\textsuperscript{171} Writer Martin Tupper took to noting all of the conversations he had with journalists as a precaution so that misquotations could be deflected.\textsuperscript{172} Frank Boyd recalled being punched by prize fighter John L. Sullivan for asking too many questions.\textsuperscript{173} Of Lord Chief Justice Cockburn, upon his arrival in the United States for a visit, it was reported proudly in the British press that he had ‘triumphantly resisted the persistent siege of newspaper interviewers’.\textsuperscript{174} Likewise, in a piece entitled ‘Dodging the Interviewers’ in \textit{The Weekly Standard}, Joseph Chamberlain had on his arrival by ship in Liverpool refused to let any press on board or on the route to his hotel, evading the journalists as deftly as possible.\textsuperscript{175}

Yet, for all their stated detestation of the interview format, many celebrities seem to have been conscious of the importance - even necessity - of the format in terms of self-publicity. Thus, protests could appear a tad overzealous, particularly as the ability to refuse journalists was viewed as a marker of status. The following 1897 piece in \textit{Punch} portrayed such a falsely reluctant celebrity interviewee:

‘If there is one thing that I hate more than another,’ said the eminent author, ‘it is being interviewed. My nature is the most modest and retiring one imaginable... No: I simply refuse to be interviewed by any journalist - ‘In that case,’ I said, rising to leave, ‘I will not trouble you further.’ To my surprise, the Eminent Author locked the door and placed his back against it. ‘Don’t be foolish,’ he said, irritably, ‘and let me finish my sentence.’\textsuperscript{176}

A similar satire of false reluctance was published just a month later, in which the celebrity pretended to flee from the invited journalist:

On my announcing myself at his door, he at once took refuge in flight, and it was only after a heated chase that I ran him down in the cupboard beneath the kitchen stairs... ‘Perhaps, if

\textsuperscript{171} \textit{Edinburgh Evening News}, August 15, 1894.
\textsuperscript{172} Martin Farquhar Tupper, \textit{My Life as An Author} (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1886), p. 308.
\textsuperscript{173} Boyd, \textit{A Pelican’s Tale}, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{174} \textit{Berrow’s Worcester Journal}, September 29, 1883.
\textsuperscript{175} \textit{The Weekly Standard and Express}, November 18, 1893.
\textsuperscript{176} \textit{Punch}, September 18, 1897.
you are so averse to being interviewed -,’ I began but a frown on the great writer’s bow arrested me. ‘No,’ he said, ‘don’t go. You see, a little chase after me lends an added zest to the interviewer’s keenness for copy’.177

Caricaturist Harry Furniss likewise satirised the celebrity that complained of the plague of interviewers yet sought them at every turn (Figure 3.16). From this more cynical viewpoint, the protestations against interviewing may have been, at least in some instances, a means of furthering one’s position. Only the most famous could possibly turn down an interview.

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177 *Punch*, October 16, 1897.
Indeed, celebrities were certainly not entirely reactive in their engagement with interviewers. On the contrary, interviewees often took the lead in discussions and shaped the interaction geographically. Before the beginning of her piece with *The Penny Illustrated Paper*, actress Letty Lind insisted that the journalist take a walk around her large garden populated by apple and pear trees, guiding the physical location of the interaction for the rest of their meeting.\(^\text{178}\) Henry Irving

\(^\text{178}\) *The Penny Illustrated Paper*, April 29, 1893.
appointed his own ‘official’ interviewer - as one would appoint a biographer - in order to defend against the many seeking to converse with him. As in autobiography, celebrities were usually proactive in selecting and even providing the visual images published. In addition, it was regarded as good practice by some prominent interviewers to send a draft of the piece to the celebrity before publication so that they could give their own approval, meaning they sometimes played a direct role in the interview’s very composition. Indeed, as Burgin stated, ‘[t]he one great rule in interviewing is always to give your "subject" the "copy" to correct,’ though this noble-minded handing over of control to the celebrity ‘invariably knocks out the most interesting experience, the best anecdote, the most striking incident.’ By doing this (though it is important to remember that many journalists did not offer such a courtesy), the celebrity robbed the interviewer of the pre-emptive power of transcription. Thus, the interviewee, rather than being solely a passive player, often directly contributed to both the final visual and textual publication.

Once again, contemporary satire best evidences awareness of celebrity autonomy and initiative in the interview process. An 1888 piece in *Punch*, this time from the point of view of the famous interviewee, found the subject preparing thoroughly for the eventual visit: ‘I pondered for hours over my past life, and called to mind its most telling incidents. I arranged my house in the most artistic fashion, and awaited events rather anxiously.’ Likewise, an 1891 piece in *Judy* depicted a celebrity with an imminent interview preparing the presentation of their life story:

> Wonder if I’m letter perfect, or fluffy, in my lines, let me see! - ‘Born in the year so-and-so!’ Yes, that’s near enough: doesn’t matter to a year or two. ‘First joined the profession at Such-and-such-town. Then accepted an engagement at - ‘must say ‘accepted’; ‘was then specially engaged at the Duke of Edinburgh’s Theatre, Blackheath’ - must say ‘specially engaged.’ Always better biz. Must not drop anything about my seven-eighths of a penny bankruptcy,

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179 *Western Mail*, August 25, 1883.
180 Each interviewee in Helen C. Black’s collection was asked to submit a headshot. Black, *Notable Women*, pp. ix-x.
181 *The Idler*, January, 1896.
183 None of the published interviews indicate whether they were edited by the celebrity or not. The only reliable and consistent source on this seems to be the memoirs of interviewers.
184 *Punch*, August 04, 1888.
or of my last appearance as co-respondent in the good old drama Divorce. I don’t know, though! Good advertisement, perhaps! But, hist! he comes! (Re-poses). 185

Other satirical pieces focused on the celebrity’s careful framing of the home and how they meticulously prepared it for the interviewer’s analysis of their taste, as this 1893 image in Funny Folks poked fun at (Figure 3.17). In this sense, the celebrity used the interviewer as much as the interviewer used them. ‘Come to me!’ an 1895 piece in Punch had a fictional celebrity write to an interviewer, ‘I fear ye not. It is ye who confer celebrity.’ 186

Figure 3.17: A Funny Folks image satirising the celebrities’ preparation of the home for the interviewer.

Finally, when discussing the interviewer-interviewee power dynamic, it is important not to forget the fact that interviewers themselves - particularly as from the 1860s anonymous journalism became increasingly unfashionable - were acquiring the status of celebrity. 187 It is here where the triptych

185 Judy, May 27, 1891.
186 Punch, May 25, 1895.
points of media and celebrity merge. Mrs Claude Beddington remembered late-Victorian Society house parties in which the literary figures of the day such as Alfred Austin and Oscar Wilde mixed freely with the leading distinguished journalists. The dinner parties of Moberly Bell, writer for *The Times*, were known as an ‘institution’ in London Society. Likewise, the ‘Cock’ and ‘Old Albion’ taverns opposite Fleet Street were drinking holes in which leading journalists could mix with the likes of Tennyson, while a social club specifically for journalists called ‘The Scribblers’ allowed them to network among each other. Prominent interviewer for *Strand Magazine*, Harry How, had a hugely popular lecture tour across Britain entitled ‘Interviews and Interviewing’. Alongside a short and admiring biography, a Birmingham newspaper praised his ability to carry the audience ‘from house to house and from town to country’ into the hearts of numerous celebrities. Just as biography might be read for the biographer rather than the subject, so individual interviewers were known for their distinctive styles.

Raymond Blathwayt - as suggested by his clear distinction between himself and the anonymous reader - was particularly notorious for such self-concern. As a colleague noted: ‘Blathwayt’s personality was often more striking than that of the person whom he interviewed’. Most others - though utilising nosisms in order to fuse themselves with readers - nevertheless developed consistent styles and approaches. Reginald Auberson, who was far more descriptive than dialogical, stated that ‘my “interviews,”... were not of the stereotyped description... but were, rather, descriptive articles dealing with personalities and their surroundings.’ Burgin’s interviews usually consisted of one long monologue quoted from the celebrity with minimal input from himself, while Robert Barr would, similarly to Blathwayt, distinctly place himself and his tastes in much of the

191 *The Dart*, May 25, 1894.
narrative. An 1882 piece in the *Manchester Times* compared two markedly different interviews with poet Henry Longfellow, noting how one piece was far kinder to the subject than the other, constructing an entirely different writer. The interviewee was not presented in a vacuum but as a formation of their intermediary (or both parties if the piece was checked before publication).

Consistent tropes reappeared across a journalist’s corpus. Harry How enjoyed experimenting with different interviewing styles, setting out one piece with actor-manager Charles Wyndham in the form of a play, including stage directions and dialogue. The interviews of Rudolph de Cordova were characterised by their interest in the health and fitness habits of his subjects. Some were willing to overtly disagree with their interviewee. The assertive Blathwayt, for instance, spent much of his piece with activist John Burns criticising his atheism, portrayed preacher Doctor Parker as bumptious, and depicted Father Ignatius as overly self-important. F. J. Gould claimed that ‘I had scarcely been ten minutes in Mrs Linton’s presence before I was contradicting her with such bluntness that I felt bound to apologise.’ While others, such as Edmund Yates, never dared disagree so overtly. Subjects were merely one aspect of many that influenced how the final piece turned out.

These distinctions of style were particularly apparent in the author-centred compilations of interviews released. Helen C. Black began all of her interviews with a detailed description of the journey towards the subject’s home, devoting at least a page of narrative covering only herself before introducing the subject. Subsequently the collection in-full reveals much of her own tastes and whims. Similarly, both How and Blathwayt had compilations of their interviews taken from numerous journals printed by major publishers, with an admiring introduction by writer Grant Allen.

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195 *Manchester Times*, August 26, 1882.
196 *Strand Magazine*, January, 1894.
197 *Strand Magazine*, February, 1901; *Strand Magazine*, November, 1899.
200 See Black, *Notable Women*. 
in the latter’s collection.\textsuperscript{201} As is clear from the advertising and presentation of these publications, the centrepieces were not the individual celebrities explored episodically, but the overarching commonality, the interviewing journalist with their distinct personality and autonomy expressed consistently in every piece. Just as subjects came to become a part of the biographer’s corpus, so interviewees became an item of the interviewer. Not Besant, but Blathwayt’s Besant.

‘We are all respectable nowadays,’ wrote Frank Frankfurt Moore on the status of journalists at the end of the century (perhaps overstating it slightly), ‘[w]e belong to a recognised profession.’\textsuperscript{202} Indeed, journalism had become an attractive and somewhat romanticised role.\textsuperscript{203} In national censuses on occupation, the number of editors and journalists (listed under the same heading) repeatedly rose; 2,443 in 1871, 3,434 in 1881, and 5,771 in 1891.\textsuperscript{204} There was an average of thirty-one journalist MPs in every parliament after 1880.\textsuperscript{205} Self-help books, bespoke schools, and the National Society of Journalists (formed in 1884) gave practical advice on how to gain connections and advance in the role.\textsuperscript{206} A. A. Reade’s \textit{A Guide to Practical Journalism} (1885) devoted a chapter to teaching newcomers how to make famous connections and interview effectively.\textsuperscript{207} ‘The thrill of chasing the new “story,” the interest of getting into the middle of life,’ Philip Gibbs wrote of the attractions of journalism, ‘the meetings with heroes, drew me back to Fleet Street as a strong magnet.’\textsuperscript{208} Chris Healey admitted in his autobiography that he entered the profession largely for the fame it promised, trying mainly to work as an interviewer - one who ‘came into intimate contact with men of achieved success in art, literature, and politics’ - as this seemed the fastest route to his

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{201} See How, \textit{Illustrated Interviews}; Blathwayt, \textit{Interviews}.
\bibitem{202} Frank Frankfurt Moore, \textit{A Journalist’s Note-Book} (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1894), p. 3.
\bibitem{203} ‘The journalist, like the poet, is born, not made’, asserted an anonymous late-Victorian journalist in his reminiscences. \textit{Bohemian Days}, p. 19.
\bibitem{205} Waller, \textit{Writers}, p. 108.
\bibitem{207} A. A. Reade, \textit{A Guide to Practical Journalism} (London: Wyman and Sons, 1885), ch. 5.
\bibitem{208} Gibbs, \textit{Adventures in Journalism}, pp. 2-3.
\end{thebibliography}
goal. Reginald Auberson, when he first came to London, wrote admiring letters to his famous journalistic idols W. T. Stead and Max Pemberton asking for advice about getting involved in the journalistic profession (the former was discouraging, the latter less so). The role was also desired as financial compensation - if work was constant - could be lucrative. For instance, when the standard lower middle class weekly income was sixty shillings, a standard payment from a periodical for a journalist’s interview piece was five guineas (105 shillings).

Just as the celebrity knew their status was on the rise when they could begin to turn down interviews, so interviewers knew they were garnering fame when they could turn down offers - both directly from celebrities and via periodicals - to interview. ‘It is a strange thing about a journalist’s career,’ wrote Carr in his reminiscences, ‘that at first it seems so hard to get the work to do, and then later so hard to do the work that comes.’ An oft-repeated rumour thought to epitomise the ego of such renowned journalists was that W. T. Stead once terminated an interview with the Russian Czar instead of waiting for him to do so. Indeed, ‘non-entities’ began paying renowned journalists large sums (200 guineas by one extravagant estimate) to interview them, purchasing the publicity gained by associating with a celebrity interviewer. This rise in applications to interviewers correlated with a greater change in journalistic style, discussed in the last chapter, where journalists not only reported the news but created it. ‘The public are beginning to prefer literary to mechanical form’, stated the president of the Institute of Journalists in 1893, before suggesting that the interview format acted as the apotheosis of this new creative form of the journalist. Just as the biographer was not a passive avenue but actively constructed the subject, so the increasingly

210 Auberson, The Nineteen Hundreds, pp. 48-49.
212 Carr, Some Eminent Victorians, pp. 36-37.
216 Daily Chronicle, September 23, 1893.
distinctive interviewing journalist created his interviewees both through association with his own public image and through his unique writing style.

