

WOMEN'S CELEBRITY IN CANADA: CONTEXTS AND MEMOIRS, 1908-2011

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ABSTRACT

“Women’s Celebrity in Canada: Contexts and Memoirs, 1908-2011” is equal parts cultural history and literary analysis. It examines the cultural contexts and conditions that shaped the emergence and development of modern celebrity in English Canada, focusing in particular on the role of mass media and bureaucratic policy in the production, dissemination, and consumption of celebrity by Canadians across the twentieth century. Reading celebrity as a function or mode of being and moving in the public sphere, this project historicizes women’s access to that sphere: it examines how ideological constructions of gender and fame have shaped how women in Canada have been able to access and use the tools and technologies of celebrity, and it argues that these conditions have had an impact on how women represent themselves in public life-writing texts. These celebrity autobiographies, this project demonstrates, not only narrate gendered experiences of celebrity but, in their rhetorical strategies and publication conditions, reveal the cultural climate of being and speaking as a famous woman at different historical junctures. In tracing the trends, tactics, and experiments in self-representation over the century, this project is able to uncover and examine the ideological and cultural pressures exerted on public women to perform particular identities and how these women attempted to manage, contest, and negotiate these conditions.

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Introduction

Theorizing the Celebrity Autobiography in Canada

The celebrity autobiography is by no means an unfamiliar or obscure genre. Even if you have never read one, you've certainly seen one and been exposed to the powerful print, radio or television marketing momentum that accompanies them. These texts are so common that the production of one has ceased to be remarkable; if it is not expected it is certainly unsurprising when a famous individual announces that she too has rendered her life story into an "honest," "profound," "remarkable," "behind the scenes," and "deeply moving" text.¹ We are in the throes of what Leigh Gilmore has termed a "long memoir boom" ("Neoconfessional" 658), a period in which popular memoir production by both well-known and unknown individuals has come to form a significant, even dominant, portion of the non-fiction market.² The celebrity autobiography, while neither the cause nor driving force behind this boom (Rak, *Boom* 9), has a prominent place within it: these texts are popular with publishers, relatively easy to market and therefore highly visible, and have significant publicity and profit potential. Moreover, there is a strong market for these texts: people, in general, want to know more about the prominent individuals circulating in the public sphere and a great many of these individuals are willing to craft a narrative in response to that demand.

The recent nature of the memoir boom, however, does not mean that the production and consumption of the celebrity autobiography are new phenomena; they are only very common

¹ These are common phrases used to promote celebrity autobiographies. They are, for example, found in the promotional material (reviews or jacket summaries) published in the autobiographies of Jann Arden, Anne Murray, Shania Twain, Celine Dion, Shannon Tweed, Elizabeth Manley, and Margaret Trudeau.

² Beginning in the early 1990s (Yagoda 66) and peaking in the first decade of the twenty-first century (Rak, *Boom* 3), this boom in the production, consumption, and, as Julie Rak stresses, the *visibility* of popular memoirs (*Boom* 69) has been attributed to multiple sources: the rising tide of neoliberalism (Gilmore, "Neoconfessional" 658; Nixon 35); shifts in various social and political contexts that opened up spaces for previously marginalized voices (Miller; Nixon 39-40; Gilmore, "Neoconfessional" 673; Winter) and/or desires to locate and identify with particular communities (Rak, *Boom* 35); the consolidation of the publishing industry and an increasing emphasis (and reliance) on bestsellers (Rak, *Boom* 66); and a variety of other social, cultural, and economic factors.

ones at present. Public figures have long sought to promote, manage, and control their public image through life narratives: the story of one's life, achievements, or character, circulated orally or in print has been a critical tool for consolidating power and authority for centuries. With the advent of mass media and the changes they wrought to the structure of the public sphere, however, such interventions into the circulation and meaning of one's public reputation became both easier to orchestrate (more and cheaper options) and all the more necessary (more participants in more media are more difficult to control). Over the course of the twentieth century we see the autobiography emerge as a prominent tool for brand and image management for individuals circulating in the public sphere; at the same time, the range of individuals claiming subject positions in the public sphere and accessing the technologies and institutions for creating and maintaining celebrity expands as well. This project details those trends as they occurred in Canadian contexts: the expansion of the public sphere in Canada to include women, the ways in which these women could access the technologies of modern celebrity, how they narrated and negotiated these conditions of celebrity in life-writing texts, and how these texts shifted and changed over time.

"Women's Celebrity in Canada: Contexts and Memoirs, 1908-2011" is equal parts cultural history and literary analysis: it examines the cultural contexts and conditions in which celebrity in Canada has been cultivated, produced, disseminated, and consumed, and it uses the autobiographies of Canadian celebrities to uncover how these conditions shaped textual strategies and how such strategies could be used to manage, contest, and negotiate these conditions. Reading celebrity as a function or mode of being and moving in the public sphere³,

³ Scholars like Michael Werner and P. David Marshall are increasingly interested in contesting the singularity of "public sphere" and seek to characterize modes of being and being in public in terms of *publics* and public *spheres*. In this dissertation, "public sphere" refers to the general physical, intellectual, media space(s) that are public as opposed to those that are private. Increasingly, however, the demarcation between public and private (and the

this project seeks to historicize women's access to that sphere: it details how women's movement into public, paid labour constituted a significant shift in their capacity to cultivate public lives and created opportunities for them to renegotiate the ideologies that had hitherto precluded or restricted the modes by which they could assert their cultural, symbolic, and economic value and power. Since many of the women who became celebrities in the twentieth century, particularly in the early decades, laboured in entertainment and leisure industries, this project also charts the development of mass media in Canada as a significant force in shaping not just the form and function of modern celebrity cultures, but also the modes and means by which women could most often cultivate celebrity.

If these histories sketch the general landscape of celebrity, the autobiographies map its contours; however, these texts are more than simply a resource for reports on the conditions of celebrity. Celebrity autobiographies are a mode of operating in the public sphere: these public life-writing texts speak to the ways in which women have negotiated and navigated a public voice that can capture, comment on, and control their public lives. As such, we must be attentive to how this public voice is cultivated and mobilized, what form it takes, the kinds of content and narratives it offers and obscures, and the rhetorical strategies used to make this voice and its narratives legitimate and authoritative. While each woman's experience is different and her text shaped by the particularities of both her experience and her reason for writing, trends across these texts reveal the pressures exerted upon women and how life-writing forms were shaped and reshaped to respond to, manage, negotiate, narrate, and contest those pressures. From these textual strategies we can begin to deduce not just the condition of being a famous woman but the

usefulness of such a demarcation) is collapsing and it can be useful to frame this tenuous split between spheres as public and personal or open and secret.

condition of narrating that condition; these texts thus speak of *and* capture the modes of being a famous woman at different historical junctures.

Since “Women’s Celebrity in Canada” works to illuminate the various considerations and trends that have shaped how Canadian women have experienced and recorded celebrity in public life-writing texts across the twentieth century, I have consulted a wide range of memoirs. The earliest text under consideration is Maud Allan’s *My Life and Dancing* (1908) and the most recent is Shania Twain’s *From This Moment On* (2011); in the century that spans between them we have works written by ice skaters, movie stars, television personalities, celebrated novelists, and more. Some of these narratives were originally published in newspapers and magazines, and some were issued as souvenirs; some speak to a lifetime lived in the public eye, while others capitalize on their subjects’ freshly minted fame: all speak of and as women who have cultivated celebrity. While all of these texts are used to trace the ebb and flow of trends and tactics over time, the texts that receive particular attention include: L.M. Montgomery’s “The Alpine Path: The Story of My Career” (1917), Nellie McClung’s *Clearing in the West* (1935) and *The Stream Runs Fast* (1945), Mazo de la Roche’s *Ringing the Changes* (1957), Carole Pope’s *Anti Diva: An Autobiography* (2000); Celine Dion’s *My Story, My Dream* (2000) in collaboration with Georges-Hébert Germain and translated by Bruce Benderson; Jann Arden’s *if i knew, don’t you think i’d tell you?* (2002), *i’ll tell you one damn thing, and that’s all i know!* (2004), and *Falling Backwards: A Memoir* (2011); Anne Murray’s *All of Me* (2010) with Michael Posner; and Shania Twain’s *From This Moment On* (2011). All of these women are (or were) famous within Canada—many have even cultivated robust international careers—and while some of these women may be claimed by other nations, their connections to Canada are uncontested and explicitly affirmed in their memoirs. From their texts we can chart how modes and methods of celebrity self-

representation have changed: from Montgomery we see how periodical publication shaped the production and consumption of a celebrity memoir and how models of self-representation in the early twentieth century could legitimately exclude the kinds of narratives that are considered necessary in today's memoir market. McClung's two memoirs allow us to trace how self-representation was still in flux in the middle of the century and how the domestic and private life were being used to buttress the public life. In de la Roche we can uncover how the conditions of celebrity shape the style and content of a memoir and how public personas are reintegrated into non-public contexts. Using Pope, Dion, Arden, Murray, Twain and a sampling of other late-twentieth century musicians and their memoirs, we can examine the impact of transnational celebrity industries and neoliberal and postfeminist ideologies on the representation of gender and celebrity during the memoir boom.

In tracing the form and function of the celebrity autobiography across the century, the chapters have been weighted to devote more attention to the cultural contexts and memoirs of the first half of the twentieth century. This may seem counter-intuitive—after all, more celebrity autobiographies have been published in the last three decades than ever before—but this increase in quantity and diversity of subject positions has not yielded a corresponding expansion of rhetorical tactics or experiments in self-representation. As a general trend, in fact, celebrity autobiographies have become less experimental and more uniform in form, style, and content. A general set of conventions for celebrity self-representation has emerged that, while shaped by the particularities of the individual's brand and marketing purpose, are relatively consistent across the genre. In the first half of the twentieth century, however, the autobiography had not yet become an obvious or inevitable site for public image management: there were fewer texts, and a wider range of experiments and tactics for representing the self; moreover, this period also saw

the most dramatic shifts in women's access and relationship to the public sphere. Exploring these trends in some detail are Chapters One and Two. Chapter One, "Women's Fame in Canada: 1890-1950s," briefly details the forms of fame possible in Canada prior to the arrival of mass media before charting how print and broadcasting cultures in this period (excluding television) shifted the means and modes of celebrity production, dissemination, and consumption. It investigates how ideological constructions in gender mediated women's access to the public sphere and celebrates the women who successfully cultivated fame in this cultural climate. Chapter Two, "Trends, Tactics, and Experiments in Early Twentieth-Century Celebrity Autobiography," traces how famous women in this period both invoked and innovated upon traditions in self-representation in order to manage contemporaneous investments in conventional femininity with the project of publicly narrating a public life. This chapter also charts the short-lived tenure of the celebrity-focused narrative in the twentieth century and the rising importance of rendering the private and domestic life in the public narrative, and concludes with case studies of the texts of Nellie McClung and Mazo de la Roche. L.M. Montgomery's 1917 autobiography, "The Alpine Path: The Story of My Career" is the focus of Chapter Three. In her text we see a famous woman strategically refuse to narrate *both* her private life and her experience of celebrity; an investigation of her rhetorical strategies and the text's original publication in a Canadian women's magazine helps chart a moment in celebrity autobiography culture when it was still possible to legitimately strike such a coy and cagey pose.

Turning to the second half of the twentieth century, Chapter Four, "Women's Fame in Canada: 1950s-2010," examines some of the developments in media, in particular television and digital technologies, and government initiatives, such as the promotion of culture as an industry and the establishment of Canadian Content regulations, that have shaped celebrity cultures in

Canada. This chapter also examines women's changing relationships to the public sphere and the expansion of that sphere to include women previously discouraged or prevented from accessing the tools and technologies for cultivating celebrity. Chapter Five, "Music Celebrity in Canada: National Ties and the Diva Dilemma," works to unpack what nation and national identities mean in transnational industries like celebrity and music and how this informs the representation of self in contemporary celebrity texts by Anne Murray, Jann Arden, and Shania Twain. From these and other music memoirs, we can trace a marked movement in contemporary celebrity texts to position the celebrity as ordinary and "normal," a project rejected by "divas" like Celine Dion and Carole Pope.

In what remains of this chapter, I examine the theoretical underpinnings of this project. The first section, "Celebrity Autobiography: Context and Theory," defines and historicizes celebrity as a cultural phenomenon and examines what happens when an individual whose subject position has been constituted through and by the work of multiple participants occupies the supposedly singular "I" of a life-writing text. This section places the celebrity autobiography within a larger historical framework of a growing public interest in the private, behind-the-scenes lives of public individuals and contests the popular and critical reading strategies that condemn these texts as market-driven or ghostwritten narratives of little or no cultural value. The second section, "The Canadian Terrain: The Terrain in Canada," outlines how and why a national focus is both legitimate and useful in the study of celebrity phenomena in the twentieth century. It distinguishes between the English-Canadian and Quebecois star systems, sketches their general contours, and explains why this project can speak only to the former. The final, much smaller section, "(Not All) The Ladies in the House" pays tribute to the limitations of this study and acknowledges (and laments) that celebrity in Canada is, for the most part, still within the

purview of a select, privileged few in this nation. To focus on women in this study is to focus, for the most part, on white, heterosexual, middle-upper class, able-bodied and, often beautiful, women; hence what gendered experiences of celebrity they report and perform are shaped by these exigencies. “Women’s Celebrity in Canada: Contexts and Memoirs, 1908-2011” is about these privileged few: they who successfully negotiated the cultural climates shaped by gender, nation, and media, to cultivate celebrity and who sought to exert some control over that condition and its effects by narrating a vision or version of their selves, their lives, and/or their fame in public life-writing texts.

Celebrity Autobiography: Context and Theory

Celebrity autobiography is a term often invoked as a generic designation—a type or subgenre of autobiography. When used as such, it typically refers to a species of genre non-fiction and is, undeservedly, taken to mean a mass-market, poorly written (and often ghosted) text designed to capitalize on the fleeting economic value of a famous individual’s public presence. In *this* project “celebrity autobiography” is taken to mean, more generally and quite literally, the autobiographies of celebrities. On this celebrity autobiography bookshelf, the memoirs of famous women like Nellie McClung, Adrienne Clarkson, and Margaret Laurence sit cheek-by-jowl with the likes of Mary Pickford, Celine Dion, and Shannon Tweed; I do not deny that there are differences in the cultural value of these individuals and their texts; I just do not invest in the critical value of such distinctions as an end in itself.

To define the celebrity autobiography as an autobiography of a celebrity necessarily requires a robust definition of both celebrity and autobiography. This section thus begins by defining and examining celebrity as a particular kind of movement and visibility in the public sphere. The autobiography, as we shall see, is only one mode or discourse of being public and

being in the public sphere for famous individuals, but it is a particularly powerful and vexed one. As we look to the cultural conditions that made it so—the development of a heightened interest in a range of information about the celebrated individual and the coding of information about the private and personal life as particularly illuminating and important—we can recognize how and why the autobiography comes to take on new cultural and economic significance in the twentieth century. This section is also concerned with strategies for reading the celebrity autobiography. If, as theorists of celebrity argue, the celebrity condition is created by and through the interaction of various networks and systems of production, dissemination, and consumption, then the celebrity autobiography needs to be understood in these contexts as referring to a specific individual but as speaking *from* and *for* a subject position that has been multiply constituted. Not surprisingly, considerable anxieties arise when the supposedly singular “I” at the helm of the life-writing narrative betrays the presence of these wider systems that have rendered this subject position and one of the aims of this section is to offer some frameworks for reading and reading *through* these concerns. The celebrity autobiography may be routinely under-estimated and over-looked by scholars but, as we shall see, it is and has long been a significant, valuable, and complex *strategy, genre, discourse, and performance*.

In “Women’s Celebrity in Canada,” readers will notice that the terms “celebrity” and “fame” are used interchangeably. Although some critics have sought to distinguish them, arguing that fame is conferred by the public for acts of greatness whereas celebrity is a function of “hype” (Boorstin 61) or, more recently, that fame is a limited kind of reputation in the public sphere whereas celebrity involves a broader scope of circulation (Braudy 1072; Gabler 5), for the purposes of this study, a celebrity or famous person is an individual whose name and image circulate widely, independent of and/or beyond whatever cultural products that might be made by

or with the individual. It is, as other critics have argued before, imperative that the individual in question not just be in circulation, but that the form and content of what John Ellis has characterized as “subsidiary forms of circulation” (*Visible Fictions* 91) operate beyond or separate from their “work” (Geraghty 187; de Cordova 99; Turner, Bonner and Marshall 168). P. David Marshall has termed such forms of circulation the “extra-textual dimensions of the public persona” (“New Media” 639). Neal Gabler has argued that this information is a “narrative” of sorts (5), a story that intrigues consumers and therein prompts continued media attention: lost celebrity, he argues, is not a function of lost publicity but of a lost narrative (9). Richard de Cordova, working in the realm of film, has characterized these forms of circulation as an “extra-filmic discourse” (91) that does not depend upon, refer back to, or confirm the “representations of personality already produced in films” (87).

Since the contemporary study of celebrity has its roots in cinema studies, many terms mobilized in the discipline, such as “star,” “stardom,” and “star systems,” have made their way into general parlance in this field. These terms are not widely used here but where they are, are taken generally to mean a celebrity, the condition of celebrity, and systems of celebrity respectively.⁴ Other terms such as “picture personalities” or “personalities” typically refer to individuals who lack a “narrative” or who circulate only in and through their “work” (de Cordova 87-91). Individuals working in television are often referred to as personalities rather than celebrities, in part because their television work is read (by audiences but also by some scholars too) as an extension of their real selves, a reading that makes it difficult to create and determine distinctions between working and non-working identities.

⁴ See Lee and York’s “Celebrity Cultures in Canada. It’s Not a Question” for a more thorough discussion of the debate about terminology in celebrity studies.

These discourses of “work” or the “extra-textual,” however, bear traces of the cinematic roots of this field where indeed there is a “work,” text, or cultural product and an identity circulating within it that can be distinguished from an identity circulating outside of it. Not all celebrities, however, enter the public sphere through a “work” or produce consumable products (early critical thinking often suggested that *all* celebrities failed to make or do anything of value⁵). Socialites, politicians, television personalities, and others are occasionally precluded from celebrity by virtue of having an identity that is continuous across a variety of products and contexts or for failing to circulate in or through an object of consumption. It is critical to my formulation of celebrity that its definition not preclude *any* field from lending itself or its participants to fame: the scope and range of fields of celebrity, I maintain, are wide and varied, and so the circulation of self/image/name “beyond or separate from their ‘work’” is not strictly about “texts” and the “extra-textual.” It is, more broadly, a way of characterizing a scope and range of discourses operating in the public sphere that are preoccupied with the individual as an individual and produced and consumed in sufficient quantities so as to exceed any one person’s control.

Although this project deliberately moves beyond cinema celebrity and the discourses of work and non-work or text and extra-textual that it has inspired, the role of the cinema in heightening the emphasis on and proliferation of discourses about the celebrity as an individual

⁵ Leo Lowenthal, in the 1940s, characterized the well-known man of the present as an “idol of consumption,” a figure affiliated with “leisure time” (13), whereas the presumably true, real, and meaningful heroes of the past were “idols of production,” individuals who “stem from the productive life, from industry, business, and natural sciences” (128) and, in other words, *made* things and modelled “productive” lives. Some two decades later Daniel Boorstin comes to similar conclusions in *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events*. In Boorstin’s rendering, the modern age is afflicted by a fascination with consuming and producing “pseudo-events,” information, occurrences, and things that are unoriginal, manufactured, unimportant or unsubstantial, distorted, fake, and tending to artificially magnify and transform the insignificant into something significant. Celebrities, he argues, are “human pseudo-events” (57), mere shadows of past heroes and real greatness built by undeserved media hype (61). The celebrity is not a doer of great deeds but a name without substance “fabricated on purpose to satisfy our exaggerated expectations of human greatness”; in a much-quoted though tautological rather than definitive summation of his argument, Boorstin declares “*The celebrity is a person who is known for his well-knownness*” (57).

in the twentieth century needs to be acknowledged. Like other forms of mass media, cinema played a role in reshaping the public sphere (how these media did so in Canadian contexts is the subject of Chapters One and Four); but its particular contribution to the already existing celebrity cultures was to change the way in which we *see* individuals. The popularization of the close-up shot by D.W. Griffiths in 1910s silent film (Marshall, *Celebrity and Power* 13) made certain individuals more significant and literarily larger than others (Dyer, *Stars* 15)⁶, and the rising practice of individuating and personalizing screen players by personal names, such as Mary Pickford, rather than corporate handles, such as the “Biograph girl,” in 1909-10 had the effect of encouraging audiences to develop different levels of attachment to and relationships with particular individuals (de Cordova 41, 52, 64). Supporting and promoting the screen industries and the development of these affective commitments were various print cultures from newspaper columns to entire magazines (de Cordova 12). In effect, what cinematic celebrity did was to create a model of fame that was predicated on exposure across multiple media and heightened affective bonds that shifted modes of consumption. By virtue of having consumed and created these bonds not in isolation but in a crowd, individuals not only developed a sense of having a personal affective attachment to a celebrity but also affective attachments to and as a group: consumers could thus recognize themselves as an audience that could re-form regularly in order to re-experience these sensations (which they could not do readily through infrequent public assemblies or more costly entertainment venues like the theatre).