This rise of the interviewer’s status in relation to their subject was observed by the satirical press. An 1890 piece in *Punch*, for instance, portrayed a pompous and self-absorbed interviewer turning up at his subject’s house wearing a grandiose pink-striped shirt-front, barely knowledgeable of the interviewee’s career and life (‘you do write books don’t you?’), rattling through his questions and speaking over the subject with impatience.\(^{217}\) An 1894 piece in *Judy* depicted a similarly bullish interviewer, encroaching upon the celebrity physically and metaphorically with an unimpressed sternness, finishing their sentences and betraying a decided lack of veneration.\(^{218}\) Though ostensibly critical, the inclusion of journalists in the satirical press was also complimentary. To be caricatured by *Punch* was a distinction that meant one had ‘arrived’.\(^{219}\) In fiction also, the successful man-about-town journalist was encapsulated by the ruthless and cynical figure of Jasper Milvain in George Gissing’s *New Grub Street* (1891).\(^{220}\) Milvain exploits the celebrities and celebrity-hopefuls he comes into contact with from a position of power. A Booker and Narbis comedy entitled ‘The Interviewer’ performed at The People’s Palace in Bristol similarly portrayed a brusque, wealthy, and entitled interviewer, sifting through his hopeful interviewees.\(^{221}\) By the final decade of the century, it was no longer such a one-way privilege for a journalist to converse with a celebrity.

As part of this levelling-up of the status of interviewers, some of the pejorative connotations of the profession were combatted. Often this was in the form of an appeal to the interview’s worth as a historical document, in keeping with the era’s increasing interest in ‘scientific’ history as explored in the previous chapter. Frank A. Burr, for instance, argued that to interview was to leave important historical records for future generations, and somewhat grandly stated that the format was actually

\(^{217}\) *Punch*, June 28, 1890.

\(^{218}\) *Judy*, September 12, 1894.


\(^{221}\) *The Bristol Mercury*, September 8, 1899.
invented by the very father of history - Herodotus. Lionel Tollemache argued that the biography format - intrinsically linked to history - benefited from the techniques of the interviewer, referencing the most revered piece of the age, Boswell’s *Life of Johnson*. Similarly, an 1896 piece in *The Idler* entitled ‘Are Interviewers a Blessing or a Curse?’ - featuring five major interviewers as contributing authors (Blathwayt, Belloc, Burgin, Miss Fredrichs, Frederick Dolman) - defended the practice as a valid modern form of education and historical research. ‘It is, of course,’ asserted Dolman, ‘not very long since the “interviewer” was considered fair game for everybody’s scorn. He was the Paul Pry of journalism, the shameless invader of the inoffensive Englishman’s castle.’ Blathwayt, in a characteristically grandiose tone, emphasised the mutual and dialectical nature of the form, arguing that ‘[b]y the clash of two bright minds, a greater interest is drawn out of subjects of every variety.’ His ideal interviewer-interviewee power dynamic was even; equal interlocutors in a mutually edifying practice.

Indeed, interviewers themselves were deemed worthy to be conversed with. Sarah Tooley was interviewed by *The Woman’s Signal* in 1894, Edmund Yates by fellow star-interviewer Harry How, W. T. Stead by *The North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, and Kate Bishop - interviewer for *The Penny Illustrated Paper* - found herself probed by her own paper. Journalist biographies and autobiographies had become a mainstay in late-Victorian celebrity life-writing. In an 1892 piece in *The Review of Reviews* it was observed: ‘Articles on journalists are becoming more and more the feature in magazines... [in this month’s issues] there are no less than half-a-dozen journalists sketched with their portraits.’

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222 *The Pall Mall Gazette*, September 6, 1890.
224 *The Idler*, January, 1896. [My emphasis]
227 *The Review of Reviews*, V, 1892.
photographing, pursuing them - was an acknowledgement of the celebrity that these celebrity-constructors had themselves attained. In perhaps the most curious confounding of the intermediary-celebrity distinction, George Bernard Shaw practiced writing fictional interviews of himself with an invented interviewer where he - demonstrating the power of the form as a mouthpiece - did little more than express his personal views on various topics.228 Here, both interviewer and interviewee were journalist and celebrity, even if ventriloquised. The cleanly divided angles of the traditional triptych visualisation evidently become insufficient when both celebrity and intermediary simultaneously generate and glisten in the light of public visibility.

Conclusion

The interpretative desires of the late-Victorian journalist masked the fact that the interviewer-interviewee relationship was both adversarial and mutually beneficial, oppositional and co-operative. The popular portrayals of ‘Paul Pry’, the intruding interviewer, were never quite shaken off. Yet, celebrities were far more cooperative and involved in the process of interviewing than many would have perhaps liked to admit. Celebrities participated by framing themselves visually (by submitting photos), textually (by checking the copy), verbally (by influencing the conversation), and simply by accepting or pursuing the ritual at all. Interviews - not dissimilar to the memoir - were thereby conceived as a necessary evil to be used for one’s own advantage. The adversarial imagining of the relationship becomes even more complicated when we consider the celebrity status many interviewers acquired, and how they were submitted to the very process they practiced. In an interview in which both parties are celebrities, the initially assumed power dynamic becomes troublesome. Celebrities needed interviewers as much as interviewers needed them. Going beyond

228 St James’s Gazette, October 31, 1893; Cited in Stokes, In the Nineties, p. 153.
this - in keeping with the thesis’ broader argument - by the 1890s it was not even necessarily clear on which participant the spotlight shone.

The next chapter on autograph collecting will further investigate the theme of celebrities being put-upon by an intrusive and predatorial public body. Indeed, both the interviewer and autograph collector were viewed as uncouth American exports to the British Isles, supposedly representative of the New World (particularly New Journalism in the former) and its distinctive lack of Old World manners. Just as the journalist was commonly represented as tricking their victim into an unwanted interview, so collectors were known for ‘catching’ their prey’s handwriting through underhand tactics. Yet, just as we have seen that the interviewee was often more willing to participate in the ritual than they would like to admit, so we shall see that signers of autographs were not always as put-upon as popularly represented (those further down the totem pole of publicity were particularly keen on making their mark). Additionally, the second section which focuses on a more dignified and posthumous manifestation of autograph collecting (self-consciously linking itself to the more respectable commemoration of historical figures) bears similarities to the interviewers’ desire (Blathwayt being perhaps the most notable instance) to present themselves as record keepers, engagers in respectable public discourse, and indeed beacons of renown themselves. It is in these respective manifestations of celebrity victimhood and celebrity autonomy that we can see continuities with contemporary celebrity culture, in which the level of sympathy to be afforded to such figures in the public eye is hotly debated.
Chapter Four: Autograph Collecting

The consumers of Victorian celebrity culture - focused, in this case, on autograph collectors - actively constructed the discourse of celebrity in divergent and creative ways. As scholars of the past few decades have emphasised, consumers - or ‘fans’ as they are usually termed in the context of celebrity studies - have consistently played a significant role in constructing celebrity. Indeed, the Victorian era, with its growth of consumerism, leisure time, hobbies, and collectables evidences how celebrity has always been partly a consumer-led rather than wholly media-dictated process. As opposed to the homogenous mass of passivity (to put it pithily) imagined by the likes of Adorno and Horkheimer in their dissection of the ‘Culture Industry’, I argue that Victorian autograph collectors can be divided into two broad categories that proactively and distinctively engaged with celebrity - the autograph hunter and the mercantile collector. In keeping with this thesis’ broader amendment to the rigid triptych of celebrity construction, we will see how celebrities themselves actively participated in consumption, as well as how individuals acquired celebrity through the very act of consumption.

The autograph hunter applied directly to contemporary celebrities in order to gain a specimen. The mercantile collector was a patron of the auction rooms and book dealers, collecting posthumous specimens often under ostensibly intellectual and antiquarian motivations. The former was depicted


2 These groups are not intended as utterly strict and categorical, clearly there would have been individuals involved in both forms of celebrity consumption. Additionally, while ‘autograph hunter’ was a contemporary term, ‘mercantile collector’ is a retrospective imposition, since, like the term ‘fan’, the phenomenon seems to have lacked a clear contemporary designator. As I explore later on, this lack of a specific term may have reflected the mercantile collector’s desire to be viewed merely as a collector in a more general, antiquarian sense.
as feminine, uncouth, and faddish, interested mainly in the ephemeral fame of contemporary transatlantic celebrity.\textsuperscript{3} The latter was represented as masculine, cultured, and antiquarian, his interest crossing over into the continental commemorative tradition.\textsuperscript{4} Often harbouring antipathic feelings towards one another and wishing to separate themselves (mercantile collectors were particularly keen on this), their diversity demonstrates the inadequacy of grouping all consumers into one clean conceptual point of the triptych.

When investigating the historical consumer of celebrity, one must necessarily engage with its common label - fan. There has been some debate on whether the usage of the term in the context of the Victorian era is anachronistic. To address this, it is worth looking at the term’s etymology, from which there are two possible sources. One traces it to the adjective ‘fanatic’ from the Latin *fanaticus*, meaning ‘of a temple’; suggesting the fan is someone who is excessively enthusiastic or filled with the kind of zeal usually associated with religious fervour. The term crept into American baseball in the late 1880s, with the OED’s first citation of this usage from 1889.\textsuperscript{5} The alternative source ‘fancy’ is older and belongs to the British Isles, being the collective name given to the patrons of prize fighting in the early-nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{6} In the nineteenth century - both in Britain and America - the root ‘fan’ slowly began to lose its religious and patrician connotations to become a description of followers, devotees, or admirers of virtually anybody or anything in secular popular culture. Yet the fact remains that the term is not found in contemporary British Victorian notices of celebrity culture.

Despite this, numerous scholars have argued that its usage is appropriate, even eminently useful. Leo Braudy calls the audiences that flocked around the eighteenth and nineteenth-century celebrity ‘fans,’ arguing that the term is appropriate to ‘distinguish a new quality of psychic connection


\textsuperscript{6} Cashmore, *Celebrity*, pp. 101-102.
between those who watch and those who, willingly or not, perform on the public stage.' Similarly, Eric Eisner opts for the term when discussing Victorian readers, rejecting popular expressions from the era such as ‘enthusiast’ or ‘votary’ because, he argues in a similar vein to Braudy, the term fan identifies something specific and important for us as analysts of the twenty-first century, in a passage so eloquent and persuasive I wish to quote it in its entirety:

The delirious partisanship of fandom is a mass-cultural phenomenon; it belongs to the space of leisure, consumption, and spectacle; it is ritualized and participatory; it is both highly individual and stereotypical; it involves complex fantasy dynamics of exhibition and shame, desire and sublimation, identification and objectification. Fandom often seeks out an aura of the transgressive and liminal, though it is also routinized, and types of fandom can range from the extremely passionate to the very casual. This is all familiar to us from twenty-first-century media culture - but hence its usefulness.

With the precedent set from such commentators, I too wish to use the terms ‘fan’ and ‘fandom’ for the Victorian context. My justification for this is threefold: firstly, to aptly situate my work within the broader literature on fandom; secondly, because there simply is not a sufficiently accurate and broad term for capturing the kind of secular enthusiasm that I am analysing; thirdly, because I hold that fandom as we would broadly recognise it today did exist as a phenomenon in the Victorian era before the use of the term acquired popular parlance.

This study will analyse Victorian fandom through the focused lens of autograph collecting since thorough coverage of all the manifestations of fandom would require a full-length study in itself. By limiting the examination to one particular - though major - avenue, the intricacies and diversities of the fandom environment can be effectively investigated. The term ‘autograph’ itself is used deliberately broadly in order to capture numerous manifestations of original handwriting in an age of mass production. Regarding the general history of autograph collecting, Joseph E. Fields has looked back to the Egyptians and the invention of writing material, proposing that the collection,

9 Another area of emphasis could have been the development of fan societies such as the Browning Society formed in 1881, or the continued popularity of the Johnson Society which had achieved over 500 meetings by the end of the century.
preservation, and honouring of writing has been a near-instinctive habit for humans as long as it has been possible.\textsuperscript{10} This conceptualisation of collecting as innate to the human species has been reiterated by numerous historians of collecting and material cultures.\textsuperscript{11} In the classical era Roman clerks and politicians often wrote in autograph (i.e. in their own handwriting) to close friends - whereas most letters were dictated to a scribe - as a sign of close intimacy and trust. There is also literary evidence for autograph collecting in antiquity, with Pliny the Elder having seen autographs of Gracchi, Cicero, and Virgil. Through the early centuries of the common era and the medieval period the autograph was known to be a token of Christian friendship among aristocrats and other privileged groups. The renaissance era continued this importance granted to the autograph, with writers such as Erasmus and Petrarch signing off their names to close friends.\textsuperscript{12} In the modern era the ability to sign one’s name on a marriage register became one of the quantifiers of literacy, adding an official bureaucratic weight to the suggestion of education and intelligence by the autograph.\textsuperscript{13}

A. N. L. Munby situated the birth of the modern autograph collector in the early-eighteenth century with the popularisation of literary culture but argued that the nineteenth century was the period in which the craze for autograph collecting acquired culturally significant popularity, contemporarily labelled ‘autographmania’.\textsuperscript{14} Looking at the French context, Tom Stammers has examined the popularity of autograph collecting after the 1789 revolution and the development of what had been a distinctly aristocratic and high-culture pursuit into a more mercantile endeavour. Personal memoirs flourished in France throughout this era but such constructions were seen as false

and insincere façades next to the autograph, which could - it was commonly believed - betray the true self (a notion this chapter shall return to). Thus, throughout history the autograph has been viewed as a marker of trust, authenticity, and intimacy, a gateway to insights of personhood as well as a valuable economic asset.

The Autograph Hunter: Her Sport, Sentimentality, and Creativity

‘Autograph Hunting. What Celebrities Suffer: The mania for collecting autographs is a well-established nuisance which effects [sic] every person who may have acquired a permanent notoriety. School girls in California write to Archbishops in England for a scrap of their handwriting. Authors and actors are besieged with applications.’

Autograph hunters - popularly associated with pejorative celebrity culture connotations such as femininity, juvenilia, and pathology - generally valued the collection of autographs for sport, sentimentality, and creativity. Unlike the mercantile collector who sought to purchase his posthumous specimens, the autograph hunter (imagined in popular representations almost solely as female) aimed to ‘win’ her autographs through careful tactics and tenacity, competing against fellow hunters. In addition to this sporting element, the autograph’s identity as an individual document within an age of mass production - something bound with what Walter Benjamin termed ‘aura’ - went hand-in-hand with the popular nineteenth-century notion that handwriting was an avenue to the soul. Autographs, as in much of history, were thus viewed as a unique expression of individuality and an unparalleled means of interpreting character. Through this, they functioned as an early avenue of what Donald Horton and Richard Wohl called para-social relationships.

Thirdly, autograph hunters valued the arranging, preserving, and categorising of autographs in itself as a form of creative expression. By performing such inventive activities the fan proactively created their own spaces and taxonomies of celebrity.