Such practices had (and created) cultural and economic value that was not limited to the box-office: celebrities who could harness audience-consumers and potentially realign or redirect affective attachments could be used to sell products, newspapers, and/or ideas. Using famous

⁶ Dyer, in turn, draws upon the work of Bela Balazs in his discussion of the significance and meaning of the close-up.

individuals as marketing tools was not a new practice but cinema intensified the scale; moreover, the end-product that could be marketed might very well be the celebrity herself as an economy grew, developed, and intensified around information about the individual. As de Cordova has noted, this was increasingly fixated on the screen celebrity's "real world identity" (91) and "the question of the player's existence outside of his or her work in film became the primary focus of discourse" (98). These discourses were initially quite circular and uninformative, referring back to the celebrity's cinematic roles as evidence (91) but this soon expanded to encompass not just the private, non-working life of the individual but such elements of that life that did not necessarily coincide with the characters played on screen:

In 1913 and 1914 one can begin to see a significant transformation in the regulation of knowledge concerning the player, one that brought into existence the star. The star emerged out of a marked expansion of the type of knowledge that could be produced about the player. The picture personality was defined, as we have seen, by a discourse that restricted knowledge to the professional existence of the actor. With the emergence of the star, the question of the player's existence outside of his or her work in film became the primary focus of discourse. The private lives of the players were constituted as a site of knowledge and truth. (98)

This development in extra-filmic discourse that made the private life not just a site of interest but a site of truth, had a dramatic and long-reaching effect on celebrity culture in general. In the twentieth century, the discourses in circulation about celebrities are overwhelmingly dominated by material about the private life of the individual: their romantic and/or familial lives, their everyday patterns, and their idiosyncrasies: in short, the activities and behaviour of a life lived outside of the public sphere. Many critics have suggested that the presence of such discourses are what confer or confirm celebrity status (Marshall, *Celebrity and Power* 58; Turner, *Understanding Celebrity* 8), a definition of celebrity that demands a specific kind of circulation in the public sphere and, in some respects, over-codes the significance and meaningfulness of the

private sphere, but one that also has, as we shall see shortly, significant implications for the role of the autobiography in celebrity culture.

De Cordova's tracing of the emergence of the cinematic celebrity as an individual distinct from his or her screen character and the development of a market for information about the private life of that person is often mistakenly read as the moment in which interest in the private lives of famous people in general first emerged. However, de Cordova speaks specifically of these trends in cinematic contexts and the significance of the private sphere has a much longer history. As Charles Ponce de Leon examines in *Self-Exposure: Human-Interest Journalism and the Emergence of Celebrity in America, 1890-1940*, the construction of and fascination with the private, non-working lives of public individuals has its origins in the nineteenth century. By the middle of that century, western nations were invested in the notion of a public self that was distinct from the private self but this public self could not be depended upon as a true representation of the person: "to glimpse a person's real self it was necessary to see her in private" (29). In journalism, a legitimate or authentic representation of an individual's private self might typically include access to her domestic sphere, her personal habits, and her thoughts and beliefs about a particular subject, but it routinely ignored those elements that make up a great deal of celebrity journalism today—the body, the sexual, the psychological, and the emotional.

The celebrity portrait at this time, Ponce de Leon suggests, looked a lot like a "hagiography" (56), but as consumers of these discourses became increasingly "skeptical, even cynical, about appearances and self-promotion," new configurations of authentic private sphere and self emerged and, with them, new strategies for representing it:

These techniques, first developed in the 1890s, were meant to illuminate the subject's "real self." Focusing on the characteristics that made him interesting or unique, they shifted the spotlight away from traits that he shared with other prominent figures—and away from idealized portraits in general. The result was profiles and sketches that

presented their subjects as complex, even flawed “human beings.” This was a far more effective strategy for depicting public figures, for it recognized the degree to which the public had become skeptical, even cynical, about appearances and self-promotion. (Ponce de Leon 33-34)

The “real” “flawed” subject was still a function of her private life but the modes for representing this life increasingly favoured techniques that suggested insider access to the unguarded activities and behaviours of the individual. Ponce de Leon’s analysis of celebrity journalism in the US notes that journalists increasingly represented their privileged proximity to the celebrity and her private spaces and thoughts in order to authorize their work (58).⁷ Both Ponce de Leon and Janet Casey have noted that in the first decades of the twentieth century, candid rather than studio photos were favoured as modes of representing the “real” (Ponce de Leon 64; Casey 131) and critics like de Cordova and Hilary Hallett pinpoint the 1920s as a critical turning point in celebrity journalism when celebrity discourses first noticeably began to represent private lives in ways that contradicted rather than buttressed a celebrity’s public image and could also be damaging to the individual’s image and career (de Cordova 129-31; Hallett 180-212).

By the end of the twentieth century, such techniques and strategies for representing the private sphere had become entrenched, and to them we have, of late, added several others. In discourses of proximity to celebrities, emotional and financial distance is increasingly leveraged as a guarantor of truth-telling and the unauthorized portraits of or access to the private life (including domestic spaces, private conversations, and bodies) are common. In both print and television media, we have also seen the rise of confessional modes of discourse wherein the celebrity willingly surrenders up narratives of past troubles or trauma, invites access into emotional or psychological spaces, or willingly exposes the “false fronts” and scaffolding of her

⁷ Ponce de Leon’s research is focused exclusively on trends in American media and his conclusions are used here because no equivalent research has yet been undertaken to help contextualize celebrity phenomena in Canada. However, in light of the cultural and geographic proximity of Canadian media discourses to those in the US, it is not unreasonable to assume that similar trends evolved although, perhaps, at different times.

public image. Moreover, it is now expected that either authorized or unauthorized representations of the private sphere be accompanied by visual evidence whether photographic or video footage. The home as a site of the private has become increasingly important in the last few decades. In the early twentieth century only a few homes, like Pickfair (the Beverly Hills home of Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks), or the Dafoe Hospital and Nursery (the Northern Ontario “home” of the Dionne quintuplets), were part of a celebrity’s media profile or a popular tourist destination but these were exceptions rather the rule; today the homes and hometowns of famous Canadians like Anne Murray, Rita MacNeil, and Shania Twain are routinely turned into pilgrimage destinations for fans (with varying degrees of success). At present the private sphere remains not only a primary constituent of the discourses circulating in and about celebrity but is consistently framed as though it can “uncover the ‘real’ and authentic person behind the public display” (Marshall, “New Media” 639).

In this cultural climate, first-person narratives take on new cultural and economic significance. On the one hand, such narratives appear to offer the ultimate access to an individual’s domestic and psychological interior lives: what better way to understand the celebrity than to hear from her directly? In print cultures this could manifest itself in multiple ways from interviews and attributable quotations, to the publication of private first-person narratives such as journals, letters, or an autobiography or memoir.⁸ While not all celebrities were eager to “throw open the portals of sacred shrines to the gaze of the crowd” (*SJLMM* 2:202), as L.M. Montgomery characterized the activities of narrating the private life, many others were quick to perceive that personal narratives were marvelous marketing devices for consolidating public interest in the individual, her image, and her cultural products. However,

⁸ It should be noted that some autobiographies were also written in the third person: the most famous include Henry Adams’s *The Education of Henry Adams* and Gertrude Stein’s *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (Yagoda 144).

because the self-interested nature of such narratives and public activities is so transparent, it has, of course, long rendered their veracity, insight, and objectivity suspect: indeed, for as long as life writers have suggested that their subjectivity grants them the greatest authority over rendering their lives, biographers have argued that their objectivity allows them greater insight into the life under scrutiny. The celebrity's task is thus often one of managing the techniques of self-representation so that the public performance of the self is authoritative, authentic, and truth-telling according to the dictates of the community for which it is produced⁹: "Women's Celebrity In Canada" is, in part, a history of such strategies as they occur in a very specific form—the autobiography or memoir.

In the following chapters, the terms "autobiography" and "memoir" are used interchangeably, acknowledging, as autobiography scholars like Julie Rak (*Boom* 12, 194), Ben Yagoda (1) and Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have done (*Reading* 198), that while these terms have historically signalled different modes of the life-writing genre, such distinctions are rarely maintained in the practical application of these terms to popular texts.¹⁰ As one of the many modes by which a celebrity might circulate a first-person narrative, the autobiography or memoir is distinctive for several reasons: it is, usually, a sustained or lengthy narrative of self; it is a narrative wherein the celebrity has considerable control over the production of the portrait of self and thereby greater control over the processes of consumption (as compared to interviews or

⁹ In defining truth-telling as a function of communal discourses and modes of truth, I depend upon Leigh Gilmore's hypothesis that "autobiography draws its social authority from its relation to culturally dominant discourses of truth telling and not [...] from its privileged relation to 'real life'" (*Autobiographics* 14)

¹⁰ Whereas "autobiography" was understood to be a literary and creative accounting of an individual's life (6, 194), "memoir" typically referred to texts written by "nonprofessional writers" (4) about their lives lived "in relation to others, to events, or to the construction of some kind of public identity related to a popular issue of the day. For this reason, memoir became associated with marketable writing about the self" (Rak, *Boom* 12). These distinctions are not helpful in characterizing the life texts written by celebrities because all texts, regardless of whether written by professional writers or not, have been written for specific markets with the purpose of managing a public identity. See Rak's "Are Memoirs Autobiography? A Consideration of Genre and Public Identity" and *Boom* for further discussion about the meanings and distinctions of these terms.

other biographical formats); it is a narrative typically written for an audience of fans and thus must navigate the complexities of writing for readers who are already familiar with the celebrity, her image, and her personal life¹¹; and it is a narrative that requires a substantial time and financial commitment from its reader. While an autobiography could be written for private purposes rather than public consumption (although generally such texts take the form of a journal or diary), this project is strictly concerned with the latter—texts written to be published and consumed by the public and, specifically, designed to be consumed during the lifetime of the celebrity.¹² These texts, unlike those written by individuals prior to fame or those designed to circulate and shape their posthumous celebrity, are read as a strategic intervention designed to manage, shape, and influence her public image, how she is read and consumed by the public, and as a result, how she experiences the conditions of celebrity. In contemporary terms, such a text could be considered an instrument of public relations, a field that has also consolidated and grown over the twentieth century as a means by which to strategically organize and manage the cultural and economic value of people, products, and ideas (Gamson, *Claims to Fame* 21).

These and not private texts form the focus of this project because of the insight they give us into not what an individual thought of the public, her fame, and the experiences of being a celebrity but what *a celebrity thought the public wanted or needed to hear about these conditions*. The celebrity autobiography is thus a narrative of publicly being a public person and helps us understand the conditions of being a famous woman by the strategies used to perform that identity. What postures did she assume? What is narrated? What is not? How is it rendered?

¹¹ Throughout these chapters, the celebrity autobiography reader is often presumed to be a fan and thus the terms, reader, audience, and fan are all used.

¹² Some of the texts in this study were published posthumously but by circumstance rather than by design. In these cases, it is reasonable to assume that the celebrity expected to see her text circulate during her lifetime and expected to benefit from what measures of management the text could effect on how she experienced her celebrity or circulated in public discourses.

These texts offer more than the particular experiences of an individual; if we are attentive to the ideological assumptions that govern the modes and methods of attempting to legitimately and authentically narrate that identity, these texts can speak to the wider conditions of celebrity.

What identities were seen to be legitimate? What methods were considered authentic for persuasively rendering these identities? In this project, the textual identity of the celebrity in her autobiography is not read as independent, isolated, or essential but a function of the forces exerted upon the celebrity (whether perceived or real) that coax and condition a performance of the self. As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have argued, “Identities, or subject positions, materialize within collectives and out of the culturally marked differences that permeate symbolic interactions within and between collectives” (32-33). Drawing upon Althusser, they go on to note that, “social subjects are subjects of ideology, ‘interpellated’ or ‘hailed’ as a particular kind of subject by the very institutions through which those ideologies are reproduced” (122).

How celebrities “materialize” within and through ideologies and thus embody or articulate them in their public image and fame was first investigated by Richard Dyer in his seminal work, *Stars*. The celebrities of cinema “may reinforce aspects of ideology simply by repeating, reproducing or reconciling them” (27), but the transformation of these individuals into stars, he suggests, may very well be a function of how they can be made to embody and negotiate certain, often contradictory, ideological investments that have critical importance at a particular moment in time.¹³ Investigating the celebrity autobiography and its production of a textual identity for the celebrity does similar work for it allows us to trace and unpack what ideologies have called, coaxed, or shaped this subject position into being and the conditions of the “collectives” that gave rise to such imperatives and such responses. This subject position is, of course, neither singular nor stable but multiple and in flux and this project focuses specifically on

¹³ These arguments underpin Dyer’s work in both *Stars* and *Heavenly Bodies*.

celebrity and gender as critical aspects of this autobiographical subjectivity. Through such a focus we are able to better understand not only the cultural climate in which and for which these subjectivities are produced and called into being, but also how such subjectivities respond to and navigate these conditions. This project thus frames identity performances as a function of both the ideological pressures exerted upon an individual and, simultaneously, an individual's negotiation of these pressures—here the individual is marked by both interpellation and agency.

The celebrity is, indeed, an example *par excellence* of how social and textual identities are intimately shaped by the spheres in which they operate and from which they emerge, for the celebrity is an individual at the heart of a complex network of systems that simultaneously produce the individual as a celebrity and seek to mobilize and trade on his or her value. The celebrity autobiography as a story of an individual is thus also a story of the individual as caught, produced, disseminated, and consumed by a system involving multiple participants. To clarify, it is necessary to situate the celebrity and the condition of celebrity as *not* simply the effects of corporate or industry string-pulling. As de Cordova has noted, celebrity is produced but not like an item in a factory (8), and certainly not fully determined by a capitalist system bent on controlling the mindless masses as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno had feared.¹⁴ Nor is celebrity a function of a single site of circulation or one individual's efforts to move into circulation: celebrity is the condition of multiple sites of circulation beyond the control of any one individual or institution. In *Celebrity and Power*, P. David Marshall argues that the celebrity is a “sign”:

¹⁴ In Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, they suggest that cultural industries are controlled by capitalism and markets are not free (or are less free) and open to competition that they were (162), thus a select few are capable of controlling and serving their own interests in ways that remind the authors of the dangers of Fascism. When art becomes a business, they argued, profit depends upon “standardization and mass production” (121) and the products offered will only present the illusion of choice (123-28); the result is a manipulated and homogenous populace.

In its simultaneous embodiment of media construction, audience construction, and the real, living and breathing human being, the celebrity sign negotiates the competing and contradictory definitions of its own significance. The cementing character of the negotiation is the basic and essential authenticity that a “real” person is housed in the sign construction [...] the source of the celebrity sign is not entirely in the manipulative hands of the media or other institutions of power. It is, as Dyer has emphasized, an area of negotiation among the public, the media, and the celebrity. In a form of working hegemony, the celebrity is configured. (xi, 12)

The model Marshall offers here of the celebrity as constructed in and out of the various meanings in circulation, meanings which are generated by multiple parties and participants, usefully situates the production of celebrity as a dynamic, multiply situated, and uncontrolled (or uncontrollable) process. In characterizing the celebrity as a “sign,” however, Marshall signals a semiotic approach that is appropriate but also limiting in its abstraction: a celebrity is more than a collection of signifiers anchored to a signified. In his metaphor of the celebrity as a “negotiated ‘terrain’ of significance” (47), Marshall more accurately captures the sense that there are concrete industries and individuals engaged through various systems of communication and consumption, mapping, contesting and thereby producing the celebrity. Although Marshall’s formulations are, to my mind, overly determined by a dialectic of producers and consumers, the “terrain” metaphor, particularly a terrain that remains in constant negotiation, is productive. The celebrity terrain might usefully be conceived of as a function of the input and participation of multiple participants including industries, media, consumers, and individuals (including the celebrity); a network impossible to control and typically lacking consensus (there may be a dominant narrative in circulation but what the celebrity means and/or represents does not usually solidify or ossify until the individual is dead). Terrains are thus not dictated by or pure expressions of ideology, but they are shaped by and give expression to the competing ideological frameworks that operate within the various participants; as Marshall notes, “in a form of working hegemony, the celebrity is configured” (*Celebrity and Power* 12).

Marshall's work in expanding the site of celebrity construction beyond the influences of the industry to include the role of fans is much indebted to Richard Dyer's work.¹⁵ Together both Marshall and Dyer have had a profound influence on the critical work of other scholars in the field as they move to expand and explore the roles, powers, and relationships of the various participants in a celebrity terrain. Nevertheless, the exact role and power of the celebrity herself is sometimes lost in this discussion. While acknowledged as the entity around which the various participants of the terrain coalesce, the celebrity is often represented as a function of or pawn in that terrain. In Lorraine York's "Star Turn: The Challenge of Theorizing Celebrity Agency," she argues that the dialectics of production and consumption that tend to dominate recent discussions of celebrity leave little room for the celebrity's active role in managing, producing and guiding their own celebrity. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, she suggests, to argue that the celebrity can act as a kind of Romantic autonomous agent of action, for such an argument overwrites the network of relations and the "interactions of various cultural agents and media" in which the celebrity must, inevitably, operate (1345). Instead, one must recognize the celebrity as an agent *within* these networks and relations, and allow for "the different levels of agency that a celebrity may possess or lose at any stage in this industrial interaction" (1341):

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

¹⁵ In *Stars*, Dyer draws upon the work of other critics to argue that audiences or consumers are a "determining force in the creation of stars" (17). In *Heavenly Bodies*, he again insists that "the audience is also part of the making of the [celebrity] image" (5).

York's formulation of the celebrity as an active participant in the production of her celebrity makes it not only possible but logical to argue that the celebrity has the potential to be an active producer of her memoir; after all, the celebrity memoir is predominantly designed to function within a complex network of strategies for image management. However, as York also points out, Romantic models of authorship and agency are not appropriate in celebrity contexts because there is a variety of participants and relationships structuring the condition. How then are we to read the celebrity autobiography?

If the celebrity is an individual around whom significant discourses and various cultural economies have formed, who has, in fact, been constituted by such processes (not like an item in a factory nor as paint put on a blank canvas, but as an active participant), then the celebrity autobiography is life writing that is by and about a subject position that is multiply constituted because *the celebrity is the subject*. The celebrity autobiography is not a text by and about an individual speaking of or reflecting on her experiences of celebrity—it is not possible to step outside the celebrity identity and speak to it as if one did not currently occupy and speak from that subject position. Even when a celebrity narrates her life, identity, or experiences that occurred prior to her public life, she still speaks as a celebrity: everything in the text, from the narrated “I” of childhood to the narrating “I” that captures that past, is framed by celebrity and is produced as a function of and in relation to that identity. This is due to the fact that the celebrity identity *pre-exists* its expression in the celebrity autobiography and this identity shapes the text's production and consumption. This is not to suggest that there is an essential self that the text expresses—as autobiography theorists often argue, identity does not pre-exist its articulation, but in the case of the celebrity there are pre-autobiography articulations and performances that have shaped and rendered the celebrity identity. This identity, in name, brand, and/or image, is

invoked in the celebrity autobiography; it is the identity from which speech proceeds and speech is read as proceeding from that identity. The celebrity autobiography consciously and specifically speaks to and invokes that identity as the subject position that is both the subject and object of narration (even when the content contests how that identity has been constructed and/or circulated); indeed, the celebrity autobiography industry depends on our knowledge of that pre-autobiography identity and a conflation of that identity with the autobiographical subject.