As mentioned, demographically the hunter differed from the mercantile collector in both fictional and factual representations. Indeed, celebrities complained of being assailed by hunters ‘of all classes’, and it is true that theoretically any literate individual with access to a piece of paper, pen, envelope, and stamp could participate in autograph hunting. Albums used by hunters to frame and arrange their specimens were easily available to buy at prices as low as two shillings, were common.

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16 Hampshire Telegraph, December 18, 1886.
17 The pejorative connotations of celebrity were explored in the introductory chapter.
18 Horton and Wohl were wrong to suggest that such mediated relationships only began with the television. ‘Mass Communication’, pp. 215-29
19 The Sheffield Daily Telegraph, July 24, 1896.
prizes in charity bazaars, and many periodicals such as The Bristol Mercury, Northern Echo, and Lloyd’s Weekly even mailed them out for free in order to attract readers. However, while the barrier for entry in hunting was certainly low compared to mercantile collecting, many of the publications interested in the practice and culture of autograph hunting were aimed at the families of the professional middle and lower middle classes engaged in the growing leisure pursuits of the era. Such publications included Chatterbox (1875-1901), Myra’s Journal (1875-1900), The Boy’s Own Paper (1879-1901), and The Girl’s Own Paper (1880-1901). Thus, while the mercantile collector was by virtual necessity a man of considerable means, autograph hunting was theoretically open to a larger section of society via its much cheaper cost of entry, but was most likely a predominant pursuit of the lower-to-upper middle classes judging both from the media interested in it as well as the class-bases of similar ‘crazes’. Additionally, as may have been gathered from the above periodicals, autograph hunting was often associated with juvenilia, the youthful ‘fads’ that developed in the Victorian era. Finally, unlike the masculine mercantile collector, the autograph hunter was - particularly in fiction - associated with femininity. This is not to suggest that every autograph hunter was a woman - many were men - but the overriding cultural image of the hunter was of a young woman. Far from the cultivated antiquarianism of the mercantile collector which shall be explored in the next section, such hunters were depicted as uncouth and unhinged, taking ‘a first place in the front rank of social nuisances.’ Evidently, the pathologisation and feminisation of the fan stretches back to the first era of mass celebrity culture.

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20 Advertisement to purchase album by post for two shillings, Aberdeen Weekly Journal, February 20, 1885. An example of an album being the prize in a church charity bazaar, Freeman’s Journal, April 18, 1893. Instances of papers that gave away albums to readers as free gifts, The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post, January 3, 1885; Northern Echo, January 17, 1885; Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper, December 13, 1885.


23 The North-Eastern Daily Gazette, March 09, 1882.

24 See ref.1.
Indeed, though mercantile collectors were sometimes accused of profiteering, autograph hunters were dismissed as grasping, obsessive, and even criminal. They were, as an 1889 contributor to the *Daily News* observed, a group ‘detested by the blessed gods, and hateful to mortals’. In an 1889 *Pall Mall Gazette* piece on autograph analysis the author labelled the group ‘the pestilential nuisance who writes for autographs’, while an 1882 article in the *Phonetic Journal* claimed that the autograph hunter was the embodiment of the social pariah: ‘His waking hours are devoted to the task of plotting against the peace and comfort of the great. Having no scruples and no humanity, he smiles at the refusal of his victims, knowing well that he has settled down upon them never to depart until he shall carry with him in triumph the plunder of his seeking.’ Unlike the historical practice of mercantile collecting, this contemporarily minded social evil was ‘the modern pest of literary men’, a group interested in those residing within Society (with a capital S).

Collectors themselves were aware of the contemporary distinction made between mercantile collectors and autograph hunters, with the former (though they lacked a contemporary definitive term for reasons that will be explored later) consistently seeking to distance themselves from the latter. As mercantile collector Adrian Joline wrote in response to a newspaper article by a hunter:

> What amuses me most about the ravings of the Maniac is the assertion that collectors of my own way of thinking buy at auctions and through dealers ‘dry-as-dust letters written for the most part by men long since gone to their fathers,’ while the ‘pestilential nuisances,’ to borrow another Gilbertian phrase, confine their attention to autographs of the living, and especially prize the peppery responses they receive from persecuted greatness.

Elsewhere, Joline expressed his happiness at being classed as separate from what many saw ‘as a hoard of semi-lunatics’. Likewise, Thomas Bailey Aldrich characterised the ‘average autograph hunter’, in contrast to the ‘true collector’, as having a ‘purposeless insistence’, desiring to collect for

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25 *Daily News*, November 9, 1889.
26 *The Pall Mall Gazette*, April 5, 1889; *Phonetic Journal*, April, 1882.
27 *Daily News*, April 26, 1890.
no reason other than the ‘desire to accumulate as many as possible.’\textsuperscript{30} This demonic imagining of the autograph-hunting mass partly reflected the popularity of social psychology by the century’s final decades, which often emphasised the dangerous nature of the human aggregate.\textsuperscript{31}

Autograph hunters - sometimes more overtly insulted as ‘cranks’ - were characterised as ‘selfish, and so long as his own desire is gratified’, thinking nothing of the need for privacy felt by public figures.\textsuperscript{32} Hunters, as went common knowledge, viewed the celebrity as a piece of meat, an animal through which they could gain kudos in their community.\textsuperscript{33} Alfred Lord Tennyson - similar to his disdain for the interviewer - was renowned for his curmudgeonly belief that ‘every crime and every vice in the world were connected with the passion for autographs’, and that to write to celebrities asking for a specimen was to ‘treat them like pigs’.\textsuperscript{34} A sardonic poem by Walter Besant touched upon this objectification of the celebrity signer by the ‘unconsidered mob’:

\begin{quote}
You smile and you will laugh
When the story you relate
How you asked the autograph
Of the man you thought so great\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

This objectification could be very explicit. Both Oliver Wendell Holmes and Alexander Dumas recalled hunters, upon hearing the signers were on their deathbeds, tactlessly asking for a specimen as their final act of writing.\textsuperscript{36} George Grossmith complained of being scolded by an entitled hunter after he had not appeased them within two days.\textsuperscript{37}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Moonshine}, June 26, 1897.
\textsuperscript{33} Kerry Ferris and Scott Harris have investigated the contemporary discourse around fandom in objectifying celebrities as trophies to be won. \textit{See Stargazing: Celebrity Fame and Social Interaction} (London: Routledge, 2011).
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Edinburgh Evening News}, March 25, 1885.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Manchester Times}, February 26, 1892.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{The Sheffield Daily Telegraph}, April 28, 1890; \textit{Manchester Times}, April 13, 1894.
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{The Royal Cornwall Gazette}, April 12, 1888.
\end{flushright}
Paralleling the cultural image of the intrusive interviewer explored in the previous chapter, hunters became notorious in the popular media for victimising the celebrity in their use of deceitful tricks. These tricks were infamous from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, as this 1855 piece in *The Stirling Observer* reported of one particularly mischievous hunter:

Feigning himself to be in the deepest distress, overwhelmed with an accumulation of agonising miseries, which had driven him to absolute despair, he professed himself to be utterly disgusted with life, and on the point of terminating his troubles by committing suicide. In this state of mind, he pathetically entreated the person addressed to inform him confidentially what he really thought of the right of the overburdened wretch to ‘shuffle off this mortal coil.’ Having crowded into this letter all the touching and miserable words at his command, he wrote copies of it to many of the most distinguished persons in Europe.  

Among the victims of such manipulative letters were Sophie Gay, Alexander Humboldt, and Charles Dickens who had sent an embarrassingly earnest response to the trickster.

Similarly, an 1889 piece in the *Edinburgh Evening News* entitled ‘The Dodges of Autograph-Hunters’ discussed such tactics, one notable example being an individual’s habit of writing a letter to each of the persons whose autograph he coveted, describing himself as a shipowner and asking for their permission to be allowed to name his next vessel after the receiver. Somewhat depressingly, nearly every recipient responded. This tactic of emotional manipulation - not dissimilar to the fawning journalist attempting to frame an interview in ways beneficial to their interviewee - became notorious, with some hunters pretending to be on their deathbeds and asking for a message from their ‘favourite’ celebrity. Another hunter, struggling to acquire a specimen from the cautious journalist Stephen Gwynn, sent an insincere letter to him asking if she could quote some of his work in a piece she herself was publishing, deliberately (and ingeniously) misrepresenting the ostensibly desired extracts in order to draw him out. One petitioner for Charles Dickens’ autograph claimed - in deliberately mistake-riddled writing - to be naming his first son after the author and thus desired

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38 *The Stirling Observer*, November 22, 1855.  
40 *Burnley Express*, February 14, 1894.  
41 *The Weekly Standard and Express*, January 27, 1900.
to know his full name. Here, the consumer-celebrity relationship was distinctly adversarial. The two parties continually tried to outwit one another, with the fan - advantaged in their asymmetrical anonymity - always able to repeat attempts and resume their hunt on the unfortunate celebrity made cautious of everything their pen touched.

In trying to beat other hunters to ‘catch’ certain celebrities, a notable competitive and meritocratic streak developed amongst the community. Journalist H. J. Jennings reminisced about the period in the 1890s when he ‘went in for autograph hunting’ and the kind of tactics he had to utilise in order to catch certain figures against his fellow practitioners: ‘You have to angle for them with all sorts of baits - the bait of flattery, the bait of cajolery, the bait of spurious interest, and the bait of manufactured occasion.’ In such tactics Jennings noticed that the lesser names were boringly easy to catch, being as eager to sign as they were to be interviewed. Certain celebrities were known for being easy wins. Andrew Lang, for instance, said of Oliver Wendell Holmes: ‘the worst thing I have heard about him is that he could never say no to an autograph hunter.’ Likewise, it was said of Gladstone that ‘he is so readily “drawn” that the autograph hunter or the bore seldom addresses him in vain.’ Conversely, James Russell Lowell was ‘harder-hearted and rather difficult to reach.’ Some, such as Ellen Terry and Rudyard Kipling, demanded that hunters show evidence of a donation to charity before they would grant their signature. Indeed, among hunters there developed an unwritten hierarchy of difficulty with celebrities designated as easy or difficult to draw (Figure 4.1). The most effective autograph hunters were described as ‘industrious’ and as having

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42 Edinburgh Evening News, December 27, 1875.
43 ‘Eminent persons are becoming as chary as tracing the letters of their name as if they were being requested to perform the operation on the back of a bill for an impecunious acquaintance.’ Manchester Courier, April 16, 1892.
45 The Monthly Packet, January 01, 1895.
46 The Yorkshire Herald, September 24, 1890.
47 Aldrich, Ponkapog Papers, p. 142.
48 Hull Daily Mail, May 05, 1893; The Yorkshire Evening Post, February 03, 1897.
‘pertinacity’, able to meritocratically lead their field and catch the most difficult prey without spending the sums of the mercantile collector.49

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drawn with ease</th>
<th>Drawn with difficulty</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William Gladstone</td>
<td>Alfred Tennyson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Leech</td>
<td>Duke of Wellington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Mogridge</td>
<td>Thomas Hood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jules Benedict</td>
<td>Thomas Henry Huxley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Cowden Clarke</td>
<td>Ellen Terry (required evidenced payment to charity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Anderson</td>
<td>Charles Dickens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Carlyle (easily drawn by vanity)</td>
<td>Thomas Gray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis Pasteur</td>
<td>Mark Twain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Irving</td>
<td>Charles Reade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Wendell Holmes</td>
<td>Rudyard Kipling (required evidenced payment to charity)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1: A table outlining which celebrities were considered easy or difficult to ‘draw’. Many suggested that the novice hunter start with the likes of those on the left and then graduate to the more difficult targets on the right. Classifications taken from discussions in the following pieces: *Edinburgh Evening News*, December 11, 1889; *Edinburgh Evening News*, August 18, 1890; *The Evening Telegraph*, August 05, 1891; *Hull Daily Mail*, May 05, 1893; *The Monthly Packet*, January 01, 1895; *The Yorkshire Evening Post*, February 03, 1897.

In pursuing their sport some autograph hunters carefully customised each trick based on the occupation and known interests of their famed target. William Riddle, for example, conjured up numerous false personas in his quest for autographs, adjusting said personas to the interests of the celebrity he was addressing. He presented as a troubled theologian to John Ruskin, a down-on-his-

49 *The Dundee Courier*, November 18, 1892; *Evening Telegraph*, August 17, 1893.
luck father of a brilliant child to Charles Dickens, and an upcoming prosopographer to Richard Cobden. Similarly, a notorious collector named Charles Robinson put his targets off guard by applying for some information or explanation on a matter of known interest. Thus, he wrote to Wilkie Collins regarding his novel *The Woman in White*, to Cardinal Manning on the temperance movement, and to William Edward Lecky on details of his *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*. Some hunters, aware of the late-Victorian celebrity’s cautiousness with interviewers and general self-representation in the new mass media, pretended to be journalists doing a segment on them, requesting a portrait and autograph for extra-illustration. Celebrities who fell for such traps were often overtly referred to as ‘victims’. The popular usage of fishing metaphors such as ‘drawing’ and ‘catching’ are telling and the predatory view of the autograph hunter predominated in many satirical representations of the figure. An 1899 piece in *Judy*, for instance, featured the diary of a loosely veiled fictional writer (Kailyard Ripping) who, on his travels was constantly hounded by the hunter. Young female enthusiasts tore off his luggage labels, stole his pens and boots, calling repeatedly at his residence for a specimen. The culprit, the celebrity knew, was the ‘wily autograph hunter’ and their ‘insidious work’.

In such a combative framework each contrived letter of appeal represented a strike and the celebrity’s response (or lack thereof) a defensive block - if they were quick enough.

Indeed, some celebrities garnered a reputation for their intense dislike of the autograph collector. Poet Robert Southey, irritated by constant requests not just for his signature but for personal papers and manuscripts, advocated playfully for the forming of a ‘Society for the Suppression of Albums’ alongside other much-targeted celebrities. Thomas Henry Huxley remarked at a social gathering when the topic of collecting was brought up: ‘I look upon autograph hunters as a progeny of Cain,'

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51 *Freeman’s Journal*, January 17, 1893.
52 Aldrich, *Ponkapog Papers*, p. 147.
54 *Judy*, February 15, 1899.
and treat their letters accordingly’. Some could be brutally dismissive in their responses to requests, as one French dramatist responded: ‘Sir, a few witty fellows are to dine with me tomorrow. Pray join us, as I should like to have one fool in the company.’ This disdain for the autograph hunter led some celebrities to play tricks of their own upon the applicants (often referred to explicitly as ‘the enemy’), such as when a strategic collector wrote to Tennyson hoping to capture him by enquiring about his opinion on the best dictionary of the English language, either Webster’s or Ogilvie’s. Tennyson replied wily with a simple note of paper on which was carefully pasted the word ‘Ogilvie’, cut out of the correspondent’s own letter. Similarly, poet Thomas Hood, in mock sympathy and deliberate obtuseness, typed up a response in which he claimed he did not know what type of autograph the applicant wanted and so hoped that typed would be sufficient. Some merely allowed their secretaries to stamp or sign-off the requests themselves. Celebrities could strike their own blows against the hunter, moving from the defensive to the offensive, taking the initiative to fool the fan as fans had tried to fool them.

Such responses to the autograph hunter also came in the more masked form of fiction. James Payn’s 1883 novel *Thicker Than Water* featured Miss Julia Blithers, an autograph hunter as much to be pitied as feared. Her autograph book, kept secured in a box beneath her bed, contained all ‘the names of great living writers’. Blithers, having expressed that it would nearly kill her if anything happened to her ‘secret treasures’, admitted to the book’s protagonist that not a single one of the autograph letters had been addressed to her. The ‘cunning’ Blithers admitted that she had used a variety of pseudonyms in order to draw the celebrity in, her most common trick being the pretence of being a daughter inviting a prominent celebrity to her elderly mother’s hospital bed: ‘the trap is

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56 *Edinburgh Evening News*, August 18, 1890.
57 *The Leeds Mercury*, March 15, 1890.
58 Notice referring to hunters as ‘the enemy’, *The Evening Telegraph*, May 28, 1890.
59 *The Cheltenham Chronicle*, October 15, 1887.
60 *Glasgow Herald*, December 20, 1852.
61 ‘Has he any unique collections at his house?’ ‘Yes, his collection of autographs of private secretaries of celebrities is the largest in the world.’ *Manchester Times*, November 11, 1892.
laid. In nine cases out of ten it catches them.\textsuperscript{63} Blithers expressed particular pride in having caught one notoriously difficult celebrity (‘They say he has not sent any one his autograph for twenty years’).\textsuperscript{64} Likewise, Henry James, in his 1894 ‘Death of a Lion’, depicted a young and desperate autograph hunter arrived all the way from the United States (many associated the autograph hunter with the interviewer as a debased American export) merely to capture the mark of the most recently decorated celebrity.\textsuperscript{65} The hunter - a young unmarried lady with a large inheritance - had an obsessive but juvenile interest in the lion’s work (‘They’ve been everything to me and a little more beside, I know them by heart’), refusing to leave his premises until she had acquired a specimen.\textsuperscript{66}

Such a feminised, pathologised, and philistine imagining of the autograph hunter was common in the broader culture. Tennyson was reported to have had to ‘put his foot down’ and no longer respond to letters after ‘[y]oung ladies have assailed him’ for his autograph.\textsuperscript{67} Andrew Lang grew tired of the ‘young ladies’ hankering after his mark, while Gioachino Rossini complained of a young woman at a dinner party pursuing him with her autograph album for a specimen.\textsuperscript{68} Similarly, actress Ellen Terry admonished young collectors for their excessive pushiness: ‘Now, most of the young people - they are generally young, and usually girls - who write for autographs, do not in the least realise that it is rather selfish - at least, inconsiderate, to ask a very busy man to write his name a few hundred times a week in their albums.’\textsuperscript{69} An 1888 piece in the \textit{Cheshire Observer} reported that a young mother had instructed her four-year-old son to stand in front of Gladstone leaving a flower show and insist that the premier provide a signature.\textsuperscript{70} A humorous piece in the 1893 \textit{Lancaster Gazette} told of an autograph-collecting wife who cut a hole out of her husband’s Rembrandt

\textsuperscript{63} Payn, \textit{Thicker}, II p. 110.
\textsuperscript{64} Payn, \textit{Thicker}, II, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{65} \textit{The Leeds Mercury}, April 28, 1888.
\textsuperscript{66} Henry James, \textit{The Death of the Lion}, repr. edn (London: Martin Secker, 1915) (Original publication in 1894), p. 42.
\textsuperscript{67} \textit{The Leeds Mercury}, June 14, 1884.
\textsuperscript{68} Northampton Mercury, May 16, 1890; The Evening Telegraph, December 01, 1882.
\textsuperscript{69} The Leeds Mercury, May 20, 1893. [My emphasis]
\textsuperscript{70} Cheshire Observer, August 25, 1888.
painting just so that she could have the signature. This association between the autograph hunter and low-brow femininity came in part from the separation of hunting and the older auction-centred tradition of collecting that the mercantile collector consciously tied himself to. Women were believed to be largely unsuitable for the antiquarian auction world - thought too irrational for its sometimes passionate biddings - leaving the more vulgar practice of autograph hunting for them.

This feminised pathologisation was sometimes framed in terms of addiction - an individual overtaken by an irrational and all-consuming desire to gather as many specimens as they could without regard for social costs. Numerous scholars have touched upon this nineteenth-century tendency of associating excessive media consumption with femininity and dependency, in which media fans are only placated - and thus rendered passive - once they have their coveted choice of consumption. Mirroring contemporary concerns regarding kleptomania - the female disorder of ceaseless and unlawful consumption - colloquial psychiatric syndromes for the enthusiasts were coined such as ‘monomania’, ‘autograph mania’, or ‘autograph fever’. William Carew Hazlitt, an experienced collector himself, compared this particular form of autograph collecting to the dangerous intoxicants of alcohol and opium. Likewise, George Birkbeck Hill’s memory of his first autograph reads like a cautionary tale:

A friend of mine gave me, in my younger days, a letter of Dr. Johnson’s. ‘There,’ said he, as I sat gazing at my treasure, ‘if you will take my advice, you will at once throw that letter into the fire.’ (A bright one was blazing before us on the hearth.) ‘If you keep it, it will probably tempt you into an outlay beyond your means, as I have seen many a man before you tempted by his first autograph.’

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71 The Lancaster Gazette, May 31, 1893.
74 For further reading on kleptomania, see Jenny Coleman, ‘Incorrigible Offenders: Media Representations of Female Habitual Criminals in the Late Victorian and Edwardian Press’, Media History, 22:2, pp. 143-158. The Yorkshire Evening Post, March 13, 1896, p. 2; Strand Magazine, November, 1902, p. 542. [refers to Strand volumes available in the ProQuest British Newspaper Database, as in the last chapter].
76 Hill, Talk, pp. 5-6.
This craze for autographs was believed to overcome any notions of taste or discernment. ‘There are valuable and valueless autographs’, went an 1882 piece in *The Evening Telegraph*, ‘but the average collector does not distinguish. He - or especially she - hunts wildly for everything.’ Intimately tied to this pathologisation was the criminal connotations of the practice. High-profile cases of such criminal activity included an incident where a young peer had their autograph of Gladstone stolen, the theft of Lord Francis Douglas’ signature from a hotel visitor book in Italy, the robbery of the Queen’s autograph at Old Winsor, the nocturnal theft of autographed wreaths from Lady Augustus Sala’s grave, and the pilfering of Lord Randolph Churchill’s signature from the Preston Working Men’s Conservative Club. The suspected culprits in all of these cases were young ladies. The autograph hunter was thus envisioned as feminine, juvenile, compulsive, and delinquent.

To be sure, popular discourse surrounding the hobby was not solely pejorative. Charming anecdotes of positive autograph-hunter interactions did occasionally appear in the era’s popular press, though diminishingly so by the 1890s. In addition, as this thesis has shown more generally, the activity was not cleanly limited to one simple point of the triptych. Publisher Richard Bentley, novelist Julia Pardoe, journalist Edward Russell, actor John Lawrence Toole, muse Dora Wordsworth, Kaiser Wilhelm II, and Queen Victoria herself, are just a selection of the celebrities known to have conspicuously taken part in the sport of autograph hunting. Such participants represent the celebrity-fan, the consuming producer of contemporary fame. Yet, their conspicuous public presence

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77 *The Evening Telegraph*, June 15, 1886. [My emphasis]
78 *The Evening Telegraph*, December 14, 1889; *The Morning Post*, October 06, 1866; *Worcestershire Chronicle*, November 03, 1888; *Citizen*, May 12, 1881; *The Cheltenham Chronicle*, August 18, 1894. ‘All experienced librarians know that the really dangerous visitor is the collector, the connoisseur, the student, the seeker after a rare pamphlet or an odd number.’ *The Inverness Courier*, October 14, 1892.
79 An 1876 piece in the *Edinburgh Evening News* narrated the charming story of how a young girl managed to acquire an autograph of Bismarck. *Edinburgh Evening News*, February 11, 1876.
as practitioners does not seem to have aided the sport much in ridding itself of its dominating image of deviancy.

Having discussed the hobby’s sporting appeal (and the many popular criticisms of the consequently heated competition), we will examine the aura of the autograph and its supposedly unique ability to grant access - igniting a para-social relationship - to the soul of the signer through the popular science of graphology. Walter Benjamin, in his essay ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, touched upon the technological developments of the nineteenth century, arguing that art, and commodities more generally, began to lose what he termed their aura as they were reproduced en masse.\footnote{Indeed, the replacement of traditional craft skills with uniform factory production was almost complete by 1880. Floud, The People and the British Economy, p. 110.} This aura was lost because of its dissemination amongst space and time, the loss of a singular and definitive moment of production:

> Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. This includes the changes which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years as well as the various changes in its ownership.\footnote{Walter Benjamin, The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, transl. Harry Zohn, repr. edn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) (Original publication in 1935), p. 3.}

The autograph, as - arguably by definition - an individual and unique production, represented an embodiment of the aura in the first era of mass reproduction.\footnote{Numerous theorists of fandom have characterised the activity as a ‘quest for authenticity’. Samantha Barbas, Movie Crazy: Fans, Stars and the Cult of Celebrity (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p. 3.} Because of their singular space-time production, their revolt against monotonous standardisation, and their status as a document in variance with the seemingly endless mechanical reproduction of the era, autographs captured the celebrity authentically in a manner that could not be recreated in seemingly infinite duplication. As Susan Stewart observed, the unrepeatability of such souvenirs is the very justification for their souvenir-status. To be sure, hunters could have simply cut out facsimiles of autographs produced in periodicals and other publications, but the mechanical production of such products (used mainly for education on how to collect rather than to be collected themselves) defeated the point - the genuine
autograph must be a trace of the signer’s lived experience. In a market of increasing uniformity, peculiarity - whether genuine or manufactured - was the goal.

In this vein, Simon Gratz, in his interwar-era observations of the Victorian hunter, noted the obsession with non-reproducible objects, items imbued with intimate qualities because of their casual, daily usage by the celebrity:

They cherish - if they can obtain it - any personal memento of one who is famous in the annals of literature, statecraft, royalty, war, music... A fragment of his personal attire, his watch, cane, seal, snuffbox, sword - in short, anything that was worn or used by him - is valued most highly.

Lyall Watson has stated that such objects which manage to retain aura in ages of mechanical reproduction return a sense of sacredness to the secular world. And exactly because of the modern world’s supposed secularity, argues Watson, collectors revert to a primitive form of religiosity, animism - the belief that objects are capable of possessing a distinct spiritual essence. Alison Booth has also conceived of such aura-filled objects in religious terms, as ‘relics’, as an object of transcendence in which the fan could touch the celebrity by-proxy, both literally and figuratively. Investigating the cult of Jane Austen, Claudia J. Johnson has described items such as the autograph as ‘sacred remnants’ that serve as ‘instruments of presence’, conferring insight and authority upon the possessor.

While virtually anybody could purchase the mass-produced goods of a renowned individual such as poems, novels, or treatises, the fan’s possession of something outside of what Foucault would

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85 This quest for the aura in an era of mass reproduction was not limited to the autograph hunter. Manufacturers deliberately mass-produced items made to look hand-made and advertisements increasingly utilised the aura of celebrity personas to distinguish their product from the seemingly identical mass-produced competitors. Jerome Hamilton Buckley, The Victorian Temper: A Study in Literary Culture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), p. 141.
86 Gratz, Autographs, pp. 13-14.
identify as the author’s official body-of-work, of - as an 1893 report in the Evening Telegraph wrote - ‘some flippant note or commonplace sentence written by the veritable pen of a literary lion’, was believed to reveal more about the celebrity due to its unperformed nature, ‘than the most weighty moral sentiments that his hero has put into print.’

Funny Folks in 1884 satirised this interest in seemingly incidental belongings:

I pine for relics - Marwood’s rope
Is scarcely in a poet’s line;
But for the toe-nail of a Pope
I’d gladly give ‘Golconda’s mine.’

As with the phrenological analysis of the interviewer, authenticity was to be located in unconscious betrayal and the superficially incidental. Obscurity of interpretation was synonymous with profundity.

This belief that handwriting could say something profound about the individual was, as touched upon in this chapter’s introduction, not new to the Victorian era. Aristotle’s comments on handwriting are perhaps the earliest on record in the west and the subject remained a source of passing speculation until the nineteenth century when handwriting analysis was incorporated as a branch of physiognomy known as graphology. Although such analysis always clothed itself in the robes of science, its focus on writing as a site of unconscious self-revelation betrayed a Romantic impulse. The analysis of handwriting was a peculiar fusion of the Victorian search for scientific truth and the Romanticism of the earlier century. Major proponents of graphology such as novelist Rhoda Broughton were, naturally, eager to deny any such subjectivist leanings. In her Character and Temperament Indicated by Handwriting (1877) in which she went through the alphabet analysing

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90 Michel Foucault, ‘What is an Author?’, in Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, ed. by Donald F. Bouchard (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 121; Evening Telegraph, January 13, 1893.
91 Funny Folks, April 05, 1884.
93 Indeed, the practice was held to be intellectually solid by respectable centres of learning such as the Royal College of Surgeons. Royal College of Surgeons, ‘Caligraphy and Character’, London Review (1845), p. 517.
how celebrities expressed certain letters and what this revealed about them, Broughton asserted: ‘Many great thinkers have acknowledged that the handwriting reflects, to a certain extent, the intelligence and character of the writer, but the study of these indications has hitherto been looked upon rather as a matter of sentiment and fancy than as a serious science.’