In short, because it represents an identity and speaks from a subject position that has been multiply constituted, the celebrity autobiography, even as it enters into the terrain that negotiates the celebrity's meaning, has already been shaped by that terrain. Not only is this terrain bound up in the production of the subject position, but it is implicated in the production of the text in multiple ways. On the level of production and marketing, for example, a vast number of individuals actively shaping the celebrity terrain, from publishers, editors, agents to the celebrity herself, make an effort to understand and assess this terrain and make strategic decisions about how the text will enter into the discourses circulating about the individual and how it is likely to be received. This may be as simple as a publisher identifying a strong fan base of potential consumers of the text and thereby justifying the publication costs or as complex as an assessment of the best strategies for intervening in and reshaping a public image. The form of the text is also influenced by these assessments, from the layout and types of photographs included to the shape and size of the text. On the level of content production, the terrain is assessed to determine not only what narratives to disseminate but how to render them in ways most conducive to the strategic goals of the text, whether it is to consolidate or reshape a public image, initiate or redirect market interest in the individual's other cultural products, or some other function.¹⁶

¹⁶ Exact consensus amongst participants about the goals of the text is unlikely; as Joshua Gamson has argued in *Claims to Fame*, even when the industry participants have a "general correspondence of interests in the production

These rhetorical strategies—what is said and what is left unsaid, how ideas and conditions are framed, what ideological investments in gender, culture, race, etc. are being exposed—reveal a great deal about the conditions of being a celebrity in particular contexts. Thus the text not only represents the celebrity terrain in the narratives of what it is like to be a celebrity, but embodies and reflects those conditions in its very form, content, and rhetorical strategies.¹⁷

As both a representation and an expression of the celebrity terrain, the celebrity autobiography might be usefully conceived of as a kind of textual *performance* of celebrity and its effects. In characterizing the text as a performance, I draw quite specifically on Judith Butler's constructions of gender as a performative "identity, instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (519). Just as gender lacks an "essence," or "stable identity or locus of agency" so too does celebrity, and both gender and celebrity are constructions that are constituted through the performance of "various acts" that are, over time, understood to be an identity (Butler 519); yet whereas these performances are erroneously understood to be an expression of a core self in gender, in celebrity cultures the performance is understood *as performance* and this has given way to a significant drive to see past, beyond, or beneath the performance where the "real" self lurks. The celebrity autobiography is a mechanism that mobilizes and affirms the presence of an essential self that the text claims it shall reveal; however, autobiography theorists, working in tandem with Butler's work to expose the fallacy of the essential gendered self, have sought to dismantle the unified, authoritative self presumed to be at the heart of autobiography and autobiography production. As a result, it becomes useful to

of celebrities, the various parties (the celebrity and her team, the sponsoring entertainment organizations) do not all have the same particular type of product, and the same particular types of uses, in mind" (80).

¹⁷ Bourdieu approaches art in a similar fashion, arguing that the meaning of a work is both external to it, in "the objective relations which constitute this field" (30), and within it because "works of art [are] a manifestation of the field as whole, in which all the powers of the field, and all the determinisms inherent in its structure and functioning, are concentrated" (37).

think of autobiographies as textual performances, ones that more often mask than expose the gaps, fragments, and contradictions of subjectivity and assumed subject positions. In the context of celebrity autobiography, then, the text is a performance of the celebrity condition, multiply-constituted as it is; it holds the promise of acting as an expression of an individual's essential self but it is a promise it can never deliver upon.¹⁸ What the celebrity autobiography does hold in its "I" is an expression or performance of the celebrity terrain that has formed around an individual. It is an "I" that cannot speak to that individual outside of or beyond those contexts, nor can it be made to speak to an essential self and yet its job is (usually) to render forth a unified selfhood at the heart of the individual and to publicly perform that innermost private self in a manner that appears to be truthful, authentic, and authoritative.

The celebrity autobiography, however, typically comes to grief when it betrays the presence of the terrain and exposes the fallacy of the singular "I," the essential self, and the autonomously crafted and controlled celebrity identity. Uncertain how to read the presence of the terrain within a singular "I" that is, in the tradition of autobiography, supposed to signal an individual and speak for the subjective, personal experiences of that individual, popular and critical readers are quick to condemn celebrity autobiographies as corporate products and/or ghostwritten texts. The celebrity autobiography *is* a corporate product in the sense that it is usually produced for the purposes of managing a public image and that there are multiple industries that stand to profit from the text as a public relations tool and/or as a marketable product in its own right. These factors arguably attend the production of any autobiography by a famous person, whether Margaret Laurence or Margaret Trudeau; however, those whose labour, image, and/or products are less culturally valued are more likely to be accused of narcissism and

¹⁸ In *Heavenly Bodies*, Dyer examines how celebrity discourses are invested in the notion that "what the star really is can be located in some inner, private, essential core" (14). See Chapter Five for an extended discussion of this tendency to invoke "essential" celebrity selves and to locate them in non-celebrity, private spaces.

greed and their texts evaluated in keeping with the value generally attributed to their public image. In a 2011 *Toronto Star* article, for example, entertainment columnist, Greg Quill, characterized the vast majority of Canadian celebrity autobiographies as either ghosted or “less-than-candid, feel-good ‘vanity’ autobiographies whose purpose is to squeeze extra juice from ailing or moribund careers.” In this latter category Quill includes the texts of “Stompin’ Tom Connors, Anne Murray, Ian Tyson, Tommy Hunter, Rush’s Neil Peart, Céline Dion and Shania Twain,” but not, importantly, any memoir that might be produced by such “artists” as Leonard Cohen and Joni Mitchell who would, presumably, be guided by some higher calling to life writing than vanity and squeezing some “juice” from their careers (although, no doubt, Cohen could use the money).

The anticipated role that brand management, profit, and corporate direction (sometimes even corporate commissions) play in motivating the production and shaping of the content of the celebrity autobiography also has a tendency to make critics uneasy. As Julie Rak examines at length in “Are Memoirs Autobiography? A Consideration of Genre and Public Identity,” scholarly work in autobiography studies has, until very recently eschewed popular memoirs as market-driven non-literary texts for which the rules of autobiography analysis were not useful. And in celebrity studies, celebrity autobiographies have been characterized as “profitable,” “cheap,” and “formulaic” (Nunn 50) and when produced by individuals with transparently promotional agendas, condemned as “self-serving” (Turner, *Understanding Celebrity* 16). This deep-seated suspicion of corporate and profit motives has a long history of translating into a low cultural value attributed to the product: thus the autobiography written by an individual whose celebrity and/or text appears to be too closely aligned to corporate production and profit motives is less valued than the autobiography of someone less obviously tied to these considerations.

Such a phenomenon is, of course, not new: as Bourdieu argued in “The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed,” the products (and individuals) invested in fields of restricted production have more symbolic capital whereas products and individuals affiliated with large-scale production have considerable economic but little symbolic capital. Moreover, as Lorraine York’s analyses of literary celebrity (and the discourses at work in the *Toronto Star* article) bear out, those with more cultural value are far more likely to be granted agency in the mechanisms of celebrity (1339) while those whose celebrity is market driven and is less culturally valued are perceived to have surrendered their agency (1344).

These concerns about the market influence on the production of autobiographies would seem to suggest that, in the absence of such motives and influences, a very different narrative might be rendered. While no doubt this is true, one cannot simply extract the celebrity from these conditions—her subject position has been shaped by the workings of the celebrity terrain which includes the market: the celebrity autobiography is always and inevitably a function of the market because the celebrity is. (This is particularly apparent, as we shall see in Chapter Two, in Mazo de la Roche’s autobiography, *Ringing the Changes* and, as we shall see in Chapter Five, in Celine Dion’s *My Story, My Dream*.) Moreover, such concerns suggest that celebrity autobiographies ought not to serve the self (or not do so quite so transparently or for economic motives), as though the revelations of celebrities’ private spheres are more culturally valuable if they appear to be motivated by a philanthropic desire to share their stories with fans or work through some traumatic experience. At the heart of this wariness of the market arguably lies a lingering investment in Romantic models of authorship: while we are not ignorant of the force exerted by the market on all authors, there is still a desire to see art (autobiographies) as inspired by some internal spirit or spark that needs to be expressed and to see art production that is

indifferent to market forces somehow more true, real, or pure. Art that is composed for profit and shaped by the market, or betrays the influence of others, represents a falling away from that ideal: hence the long-term misgivings about the cultural significance and value of celebrity phenomena.

If the role of the market and corporate structures of celebrity in motivating and shaping the production of the memoir is seen by some to compromise both the agency of the celebrity and the value and legitimacy of the celebrity autobiography, the spectre of the ghostwriter has more or less condemned the genre to an ignominious fate. Always lurking in the wings of every famous person's memoir is the concern that so manufactured and controlled by corporate interests is the celebrity that the very text sporting her name, narrative, and signature is not genuinely the product of her labour. There is ample academic criticism expressing these concerns: in the study of celebrity, critics from Daniel Boorstin (56) to Graeme Turner (*Understanding Celebrity* 16) have bemoaned the presence of ghostwriters. In autobiography studies, Paul John Eakin has called celebrity memoirs "as-told-to lives of celebrities written by ghosts" (173), and more recently, in Ben Yagoda's *Memoir* he declares that ghostwriters are "necessary" for the production of celebrity autobiographies (183) and painstakingly lists scores of celebrities with suspected or proven ghostwriters and/or collaborators: only Simone Signoret's authorship is "verified" because she successfully sued journalists who had claimed her text was not written by her (189).

While ghostwriters are a reality in the celebrity autobiography industry, as with spectres it is difficult to confirm or prove their presence. The popular and critical tendency is to guess, often on the basis of an assessment of the celebrity and her potential capacity for the sustained intellectual labour of life writing rather than on any evidence derived from either the text or other

sources. It is a process that unfortunately betrays a strong correlation between assumed ghostwriters and the low cultural value of a celebrity and/or her cultural products. As I have argued in “Not Just Ghost Stories: Alternate Practices for Reading Co-Authored Celebrity Memoirs,” we need to be aware of these reading strategies that so readily read celebrity signatures differently and that, in essence, bring ghosts to the text. We must also be more willing to recognize that the presence of a ghostwriter is, perhaps, not that important: the celebrity autobiography is a first-person narrative that is authorized, if not authored, by the celebrity as a legitimate representation of self. The celebrity signature offers a kind of “symbolic” authority or “control” as Philippe Lejeune has argued (195) and acts as a “kind of guarantee” (27) as Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith have noted, that validates the narrative. While *authorizing* is not the same as *authoring*, this project contends that celebrities, in fact, do both: by virtue of the signature and the first-person “I” that it refers to, they have authorized the text; by virtue of the many activities that make up acts of authorship, the celebrities have authored their texts even when they may never have held a pen. As Lejeune has argued:

The author of a text is most often the one who wrote it, but the fact of writing is not sufficient to be declared an author. One is not an author in the absolute. It is a relative and conventional thing: one becomes an author only when one takes, or finds oneself attributed, the responsibility for the emission of a message (emission that *implies* its production) in a given circuit of communication. The determination of the author depends as much on the laws of this circuit as on the materiality of facts. The question is complicated by the fact that the notion of an author refers as much to the idea of *initiative* as to that of *production*, and that the production itself can be shared (equally or in a hierarchical way) among several people. (192-3)

The activities of authorship in celebrity texts, especially collaboratively written or co-authored texts, are multiple and varied: there is a great deal of labour involved in the production of a text that occurs long before any words are put onto a page (see “Not Just Ghost Stories”). Yet, in terms of its impact on the celebrity terrain, the role of the celebrity in textual production is

irrelevant so long as it bears the authoritative stamp of the celebrity's signature: the text will continue to circulate and have its effects (or not) regardless of the real (rather than suspected) conditions of its production. Discourses about the text as ghostwritten will certainly shape its impact but, again, these are far more likely derived from assumptions rather than knowledge.

Whether we can prove that the celebrity did participate in the production of the text (alone or with help) may be irrelevant when we recall that the celebrity speaks from a subject position that has been multiply constituted—it is an “I” that signals an individual but speaks from and of an identity that has been crafted by multiple participants. These participants—from the celebrities to the media, industries, and fans—are, in turn shaped and cultivated by many other considerations including (but not limited to) nationalisms and the national space in which terrains are cultivated, disseminated, and/or consumed. As we shall see in the subsequent section, although celebrity has long been a transnational phenomenon, nation matters: Canada is not just the backdrop upon which the activities of celebrity occur but has a measurable impact on how celebrity terrains form and function, and how they come to be represented and embodied in the celebrity autobiography.

The Canadian Terrain: The Terrain in Canada

In examining how the celebrity autobiography has changed over the twentieth century, this project has limited the scope of texts under consideration to those by Canadians and those by women. As we shall see throughout the following chapters, nation and gender have a significant impact on the processes of celebrity production, dissemination, and consumption and therefore have a marked effect on the modes and methods by which such experiences are narrated as a life-writing text. To use the nation as an organizing device for thinking about celebrity (and thus celebrity autobiographies) might seem counter-intuitive in light of the transnational nature of

celebrity. We are well aware that in today's cultural climate, celebrity circulates in global markets through transnational corporations and that the celebrity, in person, image and/or product, usually circulates well beyond national borders. As I have argued in “‘What an elastic nationality she possesses!’ Transnational Celebrity Identities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century,” the transnational production and consumption of celebrity has always been a feature of modern celebrity cultures in Canada. This does not mean, as Nick Mount has suggested, that “fame was [or is] the province of elsewhere” (31), only that the processes of celebrity in Canada or as they involve Canadians do not occur in a hermetically sealed national space.

Nevertheless, in celebrity systems, nations matter. Even as the nation and its boundaries are figured as imaginary and arbitrary and even as the people and cultures within these geopolitical spaces are heterogeneous, we recognize that nations and national identities have real cultural, political, and affective effect. In systems of celebrity, we can trace those effects in a variety of ways: we might look to the ways in which celebrity production and dissemination are administered and shaped by the national spaces upon which they occur. Institutions of celebrity production, for example, are usually located in and, wherever possible, governed by national bodies:

Whether the state monitors and controls the flow of information or just the modes and methods by which corporate bodies and individuals profit from these systems, the production of celebrity culture is almost always in some form or another operating under the administration of the nation. Practices of dissemination and consumption are also often shaped by state policy, most noticeably through the regulation and/or funding of broadcasting content, networks, corporations, and technologies. The boundaries of nation are even felt in how we use and access the internet and social media: geo-blocking, for example, has been effectively used by political and corporate bodies alike to limit the access and flow of on-line cultural products, and on-line activities are still monitored and prosecuted by state bodies. (Lee and York)

In Canada a great deal of celebrity culture apparatus is shaped by federal legislature and policy from the development and organization of our media bodies to the content they produce and/or disseminate. Considerable work has been done in this field by cultural critics like Scott Henderson, Ira Wagman, and many others who recognize that various structures embedded in Canadian cultural industries are designed to promote and capitalize on the cultural and economic value of celebrated and celebrating individuals.

In systems of celebrity the nation is more than an administrative body with bureaucratic effects; it is a critical cultural construct wielded by institutions, industries, and individuals for cultivating and channeling affect. Symbols and signs of nation are routinely mobilized to brand and to organize but also to invoke particular affective attachments to the nation and redirect them to various cultural products. *Canadian Idol*, for example, is a program about celebrity and celebrity production in Canada but it is also, like many other television reality programs, simply an iteration of a form pioneered elsewhere: it is repetition with a difference and the meaningfulness of that difference depends on creating, using, and activating latent affective attachments to the nation. In the context of awards and honours, discourses of nation are prominent, used to affirm and consecrate not just the national identities of the individuals and the industries but the meaningfulness of such identities. The affective potential of nation is, however, most poignantly and dramatically felt when channeled through people—whether as individuals or in groups—rather than industries. A celebrity is a powerful conduit for nationalisms—above and beyond whatever national constructs she may explicitly deploy or promote, her national identity alone can wield significant cultural, political, and affective power. While the national identities of celebrities can work to affirm the significance and even the meaning of a nation (and, occasionally, vice versa), the construction and mobilization of such identities is not

uncontested ground—such identities can be implied, ascribed, embraced, rejected, and/or performed. They may be the function of explicit framings and national contexts such as the athlete celebrated for her success in representing the nation or they may be the function of reading strategies that reinserts the celebrated individual at the Oscars back into national frameworks.

In taking Canada as its focus, this project seeks to understand Canada as a specific site where systems of production, dissemination, and consumption occur and to investigate the famous Canadians that have been claimed for Canada through affective ties to the nation. The emphasis some chapters place on the political, institutional, and technological structures of celebrity systems in Canada should not be mistaken, however, for an investment in technological determinisms or top-down (that is, controlled and orchestrated by industry) models of celebrity production; these explorations are designed to showcase some of the specific conditions that attend celebrity in Canada and examine how these systems can shape celebrity cultures by enabling and promoting some forms while curtailing others. While understanding how these structures can (and do) create limits and conditions on celebrity production and dissemination in Canada is important, we also must recognize that patterns of consumption are not constrained or dictated by them: celebrity culture consumption in Canada has always included unofficial, informal, unpoliced modes of dissemination and has long included celebrities originating through non-Canadian systems.

This project is thus concerned with Canadians who have strong ties to the systems of celebrity production and dissemination in Canada *and* those celebrities who do not have such ties but are still claimed for Canada by Canadians, whether Canadian fans, Canadian media, or Canadian cultural or political institutions. The rationale for such claims varies although the most

frequent (and powerful) claiming practices mobilize discourses of birth, citizenship, home, and vehicles (whether products or institutions) of discovery/fame production. Some of the women caught in these discourses and claimed for Canada were not born in the country (Martha Black), do not self-identify as Canadian (Marie Dressler), and others cultivated their fame through institutions and industries located outside of Canada (a category that might include anyone from L.M. Montgomery who used non-Canadian publishers for her first works to Shania Twain whose celebrity was forged in the studios of Nashville). This project is interested in “Canadianness” as marked by cultural rather than geographical or political constructions. Like Michele Byers who sees Canadian celebrity as “a form of desire that unfolds through a Canadian reading (and sometimes critique) of celebrity,” this project privileges not systems of production but strategies of consumption in determining who is “Canadian,” responding to (and therein often affirming) the claims made to certain individuals by the celebrity systems at work in the Canadian terrain.¹⁹ These claims matter, even when they sit in tension with how the celebrity might self-identify, because they reflect how these terrains are being negotiated in Canada and how individuals are being circulated and reproduced as Canadian by our celebrity industries and cultures. Thus if some of the women examined here might justifiably be claimed by other nations or if they have abandoned their claims to Canada when marriage, work, or inclination made it desirable to do so, we might accept these claims *in addition to* rather than *instead of* our claim to call them Canadian.²⁰

¹⁹ Unlike Byers, however, I do not consider those who circulate through Canadian systems as more Canadian or those who develop celebrity in non-Canadian celebrity systems as being more legitimate or “real” celebrities.

²⁰ As discussed in “‘What an elastic nationality she possesses!’ Transnational Celebrity Identities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century,” the conditions of transnational celebrity make it is possible for a celebrity’s national identity to be constructed in a variety of ways; moreover, these multiple constructions can exist simultaneously and with legitimacy because the celebrity terrain is, as noted early, always under constant negotiation.

In speaking of celebrity in Canada, however, one is typically speaking of two separate star systems at work in one nation—the English-Canadian star system and the Quebecois star system. These two distinctive public spheres are formally recognized in both policy and practice in Canada but their magnitude and cultural and economic power often obscures other star systems at work in the nation. Canada, like other nations where strong ties and well-integrated media platforms service particular immigrant and/or indigenous communities, is host to several burgeoning public spheres, such as amongst Indigenous, Asian, and South Asian communities. A strong argument has been made by Kathleen Buddle and Lorraine York, for example, for the existence of an indigenous public sphere in Canada within which, York contends, there is the possibility for cultivating celebrity (See “Celebrity and Indigeneity”). The celebrity of these individuals, however, is often contained to the sphere in which they circulate and, for linguistic, cultural, and political reasons, these individuals rarely have opportunities to cross-over into other spheres. This containment is further exacerbated by the vast numbers of white Anglo cultural critics in Canada who often only perceive and work with celebrity phenomena arising in those spheres in which they themselves circulate.

This project is also structured by such a bias and concerns itself with the English-Canadian star system, a collection of institutions and individuals typically located in urban centres and disseminated across the nation through various English-language media. This system has the distinct advantage of a wider, broader audience and more mechanisms for production and dissemination than any other star system at work in Canada but is nevertheless considered weaker, less cohesive, and more fractured than the much smaller but tightly-knit system in Quebec. It is, perhaps, more accurate to speak of celebrity in English-Canada as less of a singular star system than as a *series* of systems, cultures, or networks wherein celebrity in and amongst

English Canadians circulates. Quebec, on the other hand, very clearly has *a* star system, a definitive set of individuals moving within integrated platforms of production and distribution. Since the 1970s, this star system has been a powerful economic and cultural force in Quebec: while it is disseminated piecemeal through French-speaking communities across the nation and oriented to Europe rather than the rest of Canada, it does not actually need external markets to be self-sustaining. Not only does this system create and promote more stars per capita than the rest of Canada (“Homegrown”), but in many contexts such as advertising campaigns (“Homegrown”) and television programming (Dickinson 40), Quebec audiences have a marked preference for their own locally produced talent. Both servicing and creating that demand are companies like Québecor Inc., which owns the premier media for celebrity production and distribution in Quebec including the popular television talk show, *Toute le monde en parle*; celebrity gossip magazines, *Échos vedettes*, *7 jours*, and *Star Système*; newspaper tabloids, *Le journal de Montréal* and *Le journal de Québec*; a chain of music stores; TVA, the television network and TVA films, distribution company; and Vidéotron, the largest cable and internet provider service in Québec (Dickinson 38-9). The highly integrated nature of celebrity in Quebec can fast-track and maintain celebrity but it is also a system that, according to some cultural critics “souffre de claustrophobie” (Daoust 48): stars are easily over-exposed, media events are heavily managed, and scandals, such as Guy Cloutier’s conviction for sexually abusing one of his child stars, can have far-reaching effects that implicate not just individuals and institutions of celebrity production but practices of celebrity consumption.²¹ Yet despite the liabilities and the corporate monopolies that attend such well-organized, contained, and cohesive star systems, the considerable economic and cultural clout of the Quebec star system is often held up as model for

²¹ Cloutier, convicted in 2004 of sexually abusing Nathalie Simard, is routinely identified as the inventor or father of the star system in Quebec (Dickinson 40; Bailey R7).

celebrity systems in English Canada: in 1999 the CRTC specifically articulated a desire to actively develop a “home-grown ‘star system’ [in English-Canada] similar to the one existing in Quebec” (“A Policy”).