Similarly, the London periodical Myra’s Journal, a paper aimed at middle-class female readers, ran a six-part series entitled ‘Graphology; or, How to Read Character From Handwriting’, listing the forty autographs that would be dissected (including Charles Dickens, George Augustus Sala, the Bishop of London, and Sarah Siddons, to name a few). The reader, step-by-step, was shown why Lord Macaulay’s writing may be described as school-boyish and neat, in harmony with the humble, unformed character of the man, and why Thomas Carlyle’s crabbed and jagged signature represented the curmudgeonly nature of the famous writer. As in other graphological analyses, the celebrities’ autographs were cross-referenced. The grace and beauty of Frederick Leighton’s signature is said to have ‘none of the meanness of Carlyle’s, or the grotesque characteristics of Cruikshank’s, and certainly none of the business-like clearness of Wilkie Collins.’ The celebrity autographs, reflecting the corporate identity of celebrity Society discussed in the autobiography chapter, existed in constant relativity and reference to one another. Through the ideal singularity of the autograph in an age of mass reproduction, as well as the popularity of the practice of graphology in an age convinced that the techniques of positivism could read the internal through the external, the autograph hunter could claim an intuitive connection with, and penetration into, the celebrity.


95 Myra’s Journal, November 01, 1889.

96 Myra’s Journal, December 01, 1889.

97 For the popularity of positivist assumptions in the Victorian era, see Edward S. Reed, From Soul to Mind: The Emergence of Psychology from Erasmus Darwin to William James (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).
This desire, and belief in the ability, to get close to the celebrity via the autograph in a para-social relationship was perhaps best evidenced by the popularity of birthday books. Associated almost exclusively with ‘younger members of the so-called gentler sex’ - the stereotypical autograph hunter - it was a themed calendar with spaces for signatures in which the owner and their friends could sign to indicate their birthday. Depending on the style of birthday book the publication might have noted the birthdays of celebrities, contained quotations from their work, or harboured renowned signatures, meaning the owner’s and their friends’ handwriting would be mixed almost indistinguishably with the marks of the renowned. One example was Mary P. Dunbar’s *The Queen’s Birthday Book* (1887) which gave a quote by a famous historical - usually literary - figure for each day and in-between each month an autographed portrait of a member of the aristocracy was presented (Figures 4.2-4.4). Compiler Alice Rushton’s birthday book, for a further instance, listed contemporary (Harriet Beecher Stowe, Thomas Hardy) and historical names (David Hume, Chaucer) on the left so that the owner could place their and their friends on the right (Figures 4.5-4.6).

Despite small differences, in all birthday books the owner was encouraged to fuse both traditional and mediated intimates into one indistinguishable *Gemeinschaft* clan. The collection of autographs was a symbolic memorialisation of intimacy, of ‘friends near and far’, both for immediate fellowship and para-social relationships with ostensible strangers.

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99 Daily News, January 11, 1890.


101 Quotation from *The Leeds Mercury*, July 15, 1882. Clara Tuite has similarly noted how nineteenth-century fan-letters turned the stranger into an intimate. *Lord Byron and Scandalous Celebrity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 22. Similarly, an 1889 *Newcastle Weekly Courant* piece on fan-mail to literary celebrities noted how the anonymous correspondent ‘seems to think that someone has been talking to him, and that in common courtesy he must answer’. *The Newcastle Weekly Courant*, October 19, 1889.
Figures 4.2-4.3: Pages from *The Queen’s Birthday Book* featuring literary and historical quotations, a blank page for entry of personal information, and one of autographed portraits included, besides which owners could set their own.

Figure 4.4: Pages from *Ruskin’s Birthday Book*. The left pages feature literary quotations and the right pages feature the birth and death days of famous individuals, with space for friends and family.

See *The Ruskin Birthday Book* (London: Raphael Tuck and Sons, 1901).
There was a third central aspect of autograph hunting; the creativity of shaping, detailing, and presenting collections.\textsuperscript{102} In such categorisation, the fan actively created an original space of celebrity. Unlike the mercantile collector who utilised his specimens generally for the instrumental purposes of research, profit, and institutional public exhibition, the hunter’s collection represented a far greater aestheticisation of use value.\textsuperscript{103} I argue it is beneficial to look at autograph collecting how Michel de Certeau imagined consumers, not as passive receptacles of entirely pre-rendered products, but as ‘unrecognized producers, poets of their own acts’, - as classifiers of celebrity in their own right.\textsuperscript{104} By categorising and arranging their specimens, they categorised and arranged celebrity


\textsuperscript{103} Stewart, \textit{On Longing}, p. 151.

\textsuperscript{104} Michel de Certeau, \textit{The Practice of Everyday Life}, transl. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. xviii. This theoretical approach to fandom is not unprecedented. Both Lawrence Grossberg and Henry Jenkins have evaluated twentieth-century fan groups in this autonomous meaning-creation framework,
culture in a microcosm. Lillie Langtry refused to sign an album on the basis that it bore the name of Henry Irving and Ellen Terry, as she did not wish to be categorised alongside what she saw as lower performers. The groupings of celebrities by fans mattered.

We can see the creativity of such collection in the many differing ways that enthusiasts organised their specimens. Henry T. Scott arranged his possessions by profession, believed they should not be tampered with, and would situate ideally two portraits around the specimen so as to show physical development throughout the life. Alexander Broadley believed in specialisation, described the clipping of autographs as ‘rank heresy’, and offered several practical tips on extending the life of decaying pieces. John Horne organised his autographs into categories based on occupation, choosing to mount them in frames around his house as, he stated, ‘I like to have my friends about me’. George Birkbeck Hill, in placing his specimens in an album, enjoyed juxtaposing two rivals for dramatic effect. The late-Victorian daughter of a Bury entrepreneur, Mary Joanna Hutchinson, constructed a collection of great literary and political figures from the nineteenth century. Each autograph had a portrait affixed nearby along with very brief and factual biographical details, such as birth dates and occupation. The figures were categorised by page according to demographics, with segregation along lines of gender and career. Some of the less impressive specimens were tucked into the central fold of the album so as to optimise space, whereas the most famous, such as Dickens, were granted a whole page to themselves (Figures 4.7-4.9). In contrast, a Mr Luke Howard’s album featured no portraits or biographical details. Indeed, in its lack of conscious artistry, it was reminiscent perhaps more of an accumulation than a collection. The autographs were inserted into the leaves of the album with seemingly little care for categorisation or thematic concerns. The outlay


107 Broadley, Chats, p. 68.
suggested purely pragmatic considerations such as the amount that could be fit onto the page and each signature seemed to have been added as soon as acquired, rather than carefully arranged (Figures 4.10-4.12). These diverse ways in which collections were arranged are indicative of the consumer and their approach to the activity.
Figures 4.7-4.9: Pages from the autograph album of Mary Joanna Hutchinson. The autographs are heavily extra-illustrated, clear weight is given to the more notable names, and the pages are gender segregated.

Mary Joanna Hutchinson’s Autograph Album. Bury Museum and Archives, Greater Manchester. Ref: FHU/2/5/1.
Figures 4.10-4.12: Pages from the autograph album of Luke Howard. The autographs are glued seemingly randomly, no extra-illustration is given.

With palpable irony, groups of specimens were also mass produced. Throughout 1881 *The Boy’s Own Paper* ran a series named ‘Characteristic Autographs’ combing facsimile portraits and autographs of the famous arranged in themes such as ‘Literary Leaders’, ‘Lights of the Church’, and ‘Leaders in Travel, Science and Art’ (Figures 4.13-4.14). Yet, it is clear that the series was intended as an impetus to collecting instead of being a commodity to collect in itself. Its facsimiles served merely as an invitation to seek the real thing. Journalist W. T. Stead’s 1891 *Portraits and Autographs: An Album for the People*, positioned the autographs of contemporary celebrities alongside photographs and illustrations representing their physical form (Figures 4.15-4.16). The layout of the work was intended to resemble a Hutchinson-style scrapbook album, with no page numbers and no printed text, simply the loose layering of autographs and portraits. The implicit association of the two markers - the portrait and autograph - was made because of their dual ability to represent the essence of the celebrity in miniature form. Yet, the paradox in mass producing a collector’s album in this manner should be apparent. The mechanical reproduction of the signatures in a widespread publication necessarily involved the loss of a singular and definitive moment of production. As American writer Nathaniel Hawthorne noted: ‘Human nature craves a certain materialism and clings pertinaciously to what is tangible... And, in truth, the original manuscript has always something which print itself must inevitably lose.’ W. T. Stead’s publication was an album without aura.

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110 Belief in the power of the physical frame to unconsciously betray has been explored in both the autobiography and interview chapters.


*The Boy’s Own Paper*, April 16, 1881; [every monthly issue until] *The Boy’s Own Paper*, September 17, 1881.

For those who were looking to build their own collection, album sizes varied considerably from grandiose tomes to more portable and hand-sized pocketbooks (Figures 4.17-4.19). The handwritten style of decoration imprinted on many such albums further reflects the desire for the individuality of the human mark (even if the mass production of such items may be viewed as peculiar). In addition to these more orthodox display styles there were eccentric options. In an 1897 edition of The Girl’s Own Paper the writer discussed the trend of arranging autographs in increasingly idiosyncratic and creative ways, such as autographed wooden mantelpieces, tables, and cloths.\textsuperscript{112} An 1899 article in Strand Magazine reported on an autograph quilt which a Mrs J. Wheeler Bennett knitted from 400 celebrity-autographed textile squares.\textsuperscript{113} Likewise, Paris socialite Madame Patti owned a fan on which the autographs of all the sovereigns of Europe were placed.\textsuperscript{114} All these methods of display betrayed differing social roles for the specimens. The album method, for example, suggests a more solitary and intimate enjoyment, whereas liberal placement around the home allows a more extroverted and socially driven purpose.

The autograph hunter - vilified in popular culture as an addicted, intrusive, and uncouth female - enjoyed the sport of ‘catching’ the famous, ‘drawing’ them even when fellow practitioners deemed it impossible. The handwriting of celebrities offered a window into their soul, a space of both metaphorical and physical intimacy capable of establishing an affectionate para-social relationship. Hunters took pleasure not just in the competitive accumulation of their aura-infused specimens, but in the forming and presentation of their collections. By making taxonomies and spaces of celebrity artefacts, these consumers constructed late-Victorian celebrity.

\textsuperscript{112} The Girl’s Own Paper, May 08, 1897.  
\textsuperscript{113} Strand Magazine, August, 1899.  
\textsuperscript{114} The Evening Telegraph, August 31, 1887.
Figures 4.17-4.19: Autograph albums came in various sizes and styles, allowing the collector to customise their acquisitions.

The Mercantile Collector: His Auctions, Antiquarianism, and Legitimacy

‘There are several people who make a good living by this business.’\textsuperscript{115}

This section will examine what I label the mercantile collector; the ideally well-to-do, male, financially-savvy yet enlightened consumer of largely posthumous celebrity. This main interest in those existing in posterity mimicked biography and history’s interest in the dignified deceased. These collectors consciously aspired to a higher and more respectable form of fame consumption that linked ephemeral celebrity to the old commemorative tradition of heroism - merging the living-memory and distant-past marks of George Eliot and Charles I. We will see how mercantile collectors - antagonistic towards their ostracised and feminised huntress counterparts - attempted to continually reinforce the masculinity of their activity by emphasising its utility in historical research, income-generating potentialities, and its esoteric antiquarian nature (the friction of these last two aspects will also be explored). In doing this, we will examine the means of how autographs entered the market, how they were sold, and how pricing functioned. For these men, autograph collecting was just one subsection of the larger historical document collecting sphere centred in the heated and masculine auction room.\textsuperscript{116} The autographs of deceased celebrities - tactile imprints of a life passed into posterity - were purchased alongside commodities such as house furnishings, chronicles, deeds, and manuscripts. Just like the mortal fear of the ultimate loss of definitive control (as discussed in the first chapter), the auction world and its collectors bore the threat of being quite literally summed up, as a public figure, in the coldly quantifiable metric of pound sterling.

The financial side of autograph collecting - the purchasing and selling of specimens at auction and in book shops - was made up, in Munby’s analysis, predominantly by the successful middle-class professional or businessman, who had both considerable expendable income and connections to

\textsuperscript{115} Daily News, July 6, 1897.

\textsuperscript{116} The era’s newfound interest in ‘scientific’ history was explored more thoroughly in the biography chapter.
This figure generally took more interest in the functional value of their specimens - how much they may raise in future auctions, how they may aid historical research - as opposed to the symbolic value, their sentimental worth in the collector’s subjective world. This patron of the auction room engaged in a decidedly masculine space as demonstrated by contemporary illustrations (Figures 4.20). In order to evidence the mercantile collector’s necessarily well-to-do status, we may reference the fact that the mean average price of a sale taken from eight autograph auctions (each with nine individual sales) between 1880 and 1900 reported in *The Times*, was twenty-one-pounds-eight-shillings. This was far above the level of expendable income both for the working class (estimated to be around two shillings a week) and the lower middle class (estimated to be around three pounds). The auction room was a wealthy man’s world and the mercantile collector - unlike the more accessible sport of autograph hunting - necessarily a man of considerable means.

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119 It could be argued that this is a meaningless figure as auction prices can vary so drastically. Yet, it may be considered a succinct, though certainly blunt, means of demonstrating the necessarily considerable means of the auction-room bidders. Auction data taken from *The Times*, April 10, 1882; *The Times*, April 20, 1886; *The Times*, July 26, 1887; *The Times*, March 21, 1890; *The Times*, March 24, 1892; *The Times*, July 8, 1895; *The Times*, February 29, 1896; *The Times*, June 20, 1899.  
121 Institutional purchasers such as the Oxford library struggled to match the prices of these wealthy collectors by the end of the century. Hill, *Autographs*, p. 12.
Despite the necessary wealth involved, as the value of celebrity marks shifted often, many advised that the prudent collector should acquire and study catalogues to gather at least some idea of expected prices. Unlike more familiar processes of exchange in which the price of goods or services reflects complex processes of valuation, in auctions value is constituted at least in part by virtue of the price that buyers are willing to pay on a particular occasion.\(^\text{122}\) This introduced what many saw as an exciting but unseemly element of gambling into the proceedings (particularly worrisome given the anti-gambling movement of the 1890s).\(^\text{123}\) One may be lucky or unlucky on the day as ‘[n]othing fluctuates so greatly as auction values’.\(^\text{124}\) ‘Auction "prices"," similarly asserted an 1895 publication, ‘can in no sense be taken as the ruling prices of the market’, since items ‘may fetch 10s one day and £5 another day’.\(^\text{125}\) ‘The rooms are very variable in their temperature,’ noted polycollector William


\(^{124}\) Slater, *Book Collecting*, p. 57.