Celebrity cultures in Quebec are, in short, structurally, politically, economically distinct from those in English Canada and they produce and maintain celebrity phenomena in isolation from the systems in English Canada (although some individuals have been able to work and thrive in both systems). The famous in Quebec (as in indigenous or other public spheres) experience and operate under a very distinctive and different set of contingencies and any memoir produced by these celebrities would presumably reflect those conditions in their narratives, rhetorical strategies, marketing tactics, and more. A study of such texts would significantly contribute to a better understanding of the celebrity terrains in Canada but such a project is beyond the scope of this present work. With the exception of individuals like Pauline Johnson and Celine Dion who have launched their brands and memoirs in English-language markets, “Women’s Celebrity in Canada” is a study of Anglophone English-Canadians addressing their memoirs to an English-speaking audience.²² The English-Canadian star systems they have navigated—whether as a space in which their celebrity was cultivated or simply distributed and consumed—contain a very different set of challenges. If in Quebec, the system seems cohesive, well-integrated, and “home-grown,” celebrity in English-Canadian contexts seems fractured: fractured by absences—whether of a viable feature-film industry or interwoven systems for distributing celebrity across media—by the continual movement of celebrity phenomena into and out of Canadian contexts, and by discourses that can, in a single breath, both

²² Dame Emma Albani, like Dion, was born in Quebec but her career and celebrity were cultivated in international spaces. Her memoir, briefly examined in Chapter Two but more thoroughly investigated in “What an elastic nationality she possesses” is designed to manage her fame as it circulates in British contexts.

invoke and diminish (or destroy) the viability of Canadian celebrity cultures (recall, for example, Mordecia Richler's oft-quoted "World famous all over Canada" (York, *Literary Celebrity* 130).

Celebrity in English-Canadian contexts is a fraught and contested phenomenon: it has its structures of production and dissemination as Chapters One and Four outline in detail, and yet its existence, its viability, and its significance are continually in negotiation; often when it is discussed, it is framed as a goal on the horizon rather than an actual present condition or its present condition is found lacking. In both popular and critical discourses, it is the US and not the Quebec star-system that is often the yard-stick by which the English-Canadian system is measured and found wanting: Michele Byers has argued that English-Canadian celebrity is a "parado[x]," not "real," and "(im)possible" because we "need the American system of circulation/distribution—and valuation—to create celebrities." The ease with which US celebrity phenomena can circulate in Canada and the relatively unimpeded movement of Canadians into that system (although as Byers rightly points out that movement is predominantly limited to white Anglophone Canadians who can readily "pass" for American) "raises the question" as Liz Czach points out, as to "whether a home-grown star system is either achievable or desirable" ("Television" 62).

Yet, as this project outlines in considerable detail, there are and have long been celebrity cultures in and from English Canada. They are not integrated, isolated, or self-sustaining like the Quebec system nor do they have the cultural or economic pull of the US system: celebrity in English Canada is not *a* system but, to reiterate, a *series* of systems, cultures, or networks wherein celebrity in and amongst English Canadians circulates. Their structure, function and even the discourses we use to characterize them have been and continue to be shaped by our cultural and geographical proximity to the US (Hamilton 202). Although we have policies and

measures in place to protect Canadian cultural products, the reality is that Canadian systems are in competition with US systems for market share on our home turf and there is often more work and more opportunity to become famous for (some) Canadians in the US. These Canadians succeeding in the US star system, Charles Acland has suggested, create the experience for Canadian viewers of witnessing a kind of “*star-system-in-exile*” (*Screen Traffic* 191). Although Acland’s terminology neatly captures a pervasive trend in twentieth-century cinematic celebrity production, what warrants emphasis is that his point is just as much about sites of production as sites of consumption: the exile effect is a viewing strategy or experience *in Canada* and as such is part of the cultures of celebrity right here at home.

Czach, who concurs that the US model and the absence of a robust film industry have shaped the expectations and limitations of a star system in English Canada, does not write off the possibility of celebrity. If there is such a system, she argues, it is a function of the programs and personalities on Canadian television (“Television” 65) but, she suggests, this system produces “picture personalities” rather than celebrities because “the details of their off-screen private lives, the constituents of stardom, continue to remain elusive” (71). Television has played a strong role in cultivating famous individuals in Canada and, indeed, the private lives of some of these individuals do not necessarily form a part of the discourses in circulation about them; however, as argued earlier, firm demarcations between screen and off-screen or textual and extra-textual are not always useful gauges for determining celebrity. In Canadian television we have a great number of famous people whose private lives are (or were) more or less absent from public discourse—from Juliette Cavazzi and Betty Kennedy in the early days to Rick Mercer and Don Cherry today—yet their names, images, brands, and personalities circulate(d) quite vigorously in

a range of discourses and contexts beyond their control and these individuals no doubt experience(d) the effects of this fame in both their private and public lives.

In the study of celebrity in English-Canadian contexts, some forms and fields are more fraught than others: literary celebrity, for example, is “like all forms of celebrity [...] crucially caught up in determinations and negotiations of citizenship” (175) as Lorraine York has noted in *Literary Celebrity in Canada*, but the field is well-established, well-respected, and otherwise accepted as an intrinsic part of our literary cultures in Canada. Music celebrity is also frequently a subject of popular and critical discussion in Canada and, like literature, is buttressed by substantial and well-publicized awards and galas although the transnational conditions of music production in Canada are, as examined in Chapter Five, a poorly masked reality of the field. There are various other fields of endeavour wherein celebrity in English-Canadian contexts is cultivated—such as politics, sports, dance, journalism, culinary arts, etc.—and, due in part to the growth of human-interest journalism, public relations, and marketing campaigns over the twentieth century, celebrity phenomena are not necessarily tied to or launched through any particular form or field of labour. There are, in short, celebrities born, made, disseminated, and consumed in English Canada from a vast range of fields; the signs of them are everywhere: in our magazines, newspapers, bookstores, and theatres, on our televisions and on our tongues. We cultivate cultures, discourses, and anxieties about these individuals and the systems they operate in: we wonder how it all works, whose interests are being served, and how dependent celebrity phenomena are upon the government and/or non-Canadian fans and industries. We even try to distinguish what makes Canadian celebrity phenomena Canadian: some have argued that Canadians are less affected by fame in negative ways (Karr 56), more “deserving, authentic, sincere” in our fame (Hamilton 202), “uneasy” (York, *Literary Celebrity* 115-6) or “graciou[s]”

(“About Us”) about fame.²³ While such attempts to articulate national characteristics are part of the discursive trends at work in English-Canadian celebrity cultures, there can be no particular representative expression or experience of celebrity in Canada or even English Canada. As Lorraine York has also argued, the diversity of fields and forms of celebrity and the mobility of individuals in and out of English-language systems mitigate against determining a useful or accurate national characteristic, performance, or expression of fame (*Literary Celebrity* 4-5, 167-8). We must proceed then on a case-by-case basis: we must be attentive to the structural and ideological influences, the trends across discourses, and the patterns of representation as they occur in and about Canada but we must stop short of making any one case, influence, discourse, or representation speak for the whole.

(Not All) The Ladies in the House

While this project does not aim to locate or identify national expressions of celebrity, it nevertheless maintains that there are national conditions that shape celebrity. As each of the various chapters moves through and explores various structural components to celebrity production within our borders, what is uncomfortably clear is that celebrity systems in Canada have not been nor are presently equitable. Celebrity in Canada has and continues to be dominated by white, heterosexual, able-bodied, middle-upper class, and/or conventionally attractive individuals: these people have historically enjoyed considerably social, economic and political power in Canada and have had disproportionate access to the industries of celebrity both at home and abroad. This does not mean that those who presently or have historically been discouraged or prevented from cultivating public lives have not done so, but for some, like Pauline Johnson or Terry Fox, their “difference” cultivates and is cultivated into a celebrated public identity,

²³ Both York and Hamilton are giving examples of discourse trends; they are not attempting to characterize Canadian celebrity.

becoming a constant qualifier or descriptor in how they circulate and/or an identity that must be continually performed or negotiated.

As the public sphere in Canada has slowly expanded in the twentieth century to include individuals and identities previously rendered invisible, insignificant, or illegitimate and to allow for constructions of public identities that do not necessitate a performance of “difference,” the discourses by which identities are constructed and represented change. This project is interested in the discursive changes of self-representation of one particular group that has and continues to experience the mechanisms of celebrity differently and often uses their life-writing texts to speak to that difference—women. How women have experienced, negotiated, and narrated celebrity warrants particular analysis because their access to and experience in the public sphere has been shaped by ideological investments in the meaning of gender: celebrity for women is always, inevitably, and irretrievably shaped by gender. This does not mean, however, that such ideologies affected all women the same or that the conditions of celebrity were not also equally or overwhelmingly conditioned by other factors like race, class, or ability. As feminist scholars have now well established, there are multiple sites and subject positions by which and through which women experience and perform their gender—one cannot speak for or of women as a category united by a common experience. To speak of women’s gendered experiences of celebrity then is indeed to privilege one subject position at the cost of others and to potentially efface or overwrite how alternate subject positions texture and condition the experiences of gender. Where possible, this project has sought to recuperate and acknowledge those positions and conditions—to sketch, for example, how middle-class constructions of femininity have been experienced differently by non-white women in the spotlight or how patterns of discrimination

make breaking into public labour and the public sphere more challenging for some women than for others.

Without losing sight of both the privileged demographic to which this project speaks and the implications of over-coding gender as a subject position, “Women’s Celebrity in Canada” attempts to trace some of the ideological constructions of and investments in the meaningfulness of gender and how they have shaped the various institutions, practices, and performances of celebrity. These histories, broad as they may be, help to contextualize how women’s autobiographies have, at different historical junctures, engaged, affirmed, and/or contested these constructions and their effects. In this project, women are represented as actively negotiating and narrating their gender and their gendered experiences of celebrity. While it acknowledges that they are coaxed, compelled, and interpellated into gendered subject positions and are, at times, unaware of that process, these women are framed as participants in the production of their gendered subject positions (and whatever ideologies these positions might perpetuate) and as active inhabitants and performers of their identities, particularly their identities as celebrities and as women. Once again this discourse of identity performance invokes and depends upon Butler’s argument that gendered identities are not essential but constructed through repetitions and iterations of “acts” (519). In terms of its representation and negotiation of gender, each woman’s celebrity autobiography functions as both a discrete act at work in her larger repertoire of gender performances and as a collection or series of acts within the text. Just as they do with the various discourses of celebrity in circulation, these texts position themselves as speaking for and capturing all performances: they appear as meta-commentaries, made authoritative by investments in the meaningfulness of the first-person pronoun and its discourses of experience,

and by the relative permanence of these texts when so many other performances are fleeting or go unrecorded, unpreserved, or unobserved.²⁴

As a mode or means of collecting together a series of gender performances, the celebrity autobiography is far more likely to strive for cohesion and continuity over time than to highlight the fissures, fragments, and contradictions of these performances. The narrating “I” of these texts is typically governed by a teleological drive that seeks to trace the formation of the present self in signs and symptoms of the past. This tactic, as we shall see in coming chapters, is often couched in discourses of talent and ambition, but is equally true in the ways gender is rendered: the gendered postures struck by the present “I” shape and condition not only what we read of the past self but what kinds of past selves are rendered and generally strive to create continuity across these performances.²⁵ In these ways, the celebrity autobiography renders the illusion of not only a unified self, but an essential self that the text seeks to express. While many autobiographies mobilize these strategies of self-representation, the stakes are arguably higher in the celebrity text because a compelling representation of an essential self can buttress the celebrity’s claims for the authority and authenticity of her public image and/or this public life-writing text: when the identity performed in the life-writing text appears to have its roots in an identity that pre-existed life (and narrative) in the public sphere, it seems to act as a guarantor of the present identity rendered up by the text and, perhaps, the public image the text might be attempting to authenticate. (As we shall see, this mobilization of a “pre-public” selfhood has long

²⁴ As famous women, there are bound to be multiple forms or records of other gender performances however, it is beyond the scope of this project to evaluate these performances against those in the autobiography; instead, I seek to contextualize textual performances by examining the broader cultural contexts in which they occur.

²⁵ A notable exception, as we shall see in Chapter Two, is Nellie McClung’s representation of how her young self, “Helen,” in *Clearing in the West* contested and struggled against conventional gender roles whereas the narrating McClung clearly values these modes of performing femininity.

been and continues to be complicated for women by ideological investments in their proximity to domestic spaces and the private sphere.)

Such strategies frame the text as a vehicle for the expression, not the production, of an identity; gloss over the fragmented, iterative, and contradictory performances that render the identity; and obscure the role of the terrain in producing the celebrity subject position.

“Women’s Celebrity in Canada” looks to the significant and strategic effects these tactics have in a celebrity’s bid to manage her public identity through a public life-writing text. For the women in the early decades of the twentieth century, the tactics of performing gender and managing celebrity are particularly fraught with contradiction and tension. To them we turn now, charting the cultural contexts for those performances in Chapter One before turning to the texts themselves in Chapters Two and Three. As these chapters and, indeed, the rest of “Women’s Celebrity in Canada: Contexts and Memoirs, 1908-2011” argues, gender matters and continues to matter in how women experience their public lives and the institutions and mechanisms of celebrity. How their life-writing texts capture and speak to those conditions varies across the century and even amongst contemporaneous texts, but we can use the strategies, trends, and experiments across these texts to better understand what it meant to be a famous woman in Canada and what it meant to occupy and speak *from* and *of* such a contested subject position.

Chapter One

Women's Fame in Canada: 1890-1950

“A woman's name should appear in the newspaper only three times: at her birth, upon her marriage and at her death.”

19th century maxim

“It is seldom in our chief cities, or even in the metropolis of Montreal, that we can point to anyone who at all resembles a woman of the world, and even should we come across one, you may be sure that she has one or other of the virtues of ‘La Mere Gigogne.’ Beneath her affectation of elegance she hides a housewifely mind. I beg you to take note of those excellent doughnuts which you eat at her table. Their delicacy betrays her handiwork; it is equivalent to her signature” (27).

Madame Dandurand, National Council of Women
Women of Canada: Their Life and Work (1900)

“If a woman succeeded, her success would belong to her as an individual. People would say she was an exceptional woman. She had a ‘masculine’ mind. Her success belonged to her alone, but if she failed, she failed for all women everywhere” (140-1).

Nellie McClung, *The Stream Runs Fast* (1945)

While the above epigraphs are drawn from a wide variety of sources, together they begin to sketch some of the boundaries of what it meant for a woman to have a public life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The first, a common maxim, would have us believe that a truly genteel and feminine woman successfully navigated life without drawing undue attention to herself in the public sphere. Built upon the doctrine of separate spheres, this philosophy did not just condemn women to the private sphere, but to anonymity; after all, until television, print media were the dominant and primary mode of producing and/or disseminating celebrity and, with the advent of mass media, a woman could not achieve celebrity without appearing in some form in a newspaper. Madame Dandurand, writing in the National Council of Women's ambitious publication, *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work*, offers a slight variation of this sentiment: while she does not quite efface the worldly women of Canada, we are quickly redirected to focus on their “true” inner domestic core. Here again, women's presence in print is a site of discomfort: transformed into a quaint, harmless figure, “La Mere Gigogne,” the

cosmopolitan woman's "signature" becomes a foodstuff designed to please the palate and disappear without a trace.

Ironically, Dandurand herself had no qualms about signing her contribution, but one wonders how intrepid journalists and world travelling celebrities like Sara Jeannette Duncan or Kit Coleman who signed their columns (and not with doughnuts) would have responded to this way of assessing their skills. Perhaps they might have agreed—certainly the ideological investment in women's innate domesticity was a pervasive and compelling structure, not least because it allowed some women, under the guise of continuing that labour, to enter the public and political spheres. Nellie McClung, the source of the third and last epigraph, built an extraordinarily successful and often controversial career from inhabiting these conventional gender scripts in very public ways. She first rose to prominence in 1908 with her best-selling domestic novel, *Sowing Seeds in Danny*, a text that, at least initially, outsold *Anne of Green Gables* which was published in the same year (Gerson, *Canadian Women* 151). Using that success to launch a public speaking career, McClung honed the oratorical skills that were later so instrumental in her political career where, under the tenants of maternal feminism, she campaigned for suffrage and later, in 1921, was elected to the Alberta Legislature. Hence when she writes, in 1945, of women's experiences with success and celebrity in Canada she speaks from decades of first-hand experience. Her assessment of cultural responses to women's success confirms not just the pervasive gendering of the public sphere as masculine but, more insidiously, the gendering of failure as feminine. Moreover, McClung suggests, there is an element of isolation and loneliness attending woman's achievements as if her success alienates her from other members of her sex and her sex renders her an oddity amongst other successful (read: male) people. In light of the considerable energy McClung expended on behalf of the

“average” woman (for her, this meant healthy, white, heterosexual women), her isolation from the very people she sought to serve must have rankled.

From these brief snapshots, a portrait begins to emerge of the cultural conditions attending women’s fame in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Canada. The constant note struck is that every aspect of a woman’s relationship to public life, success, and celebrity was qualified by her gender. Anatomy, women were recognizing, was destiny—not as a biological determinant of fate but a cultural one. Prevailing gender ideologies not only shaped how a community responded to a woman’s public life, but severely mediated her access to those instruments and institutions that would enable her to create a life beyond the private or domestic sphere in the first place. A woman without access to print or the popular press might very well be, according to the earlier maxim, a “real” lady, but after the advent of mass media in Canada in the 1890s, she was not and would likely never be a celebrity. As such, the story of women’s fame in Canada is also the story of the development of mass media forms in Canada. This chapter is thus designed to illuminate the mass cultural and technological changes over the last decade of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century that changed how women experienced fame in Canada. How they managed and responded to those conditions, particularly in the form of public life-writing texts, is the subject of the following chapters; here we are concerned with the growth and development of those media that enabled Canadians to finally achieve modern forms of celebrity and circulate their name, image, and sometimes even their labour across vast distances with unprecedented speed and accuracy. Intersecting this, of course, are the labour practices and gender ideologies that had an impact on women’s ability and willingness to access these media and circulate in the public sphere.

The designation of such a sweeping time frame, from 1890 to the 1950s, is meant to capture the onset of modernity in Canada and the development of three major mass media—print, film, and radio broadcasting—ending just prior to the television era, which constituted another major shift in how celebrity could be produced and disseminated in Canada. Included in this scope are two generations of famous Canadian women: those born in the middle decades of the nineteenth century (particularly the 1860s and 1870s) who transformed their labour into celebrity and their celebrity into life-writing texts during the twentieth century, and those born in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century for whom mass print culture would have been well established but who were likely feeling the effects of broadcasting technology and the models of fame emerging from Hollywood on their own labour and celebrity.¹ As this chapter demonstrates, the women of these generations witnessed incredible cultural and technological changes over the course of their lifetimes but even the most dramatic moments that contained the greatest potential to revolutionize women's relationships to the public sphere—the New Woman, suffrage, and two world wars—did little to shake how their relationships to the private sphere were conceived. As a result, the women who achieved celebrity in this period often found themselves negotiating the often contradictory claims of their own personal ambitions to, as Montgomery said, “have a recognized place among good workers in my chosen profession” (“The Alpine Path” Sept. 1917:8), and the claims of a cultural climate that suggested a woman's primary obligation was to the home and family. It is not surprising then, given the inherent challenges of navigating such contested territory, that many women who cultivated celebrity did

¹ Some women under consideration fall outside these parameters: Emma Albani (1847-1930), was Canada's first internationally celebrated singer and was famous by the 1870s (Forster, *100 Canadian Heroines* 26) but her career developed almost entirely in Europe where systems of celebrity-production were considerably different. E. Pauline Johnson or Tekahionwake (1861-1913), the famous Anglo-Mohawk poet and performer, also achieved considerable celebrity prior to the 1890s but, like Albani, did not publish her life story until the twentieth century. By the time they crafted their texts, both women would have felt or, at least, witnessed the effects of what this chapter aims to uncover, that is, the cultural and technological changes wrought by modernity on women's celebrity.

so in fields intimately linked to the domestic sphere, whether through domestic fiction, women's pages and programs, or maternal feminisms.

While this chapter limits its scope to just two critical conditions that shaped women's celebrity in Canada, the development of mass media and the pervasive gender ideologies that shaped their access to public labour and life, there are considerably more factors at work, both in addition to and interwoven with, those examined here. As the introduction has already explained, issues of gender are difficult, even impossible, to separate from issues of class and race and, as it will become readily apparent in this chapter and much of this book, the history of women's celebrity in English Canada is an overwhelmingly middle class and white narrative. Indeed, the histories related here are dominated by middle-class cultures and the technologies examined were (and for the most part, continue to be) controlled by predominantly white men: these were the instruments and institutions of mass culture in Canada and it will come as no surprise that they served and privileged their own. As we move through this chapter, beginning with a brief history of pre-modern celebrity in Canada and moving into the changes wrought by modernity and mass media, I endeavor, where possible, to rectify the bias of these institutions by highlighting non-white, non-middle-class examples of women's celebrity. This practice, while it does over-represent minority examples, consciously carves out space for those women who are otherwise rendered invisible by this project because they did not write or publish a public autobiography that can be taken up in this study.² Following the exploration of how mass media in Canada altered the conditions of celebrity for all Canadians, this chapter considers how gender ideologies shaped women's labour practices and their access to paid labour that could potentially

² This study is concerned with women's autobiographical writing that was produced after and in response to their celebrity and the only non-white example from this time period is Tekahionwake or E. Pauline Johnson's romanticized history of her parents in the short story "My Mother." Life-writing texts produced before celebrity, that were not intended for public dissemination (such as the letters of Koñwatsi-tsiaiēñni or Molly Brant), or not prepared by the celebrity (such as press interviews with Portia White) do not fall within the purview of this study.

be transformed into an opportunity for fame. As we might expect, those women who laboured in mass culture and mass media industries experienced a significant advantage in the business of creating and disseminating a public identity and it is not a coincidence that it is also they who dominate in the production of celebrity autobiographies. This history of celebrity, mass media, and gendered labour practices offered here, while it cannot comprehensively account for the diversity of women's experiences nor, as we shall see in Chapter Two, the variety of forms in which that experience is expressed, is nevertheless a critical tool for contextualizing the changing conditions of women's celebrity in Canada. Each woman experienced her celebrity differently, but they were all affected and shaped by these developments in Canadian culture.

Celebrity Culture in Canada

Celebrity culture in Canada is intimately linked to the development of mass culture and mass media. This does not mean, however, that one cannot have celebrity without mass media, as Richard Schickel has claimed, or that there were no pre-modern celebrities in Canada (23). As Joshua Gamson has pointed out in his exploration of pre-modern, pre-media Western forms of fame, one could circulate in image (such as on coins) or in narrative (usually oral) but this phenomenon was mostly restricted to members of religious orders and the aristocracy and such forms of fame often took a long time to gain momentum (*Claims to Fame* 16-17). With changes in print and engraving technology and the advent of social mobility through the development of the capitalist marketplace, members of the rising middle class could, in theory, also manufacture and mobilize representations of the self to circulate in the public realm (17-18). However, in order for an individual to become a celebrity under these conditions, that is to become a public figure and circulate in "subsidiary forms of circulation" (Ellis, *Visible Fictions* 91), there needed to be diverse modes of circulating one's self or narrative and a population that would consume

those representations (presumably because this was the only means by which the individual was available to them). Such conditions existed long before modernity in the great urban centres of London or New York but the slow development of such centres in Canada, the vast geographical spaces that separated them, and the speed with which they might communicate with each other militated against the development of a vibrant pre-modern celebrity culture in Canada.

As a result, many Canadians who found fame prior to the advent and development of mass media in Canada did so outside of Canada. In the arts, for example, it was difficult for Canadians to get sufficient training or live from their labour in Canada and many moved to Europe or the US in order to pursue their careers (Vance 190). Writers were more fortunate than the musicians, dancers, singers, and artists in that they could hone their craft at home, but they often sought American and British publishers to print their work.³ Beyond the arts, a Canadian could potentially make a name for him or herself abroad in political or military work or in particular social circles. Perpetrators of scandal or crime might find themselves infamous and widely discussed in Canadian and non-Canadian newspapers and drawing rooms. Maria Monk's claim, for example, in 1835 that she had been impregnated by priests in Montreal was launched through American media and, according to Gerson, was much discussed on both sides of the Atlantic (*Canadian Women* 41). Wherever it was that a Canadian made her mark, it was usually made possible by the existence of more developed systems of communication that allowed for the circulation of the individual's name, image and/or labour than were, at the time, possible at home in Canada. This is not to claim, as Nick Mount does, that "fame was the province of elsewhere" for Canadians before the twentieth century (31), only that it was easier to achieve

³ The reasons for this are complex and varied: some writers wrote for non-Canadian audiences, as the Strickland sisters did with their non-fiction guides for emigrants, but for many writers the better pay and copyright protection afforded by British and, eventually, American publication was sufficient incentive. For a more comprehensive exploration of the impact of copyright law on Canadian writers see Mount, Gerson, and Karr.

elsewhere. There were, indeed, famous people in Canada who circulated in pre-modern oral and print cultures in Canada but the conditions of their celebrity and circulation were markedly different.

Early forms of English-language celebrity culture were very much contingent on the types of communities developing and the systems of communication within and between them. Virtual communities might form of decentralized populations who could participate in celebrity culture as consumers of information or small-scale production goods, but these individuals might not ever meet another member or recognize themselves as part of a consumer community. Moreover, in light of the labour and energy necessitated by early settlement activities, no doubt information and individuals associated with politics and military life would be in demand while those artistic and cultural products of leisure would have been of secondary importance. While the latter category would have afforded women more opportunity than the former for making themselves known, feminist historians have worked hard to recuperate the contributions of women in war-time, some of whom, like Molly Brant or Koñwatsi-tsiaiéñni, were extremely well-known and much-respected in their time (“Molly Brant”).⁴ The wives of officers and governing officials may have also played unofficial and thus unrecorded roles in the martial and administrative activities of settlement in early Canada but it is less certain whether their activities were, as Brant’s work was, part of the flow of information. It is more likely that women’s activities were better known within their community than without as with the case of Rose Fortune, a former slave and Black Loyalist, who was something of a local figure in her Nova

⁴ Brant, a Mohawk, successfully mediated between the Iroquois (although, it appears, predominantly her Mohawk people) and the British during the American Revolution (“Molly Brant”).

Scotia community for her role in the Underground Railroad, her entrepreneurship, and her self-appointed position as local police officer (Forster, *100 Canadian Heroines* 88-9).⁵

In the arts, specifically writing, a woman living in isolated rural spaces could foster her own fame if she had some means of circulating her work. This typically required not only print or oral lines of communication between individuals who might circulate her work, but also access to an urban centre where her work might be produced. In fact, these centralized populations that developed after the first flushes of early settlement activities were critical to the production, dissemination, and consumption practices that could render celebrity phenomena. With the right infrastructure and a sufficient population base, communities could begin to produce newspapers and periodicals that could circulate (albeit slowly) to more isolated locations. Periodical publications were not uncommon for settled communities but, as the *Early Canadiana Online* archives demonstrate, they were usually tied to particular agricultural considerations or religious denominations. While there were more opportunities for aspiring creative writers to promote their name and work in some of these magazines than in the newspapers, the efficacy of these texts as vehicles for fame was severely limited by their short-lived lifespan and subscription-based circulation.⁶

The possibility of promoting oneself or one's labour in newspapers was also quite limited until the 1890s. Papers were dominated by provincial and dominion politics and contained very little local news or what we might now call entertainment (McNairn 95, Sotiron 107); as a result, those figures who circulated in these papers tended to be political figures, particularly those involved in nation-building projects, or criminals. As might be expected, women were not

⁵ I am indebted here to Merna Forster's archival research for bringing *Fortune* to my attention.

⁶ *The Literary Garland* (1838-1851) stands as an exception: it enjoyed a relatively long publication run and became an important periodical for aspiring Canadian writers in both rural areas and urban centres to publish and get paid (and perhaps noticed) for their literary efforts.

typically featured in either political or criminal news but there were some exceptions. Certainly the fate of Marie-Joseph Angélique, a Black slave who was convicted of setting a fire that burned down much of Montreal in 1734, was much discussed and has more recently been recuperated by both contemporary historians and artists to serve particular political aims. Grace Marks, now freshly “re-famed” by Margaret Atwood’s best-selling novel *Alias Grace*, created a stir at her murder trial in 1843 as much for her youth and gender as for the grisliness of the crimes.

Even without a local print culture, population centres could nevertheless support forms of celebrity through a vibrant oral culture. Wherever men or women assembled news and gossip could be shared, creating and spreading fame (or infamy), whether informally on the streets or more formally in church groups and the growing numbers of arts-focused (such as textile or literary) or social-reform (such as temperance or suffrage) societies.⁷ Although local figures usually faded quickly into obscurity, occasionally they would be transformed, over time, into legends. Laura Secord, for example, did not live to see or enjoy her own celebrity because it was posthumously produced by the labour of others through print.⁸ Another, earlier example comes from French-Canadian lore where in the parish of Saint Vallier in 1760, a rumour began to circulate that Marie Josephine Corriveau killed her husband (Aubert de Gaspé 304). Three years later she was convicted of murdering her second husband and, according to Philippe Aubert de Gaspé’s *Les Anciens Canadiens*, “La Corriveau” became an important supernatural figure in French-Canadian oral culture. Aubert de Gaspé’s text thus traces and affirms her celebrity in

⁷ There was, at times, significant overlap between these arts and political societies: the Toronto Women’s Literary Club, for example, was formed in 1877 as a means by which women could pursue suffrage activities (“Emily Jennings Stowe”).

⁸ Sarah Ann Curzon’s play *Laura Secord, The Heroine of 1812* (written 1867, published 1887) represents the first effort to rescue Secord “from oblivion” and memorialize her actions (Preface). Secord now circulates in Canadian contexts in text (from history to children’s narratives), in art and historic markers (including a sculpture and her home), and, of course, in chocolate.

both oral culture (as circulating in stories) and print cultures (he reproduces legal texts in which her narrative circulates) and by doing so becomes another print medium by which her fame and narrative remain in circulation. It is worth noting that Corriveau's fame continues to live on in oral culture today—a variation of her life story is still told on walking ghost tours of Vieux Quebec.

Such examples, however, throw into relief how dependent we are on print culture to capture pre-modern, pre-mass media examples of celebrity. We might surmise that, with a venue as modest as a church or school house, a community might cultivate local talent in the arts or play host to travelling talent, but it is print culture that will help us trace who performed where and whether they were popular. Moreover, any attempt to recuperate such celebrity cultures in Canada will necessarily be shaped by regional considerations for post-settlement communities developed at different times across the country: Halifax, for example, had its first newspaper by 1752 (Vipond 2), a theatre by 1768 and had, in several different venues, hosted numerous theatrical presentations by the end of the eighteenth century (Fergusson 419), whereas Edmonton, settled considerably later, printed its first newspaper in 1880 (Edmonton Historical Board) and received its first visit from a professional theatre troupe in 1892 (Herzog). In short, it was not impossible to become a public figure and circulate in multiple forms in Canada before the late nineteenth century, but one's fame was either limited to particular regions or cultures, or particular fields of labour (usually politics), and there were very few Canadian institutions available for systematically circulating that individual or her labour.

By the 1890s, more or less all of the factors needed to generate modern forms of celebrity had fallen into place. Canada was in the process of modernizing: the transformation of Canada from a traditional, agricultural-based economy and culture to an urban, wage-based one began in

about 1850 and took seventy years to realize (Vipond 7), but these processes had, by the end of the nineteenth century, reached “a kind of critical mass” (Karr 4). By the 1890s Canada was, based on its output per capita, one of the “most industrialized countries in the world” (McInnis) and, while more than two-thirds of Canadians still lived outside of urban centres (“Population, Urban and Rural”), the railway and telegraph ensured that they were increasingly exposed to the products of urban culture and industry.⁹ A consumer culture was being born: a culture where individuals were, if not labouring to *produce* uniform products, labouring in order to *purchase* these products. This was made easier by the development of a waged labour economy where one had wages to spend and set hours for labouring and therefore, in theory, free time in order to spend one’s wages.¹⁰ At the same time, businesses, industries, and institutions began to develop and sell ways in which people might use this new leisure time (Vipond 9-10; Gamson, *Claims to Fame* 23).

In this constellation of developments—the assembling of people in urban centres; the capacity to communicate quickly between and to populations in different places; the technology to mass produce goods and the economy for the consumption of these goods; and the capacity to transport those goods across the country—Canadians had attained critical “mass,” a large group, widely dispersed and unknown to one another but potential participants in the same kinds of cultures.¹¹ Mass culture allowed for (almost) simultaneous sites of shared knowledge and experience that were no longer bound by regional conditions—people in Montreal and Victoria might now consume the same soap or read the same review of a musical performance in Toronto.

⁹ As telegraph wires often ran parallel to the railway, the movement of goods and information developed in tandem. The developing rail lines also enabled the faster and more economical movement of performers (Walden 377) and thus created increasing opportunities for individuals to circulate. By 1885, railway connected Halifax to Vancouver (Vipond 4).

¹⁰ I say “in theory” because this system does not account for the domestic labour performed after the waged-labour day came to a close.

¹¹ This definition of mass relies upon some of the tenants of mass culture as examined by Lorimer and Gasher’s *Mass Communication in Canada* (28).

Mass culture did not create a monolithic national culture—Canadians have always been too diverse to be united in or by the production or consumption of cultures—but the products of mass culture, whether soap or a radio broadcast, were reaching unprecedented numbers of people who, in their consumption habits, were forming multiple and over-lapping cultural communities.¹² And, in the wake of nationally circulating print and consumer cultures, such communities could thus not only begin to “imagine” themselves as communities, but begin to behave and consume information and goods as part of a strategy of belonging (B. Anderson 6).

Mass culture and mass media developed hand-in-hand: not only were the development and expansion of mass media funded by revenue generated by advertising mass produced products (Vipond 17-18), but mass media, in turn, shaped the consumption habits of its audiences. From the media Canadians learned about what products they might buy (especially ones that enabled further leisure time or provided ways to spend one’s leisure time) and print, radio, and cinema were ways of occupying and enjoying one’s leisure time. With mass media and mass culture, the very parameters of who and what constituted celebrity changed.¹³ Not only did mass media enable a faster means of circulating one’s image and name to a wider audience than ever before, but such scope of circulation came to be the new benchmark for celebrity. Celebrity certainly could still be cultivated as a localized phenomenon but, as media networks developed throughout the country, it became easier for the average consumer to identify and distinguish between regional, national, and international celebrity. Writers, in particular, benefited from developments in mass media, securing not only larger audiences but more potential venues for their work. At the same time, vast new employment opportunities developed

¹² See Chapter Four’s section on Mass Media & Canada for an explanation as to why the CBC was not able to foster a national culture or a national roster of celebrities.

¹³ This argument has been made by many critics: see, for example, Ponce de Leon’s *Self-Exposure: Human-Interest Journalism and the Emergence of Celebrity in America, 1890-1940* (13) and Turner’s *Understanding Celebrity* (10).

in journalism and various entertainment industries that created opportunities for new forms of labour that circulated widely. While an individual did not necessarily need to circulate her labour in mass media to be a celebrity—for many, it was a long time before broadcasting technology would even make this possible—some form of presence in mass media print cultures was increasingly necessary. As the following section makes clear, the development of mass media in Canada had a dramatic impact on not just how that celebrity was expressed and disseminated, but on what kinds of celebrity could develop and what forms would be privileged.

Mass Media and Celebrity in Canada

The daily newspaper was the first mass medium in Canada (Vipond 1). It came of age in Canada in the mid-nineteenth century but, by then, the newspaper trade had long been a fixture in Canadian print culture. The first paper printed and circulated in Canada was *The Halifax Gazette* in 1752 and, like subsequent early papers in Canada, was dependent upon government support for survival (Vipond 2). As a result of these ties and the slow movement of information before the telegraph, such papers were dominated by political news, often reprinting parliamentary debates (Sotiron 107) or other lengthy political documents and commentary (McNairn 95). While these practices did not preclude the possibility of an individual becoming famous, it certainly limited the scope of the field to political matters. The movement away from political partisanship was made possible by advances in technology (which allowed for more frequent and less costly print runs), injections of corporate capital (and, later, advertising revenue), and increasing subscription and circulation fostered by stylistic and content changes (Vipond 12-13). At the same time, the number of papers, particularly urban dailies, began to increase: the *Globe*, launched in 1844 was, according to Vipond, Canada's first modern paper and was followed by others including Montreal's *Star* (1869) and *La Presse* (1884); Toronto's

Telegram (1876), *World* (1880), *News* (1881), and *Star* (1892); Ottawa's *Journal* (1885); and Hamilton's *Herald* (1889) (Vipond 11). However, in the 1890s, the business practices of newspapers underwent a marked change and this had a direct impact on who might cultivate celebrity:

As newspapers everywhere grew in size and value between 1890 and 1920, publishers adopted business methods and goals, first to encourage the newspaper's growth and to protect the successful newspaper's competitive edge, and then to sustain the owner's increasingly valuable financial interest in the enterprise. [...] Beginning in the 1890s publishers and their business managers reduced the role of the editorial page and decreased the amount of political coverage and social commentary in their newspapers. More space was devoted to news and entertainment. The amount of sensational and trivial material, such as 'human-interest' stories, increased. (Sotiron 105-6)

Local news and entertainment, editors and publishers discovered, attracted a more consistent readership and thus by 1898, most papers had phased out practices like the reproduction of "verbatim accounts of parliamentary debates" (Sotiron 107). News still dominated the content of these papers but was now disseminated in the new simple and direct style derived from US models that emphasized facts and information (Vipond 13). With the rise of what Sotiron has troublingly called "trivial material," the opportunities for non-political celebrity grew considerably: an individual might, by virtue of writing a regular humour, domestic, or society column become a household name and, because these columns were, unlike the news, usually written by and attributed to women (albeit often under pseudonyms), this development represented an extraordinary opportunity for women, in particular, to cultivate celebrity (Lang 8-10). However, one did not necessarily need to write the column to use it as a vehicle for celebrity: as the emphasis on entertainment and celebrity news became a growing part of journalism in the first decades of the century, women were cultivating what Ponce de Leon has characterized as a "new degree of visibility" (66). After 1917 when the news gathering co-

operative, The Canadian Press, formed, such copy could circulate nationally (“Canadian Press”), an important development in the role of Canadian newspapers in cultivating celebrity.

The Canadian magazine market, on the other hand, operated within quite different parameters. Until 1917, magazines in Canada were the only mass-mediated source of information about local, national, and global issues *and* they were the only common site of regular cultural consumption that English-speaking Canadians across the nation were able to share. However, they were much slower at opening their doors to women journalists (Gerson, *Canadian Women* 110) and the industry was heavily dominated by the American market (Vipond 25). This periodical boom in the United States proved to be an important vehicle through which Canadians could find the success and celebrity that they could not find at home (Vance 193, 200). As Nick Mount’s *When Canadian Literature Moved to New York* has persuasively argued, many Canadian writers moved to the US and there found careers and, occasionally, celebrity. In the magazine industry, however, one did not necessarily need to move and many writers published in the American magazines from their homes in Canada. In fact, many Canadians depended upon this market in order to make a living: as Mazo de la Roche wrote in her autobiography, she sent her material first to American magazines “which paid well, or—failing that—to Canadian magazines, which paid much less” (141).

This new market in magazine publications was made possible because magazine editors in Canada (as elsewhere) adopted the changes in style and content that were making newspapers more profitable: more entertainment and personality news and simpler, more direct styles (Desbarats 145; Vipond 13). These changes, however, were not met with enthusiasm by all: in 1913, Canadian poet and historian, Thomas Guthrie Marquis complained: “Latterly Canadian magazines have been in lighter vein, aiming to please rather than to instruct. Caught by the spirit

of the time, publishers now devote more of their attention to pictorial than to the literary side of their publications. In a commercial age, too, business and finance occupy more attention, and many of the leading periodicals give more space to the literature of the dollar than to anything else” (F. Sutherland 37). As Marquis observed, the periodical press in Canada was changing: having recently shifted their focus from class-based markets to mass markets, magazines in particular were on the hunt for ways to attract both readers and ad revenue (Desbarats 145; F. Sutherland 6; Lang 32). As British and American periodicals had already discovered, journalism about or using celebrities was both persuasive and lucrative (Beetham; Easley; Ponce de Leon) and Canadian periodicals, much to the chagrin of men like Marquis, were beginning to follow suit. Nationally circulated mass-market magazines like *Canadian Home Journal* (1910-1959), *Everywoman’s World* (1913-1923), *Saturday Night* (1887-2005), and *Maclean’s* (1905-) were, in the first few decades of the twentieth century, slowly increasing their celebrity-focused content.¹⁴ Importantly, this content included profiling prominent Canadians in features such as *Busy Man’s Magazine’s* “Men in the Public Eye” and *Everywoman’s World’s* “Leading Women,” to extensive interviews (such as Arthur Stringer’s profile of Canadian-born Hollywood superstar Mary Pickford) and serialized autobiographies (such as L.M. Montgomery’s “The Alpine Path”).