Carew Hazlitt, ‘[n]ow it is high, now low.’ 126 ‘Now and again some collection comes to the hammer’, Frederick S. Robinson observed of this unpredictability, ‘with a reputation based on the thousands which were paid for it, and lo! the bubble is burst in the auction room.’ 127

Adrian Joline warned newcomers of this random quality:

As in the case of books, the auction prices seldom afford any just criterion of value. There may be an enthusiast, bent upon gaining certain items, who will run up the prices to fabulous heights, and again there may be occasions when, by reason of indifference or of inadequate advertising, the finest specimens are knocked down for a trifling sum. 128

Consequently, perhaps the most common tone of newspaper reports on auction sales was bewilderment (‘Mysterious are the laws which rule the prices given for the letters of celebrated men’, ‘Caprice seems to be just as active a factor in the valuation of autographs as it does in that of old books’). 129 In such capricious circumstances the names of grand historical figures were mixed with recently deceased celebrities, demonstrating the mercantile collector’s distinctive abridgement of contemporary celebrity culture with the more established and respectable commemorative tradition (Figures 4.21-4.22). Unlike the intrusive hunter, the mercantile collector who purchased a specimen of Charles I alongside George Eliot was - instead of feasting vampirically upon those nearing death such as the applicants to Oliver Wendell Holmes - merely circulating important historical information.

126 Hazlitt, The Confessions, p. 150.
129 The Derby Mercury, May 28, 1890; The Leeds Mercury, November 18, 1893.
### 1889 London Auction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Price Sold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fourteen letters from Lord Beaconsfield to Colonel Rathbone</td>
<td>£19 19s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from George Eliot explaining passages in 'Romola'</td>
<td>£10 15s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Carlyle letter to his printer</td>
<td>£1 10s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Carlyle containing 'some interesting literary matter'</td>
<td>£3 10s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Carlyle Letter to Leigh Hunt</td>
<td>£2 5s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Carlyle letter containing 'a characteristic criticism of a MS. History of Cromwell.'</td>
<td>£5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from Charles Lamb to Samuel Taylor Coleridge</td>
<td>£23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Cobden letter to friend on the Corn Laws</td>
<td>£18s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two letters of Charles I</td>
<td>£4 1s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter of Mrs Fritz Herbert</td>
<td>£15s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napoleon Bonaparte autograph</td>
<td>£2 4s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter of Duke of Cambridge</td>
<td>£1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1890 London Auction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Price Sold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter of George Grote to John Burns</td>
<td>£60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter of Lord Byron on the subject of love</td>
<td>£32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen Elizabeth</td>
<td>£9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry VIII</td>
<td>£7 15s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With the noted aspect of happenstance the closest a bidder could get to an idea of a fixed value was through analysis of the previous prices. Collectors could track the changes in prices alongside historical and biographical events (successes, failures, anniversaries) in order to explain the variances of public taste. Advocating such biographical and longitudinal inspection, Dr Scott and Samuel Davey asserted that the ‘great problem for the beginner to solve is the mysterious reason why certain letters command a far greater price than others.’ Such uncertainty, they argued, can be resolved:

by a careful study of the great names of the past hundred years, he [the collector] can comprehend the causes which influence public taste in the selection of its permanent favourites, then he will have mastered one of the great difficulties of the craft.  

Thus, accomplished mercantile collectors were expected to understand the market and its history, to know the general trends in values and the possible reasons for them. This could only be achieved via self-education regarding the careers of celebrities in recent memory and their trajectories in the public eye. This ideally high knowledge barrier was praised. As Henry T. Scott asserted: ‘Collecting autographs is the most intellectual of all collecting, requiring more learning, judgment, and taste. It is a liberal education in itself, requiring and giving a knowledge of history of men and events.’

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131 Scott, *Autograph*, p. 29. [my italics]
most effective mercantile collector was a renaissance man, marked out ‘as a king among collectors.’132

Indeed, mercantile collectors - seeking to separate themselves from other forms of celebrity consumers - were keen to emphasise both the historical precedent of their activity as well as the masculine usefulness of it in the high-minded pursuit of history. A French novelist caustically described the mindset of such collectors: ‘He flattered himself... he was not only a dealer, but a clever connoisseur and a passionate collector of the precious and the delicate’.133 Unlike, as we saw, the contemporarily minded autograph hunter, the handwriting specimens available for purchase at auction were largely of ‘the illustrious dead’.134 In the relatively rare occurrences when living celebrity autographs were auctioned, such as happened to John Morley, the ensuing controversy for the auction house acted as a deterrent.135 Posthumous specimens raised more money anyway because of their finiteness and resulting scarcity.136 In drawing a link with the past, mercantile collectors were following the way of other collecting traditions that framed their practice as precedent and thus legitimate, as well as situating themselves within the ‘scientific’ historical zeitgeist. Coin collectors, for instance, claimed Samuel Pepys as a practitioner, book collectors claimed that the first book auction took place in 1653, while engraving collectors traced their practice back to the ancient Greeks.137

Seeking such legitimisation, Scott and Davey emphasised the ancient practice of autograph collecting, citing Cicero and Libanius the Sophist as counterparts from antiquity.138 The line of

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132 Robinson, The Connoisseur, p. 16.
134 The Inverness Courier, December 01, 1891.
135 Sheffield Evening Telegraph, April 23, 1888. Martin Farquhar Tupper reported a surreal and uncomfortable feeling upon seeing one of his signatures being sold for eighteen pence. Tupper, My Life As An Author, p. 304.
136 The Pall Mall Gazette, August 10, 1887.
138 Scott, Davey, A Guide, pp. xiv. 'The taste is an old one. There were autograph collectors among the classical nations.' The Standard, December 08, 1892.
collectors was traced to what they saw as the first modern collector, eighteenth-century antiquary Ralph Thoresby, whose methods set the form for modern historical autograph collectors to come.\textsuperscript{139} Likewise, Henry T. Scott saw autograph collecting as a long European tradition, peaking in times of major cultural activity such as the Reformation and the French Revolution, claiming figures such as Fontaine as ancestral practitioners.\textsuperscript{140} Simon Gratz labelled it ‘an eminently intellectual amusement,’ while Adrian Joline asserted that ‘[a]lmost every one who reads and who really thinks has a pleasure in looking at autographs.’\textsuperscript{141} By associating a hobby with the intellectual strands of the past, enthusiasts prevented it from being seen as the ‘Latest Fashionable Fad’ or ‘The Craze of the Hour’, unlike the autograph hunter’s common grouping with the supposedly infantile stamp collector.\textsuperscript{142}

Indeed, autograph hunting was often explicitly condemned as a separate activity altogether. ‘The practice of writing begging letters to celebrities,’ objected Scott and Davey, ‘for their autographs is strongly to be condemned’.\textsuperscript{143} A contributor to the \textit{Evening Telegraph} described hunting as ‘the worst form which can be taken by the desire of collection, made for the individual who habitually desires to come by his collection on the cheap’, referring to the non-financial nature of hunting.\textsuperscript{144} ‘Autograph hunting’, asserted a contributor to the 1880 \textit{Shields Daily Gazette}, ‘is all very well for the sentimental young ladies who “dote” on a scratch of their favourite rhymer’s pen’, but it lacked true masculine refinement and culture.\textsuperscript{145} In a letter to the editor of \textit{The Owl} responding to an article condemning hunting, a mercantile collector asserted: ‘I am no ordinary hungry autograph hunter.’\textsuperscript{146} As the internationally renowned ‘Prince of Collectors’ Étienne Charavay echoed in an interview with \textit{The Pall Mall Gazette}:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{139} Scott, Davey, \textit{A Guide}, p. 21. \\
\textsuperscript{140} Scott, \textit{Autograph}, pp. 14-15. \\
\textsuperscript{141} Gratz, \textit{Autographs}, p. 14; Adrian Joline, \textit{The Autograph}, p. 18. \\
\textsuperscript{142} \textit{The Evening Telegraph}, July 14, 1887; \textit{The Pall Mall Gazette}, June 9, 1884; Adrian Joline, \textit{The Autograph}, p. 37. \\
\textsuperscript{143} Scott, Davey, \textit{A Guide}, p. 32. \\
\textsuperscript{144} \textit{Evening Telegraph}, February 28, 1891. \\
\textsuperscript{145} \textit{Shields Daily Gazette}, September 14, 1880. \\
\textsuperscript{146} \textit{The Owl}, February 25, 1887.
\end{flushright}
'I suppose that the autograph dealer is a being of comparatively recent growth, M. Charavay?' - 'The individual who sends stamped envelopes to celebrities demanding their signatures in a "your-money-or-your-life" kind of way is certainly a modern innovation,' replied M. Charavay, smiling, 'but we know that the old Roman poets and philosophers kept preciously the epistles sent them by their friends, and during the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries the Italian ladies of the renaissance kept jewelled tablets on which their friends were asked to write a motto or verse.'

Auction-room antiquaries William Upcott, Dawson Turner, and Alfred Morrison functioned as three other publicly renowned idols - fan-celebrities - for the mercantile collector. Upcott - commonly referred to as the ‘King of Autograph Collectors’ - responded to fan-mail from beginner collectors looking to get a start in the auction world. As John Fiske has observed in his examination of twentieth-century fandom, consumption itself is a potential avenue through which celebrity can be achieved, as one acquires notoriety within an enthusiast community.

Reflecting the scholarly interests of such public figures, Henry T. Scott, in his chapter, ‘Autograph Collecting as an Aid to the Historian’, referenced Thomas Carlyle’s use of autograph letters in his depiction of Cromwell. Looking to fulfill this cultural role, collectors submitted their specimens to historical societies for review, published the accumulated marks of famous historical figures, and the Society of Archivists and Autograph Collectors was formed in 1892. The specimens of these collections, once outside the auction rooms, were exhibited in national exhibitions, fine art societies, and in monuments to particular names such as the 1898 Museum of Brontë Relics. The British Library in 1895 published in facsimile some of the precious autographs in their collection in order to, in the words of the Daily News, ‘teach us history in object lessons’. Indeed, the collection of the

147 The Pall Mall Gazette, September 2, 1890.
149 Munby, The Cult, p. 85.
152 Professor Gregory B. Keen, Autograph Collection of Ferdinand J. Dreer (1890); W. J. Hardy, The Handwriting of the King & Queens of England (Oxford: The Religious Tract Society, 1893); The Standard, October 11, 1892; The Leeds Mercury, August 24, 1892.
154 Daily News, November 18, 1895.
aforementioned Alfred Morrison became the subject of a report in 1884 by the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, which described the accumulation thusly:

To call it a magnificent accumulation of autographs, without at the same time calling attention to the unusual historic worth of the majority and the singular interest of a minority of the writings, would convey no adequate notion of the merits of a collection, which in comprehensiveness and general excellence, as well as in the high importance of its most remarkable matters... [forms] the most remarkable gathering of historical autographs ever formed by a single private collector in Great Britain.  

This was the respectable autograph collecting of the newly scientific historian.

Reinforcing this historical association with mercantile collecting, miscellaneous and intimate items linked to deceased celebrities such as autographs or pens all fell under the umbrella term of ‘relics’, with newspaper pieces analysing those of particular names such as the letters of Edmund Kean, the spectacles of Joshua Reynolds, the manuscripts and furniture of Robert Burns, or those of particular demographics such as literature, the military, or theatre (Figure 4.23). The relics of national heroes such as David Livingstone and General Gordon, as well as major cultural celebrities like John Keats or the Brontë family, were put on public exhibition by private societies and public institutions such as libraries for an entry fee, often to raise money for charitable or academic endeavours. The sale of such relics in auctions were much-discussed in newspapers, with the largest ‘knock-downs’ highlighted (in 1891, for instance, a tooth of Isaac Newton sold for £790). The discoveries of such objects within estates and across lines of trade were reported in newspapers as ‘undiscoveries’, provoking images of contemporary archaeological digs, of documents saved from the oblivion that celebrities were both spared from and cursed without.

156 The Era, June 25, 1898; The Evening News, May 19, 1886; The Leeds Mercury, March 7, 1885; Grantham Journal, February 28, 1885; The Dover Express, September 11, 1891.
157 The Evening Telegraph, February 28, 1890; The Huddersfield Daily Chronicle, January 05, 1887; The Dover Express, August 10, 1894; The Leeds Mercury, October 17, 1890.
158 The Evening News, December 13, 1894; The Star, February 17, 1891.
159 The Bristol Mercury, December 20, 1892.
In emphasising the scholarly nature of their specimens, mercantile collectors connected themselves to the broader, gentlemanly forms of collecting-via-auction such as the eminently respectable and ethereal book collector.\(^{160}\) In this wider world of collecting, the ideal participant - in contrast to the popular images of the undiscerning hunter - was ‘a wise and discriminating man who gathers the old and the rare, who selects only the best examples, and who knows precisely what he wants.’\(^{161}\) There was certainly crossover between the two forms of collecting, as both were interested in autographed editions and manuscripts, leading many monographs on book collecting to spend a chapter or so on the autograph.\(^ {162}\) It may even be postulated that the lack of a contemporary designation for mercantile collectors reflected their integration with the larger collection sphere; they were simply ‘collectors’. However, there was a tendency of book collectors to

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view autograph collectors as their slightly uncouth younger brother, reflecting pejorative associations. Bibliomaniac Percy Fitzgerald admitted that while the notion of the ‘hobby’ had somewhat unrighteous connotations, the practice of book collecting still maintained a ‘cloud of pleasant romantic associations’, adding smugly, ‘[n]o “hobby” is so old, so enduring, or respectable as this’. Indeed, the auction world of book collecting had long attempted to justify what some viewed as a crude practice (due to the passion of bidders) by appealing to its high-minded dissemination of historical knowledge. Polycollectors, such as William Carew Hazlitt or Adrian Joline, who accumulated a variety of items available at auction, bridged the gap between the autograph collector and the larger antiquarian world of auction participation.