The advent of photography in all periodicals also played an important role in shaping the conditions of celebrity. Although photography had become a growing presence in newspapers since its development in the 1860s (first as engravings and, by the 1880s, as halftone photographs), it was not until 1897 that the technology developed to incorporate halftone photographs into the daily paper (Campbell). Unlike today, where celebrities can control only a small fraction of the images circulated in connection to their name, celebrities of the early

¹⁴ From 1905-1911, *Maclean’s* was printed as *Busy Man’s Magazine*.

twentieth century (or the industry professionals who handled their PR) would have been able to exert some influence over what photographs a newspaper or magazine might use. Initially these images would have been posed studio shots but as the technology developed, journalists increasingly requested candid shots (Ponce de Leon 64); these could be provided by the celebrity but the shift in style gave rise to that important celebrity-orchestrated publicity event—“the photo opp”. As we will see Montgomery do in Chapter Three, a celebrity could carefully stage and disseminate photographs to cultivate a specific visual image that supported and buttressed her public identity. Moreover, an audience sufficiently exposed to such an image and the meaning it was designed to generate, could eventually begin to consume the image in alternate forms (in cartoon, for example) and/or divorced from its original context.

A celebrity’s image, familiar and imbued with certain meanings, came to be particularly useful in marketing products and, by the First World War, photos were an important marketing strategy, particularly for promoting authors (Hammill, *Women* 106). As Hammill has noted, this trend arose from and in tandem with “the highly visual culture of Hollywood, which circulated pictures of stars through fan magazines, advertisements, and consumer products” (*Women* 4). However, the celebrity’s image was useful for more than simply promoting the celebrity and her cultural products; it was also very useful for promoting other items wholly unaffiliated with the celebrity and even, at times, without the celebrity’s knowledge or permission. Maud Allan, who was famous for her risqué costumes and sensational interpretation of the “Dance of Salome,” for example, found that both photos and graphic versions of her image were used to sell a variety of products from Salome Corn Plasters to cigarettes (Bishop-Gwyn 36-8). In fact, it was not until 1973 that celebrities in Canada were legally acknowledged to own any “aspects of his or her

likeness, personality, and identity,” although in the United States a “right of publicity” had been developing since the 1950s (Flagg).¹⁵

The impact of mass media print culture and photography technologies on celebrity culture was not particular to Canada; in fact most of these technologies and the forms of their implementation originated elsewhere. On the receiving end of so many cultural products from both the US and UK, Canadians quickly acclimatized and adopted the technological advancements and stylistic conventions of mass media circulating elsewhere, but this did not mean mass media in Canada carried the same content nor did they develop or circulate in the same ways.¹⁶ Little, however, was done to check the influx of non-Canadian media into Canada until the development of radio broadcasting technology in the 1920s:

...the government was convinced that broadcasting was a very special industry in its ability to facilitate nation-wide inter-communication. While newspapers were local, magazines middle-class, and movies purely entertainment, radio appealed to all classes, in all parts of the country, and could be successfully used not only for entertainment but for information and propaganda purposes. (Vipond 43)

American domination of this cultural and political medium was not acceptable and since radiowaves could not be checked at the border, a Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting advised the creation of a national broadcasting system (Edwardson, *Canadian Content* 11). In 1932, the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission (CRBC) was created with the purpose of regulating private Canadian radio stations and developing a national network that would service all Canadians (Vipond 41-2). In 1936, it was reorganized as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), a Crown Corporation, and continued to maintain its role developing national

¹⁵ See Sheryl Hamilton’s *Impersonations: Troubling the Person in Law and Culture* for an extended history and discussion of Canada’s publicity laws.

¹⁶ A study of the trends in representation in Canadian periodical culture at this time would significantly improve our understanding of the development of human-interest journalism and the rise of celebrity culture in Canada.

programs and regulating broadcasting for private radio and, eventually, television stations (Vipond 42).

Radio in Canada represented a new medium by which celebrity might be generated—as AM stations began to develop across the country throughout the early 1920s, for a few hours each day Canadians could tune in and hear news reported live or music (Potts “Early”). By this means, musicians were able to disseminate their work more widely and news announcers might develop a local reputation. With the development and dissemination of fifteen-minute programs on records, Canadian stations could represent non-local talent and a wider variety of shows. Initially, this technology primarily benefited celebrities from the US, UK, and Australia, as these were where the majority of the programs were imported from (Potts, “Early”), but by the 1930s and 40s Canadian programs in music, sports, and comedy created popular and well-known personalities many of whom, like Johnny Wayne and Frank Shuster, went on to develop successful careers in television. Despite the presence of local stations and national programming, however, Canadians still listened predominantly to American stations with the exception of, according to Vipond, a kind of “golden age” in the 1940s and 50s when Canadians tuned in for war news and, for a time, seem to have forgotten to change the dial (42).

For the late Victorians and Edwardians who had already achieved celebrity, the advent of radio meant a new medium by which their fame might further be disseminated and affirmed. Montgomery, for example, did her first radio broadcast quite late in terms of her celebrity (she had, by 1931, been famous for twenty-three years) but quite early in terms of the development of the medium (Montgomery, *SJLMM* IV:108). At this time only one-third of Canadians had radios in their homes but this number rapidly increased over the next two decades: by 1940, 75% of Canadians had a radio, and by 1950, almost all Canadians had a radio in their home and many

had one in their car as well (Vipond 39). Radio represented both an opportunity and a risk for established celebrities: unlike print culture, the instantaneousness of the broadcast transmission meant that one could not fix an error before it reached the masses and not all celebrities were well-suited to the medium. Stephen Leacock, as York notes in *Literary Celebrity in Canada*, was unable to successfully adapt his style of humour to the medium (56). Beatrice Lillie, in her autobiography, *Every Other Inch a Lady* (1972), also notes the difficulty of performing on radio without an audience: “How could I pull the first laugh from a radio audience, and if I did, how would I know they were laughing and telling me what to do next?” (266). However, for those well-suited to the medium, radio was a powerful tool for marketing the self and one’s cultural productions—a successful program broadcast across the country brought the celebrity into people’s homes with a kind of intimacy and immediacy that print culture could not, seemingly, produce. Moreover, for these celebrities for whom radio was an additional rather than primary mode of disseminating their name and labour, appearing on the radio or even, simply being discussed on the radio represented a powerful affirmation and perpetuation of their celebrity status.

Radio, while it represented an incredible opportunity for the development of celebrity in Canada, did not, ultimately, come close to supplanting the primacy of print culture in creating and/or disseminating celebrity. This was due, in part, to the unrealized goals of the Royal Commission to fully nationalize broadcasting and convert private stations into “supplementary services” (Vipond 42), but also because a kind of celebrity culture and discourse had emerged from Hollywood that gave primacy to images (Gamson, *Claims to Fame* 28; Hammill, *Women* 4). The impact of Hollywood film culture and fan magazines on the development of celebrity culture has been well documented by critics like Richard Dyer, Joshua Gamson, and P. David

Marshall, and to them one should turn for a more thorough investigation than what can be provided here. Suffice to say, the changes that Hollywood wrought on American celebrity culture were also felt in Canada: as in the US, the rising profile of biographical information, the ideological investment in the private life of the celebrity as a source of truth, the developing distinction between media and industry copy, and the highly visual culture of cinema and the mass-disseminated fan magazines that gave new significance and function to the image in discourses of stardom also became integral to how celebrity was conceptualized and framed in Canada.

Although the forms of celebrity derived from cinema became, over time, the “gold standard” for celebrity in all other fields, the opportunities for Canadian industries and celebrities to participate in cinema culture were extremely limited. In fact, of all the mass media to develop between 1890 -1950s, film was the media in which Canadians had the least opportunity to achieve celebrity. This is not to say that there were not famous Canadian actors, but without a vigorous film industry of its own, Canada was flooded with American products and Canadians who sought to participate in the medium usually had to go to the US to do so. By the First World War, most towns in Canada had a cinema and for a while, particularly during the war, there was a demand for Canadian-made or, at least, Canada-centric films and newsreels, but production companies in Canada on the whole struggled to stay afloat (Vipond 31-2). The market was consistently dominated by American films (Vipond 33) and the growing preference for narrative fiction and longer, more costly, films in the US (de Cordova 27-8) meant that Canadian audiences, whether they shared those preferences or not, would have been exposed to those genres and, perhaps, eventually developed similar tastes. As the market for local and documentary films shrank, so too did the viability of the fledgling film industry in Canada which

could not compete with the larger production budgets of American feature films. Around 1923, feature film production in Canada appeared to grind to a halt as the majority of urban movie theatres fell under the indirect control of the American owned Famous Players which kept American films in Canadian theatres (Vipond 33). Feature film production in Canada began to return slowly in the late 1940s and early 1950s, but this progress halted “abruptly” with the advent of television (Vipond 58) and did not resume until the 1970s (Melnik 113).¹⁷

In rehearsing a history of mass media and its impact on the development of celebrity culture in Canada, it is important to keep in mind that mass media do not function independently of the people who produce or consume them. Whatever potential for celebrity exists in them is there because of how the people use them—newspapers divested themselves of their political focus not because advertising revenue made it possible to do so and not because communications networks allowed for the faster transmission of all sorts of news and information (both scenarios could have just as easily resulted in a heightened attention to politics), but because the readers demonstrated a preference for consuming other kinds of information. The consumer’s capacity to shape the production of culture, media, and goods through their consumption habits is, however, mediated by the producers who interpret and shape the responses to the audience’s consumption habits. In the case of early twentieth-century mass media, that meant that the power to use, develop, and shape the function of mass media rested predominantly in the hands of white middle and upper-class men (Huyssen 62). In this respect, the racial, gender, and class power structures embedded in Canadian culture as a whole were more or less replicated in the infrastructure of media. Those excluded from these systems of power, women, visible minorities, the working class, etc., were more likely to find themselves the *subjects* of mass media content

¹⁷ Although television programming in Canada developed during the 1890-1950 period under discussion here, it will be discussed Chapter 4, Women’s Fame in Canada: 1950s-2010.

than its producers and for many, like First Nations or Asian-Canadians, that representation would be wholly skewed by prevailing prejudices. Thus, while the technologies of mass media were having a profound influence on the shape and nature of the information being disseminated, the responsibility for the Eurocentric, patriarchal content falls on its producers and the white middle-class target market who were willing to consume these ideologies that maintained their privileged positions.

Gender and Celebrity in Canada

The cultural attitudes toward celebrity and the development and function of mass media for the production and/or dissemination of celebrity were by no means unaffected by gender ideologies; they were, in fact, inseparable. *Every* aspect of a woman's relationship to celebrity—from her capacity to pursue work and transform that work into celebrity to her access to mass media to produce or disseminate that celebrity—was governed by cultural attitudes to her gender. At the end of the nineteenth century, women in Canada were still irrevocably tied to their biological destinies as wives and mothers, and their supposedly natural aptitude for that labour governed how women were understood in relation to other forms of labour and their role in the increasingly distinct spheres of the public and private.¹⁸ Despite considerable political and cultural developments that gave women the vote and increased women's opportunities to work outside the home, these constructs continued to dominate Canadian constructions of gender well into the twentieth century:

Once courtship and marriage had culminated in homes and families, wives and mothers were expected to take over as emotional practical mainstays of the private realm while husbands and fathers normally functioned as breadwinners in the public world. Women's increased presence in the paid labour force and their enfranchisement in the political

¹⁸ With industrialization and modernization, there was an increasing distinction between labour performed inside and outside of the home (and therein gendered labour) which in agricultural societies was less distinct. As a result, the constructs of a public and private sphere grew more distinct and increasingly separate (Roach Pierson 20-21).

system in the 1920s and 1930s did almost nothing to change this fundamental allocation of duties. Indeed, much of the feminists' case for suffrage had rested on the pledge that women's work at home would in no way be neglected. Very few Canadians questioned that, whatever duties women might have in the world at large, as income earners, voters, volunteers, activists and so forth, they were secondary to their efforts as housewives and mothers. (Strong-Boag, *New Day* 113)

The trouble, as various critics have pointed out, was that the radical potential offered to Canadian women's gender roles by the New Woman, better education and job opportunities, and suffrage was often absorbed into the rhetoric of maternal feminism which reinscribed rather than disputed the primacy of women's biological destiny (Kealey 14; Roberts 15-19; Dean 77; Strong-Boag, *New Day* 1-2) .

Although these ideological constructs that positioned women as naturally belonging to the private sphere and laboring in domestic tasks were white middle-class constructions of gender and gender roles, they were by no means confined to that demographic. While non-white and working-class women had complicated and diverse responses to these unattainable (but nevertheless persuasive) ideals, the more public a woman's life was, the more likely she would find herself having to negotiate these constructions in very public ways. Women like Anglo-Mohawk performer, Pauline Johnson, and African-Canadian singer, Portia White, who were able to surmount the cultural and political discrimination that usually prevented non-white women from accessing the institutions and instruments of celebrity, still had to contend with systemic racism *and* these pervasive white middle-class constructions of femininity. Such women often found themselves subject to an intensified scrutiny, their race heightening both the spectacle of their celebrity and the hunt for evidence of any form of impropriety or moral backsliding. As Carole Gerson has noted about Johnson, she worked hard to "avoid any whiff of sexual impropriety" (*Canadian Women* 93), necessitated, in all likelihood, by racist assumptions about

the loose morals of non-white women which would have been exacerbated by a general suspicion of women in the public sphere.

These ideological investments in separate spheres, gender roles, race, and class that shaped cultural response to women's celebrity were the same constructions that created significant and oppressive barriers to women's abilities to achieve or cultivate celebrity in the first place. The expectation of girls and women to be domestic bodies with care-taking duties in the private sphere clearly presents a serious obstacle for achieving celebrity. Not only does the domestic, private sphere of the home offer no opportunity to circulate in subsidiary forms but these forms of socialization ill prepare a woman to navigate the political, economic, and cultural business of celebrity. This does not mean a woman cannot continue to pursue domestic labour as her only or primary site of labour, only that she and her labour must enter and circulate in the public sphere. Traditionally, women might have brought their domestic labour (by taking in laundry or working out in domestic service) or the products of their domestic labour (such as food stuff and textiles) to the public market, but small-scale production precludes the possibility of large-scale consumption.

Industrialization and modernization, however, afforded a new outlet for women's domestic energies: under the guise of maternal feminism, women, usually middle-class white women, took on public social projects, arguing that their natural aptitude for caretaking made them well suited for such work and their important role as mothers gave them "the duty and the right to participate in the public sphere" (Kealey 7). Although not all women were included in or endorsed this mandate, the extraordinary growth in women's organizations in Canada between 1880-1920 and their role in the eventual achievement of suffrage suggest that it was a powerful and relatively effective rhetoric (Kealey 2). As we will see in Chapter Two with the case of

Nellie McClung, the movement of women into public roles predicated on the rhetoric of maternal feminism was one way in which women's domestic labour might transcend the private sphere of the home and enter celebrity. It was a route to celebrity that did not trouble but, rather, endorsed arguments about women's inherent domesticity but, by shifting the location of that labour, it was granted more value, more publicity, and thus more opportunities for celebrity.¹⁹

With the exception of those women who pursued social work projects under the banner of maternal feminism, those women who entered the paid labour force had, in theory, more opportunity to achieve labour-related fame because they were now active participants in a public sphere and market. Women in Canada, however, did not move quickly into the paid labour force—in 1901, 13% of the paid labour force were women and it took ninety years before they approached parity with men (Frager and Patrias 26, 153). Throughout the early twentieth century, women's participation rates in the labour force were usually higher in urban areas than rural areas but women in Canada never, as a whole, dominated the industrial or factory work (Frager and Patrias 26).²⁰ Instead, women's employment in white-collar jobs grew steadily over the first half of the twentieth century: from 25% (of working women) in 1901 to 50% by 1921 (55). Women as a percentage of the overall paid labour force grew slowly in the early twentieth century from 13% in 1901 (Frager and Patrias 26) to 15.5% in 1921 (Strong-Boag, “‘Janey Canuck’” 7-8), 17% in 1931 (Frager and Patrias 26), 20% in 1941 (26), and 22% in 1951 (153).²¹ Periods of economic boom and bust affected women's participation rates in the labour

¹⁹ The labours of the domestic sphere were not literally applicable to social projects; instead women focused on the transferable nature of certain skills such as caretaking and nurturing, and made judicious use of metaphors, like sweeping the city clean, to draw parallels between domestic and social work.

²⁰ There are, of course, exceptions where particular institutions employed mostly women but factory work was, as a rule, generally performed by men: in 1901 only 30% of working women were in factories (31) and by 1931 this rate had declined to 13% (Frager and Patrias 31).

²¹ These numbers do not, however, reflect *real* labour performed, only that which was recognized by census forms as paid labour—agricultural work and unpaid domestic labour, for example, were not considered “work” and, Frager

force but not very dramatically: women in Canada were not actively recruited for work during World War I until 1916 and “the demand was temporary and mostly in occupations such as office work and light factory work. Some women did work in munitions, but this was the exception rather than the rule” (Wilson 91). During the Depression women were actively discouraged, even “hounded” from their jobs based on misguided assumptions that women did not need to work, were stealing jobs from men, and that waged labour was a “male privilege”; however the failure to oust women from the labour market at this time, Strong-Boag has suggested, signaled that women’s waged labour was now an entrenched part of the Canadian economy (“‘Janey Canuck’” 9; *New Day* 47).²² During World War II, women were not recruited for work until quite late (1942) and afterwards were strongly encouraged to quit, but the 7% decline in women’s participation rates after the war recovered within a decade (Wilson 26, 105).

In short, women in Canada were more and more likely to be leaving their homes in search of employment and while this trend was, at first, limited to young single women, married women were also joining (or returning) to the workforce in greater numbers (Sangster 16). However, the likelihood of these women performing labour that might widely circulate in association with their own name or images was limited, particularly by the gendered labour market.

Modernization and industrialization which, by virtue of creating new forms of labour that neither sex had performed before, ought to have mitigated gendered labour practices, simply exacerbated and institutionalized them; the perceived innate skills and strengths of each sex were used to rationalize both the assignment and the value of labour even if such connections were transparent fictions. Women’s skills, perceived as an extension of their domestic responsibilities and therein

and Patrias contend, census data for homeworkers (such as contract piece workers in the garment industry) is unreliable (26).

²² Strong-Boag’s research suggests that the gendered division of labour meant that in actuality there was very little competition between men and women for the same jobs, despite the commonly held (and voiced) belief that women were occupying important wage-earning positions that could be filled by men (*New Day* 51).

more common and less valuable, shuttled women into particular kinds of labour and professions that were now also less valued: “Because women themselves have been devalued, a woman's touch has had a negative effect. Women did not simply fill jobs deemed unskilled: certain jobs were seen as less skilled and less remunerative *because* women did them. And, in circular fashion, the presence of women in devalued jobs reconfirmed notions of women as lacking skill” (Frager and Patrias 38).²³ Without some sort of value—whether cultural, social, political, or economic—attached to a woman’s labour (besides its significance as cheap and readily available), it would have been almost impossible for a woman to transform that labour into an opportunity for celebrity. To do so would demand that she demonstrate or create the value of her work and, perhaps simultaneously, differentiate herself and her labour from the many other women performing exactly the same type of work. Such a process proved to be impossible for most women and those rare exceptions, like “Mrs. Jack Wright” and Veronica Foster or “Ronnie the Bren Gun Girl,” (two women chosen and carefully photographed for the purposes of promoting women’s war work as capable of balancing patriotic duty and traditional gender roles), had considerable assistance in the production of their fame.²⁴

Women like Foster and Wright were more than just beautiful subjects who could be mobilized to sell products or, in this case, government and corporate propaganda, they represented a kind of celebrity that arose from well-publicized examples of women breaking down the boundaries of gendered labour. Granted, by the time Wright and Foster’s photos were

²³ Not all women had access to the same job opportunities or wages: women entering the workforce could expect to find themselves allocated into different professions based on their race, class, and education: there was, as Frager and Patrias have pointed out, a concerted effort in Canada to keep minorities *out* of white-collar professions and *in* other industries such as domestic service or the garment industry (42, 71).

²⁴ While it is unclear what purpose the “Mrs. Jack Wright” photos served (if any) in the media or whether this identity was entirely manufactured, it is often assumed that the images of Veronica Foster, the “Bren Gun Girl,” (the Canadian precursor to Rosie the Riveter) circulated in propaganda posters. These images are from the National Film Board of Canada collection and can be accessed on-line through Library and Archives Canada.

taken in the 1940s, women's factory work was neither new nor remarkable and the images themselves hardly represented a serious challenge to traditional forms of femininity, but the movement of women into traditionally masculine fields of labour was (and continues to be) the subject of considerable media attention. For some women, particularly those well-documented and publicized "firsts" in politics (Mary Ellen Smith, Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung, Agnes Macphail, Louis McKinney, Charlotte Whitton, and Ellen Louks Fairclough), that attention transformed them into both celebrities and historical figures. In other male-dominated professions, such as medicine, law, academia, and the sciences, a woman's presence would certainly have been remarked upon but not necessarily well or widely reported in the media—much depended upon the individual's desire to cultivate publicity and whether her profession was already intimately linked to the media. In Nellie McClung's *Clearing in the West* (1935), for example, she details several female revivalist preachers some of whom were even pictured in the paper (325-6); however the limited notoriety (and influence) of these women is a far cry from what Ontario-born revivalist Aimee Semple McPherson was able to accomplish with her 5,300 seat auditorium and religious radio station in California (Forster, *100 Canadian Heroines* 173-6). In Beatrice Lillie's autobiography, "Sister McPherson" is represented as not only well-connected to Hollywood celebrity, but a significant celebrity in her own right (197-200).

Without access to media representation, a woman's chances of cultivating fame were very slim; hence the most likely field for a woman to turn her labour into celebrity in the early twentieth century was in the new leisure and mass culture industries (Hallett 15) where, at least in the writing and performing professions, she could earn as much as a man might (Hallett 40). As newspapers expanded their readership and developed women's pages, for example, an extraordinary opportunity arose for women to work in journalism. In the 1890s women like Kit

Coleman, Flora Denison, and Jean Blewett became not just household names but critical components of a paper's success (Lang).²⁵ Although predominantly confined to writing on issues that would attract a female readership, the most well-known female journalists stretched the scope of this labour to include not just domestic advice but political issues and exotic adventures in foreign countries.²⁶ Celebrity in this field was possible because these columns broke tradition with the customary anonymity of journalism articles, and enabled women to sign their work, albeit often under pseudonyms (Gerson, *Canadian Women* 31; Lang 10). Such pseudonyms, according to Marjory Lang, were part of some early women journalists' strategies for crafting public selves and protecting private lives (13), yet the names, personas, and even images that circulated were marks of a female celebrity in journalism that would become less, rather than more, common:

The first women journalists in Canada, who worked in the nineteenth century, were singular enough to warrant separate treatment. In most cases, each was the first woman ever to be employed on a particular paper. They had a licence for individual fame and self-expression that women journalists would rarely find in later generations. [...] as women's participation in journalism became more commonplace, the spotlight that focused on them dimmed even as the news and views they recorded, shaped, and publicized assumed enhanced social, intellectual, and, not least, commercial significance. (Lang 24, 5)

In the creative fiction market, however, the celebrity of Canadian women writers did not diminish over time; in fact, as the US periodical and book publishing market grew and developed, more and more women were finding venues for their work. The importance of American magazines to Canadian women's celebrity is, perhaps, best illustrated by the example of Mazo de la Roche who was launched into international stardom when her novel won the

²⁵ The conditions under which these (and other) women moved into this field and made names for themselves is well documented in Marjory Lang's *Women Who Made the News: Female Journalists in Canada, 1880-1945*.

²⁶ A few women journalists achieved recognition for their labour outside this field—Kit Coleman went on to be the first “officially credited woman war correspondent” in the Spanish-American war (Lang 60), E. Cora Hind was a much-respected agricultural journalist (Lang 43), and many women, like Sara Jeannette Duncan, built names for themselves by reporting on their travel adventures (Lang 30).

Atlantic Monthly prize in 1927, but many women, including L.M. Montgomery, used these periodicals to launch their careers and create a market for the novels that would later bring them celebrity. One of the first women in Canada to achieve international celebrity in mass market fiction was Marshall Saunders whose *Beautiful Joe* (1893) went on to become the first Canadian novel to sell over a million copies (Gerson, *Canadian Women* 79). The sales success of Saunders certainly propelled her into the spotlight but for some women that spotlight was initially manufactured by savvy publishers who ensured additional exposure and publicity for an author as Doubleday, Page did for Nellie McClung (Gerson, *Canadian Women* 151). Other women, like Martha Ostenso and Mazo de la Roche, cultivated glamorous life stories and life-styles that continued to fascinate the public and make for great copy for decades (Hammill, “Sensations”).

Writing, perhaps more than any other art, was transformed by mass culture into a significant vehicle for Canadian women in the early twentieth century to make a living and achieve fame: whether in a newspaper, mass market magazine or novel, it remained the fastest, cheapest, and easiest route for entering mass culture industries for women. Until the development of film and radio, writing was the only labour that could be both discussed in mass media *and* produced and consumed in mass quantities, yet even when technological innovation enabled non-print forms of mass dissemination, gender scripts continued to limit what women could achieve with them. As with the ghettoization of women’s labour in early journalism, women in radio likewise found their talents employed in pursuit of topics and programs that buttressed rather than challenged prevailing gender ideologies. Kate Aitken, an extremely popular radio personality, began broadcasting domestic programs on CFRB Toronto in 1934 and, by the time she retired in 1958, had been picked up and syndicated by the CBC to an audience of millions across the country (Fairbridge). Claire Wallace also found her start with CFRB Toronto

just a year after Aitken but made the move to CBC sooner, becoming the first woman to broadcast nationally at CBC (“Claire Wallace”). Like Aitken, Wallace was also widely promoted as enabling conventional gender roles (Crean, *Newsworthy* 88).

Although opportunities to cultivate celebrity in the film industry occurred primarily in the US and in front of the camera, rather than behind it, some of the earliest Canadian-born silent screen stars like Mary Pickford and Nell Shipman were also directors and producers.²⁷ While in acting roles, however, most of the Canadian-born Hollywood stars of the early years (Pickford, Shipman, and Florence Lawrence) and the second generation (Norma Shearer, Barbara Kent, and Ruby Keeler) built careers on a successful mobilization of idealized femininity that was oriented more towards their embodiment of physical desirability (youthful, petit, and beautiful) rather than, as in radio, domestic prowess. In Marie Dressler’s case, however, she used her departure from the feminine ideal to create comedy and cultivated an impressive vaudeville career at the turn of the century. In the 1920s when the rage for youthful boyishness made Dressler’s image of buxom masculinity dated and unpopular, Dressler found herself out of work but, in the 1930s she made a spectacular come-back in Hollywood by once again capitalizing on her departure from idealized femininity.

Whatever the route to fame, whether factory work, politics, or the arts, and whatever the media used to disseminate it, a woman in Canada who cultivated celebrity could expect to find herself subject to some unpleasant questions about the propriety of her labour and public identity. There was, it seems, something unseemly about a woman being famous—as if her celebrity were a deliberate challenge to gender ideologies that claimed she was better suited for

²⁷ Feminist film scholars are doing critical work in recuperating the celebrity of non-acting women in the film industry (see, for example, Columbia University’s on-line archive, *Women Film Pioneers Project*); however, as Hallett points out, only the names of the actresses and actors translated into box office receipts (77). See Hallett’s *Go West, Young Women! The Rise of Early Hollywood* for an examination of the various ways women shaped early Hollywood.

private spheres and domestic tasks. Certainly the nature of a woman's labour and the public image she projected impacted responses to her celebrity—the more closely her celebrity could be aligned with or framed by conventional gender scripts, the less likely her fame would be construed as unfeminine and/or unacceptable. However, as Janice Fiamengo has observed, “women who moved into conspicuously public positions were conscious of the need to establish compelling and attractive personalities that would intrigue, fascinate, and reassure a socially broad-based audience” (*Woman's Page* 15). Even amongst the early pioneers in print journalism and radio broadcasting who drew from and served domestic discourses, there was still a need to perform a heightened femininity that assured audiences that these public roles were not detracting from their primary duties as home-makers and care-givers (Lang 121; Crean, *Newsworthy* 84, 88). As cultural responses to Nellie McClung's politics made evident, domestic discourses had only a limited usefulness and could not contain nor negate the public body and voice that demanded to be heard.²⁸ Thus for some women, as we shall see further in Chapter Two, a performance of femininity did not include domesticity at all, and they chose, instead, to align their labour and celebrity with the forces of high culture. In the case of Emma Albani, the internationally acclaimed soprano, her celebrity was easily folded into discourses of “real” culture and buttressed by the ever-appealing apprenticeship narrative of hard work and talent.²⁹ However, for Maud Allan, the scantily-clad dancer who claimed to be channeling ancient Greek culture in her performances, the rhetoric was less persuasive and a kind of scandalous notoriety attended her short-lived celebrity.

²⁸ For Nellie McClung, the labour of the domestic sphere was instrumental in rationalizing and navigating her fame. Like many women of her time, she relied upon the tenants of maternal feminism to rationalize the presence and value of women's labour in the public, particularly, the political sphere, but she nevertheless earned an unsavory reputation as “an unnatural and disgruntled woman, who neglected her children, disliked men, and sought to usurp male power” (Fiamengo, *Woman's Page* 191). As we shall see in the next chapter, McClung expended considerable energy in her public speeches and her autobiographies responding to this portrait and arguing that political ambition and conventional domesticity were not mutually exclusive.

²⁹ See York's *Literary Celebrity in Canada* for a more thorough explanation of the apprenticeship narrative.

That Albani could claim a legitimacy that Allan could not was just as much a function of how each woman managed gender scripts as of how cultural responses to mass culture and leisure industries framed the reception and evaluation of their respective professions. Despite the incredible economic and cultural opportunities now possible, modernization and mass culture were not greeted with unbridled enthusiasm by all. As in the US and other Western nations, there was considerable anxiety about the effects of a consumer culture that valued leisure and the new ways in which that leisure time might be filled. Many sought to safeguard so-called “real” culture under the assumption that, “mass life led to barbarous homogenization; refinement led to social cohesion and prosperity” (Edwardson, *Canadian Content* 10). The critical frameworks that drove a wedge between popular culture and high culture industries were, as York has argued, not created but “emphasized and widened” (*Literary Celebrity* 36) by modernism (even though the celebrity culture of modernism certainly complicated attempts to distinguish between elite and mass culture).³⁰ Moreover, the systemic devaluation of cultural products operating in mass markets also encompassed the individuals who produced or promoted these products and who circulated in the mass media: this is not to say that best-selling novelists or radio broadcasters had no cultural value, only that new systems of public identities linked to profit structures and mass culture were in tension with ideals about the value of small-scale production and consumption of cultural products. This disproportionately affected how women’s labour was valued because these industries offered the most opportunities for women to work and yet the cultures of production and consumption were consistently gendered feminine and distinct from the privileged and valued masculine, bourgeois cultures and activities (Huyssen 47-53).

³⁰ See Aaron Jaffe’s *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* or Jaffe and Jonathan Goldman’s *Celebrity Star Maps: Celebrity, Modernity, Culture* for a more thorough investigation of modernism and celebrity culture.

The proximity of celebrity to mass culture—even if one did not labour in mass media, one certainly circulated in them—made it suspect as well: on the one hand, the development of celebrity suggested a kind of democratic process wherein the audience elected its idols through patterns of consumption but, on the other hand, what value was labour or celebrity if it arose because an undiscerning mass audience was consuming it? As mass audiences became increasingly characterized as passive, mindless, and easily manipulated mobs (see Horkheimer and Adorno’s work in the 1930s and 40s), the cultural value of celebrity became increasingly tenuous. Such anxieties were exacerbated in Canada because of the seeming cultural threat posed by American mass media and mass cultural products flooding the Canadian market. One ineffective but well-meaning response was to seek out and promote “highbrow Canadian content” (Edwardson, *Canadian Content* 10; Karr 193), a critical shift that had a dramatic impact on responses to Canadian women’s celebrity. As mass culture and leisure industries offered the most opportunities for women not just to find labour but achieve celebrity, the critical rejection of these cultures meant that many Canadian women found themselves and their labour negatively characterized as popular or middlebrow. L.M. Montgomery and Mazo de la Roche, for example, found themselves out of favour with critics by the mid-twentieth century (York, *Literary Celebrity* 75) in part because the pastoral and domestic worlds of their texts seemed no longer relevant, but also because their circulation in mass markets was no longer a sign of their national significance but symptomatic of middlebrow culture. However, during the height of their celebrity, for Montgomery in the 1920s (Hammill, *Women* 107) and for de la Roche in the late 1920s and 30s (Hammill, “Sensations”), their use of and participation in mass culture industries were not suspect but expected—newspapers sought them out, their image was recognizable, and all this attention operated in a circular fashion to affirm both their success and the cultural value

of their labour. For other women whose fame also arose from the new opportunities presented by mass media, such as female journalists, there seemed to be a kind of inverse relationship between the social acceptability of her focus (woman's page, agriculture, etc) and the value of her labour: while women like E. Cora Hind struggled at first to be taken seriously in their fields, once established, their labour and its value were taken seriously. Women's work on the society and domestic pages, on the other hand, was consistently ghettoized as less culturally valuable although its economic value and proximity to conventional gender roles was undisputed (Gerson, *Canadian Women* 60, 62-3).

While the cultural capital of specific celebrities ebbed and waned as attitudes toward their celebrity or their labour shifted and changed, the one constant was the necessity of navigating gender scripts. Well into the twentieth century, women in Canada were confronting skepticism about the propriety of their place in the public sphere and the value of their labour: how many Nellie McClungs and Marie Dresslers, in the face of such potential criticism and cruelty, opted to abort their career ambitions or were prevented by well-meaning family from taking those first steps towards cultivating a public life? We will, of course, never know, but from those few who did transform their energies into celebrity, we can discover how they managed their fame in the midst of these cultural attitudes and restrictive gender scripts. Ironically, the most effective way for a woman to counter opinions that her celebrity compromised her femininity or that her presence in mass markets devalued her labour was not to challenge the ideologies these beliefs were founded upon, but to increase her public exposure with a carefully crafted public image. For the celebrities of this period, there were limited options to effect this: public appearances and lectures were important, particularly for women of the early generation; managing her public image in periodical print media was also critical regardless of whether it was an interview, a

review, biographical note, society column or the news; a woman might also, by the late 1920s, secure a spot on a radio program; or she could publish an autobiography.

Of all of these options, the publication of an autobiography represented the most significant investment of time and money for both the celebrity and her audience but it also had an unmatched staying power—where today’s newspaper might line tomorrow’s cupboards and where a radio program left no trace at all, a book remained with its consumer. However, the capacity of the autobiography to shape and control her public image was, in some respects, mitigated by the fact that most Canadian women who wrote celebrity autobiographies during this period did so at the end of their careers. This lengthy delay in producing a text was symptomatic of a critical hesitation attending women’s relationship to the genre; as we shall see in the next chapter, the autobiography, like the cultivation of a public life, was intimately bound by gender scripts and it was not a simple or straight-forward task for a woman to pick up a pen and inscribe a life story. However, if there were few role models for this project, there were also few rules. The scope of experimentation in these texts is remarkable and testifies to the active and creative ways women were finding to manage their celebrity at this time when gender scripts were not keeping pace with the great changes and developments in media and technology.

Chapter Two

Trends, Tactics, and Experiments in Early Twentieth-Century Celebrity Autobiography



Figure 1.
“Title Page”
Eminent American Comedienne, n. page

The Eminent American Comedienne
Marie Dressler
in
**The Life Story of an
Ugly Duckling**
An Autobiographical Fragment
in Seven Parts

Illustrated with many Pleasing Scenes
from former Triumphs and
from Private Life

Now for the first time presented under
the Management of
Robert M. McBride & Company
New York MCMXXIV

“My Dear, they asked me to write me life, and, heaven help me, I said I would! Till now I never realized that the twenty-five years my name has been in electric lights cannot be condensed into one somersault!

Gosh, I’ve tried all sorts of plain and fancy introductions to this thing until the floor around me looks like a stage snowstorm. If the orchestra would only play an overture—if the curtain would only go up—if someone would only give me a cue for an entrance! It’s the silence—and being alone for the first time in my life with a typewriter that intimidates me, though goodness knows I’ve been alone with lots of other things.” (Dressler, *Eminent* 1)

In turning to a public life-writing text for the management of her celebrity, the modern woman was not without autobiographical traditions to fall back upon but she was, as comedic actress, Marie Dressler, dramatizes here in her first memoir, not entirely certain as to how to proceed. Historically, the genre developed for the expression of a public life, the prerogative of men, and, as such, its conventions served the needs of those privileged men who might make a claim to the public’s attention through a life story. While women had long been engaged in life-writing projects, the vast majority of these texts recorded lives lived in the private sphere and thus offered little assistance to a public woman searching for ways to represent her public life.

The texts of public women prior to the twentieth century, as we shall see in this chapter, were neither plentiful nor united in their approaches to self-representation; while there were certain trends, particularly as pertains to the expression of femininity, the scope and range of these texts are indicative of the difficulty these women had in managing Victorian gender roles and masculine genre scripts. Inheriting a legacy of anxiety about the seemliness of both public life and writing about it, famous women in the early twentieth century found themselves not quite certain how to proceed with this project of documenting their lives, labour, and celebrity. And so they experimented. Appropriating and modifying tactics from men's and women's texts, repurposing rhetorical strategies used in live appearances or media interviews, and relying heavily on their labour—whether the stage or the fictional page—to provide them with a guideline for a textual representation of self, the women of the early-to-mid twentieth century ended up producing a body of literature characterized by experimentation and a remarkable diversity in style, structure, content, and rhetorical strategies.

Drawing on a wide variety of texts written from 1908-1957 by women working in literature, film, entertainment and the arts, and politics, this chapter traces those trends, tactics, and experiments that formed English-Canadian women's first efforts to manage modern celebrity through autobiography. As we shall see, these texts not only illuminate the cultural conditions of celebrity in Canada through *what* they narrate but, also *how* they narrate their lives and experiences; in fact, the rhetorical strategies these women mobilize to manage gender and genre scripts is often more revelatory of the cultural conditions of being a woman celebrity than anything they might say (or not say) about the experience. Such strategies, however, did not arise out of a vacuum and thus this chapter begins by tracing those traditions and gendered genre scripts that Canadian women in the early twentieth century inherited. This brief history allows us

to contextualize the strategies and structures of Canadian women's texts and to trace, not just the points of continuity with previous life-writing scripts, but also the sites of experimentation, dis-ease, and adaptation. As we chart both the diversity and the trends of the rhetorical strategies of these texts, two distinct narrative structures emerge, one focused on the experiences of fame—a kind of autobiography of celebrity—and the other more broadly interested in the life experiences of the individual—an autobiography of *a* celebrity. In the early decades of the twentieth century these forms co-existed, neither one appears to have been privileged as a more legitimate form for the expression of self. Over time, however, the celebrity story structure faded from use and the latter, life story structure became *the* model for authoritative and authentic self-representation, dominating celebrity autobiography production for the remainder of the twentieth century. After historicizing how and why those trends emerged, this chapter concludes with an examination of the autobiographies of two women, Nellie McClung and Mazo de la Roche, whose texts chart the scope of opportunities and limitations in the project of storying a famous woman's life *and* celebrity in this period.

Traditions

When the women of the early-to-mid twentieth century went to their bookshelves for inspiration on public life writing, the relevant question is not what were the specific books at their disposal (although this, on a case by case basis, could yield some interesting findings), but what were the gender and genre scripts modeled by those texts. What traditions were available to a famous woman for her project of representing herself as a woman, as a public person and, most especially, as a public woman? These questions preoccupied much early feminist autobiography study and the conclusions they reached foregrounded the role of gender in determining or

characterizing autobiographical conventions.¹ In particular, Sidonie Smith's *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography* played a critical role in establishing the terms of reference for thinking about the transgressive nature of public life writing for women, gendered genre scripts, and the necessity of women, particularly public women, to borrow and use masculine conventions of self-representation. Building on Smith's work, scholars like Mary Jean Corbett and Linda Peterson began to expand the frame of reference to include class, race, faith, and labour as additional important organizing principles for characterizing the conventions of nineteenth-century women's life writing.² As Peterson rightly points out, what might have passed for legitimate and persuasive conventions of self-representation for the middle-class reformer might have been quite different for the private lady crafting a spiritual text. In short, a Victorian woman could seek out and participate in multiple, overlapping, even contradictory traditions and conventions of self-representation in crafting her life story but the one, non-negotiable component of her identity that continually qualified if not, as Smith has suggested, "contaminated" her relationship to writing was her gender (*Poetics* 7).