Indeed, the mercantile collector, unlike the hunter, by virtue of their consumption space in the auction rooms, often gathered other items of cultural import sold alongside autographs. For instance, a typical Sotheby auction containing autographs would be titled ‘Autograph Letters and Historical Manuscripts’, while Puttick and Simpson usually named theirs, ‘A Collection of Autograph Letters and Documents’. Magazines such as The Curio grouped autograph collecting with the broader auction-centred collecting of heraldry, book plates, coins, rare books, and works of art, aiming to be the public organ of the cultured antiquarian above the ‘temporary collecting craze’ - an obvious euphemism for hunters. Likewise, regular series such as ‘Book and Curio Sales’ in the Glasgow Herald combined sales of books, engravings, and autographs into one seamless report. By associating with book collectors, an esoteric pursuit and one an enthusiast admitted was ‘seldom

167 The Times, June 19, 1890; The Standard, January 29, 1900.
169 Glasgow Herald, June 24, 1896.
Yet, these intellectual defences did not stop some outside commentators perceiving such a cold, business-like, and philistine aspect to the auction rooms - dominated in the late-Victorian era by three firms (listed in descending order of market leadership): Sotheby, Christie, and Puttick & Simpson.171 ‘The people who buy autograph[s],’ asserted an 1897 Edinburgh Evening News piece, ‘are not literary. They look on them as other people look on curious furniture.’172 An 1883 piece in The Times similarly described the typical auction attendee as ‘the regular “marchand de bric-a-brac”,’ whose entire evaluation of items ‘lies in the nutshell of his pocket.’173 An 1889 piece in The Leeds Mercury also observed what they saw as a mercenary aspect of the mercantile collector who was seemingly only interested in the cold functional value of his specimens:

This naturally suggests the mercenary considerations which no amount of lofty sentiment can quite exclude from the autograph-collector’s calculations. Sentiment alone is not enough to feed his ‘fearful joys.’ He may repel the insinuation as libellous, and aver that his treasures are beyond all price, to the true collector they always are - after he has bought them, and before he wants to sell them. He held them cheap enough when he bid for them an old-song price in the saleroom; and on the day when they come to be disposed of or valued for probate, the new price, as compared with the old, will probably mark the true measure of his success in his particular hobby.174

Perceiving this profiteering aspect of collecting, newspapers speculated on the value of a collection as an investment much the same as they would a house, especially after William Upcott’s collection had sold in 1846 for £4,125.175 It was reported of Henry Parks, for instance, that he was offered £450 for his full collection, a Mrs Bok’s collection of 5,000 examples was estimated to be worth £20,000, while the Queen of Spain’s 2,000 strong collection was estimated to be worth £30,000.176 This

170 Slater, The Romance.
172 Edinburgh Evening News, November 03, 1897.
174 The Leeds Mercury, March 10, 1890.
175 Gratz, Autographs, p. 92.
176 The North-Eastern Daily Gazette, January 06, 1897; The North-Eastern Daily Gazette, May 06, 1889; The Essex County Standard, April 28, 1894, p. 7.
pecuniary aspect was further strengthened by businesses’ use of the autograph to sell their wares. C. Brandeur’s pens, for instance, used the marks of Charles Dickens to advertise their product, while hotels and restaurants utilised visitor books in order to publicly display their famous patrons (Figures 4.24-4.25). With such financial interest, it is unsurprising that a major industry of forgeries developed around autographs, inevitably contributing to the underhand reputation the auction world had, often labelled ‘the disease of autographs’.\footnote{For a contemporary piece on Victorian autograph forgery, see \textit{The Standard}, September 24, 1897.}
Figure 4.24: Advertisement for C. Brandauer’s pens.

Figure 4.25: A newspaper reproduction of a hotel visitor book featuring famous names.
Freeman’s Journal, May 26, 1896.
The practitioner’s emphasis on the activity’s intellectualism was perhaps not just a response to critics who cried profiteering, but also a compensation for the notoriously heated nature of English auctions themselves. As an 1848 French periodical piece on English auction rooms said of regular patrons: ‘difficult though it may always be to exercise restraint once the bidding starts, for them it is impossible. If a man whose appearance or triumphant expression annoys you bids a shilling more than your limit, you cannot help bidding another shilling.’

George Augustus Sala, twenty years later, similarly commented: ‘Much noise, much dust, and an appreciable amount of confusion, must necessarily... exist at every auction,’ adding that such hecticness contributed to criminality: ‘It is strange, too, how soon the virtues of auctioneering are apt to degenerate into vices; and how thin a barrier exists between its legitimate commercial business and an imbroglio of roguish chaffering.’

‘Auctions present to spectators,’ stated Andrew Miller on the nineteenth-century auction, ‘the possibilities of utopia and of hell, the satisfaction of all desires, and the frustration of all needs.’

While the specimens purchased may have had a more justified utility, and while the likes of Charavay may have sought to distinguish themselves from the irrational hunter, the auction room was ironically notorious itself for heated emotion and savage competition. Perhaps this uneasy paradox - the sense that one is not so innocent - partly explains the level of antagonism publicly displayed towards the hunter.

Contributing to this excitement, charismatic auctioneers such as the famed George Robins manipulated the bidding crowd with theatrical gestures and building crescendos, often carrying on the bid when it became clear that the highest bidder was desperate. This performance aspect of the auctioneer was noted by one biographer: ‘He resembles some of our greatest orators, who become louder and louder in their tones as they approach the close of their speeches, and are loudest of all

178 Learmount, A History, p. 117.
179 Sala, Twice Round, p. 172.
in their concluding sentence.  

The auctioneer was described as a ‘dealer in words’ who knew how to ‘enlarge nothing into something’ with the ‘persuasive powers of the writer’. An 1893 piece in The Pall Mall Gazette, for instance, gave a portrayal of such an expert: ‘His manner was calm and his voice low... yet he knows his men’. The auctioneer thought on his feet and combined lots when he felt that they were not raising what they should individually. He interspersed the biddings with playful humour, scoffing in mock anger when bids were low. For one lot the auctioneer selected two particularly well-dressed gentlemen to compete for an item, in turn making them think that other wealthy gentlemen were looking to move in. By doing this, the auctioneer achieved a selling price ‘at least twice as much as it ought to be.’

For those who wished to avoid such excitable scenes, mercantile collectors had one other major avenue for purchasing autographs. In keeping with autograph collecting’s link to the larger antiquarian community, second-hand book dealers often also sold autographs or autographed materials (letters, manuscripts) in their stores. Collectors could go straight to the dealers themselves and purchase them directly, though for a higher price than could be potentially had in auction rooms. Some desperate collectors did this upon announcement of an upcoming sale that included an item or collection they direly needed, paying a significant mark-up to avoid the uncertainty of the auction. This likelihood that the dealer would overcharge (thereby justifying not taking it to auction) led many collectors to advise others to prudently attend auction rooms where one may pay a fraction of the stated price. The auction was the centre of the mercantile collector’s activity, the second-hand book shop being merely an auxiliary space, usually only visited under duress.

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183 *The Pall Mall Gazette*, April 13, 1893.
Whether a result of auction-room biddings or dealer sale, the relative financial values of autographs were a common newspaper topic, particularly in Society-interest columns such as ‘Gleaning’ from the *Birmingham Daily Post*, ‘Stray Leaves’ from *The Examiner*, or ‘Odds and Ends’ in *The Bury and Norwich Post*. A common observation of prices was the distinct loss of relative value in aristocratic handwriting since the early-nineteenth century and the converse rise in the value of cultural and artistic celebrities. In 1889, for instance, examples of Robert Burns’ calligraphy were priced in the heady realm of thirty-five pounds each, while Princess Louise’s hand only went for a guinea. Besides such demographic distinctions, autographs were generally judged on the quality of maintenance, the actual content of the writing, the context of the signature (document, letter, manuscript), and the availability of other specimens on the market. Those produced specifically for albums in response to requests were regarded as the least valuable due both to the contrived nature of their production and the fact that it was ungraciously hunted.

Yet, regardless of these contributing factors and the randomness of the auction rooms, autograph prices rose steadily and universally throughout the era despite it being a period of predominant deflation in currency (Figure 4.26). Many autographs purchased for a small sum at the beginning

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187 *Birmingham Daily Post*, December 7, 1883; *The Examiner*, June 26, 1880; *The Bury and Norwich Post*, June 07, 1887.
188 *La Belle Assemblée*, November 01, 1827; *Citizen*, November 24, 1891.
189 *The Pall Mall Gazette*, October 15, 1889.
190 *Daily News*, February 29, 1896; *The Pall Mall Gazette*, August 10, 1887; *The Girl’s Own Paper*, February 28, 1891. The analysis of dealer price catalogues - as opposed to auction-room results - in quantifying the value placed on celebrities, acknowledges the somewhat arbitrary and therefore unreliable nature of auction-room prices. Dealer catalogues carried more analytical significance.
192 For 1843 Johnson autograph, see *Berrow’s Worcester Journal*, May 18, 1843; for 1896 Johnson autograph, see *The Lichfield Mercury*, March 06, 1896; for 1843 Nelson autograph, see *The Ipswich Journal*, April 29, 1843; for 1898 Nelson autograph, see *The Pall Mall Gazette*, July 29, 1898; for Walter Scott 1845 autograph, see *The Morning Post*, February 03, 1845; for Walter Scott 1889 autograph, see *The Leeds Mercury*, November 29, 1889; for Thomas Gray 1845 autograph, see *The Ipswich Journal*, December 6, 1845; for 1889 Thomas Gray autograph, see *The Leeds Mercury*, August 10, 1889; for 1845 William Shenstone autograph, see *The Morning Post*, February 03, 1845; for 1889 William Shenstone autograph, see *The Pall Mall Gazette*, October 15, 1889; for 1843 Oliver Cromwell autograph, see *Reading Mercury*, April 29, 1843; for 1889 Oliver Cromwell autograph, see *The Pall Mall Gazette*, October 15, 1889; for 1845 Henry VII autograph, see *The Morning Chronicle*, February 1, 1845; for 1892 Henry VII [priced halved from the sale of two items], see *The Pall Mall Gazette*, July 19, 1892; for 1843 Charles I autograph, see *The Newcastle Courant*, April 28, 1843; for 1892 Charles I autograph, see *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, May 6, 1892; for 1844 Edmund Kean autograph, see *The Morning Post*, January 19, 1844; for 1898 Edmund Kean autograph, see *The Era*, June 25, 1898.
of the century realised a small fortune in later decades. ‘We have known amateurs,’ wrote Scott and Davey, ‘of only twenty years’ standing who have disposed of their collections at a profit so considerable that they themselves were astonished at it.’\(^\text{193}\) The price, for example, of any of Samuel Johnson’s autograph letters rose by about a pound between 1875 and 1895.\(^\text{194}\) Similarly, in 1831 the full manuscript of Sir Walter Scott’s *The Abbot* was valued at fourteen pounds, and by 1889 a single page of the manuscript was sold in London for seventeen pounds.\(^\text{195}\) Because of this consistent rise, many collectors advised others to get involved in the practice as soon as possible so as to benefit from the seemingly inevitable rise in value.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autograph Letter</th>
<th>Early-Victorian</th>
<th>Late-Victorian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Samuel Johnson</td>
<td>£2 11s (1843)</td>
<td>£4 15s (1896)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Nelson</td>
<td>£3 3s (1843)</td>
<td>£4 (1898)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Scott</td>
<td>£2 10s (1845)</td>
<td>£4 4s (1889)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Gray</td>
<td>£14 10s (1845)</td>
<td>£18 18s (1889)</td>
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<tr>
<td>William Shenstone</td>
<td>13s (1845)</td>
<td>£4 4s (1889)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Cromwell</td>
<td>£7 (1843)</td>
<td>£12 12s (1889)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry VII</td>
<td>17s (1845)</td>
<td>£37 14s (1892)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles I</td>
<td>£4 14s 6d (1843)</td>
<td>£14 14s (1892)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmund Kean</td>
<td>£1 11s (1844)</td>
<td>£31 (1898)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.26: A comparison of prices of autographs between the early- and late-Victorian era. Prices were gathered from newspaper reports of auctions. All are as closest to a generic autographed letter as possible, unpublished manuscripts were not consulted as they usually went for much more and would skew the prices. Auction prices, as discussed, depended on many variable factors and were to an extent ‘random’, but the uniformity of this rise was noted by many contemporaries and can be witnessed here. [Sources in footnotes due to length].

\(^{194}\) Hill, *Talk*, pp. 7-8.
Tracing where these increasingly pricey specimens were sourced from can be complex. One major source of supply was the executor’s sale, a common feature of Victorian newspapers (particularly *The Times*), with firms selling off the containments of a home from the deceased’s residence.\(^{196}\) As mentioned, the autograph in the auction room formed only one item type in a larger web of objects for the bidding.\(^{197}\) James Payn’s relatives, for instance, held an auction of his relics (manuscripts, autographs, personal belongings) shortly after his death, thus willingly dispersing his aura throughout the market (though raising a disappointing amount).\(^{198}\) Such sales of relics were often sold off as a legacy to aid the deceased’s friends and family.

Rather than selling off specimens of the individuals themselves, some auctions sold off an individual’s, a group’s, or an institution’s collection in a session, reintroducing specimens that were formerly available.\(^{199}\) Adrian Joline stated that it was the fate of most collections to be dispersed in such a way.\(^{200}\) As a widow, for instance, Mabel Morrison was unsure of what to do with her late husband’s large collection and decided it should be re-circulated via auction among other collectors.\(^{201}\) Likewise, William Morley Punshon, a businessman turned clergyman and auction-room patron, had his seven-volume collection of autograph letters sold after his death.\(^{202}\) Like the

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\(^{196}\) Elizabeth Coggin Womack, ‘Nineteenth-Century Auction Narratives and Compassionate Reading’, *Victorian Review*, 43:2 (2017), p. 229. As suggested by this chapter’s first section, autographs could also enter the market through direct application to the signer, however, as a general rule, autograph hunters collected their specimens to be owned for primarily symbolic value, and then either passed them down the family (as with Luke Howard’s collection) or were sold off at auction after their death where their value would become more functional, entering the sphere of the mercantile collector, particularly as the celebrity signer would often be deceased by then also.

\(^{197}\) *Freeman’s Journal*, June 8, 1880; *Birmingham Daily Post*, February 24, 1894; *Birmingham Daily Post*, November 23, 1895.

\(^{198}\) *The North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, May 12, 1898.


\(^{200}\) Adrian Joline, *The Autograph Hunter*, p. 60.

\(^{201}\) Herrman, *Sotheby’s*, pp. 170-171.

\(^{202}\) *Northern Echo*, November 22, 1881.
executor’s sale, some collections were sold under duress. For example, Lord Londesborough, undergoing financial difficulties, attempted to remedy this by auctioning off the collection formed by his father. Further demonstrating the popularity of the hobby amongst celebrities themselves, these auctioned private collections were sometimes the belongings of known names such as Edmund Yates and Charles Kean. Thus, death played a significant role in the supplying of autographs to market, acting as a kind of economic lubricant that circulated and regurgitated specimens.

Following such lifespans, particularly noteworthy specimens were tracked in auction after auction in ‘it-narratives’. Leah Price has argued that in the nineteenth century it-narratives shifted, like the novel, from focusing self-consciously on the constructed frame and structure of the work (the prefaces, introductions, and paratexts of a book, for instance) to focusing on a character-based plot which sees the ‘it’ navigating its way through a personal conflict such as the anxiety of being stolen or the desire to be bought. Accordingly, biographical aspects influenced commentaries on sales, the item becoming an extension and representation of the deceased celebrity’s selfhood, as has been observed in different contexts by Lyall Watson. ‘The highest prices obtained were for the two men in totally different positions’, noted the 1892 Leeds Mercury referring to the politically oppressed Archbishop Laud and James Strode, ‘who were persecuted in different manners during their lifetime.’ The changing values of these stand-ins were also noted in narrative form. An 1881 piece, for instance, in the Edinburgh Evening News subtitled ‘A Romance of Burns’ Autographs’ narrated the journey of six specimens of the Scottish poet sold from a desperate old lady to a dealer for twenty-five-pounds, who then sold them at an Edinburgh auction for £200. A manuscript of

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203 The York Herald, June 30, 1888.
206 Watson, The Nature of, p. 21. This extension of the celebrity’s aura also bears similarities to the common connection of the celebrity and their home.
207 The Leeds Mercury, December 2, 1892.
Thackeray was anthropomorphised as the ‘hero’ of an auction - reified as his posthumous essence - for selling for eighty-eight-pounds, a figure larger than it had ever previously raised. Indeed, autographs could be followed from the announcement of their future sale to their eventual ‘knocking-off’, allowing readers to see if it had lived up to its potential. As the celebrity life-narrative was twisted and re-formed by numerous intermediaries, so their marks - serving as microcosms of their personhood - were followed diligently by the popular press and enthusiasts as they increased or decreased in value, changed hands from family members to wealthy merchants, survived and disappeared. This was - in miniature form - the afterlife that celebrities feared, being bounced around by intermediary to intermediary, consumer to consumer, influenced by all they came into contact with.

The mercantile collector - represented as cultured, antiquarian, dignified yet also covetous - framed autograph collecting as an avenue of historical scholarship, cultural preservation, and - though this was generally denied by practitioners themselves - monetary profit. Focused mainly on the handwriting of the deceased, the mercantile collector associated himself with a more dignified form of fame than the autograph hunter, crossing over to the posthumous and masculine commemorative tradition of hero-worship. From the investigation of this form of celebrity fandom we can see how consumers informed and constructed the publicity of those they consumed in divergent ways. Rather than being acted upon in the fundamental triptych of celebrity construction, audiences of consumers - discussed in the plural so as to reflect their heterogenous nature - act upon their respective discourses of fame. Both forms of late-Victorian fandom, in part due to their very diversity, demonstrated the proactivity of the audience in constructing contemporary fame.

Consumption is both a product and means of celebrity.

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209 The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post, March 25, 1892.
210 Announcement that an autograph of Giuseppe Mazzini would be up for sale, Aberdeen Weekly Journal, November 16, 1891. Revelation that Mazzini’s autograph had disappointingly sold for ten shillings, The Morning Post, November 28, 1891.
Conclusion

It can be easy to talk about consumers, audiences, or fans without thoroughly considering the meaning of those terms. Perhaps the two distinguishing characteristics of such concepts are, firstly, being on the receiving end of a mechanism that seeks to distribute (even push) its products and, secondly, taking part in a cultural phenomenon by purchasing, collecting, customising, and cherishing. Like many of my scholarly predecessors in more recent decades it is this second conceptualisation of the consumer that I wish to emphasise. By understanding consumers as another active node in the feedback loop of popular culture, rather than simply the passive receptacles to whom popular culture is delivered, it quickly becomes apparent how they both consumed and produced the discourse they engaged with. A term of relatively recent coinage, the ‘prosumer’, used by media studies scholars to refer to twenty-first century instances of such mixed identities (the YouTube celebrity who discusses their latest makeup purchase, for instance) seems an eminently apt term - regardless of its slightly clunky nature - to describe the autograph hunter and mercantile collector of the late-Victorian era, who created taxonomies, monetised, ranked, reified, hounded, hailed, and built sentimental connections to those visible in the public eye.²¹¹

Such an understanding of the multifaceted role of the consumer organically connects with this thesis’ amendment to the traditional triptych of celebrity. Indeed, it can at times become difficult to assign the Victorian autograph collector to one single point of the visualisation. Many autograph hunters functioned as celebrity-fans (Julia Pardoe, John Lawrence Toole, Queen Victoria), celebrities who participated in consuming the very publicity they radiated. Conversely, many mercantile collectors functioned as fan-celebrities (William Upcott, Dawson Turner, Alfred Morrison), collectors so known for their proficiency that they themselves achieved renown within enthusiast circles - and indeed even among the wider public. The existence of such figures speaks to both the need for a softening of the traditional triptych of celebrity and, concordantly, the imperative to understand

²¹¹ For discussion of the term ‘prosumer’, see Duffett, Understanding Fandom, p. 63.
consumers as proactive participants in popular culture (the latter understanding outlined at the beginning of this conclusion). Indeed, without such a nuanced perspective that recognises the spaces of autonomy, consumers cannot be understood in any substantive sense at all.
Conclusion

For a term not long ago thought to be anachronistic in the study of history, celebrity has come a long way. Like its antecedents, in seeking to combat this accusation of anachronism, this study has sought to refine the definition, historical framing, and scholarly conceptualisation of celebrity. This specification must be sufficiently broad and specific, hence the visualisation of celebrity as the irreducible culmination of interweaving self-interested forces in a converging triptych that allows for complex integration between the three points. Rather than simply a consequence of radiant individuality, an omnipotent media machine, or a consuming audience, celebrity as a historical phenomenon is the result of all three fundamental forces both conflicting and coalescing. Simplistic triangular frameworks - favoured by celebrity researchers as recently as 2019 - are rendered insufficient when we note the interweaving of the three fundamental players. This thesis, it is hoped, has demonstrated the need for such an amendment.

Each chapter has demonstrated separate instances of the conflicting and coalescing nature of late-Victorian celebrity culture. The chapter on autobiography investigated how celebrities approached what was usually their final act of self-construction, how they sought to shape their public persona for a time in which they would no longer be able to participate in the discussion and how, by doing so, they ironically played the part of the gossiping intermediary themselves. The biography chapter examined how intermediaries sought to define deceased celebrities - attempting to reach deep into the psyche - in hopes of becoming the definitive interpretation of the life, sometimes overshadowing the very fame they wrote about. The interview chapter discussed the complex interactions between journalists and readers, as well as journalists and celebrities, demonstrating the tense tug-of-war that occurred between the latter coupling and the increasing renown of interviewers themselves. Finally, the chapter on autograph collecting demonstrated how fame was both constructed and gained by the consumer in the contemporary and posthumous spheres. The feminine autograph hunter - like interviewers - engaged in a complex, often belligerent, relationship with celebrities, both adoring and victimising them. The masculine mercantile collector, situating the deceased
celebrity within the broader catacombs of fame, fixed monetary values upon public names in boisterous auctions. Within both styles of consumption celebrities participated and celebrityhood was achieved. Fundamentally, in each chapter we see the three central agents of celebrity both struggle against, and collapse into, one-another. This merging occurs because the fame of celebrity - unlike heroism - draws attention relatively indiscriminatingly and with less concern for pre-defined cultural and moral roles. As a visual metaphor, we may liken the fame of celebrity - in contrast to the more rigid nature of heroism - to the free-flowing and shape-filling nature of liquid.

In making these claims this study has contributed to numerous bodies of literature. By taking a deliberately broad demographic approach this thesis has widened the scope of analysis usually taken by scholars of Victorian celebrity (who have thus far focused overwhelmingly on the feminine literary sphere). The title of celebrity was contemporarily conferred upon many more individuals than the current literature suggests. Additionally, my framing of the late-Victorian era as the first mass celebrity culture, as the maturation of a process that had begun a century earlier, engages directly with long-standing inter-disciplinary debates surrounding the phenomenon’s temporal origin and definition. Finally, by contrasting celebrity with other forms of nineteenth-century fame such as heroism, this study has contributed to the discussions of Max Jones, Berny Sèbe, and Edward Berenson.

In making these contributions a variety of possible structures and approaches were rejected. Though a thematic structure focused on individual personalities has clear merits (such as that

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2 Boorstin places celebrity’s creation in the twentieth century, Marshall places it in the nineteenth, Lilti in the eighteenth. Lilti’s placing has largely been accepted as historical consensus, and it is hoped that my conceptualisation of the Victorian era as the next great stride of celebrity will be noted.

pursued recently by Sharon Marcus), the route this study has taken - a structural investigation of the activities of celebrity - allows for a nuanced analysis of the phenomenon in all of its various ambiguities and one that is not overdependent upon anecdotes and particularities. Not only does this approach offer a novel perspective, but it may serve as a theoretical framework to be used by future scholars seeking to answer the call made by Simon Morgan to take celebrity seriously as a historical phenomenon and academic topic.

Such a framework may be applied also to other periods. For instance, the work on twentieth-century celebrity has largely concerned itself with the film star, a term used virtually interchangeably with celebrity as a specific expression of the phenomenon. Richard deCordova has already performed a nuanced structural analysis of the construction of American film stars of the early-to-mid century. However, the scholarship on twentieth-century celebrity, like the concern with Victorian literary figures, could benefit from a broadening of the term (an entirely justified suggestion given the contemporary application of the term to famous figures of many occupations). The work of Richard Schickel - notwithstanding his assertion that celebrity did not exist prior to the twentieth century - is the closest we have come to a multi-demographic analysis of twentieth-century celebrity (looking at film stars, pop stars, politicians), though even this still predominantly concerns itself with film actors. Just as analysis of Victorian celebrity may not be limited to the literary sphere, analysis of twentieth-century celebrities need not be reduced to the realm of film.

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8 See Schickel, *Intimate Strangers*. 
Recent work on twenty-first century celebrity culture - perhaps the only era for which there is universal agreement about the existence of the phenomenon - has begun to note the impact of the major technological developments of the time - particularly globalisation and the ubiquity of the internet. As many of these commentators have pointed out, the internet vastly increases the ability of consumers to swiftly interact with celebrity-related content online. What some have called the ‘democratic’ nature of the world wide web - the theoretical ability of anyone with an internet connection to take part in its discourse - has great implications for the traditional triptych structure of celebrity construction. When consumers are able to publish their views and behaviours at the click of a button as ‘prosumers’, or gain global renown within virtual communities of fandom as ‘micro-celebrities’ (though I have demonstrated the existence of such merged identities over a century prior), the line between them and the media or celebrity becomes seemingly even more blurred than I have suggested it was in the late-Victorian era. The parties involved in the matrices of celebrity construction have, it seems at least, never been so indistinct.

The benefits and opportunities of pursuing such contemporary research - particularly of so liquid a form of fame - should be clear. Take, for an easily available example, the popular television series *Celebrity Masterchef*. We may examine the stated motivations of the celebrities appearing on the programme, what the criteria for celebrity is, what the celebrity theme adds to the programme, how popular such programming is compared to other items, the tweets of viewers (both during the programme’s airing and afterwards), how interactive (i.e. inclusive of the audience’s will) the competition is, whether media coverage focuses on the celebrities as a group or individually, and to what extent published media informs audience opinion or visa-versa (if such a line of distinction can

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even be clearly drawn), to name just a few avenues of deconstruction. Such analysis would inform us not only about the specificities of contemporary celebrity, but also how individuality is constructed, how the power dynamic plays out between media and consumer, how clear the line between these categories are, and the extent to which continuities can be drawn between such modern-day instances and the Victorian celebrity activities explored in this thesis. Is it apt to draw a comparison between the Victorian autograph hunter who proudly glued their latest handwritten conquest into an album and the twenty-first century Celebrity Masterchef fan who changes their Facebook profile picture to a ‘selfie’ featuring them alongside the recent programme victor? Such an investigation would mirror the recent work done by Bob Nicholson in tracing the Victorian seeds of what many see as the exclusively twenty-first century roots of various media phenomena.10

Conscious that it is dealing fundamentally with two bodies of scholarship - that on celebrity and that on late-Victorian Britain - it is also hoped that this thesis has demonstrated how fundamental the study of celebrity is in understanding the British Isles in the final decades of the nineteenth century. No analysis of its popular culture, consumerism, or notions of the public are complete without accounting for celebrity. Some astute recent works that have already noticed this are Richard Pearson’s investigation of the connections between Victorian novelists and the stage, Richard Salmon’s analysis of the rise of the literary profession, and Robert Patten’s examination of Charles Dickens’ renown in an industrial age.11 Recent publications that may have proved yet more insightful had they explicitly and thoroughly engaged with the contemporary celebrity culture are Daniel Bivona and Marlene Tromp’s work examining the abstraction of economic concepts throughout the era, Paul Raphael Rooney and Anna Gasperini’s exploration of the Victorian reading experience, Anna Maria Jones, Rebecca N. Mitchell, and Kate Flint’s investigation of popular graphic

texts, Barry Crosbie and Mark Hampton’s analysis of the British imperial worldview, and Helen Kingstone and Kate Lister’s dissection of collecting cultures. With the near-ubiquitous literacy, extended leisure time, psychological intrigue, human-interest journalism, professionalisation of work, concerns over the legality of ‘public’ property, passing ‘fads’ and ‘crazes’, the reported anomie and isolation of urban living, as well as the exponential developments in communication technologies, the phenomenon is a key aspect of understanding how people lived and thought in what was contemporarily referred to as ‘the century of celebrities’.

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13 Glasgow Herald, March 21, 1887; Sunderland Daily Echo, October 19, 1899.
### Appendices

**Appendix 1: Celebrity Autobiography Dataset**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Celebrity</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Vols</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>Memoirs</td>
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<td>Adam and Charles Black</td>
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<td>An Autobiography</td>
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<td>George Allen</td>
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<td>Stray Records</td>
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Primary Sources

Archival Sources

Bury Council Archives, Greater Manchester
- Red embossed album cover containing cartes de visite of Victorian celebrities and family members. Ref: FHU/2/1/4/2/1.
- Mary Joanna Hutchison’s Autograph Album. Ref: FHU/2/5/1.

The National Archives, Kew
- An 1888 printing by the company of Thomas White Smith featuring the likenesses of numerous ‘Great Men’, with a legend on the back. Ref: COPY 1/392/295.
- Photograph of a Miscellaneous Group of Eminent Persons. Ref: COPY 1/2/127.
- Photograph of One Thousand Living and Historical Celebrities. Ref: COPY 1/4/180.
- Photograph of Many Modern Celebrities. Ref: COPY 1/1/233.
- Photograph Giving Portraits of Living Celebrities. Ref: COPY 1/1/184.
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- Photographic Portraits of 70 Men, Eminent in Arts, Sciences and the Fine Arts. Ref: COPY 1/14/793.
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