In Smith's *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography*, she argues that the autobiography is an "androcentric genre" (50), by which she means that it is a form that privileges first and foremost the experiences and values of men and that it has been designed as a vehicle for the expression of their lives. In making this claim, she cites the historic function of autobiography as the telling of a "public story of the public life" (52) and men's undisputed privileged access to public life as evidence for her claim. In considering Smith's arguments, it is necessary to leave aside both

¹ To be clear, these theorists did not focus on famous women so much as the conditions and experiences of entering the public sphere through life writing for women in general.

² Although these scholars work predominantly with British memoirs, it is important to note that critics like Helen Buss and Misao Dean, who work with nineteenth-century Canadian texts, also draw upon these theorists, suggesting that Canadian women's writing at this time had much in common with British women's writing. This conclusion is not surprising when we consider that many nineteenth-century Canadian women typically sought UK publishers for their texts. See also footnote 3 in Chapter One.

women's long history in private life-writing genres such as letter writing, diaries, journals, memoirs and autobiographies and the many men who, by virtue of class and race, were excluded from cultivating legitimate public subjectivities or accessing life-writing genres. However, distilled to an observation about a certain, privileged demographic, Smith's argument is compelling: privileged women did not enjoy the same kinds of public lives as privileged men and her claim that those women who did negotiate some kind of public presence would have turned to men's texts as their model for self-representation, makes sense (52). In her bid to speak with authority, a public woman writing an autobiography for public consumption would, Smith suggests, adopt "the speaking postures associated with male or 'human' selfhood":

Tracing or discovering a pattern of progressive stages, the autobiographer suggests how she has become who she is: the childhood that moved her toward some vocation, her educational and intellectual experiences, her entrance into the public arena, her success and failures, her reflection on that achievement in later years. In so doing, she reproduces the prevailing ideology of male selfhood, affirming that the individual, no matter how fiercely "he" is besieged by society around him and no matter how compromised "he" is by the struggle, can lay legitimate claim to an autonomous identity that most fully realizes "his" unique potentiality. (52)

The conventions that Smith identifies as characteristic of early public autobiographies by women, in particular the confident, autonomous "I" and the teleological structure, are important to note as they are dominant features in women's celebrity autobiography throughout the twentieth century. However, Smith's characterization of these genre tactics as belonging to men and as representing male selfhood has the unfortunate effect of rendering women who use these tactics "interlopers" (51), as if to use them is, in effect, to "writ[e] a man's story" (51). Smith's firm demarcation of gendered genre traditions (she speaks in *Poetics* of paternal and maternal scripts wherein the former characterizes the tactics for representing public life and the latter for women's private lives), makes it difficult to envision a space between wherein a woman might successfully borrow from multiple traditions, modifying and adapting them for the representation

of a woman's public life. Instead, Smith speaks of a kind of "double-voicedness" or "fragile heteroglossia" that emerges when women attempt to cast their lives in a form suited for the public man while still engaging the gendered "fictions of selfhood that constitute the idea of woman and that specify the parameters of female subjectivity" (50). In Smith's telling, then, the public woman who tries to be both public and woman in her life story will "struggle" with her doubleness, caught between and in dialogue with "two stories, two interpretations, two rhetorical postures" (51) and this struggle can be read in the very "structure, the rhetorical strategies, and the thematic preoccupations" of her text (42).

While a text will, no doubt, bear traces of the effects of balancing a gender role that is at odds with the genre script it mobilizes, subsequent work in women's life writing suggests that the binary structures Smith invokes for conceiving of paternal and maternal traditions are not quite so mutually exclusive. In Linda Peterson's work on early nineteenth-century autobiographies, for example, she notes that those tactics often affiliated exclusively with women's texts and traditions, such as narrated domestic content, played an important role in men's texts too (56). Her work also identifies examples of public women throughout the century who appear to be successfully negotiating gender and genre scripts, indicating far more porous boundaries, perhaps even a spectrum of gendered genre practices, than Smith's *Poetics* registers. Margaret Oliphant, for example, crafted a domestic memoir that incorporated "the professional artist's life story by making it part of a chronicle of the family's professional achievement" (Peterson 148) and Harriet Martineau modeled a female selfhood that, while it did not neglect to narrate the domestic, "focus[ed] primarily on personal development and intellectual progress" (Peterson 63). And yet, long before these public women took up a pen to inscribe their lives, courtesans in eighteenth-century France had done the same, chronicling their professional lives

and personal dalliances in what we now call “scandalous memoirs” (Rak, *Boom* 4-5). Hence, while Smith rightly identifies those tools and tactics used for legitimate and authoritative representations of public life (most frequently found in, and thus made authoritative by, men’s texts), what is underappreciated are the ways in which women, responding to their culture’s gender ideologies, have long been remaking and adapting these scripts to perform their gender. These women, it seems, were not raiding their brother’s rhetorical closets for ill-fitting clothes, but refashioning their own wardrobes for public presentation and those clothes, paraded in public, left no doubt as to their wearer’s gender.

What was that costume worn that both proclaimed her difference and sought to rationalize the transgressiveness of a public life and a story about it? Femininity.³ In Canada as elsewhere, there is a long history of women autobiographers (famous or not) who framed their narratives as legitimate and appropriate by posturing a heightened femininity in their self-representation and framing the form and content of their narrative as the product of proper feminine attributes (Dean 13, 29-30). Rhetorically, femininity could be manufactured and performed through styles, tones, structures or voices that deferred attention from the self and avoided gestures of confidence, accomplishment, and authority (Buss, *Mapping* 137; Dean 35, 89; Etherington-Wright 132-3). Para-textual elements such as prefaces and introductions even projected responsibility for the narcissistic gaze of the autobiographical impulse onto others, usually men, as a way to both perform modesty and use conventional sites of authority to legitimize their texts and their place in the public sphere (Etherington-Wright 130, 141).

³ While critics have been attentive to the ways in which such gender performances were compelled and have noted the ways in which such performances could affirm and perpetuate rather than challenge essentializing gender scripts (Smith 58, Buss 134-5), such performances—whether under duress or by choice—also mark a space where women can and, indeed must, embody their difference. For a nineteenth-century public woman narrating her life, the necessity of inscribing her femininity opens up a space and opportunity for the expression of a gendered experience of celebrity.

These tactics—what Susanna Moodie called the “rules” of femininity—“enabled [women] to use the limited authority which those rules granted” (Dean 34). That Dean draws on Susanna Moodie, well-known in her time (and ours) as one of nineteenth-century Canada’s more successful professional woman writers, to illustrate how the conventions of femininity were managed by female autobiographers suggests that famous women as well as the unknown drew upon a shared arsenal of rhetorical tactics.⁴ In Moodie’s second autobiography, *Life in the Clearings* (1853), for example, Moodie references her position as a well-known woman several times, often finding humour in the disjunction between people’s expectations of what she ought to look like and the real “humly person” before them (65). These brief anecdotes, however, represent Moodie’s only explicit engagement with the reality of her celebrity in the text, and instead of narrating her life or self, she keeps her gaze firmly focused outward on the people, communities, and landscapes of Canada. These tactics, portraying celebrity through the eyes or mouths of others, redirecting the gaze away from the self, and narrating self-deprecating anecdotes, successfully circumvent the immodesty of storying one’s success while still narrating both the condition and experiences of celebrity. This latter accomplishment, the documentation of her success and celebrity, however, is often overlooked in scholarship that examines Moodie’s autobiographical techniques: her declaration may be couched in feminine rhetorical devices, but it is declared nevertheless.⁵ Moodie’s performance of femininity is tactical and suggests both an understanding of and resistance to the gender scripts that might otherwise efface a representation of her public life.⁶

⁴ Here Dean draws on and affirms Sidonie Smith’s observations of Moodie.

⁵ See Dean (34-40) for an extended analysis of Moodie’s feminine autobiographical tactics.

⁶ The usefulness of these indirect forms of representing the public self ought not to be under-estimated: these same tactics prove critical to the autobiographies of early twentieth-century journalists like E. Cora Hind and Madge Macbeth who, also using episodic narratives, intimate their own importance and skills by narrating the world around them. Neither Hind’s *Seeing For Myself: Agricultural Conditions Around the World* (1937) and *My Travels and Findings* (1939) nor Macbeth’s *Over My Shoulder* (1953) and *Boulevard Career* (1957) are included in this study.

In addition to these rhetorical strategies, one of the most pervasive techniques for performing femininity in women's autobiographies at this time was to narrate domestic content. According to Linda Peterson, the pressure on women life writers to conform to the tenets of Victorian domesticity and the emerging and consolidating conventions of the domestic memoir was so pervasive that "virtually every major Victorian woman writer" incorporated "domestic patterns" into her autobiography even when such content and conventions were at cross purposes to the author's political purposes or at the cost of narrative coherence and continuity (25-6).⁷ No doubt, it was also expected that a woman would represent herself as successful in this domestic life, perhaps even exceptionally so. For the famous woman, in particular, such a narrative might go a long way towards managing an audience's concern that her public life and/or life-storying project negatively affects her "natural" and proper sphere in the home but it could also, as Peterson points out, efface and undermine her public accomplishments:

At best, women embraced the domestic memoir because they valued the private sphere, invested themselves in domesticity, and esteemed their roles in the home. [...] At worst, however, we might say that Victorian women turned to domestic memoirs because they had lost their place in the public traditions of autobiography. They tended—one might say they were subtly forced—to gravitate toward private, culturally sanctioned forms of life writing because they were excluded from others. The memoir—domestic in its focus, relational in its mode of self-construction—allowed women to write as mothers, daughters, and wives. It allowed them to represent their lives in terms of "good" feminine plots. But it did not allow them to develop—or disturb—the primary masculine traditions of autobiography; the public *res gestae* account of professional life or the more introspective, developmental form of an intellectual career. (19, 20)

While these texts do invoke an autobiographical "I," they are predominantly composed of collections of previously published newspaper articles rather than attempts to manage celebrity through a life narrative. It is, however, less certain if the material in Hind's second text had been previously published; an argument could be made that it does respond to and manage celebrity as it was assembled at the behest of her publisher after the success of the first text (Dagg 135).

⁷ Peterson acknowledges that there were multiple and conflicting iterations of these domestic ideologies according to various class, spiritual, racial demographics, particularly in the early Victorian period (56). In *Traditions of Victorian Women's Autobiography*, she convincingly argues that these domestic conventions emerged and created a kind of tradition in Victorian women's autobiographies as a result of the editorial practices associated with the publication of 17th century women's autobiographies in the Victorian period and the efforts of various groups who sought to establish a tradition of women's letters, to promote and validate middle-class models of domesticity and the separate spheres, and to imbue both domesticity and the domestic memoir with value and significance.

While it is possible that in narrating her private, domestic life, the famous woman might find ways to speak of her public life, the cultural climate and gendered genre practices that Peterson outlines suggest that there were very limited opportunities for women to represent themselves as creatures of the public sphere. For those few who did venture such narratives—Mary Jean Corbett highlights the texts of actresses in particular—middle-class constructions of femininity dominate their representations of the domestic life on *and* off the stage (*Representing* 108, 117). In ways that anticipate women's celebrity autobiography of the twentieth century, the autobiographical performances of self by these actresses were shaped by their labour and the roles they played on stage (Corbett, "Performing" 15). Consistency, Corbett argues, was critical: "to be always the same, to represent consistently a known, acceptable, often conventional female role is both to establish the unassailability of one's own position and to ensure one's continuing marketability" (*Representing* 135).

While domesticity was a critical proving ground for performing femininity, its prominence in women's memoirs began to wane by the end of the century, particularly in middle-class women's memoirs as professional and public lives lived beyond the private sphere became not only more common but increasingly legitimate (Corbett, *Representing* 99; Peterson 167). Such a shift away from domesticity and the private life and towards a narrative of public life marks an important turning point in the development of the celebrity autobiography. As a space begins to open up for women to define themselves based on their activities in the public sphere, this public, labouring self comes to dominate not just the narrative content of the life-writing text, but the form and style of the text as well. In the twentieth century these patterns of self-representation become the norm and not only does domesticity cease to be a primary space for the production and performance of femininity, but the ways in which the private life is

rendered (or not rendered) in support of this public self vary dramatically. Yet, as we shall see, throughout this experimental phase of celebrity autobiography production, the legacies of women's life writing in the nineteenth century are neither ignored nor lost but make themselves felt in new ways. Sometimes adopted, sometimes rejected, but almost always adapted—the structures, forms, and rhetorical strategies of one generation are always indebted to another.

Twentieth-Century Innovations and Adaptations

As we saw in Chapter One, women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were emerging into the public and paid labour forces, circulating (and cultivating circulation) in the news with increasing impunity, and capitalizing on the developments in mass media and consumer cultures to cultivate careers and identities in the public sphere in greater numbers than ever before. As they turned to public life-writing genres to record their experiences, those traditions and precedents set by previous generations of women informed this process, but they nevertheless had to be innovated upon to reflect the new conditions of life and labour. The modern celebrity was a “working girl” so-to-speak, a woman with a career that had enabled her to cultivate an identity as a public person, and thus in the twentieth century we see the rise of labour as a critical organizing device for women's celebrity autobiographies. Yet, as we shall see, this generation inherited a lingering hesitation to engage the public life-writing project and retained certain rhetorical postures of modesty and femininity; at the same time, they also capitalized on the notion of separate spheres to parse their domestic lives from their public, labouring lives and to exclude them from representation.

Turning now to the famous women of Canada and their texts, we see that famous women managed this developing trend that legitimized a narrative about their careers and redirected the gaze away from the domestic in vastly different ways. The first few decades of the century, in

particular, saw experimentation and an extraordinary diversity in the modes of authentic and authoritative self-representation, yet across the decades, certain trends emerge. Beginning with an examination of the publication conditions of the texts themselves, we can trace how the celebrity autobiography market developed and was structured. In the organization of a woman's public text around her labouring life, we can trace the vestiges of older rhetorical models put to new uses and the development of two distinct patterns for narrating that life. As the conditions of celebrity change, so too do the texts and in these early experiments and innovations, we can chart the emergence of those conventions and forms that shaped the celebrity autobiography as it is practiced today.

Who were these famous women autobiographers of the first half of the twentieth century? The vast majority of women who inform this study were born in the 1860s and '70s, came to fame through their public labour in the early decades of the twentieth century, and wrote texts on that experience sometime after the height of their celebrity had passed. They include: internationally acclaimed soprano, Dame Emma Albani (1847-1930)⁸; the dancing sensation of Edwardian London, Maud Allan (1873-1956); the Anglo-Mohawk performer-poet, Pauline Johnson (1861-1913); the celebrated author of *Anne of Green Gables*, L.M. Montgomery (1874-1942); stage and cinema legend, Marie Dressler (1869-1934); Yukon MP, Martha Black (1866-1957); suffragette and best-selling author, Nellie McClung (1873-1951); Hollywood's first major motion picture star, Mary Pickford (1892-1979); Governor General award winning writer and visual artist, Emily Carr (1871-1945), and reclusive and eccentric author, Mazo de la Roche (1879-1961). Not all of these women were born in Canada (Black was born in the US) and many of them had to travel great distances to find a market for their labour (Dressler, Montgomery, de

⁸ As Robin Elliot and other critics have pointed out, there is still no evidence confirming that Albani was born in 1847 (110). Some have suggested she may have been born later; however this is the date widely used by Canadian sources.

la Roche, and Pickford needed the cultural institutions of the US and both Allan and Albani apprenticed and worked in Europe). The autobiographies of these, some of early Canada's most famous women, were just as loosely tied to Canada as the women who wrote them: most were not issued in Canadian periodicals or by Canadian publishing houses but published abroad, often for non-Canadian audiences. Celebrity, even at this early juncture, was a transnational affair for Canadians.

These women of or from Canada who achieved modern celebrity in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries represent a particular, privileged demographic: they were, for the most part, white, middle-class, heterosexual women whose talents were encouraged and often financially and emotionally supported by family members until they were self-supporting.⁹ Even those women who did not fit this mold—Pauline Johnson was of Mohawk and English ancestry and Mazo de la Roche found in her cousin Caroline a lifelong companion—led relatively privileged lives prior to success, a factor which, no doubt, enabled all of these women better access to the industries of celebrity.¹⁰ As women arising from and speaking to the middle class, it is not surprising that their texts are shaped by and for the values and conservative mores of this demographic. For this audience, these women might emphasize particular values, excise certain kinds of narratives, and circulate their texts in particular forums. Looking over the publication history of these women's texts, it is worth noting how many were first published in middle-class women's magazines: *My Life and Dancing* by Maud Allan (1873-1956) which was issued in hardcover in 1908 but was, according to Felix Cherniavsky, first serialized in a London

⁹ This same privileged demographic is identified by Carole Gerson as that group of women most likely to see their texts in print (29) and, no doubt, a woman's access to publishers for her autobiography only intensified when she became famous. Although Gerson suggests that most books published in Canada before 1918 were financed by their authors (71-3), one suspects that the financial arrangements for established celebrities might have been different. See Gerson's *Canadian Women in Print, 1750-1918*.

¹⁰ Mazo de la Roche's sexual orientation has been the source of considerable (unresolved) speculation (Gallus 2011; Kirk; Hammill "Sensations").

newspaper shortly beforehand (*Salome Dancer* 177). The brief autobiographical story, “My Mother,” by Pauline Johnson (1861-1913) was also a periodical publication, printed in *Mother’s Magazine* in April-July 1909 and later compiled with other short stories in 1913 in *The Moccasin Maker* (Strong-Boag and Gerson 230).¹¹ There is no evidence that the autobiography of Emma Albani (1847-1930), *Forty Years of Song* (1911), was serialized but with L.M. Montgomery (1874-1942), one could only read “The Alpine Path: The Story of My Career” in the 1917 June-November issues of *Everywoman’s World* magazine until the text was reprinted in 1974. Following Montgomery, the practice of periodical publication appears to fall out of fashion and a trend in publishing multiple autobiographies begins to emerge. Marie Dressler (1869-1934) wrote her first autobiography, *The Eminent American Comedienne, Marie Dressler, in The Life Story of an Ugly Duckling: An Autobiographical Fragment in Seven Parts* (1924), a decade after her stage career had ended and the second autobiography, *My Own Story*, in the midst of her second, wildly successful international film career in 1934. Martha Black (1866-1957) wrote *My Seventy Years* in 1938, a text that was later reissued in 1976 as *My Ninety Years* when Flo Whyard appended a biography of Black’s last twenty years to the original memoir. Nellie McClung (1873-1951) is the first of these authors to have planned a second autobiography: the first, *Clearing in the West* (1935), covers her life until her marriage and the second, *The Stream Runs Fast* (1945), documents the accomplishments of her public life after marriage. In 1946, *Growing Pains: An Autobiography* by Emily Carr (1871-1945) was posthumously published.¹² And the last of this aging generation to publish autobiographies was Mary Pickford (1892-1979),

¹¹ Johnson’s romanticized narrative of her parents in “My Mother” is being read as a form of autobiography because the text works to explain and rationalize Johnson’s public image as a mixed-race Mohawk princess.

¹² Like Montgomery, Carr left instructions for the posthumous publication of her journals which were compiled and edited by Ira Dilworth as *Hundreds and Thousands: The Journals of an Artist* (1966). Neither Montgomery nor Carr’s journals are included in this study because they were not designed to manage their public images and celebrity during their lifetime. With *Growing Pains*, although posthumously published, Carr might reasonably have assumed it would have been published during her lifetime and therefor have been of some use in managing her public image.

whose *Sunshine and Shadow* was first serialized in the American women's periodical, *McCall's Magazine*, in 1954 and published in its entirety the next year, and Mazo de la Roche (1879-1961) who wrote *Ringed the Changes* for her legions of fans in 1957.¹³

As we can see from the publication dates of these texts, the production of an autobiography for a famous woman was generally not the work of a young woman at the beginning of her career: in fact, the vast majority of these celebrity autobiographies are composed by women who were well past their initial induction into celebrity and some quite late in life. The marked delay in producing a text in the early decades of the century suggests that there was more market interest in established rather than developing personalities. This makes sense from the perspective of the reader whose exposure to and relationship with a particular individual developed more slowly over time (being predominantly contained to the slower mechanisms of print media) and for whom purchasing of a text or magazine subscription was still a matter of some economic investment. It is also a sensible approach from the perspective of the publishers who, if financing the text, might have been apprehensive about issuing texts that might not sell well. The relative frequency with which these early texts were first serialized in periodicals indicates that publishing books by celebrities may have been a risky venture but there was a growing market for human-interest journalism.¹⁴ As we shall see in more detail in Chapter Three, editors of periodicals sought out celebrity texts and while they hoped that such texts would appeal to audiences and increase circulation, the largest profit margin came from the advertisers for whom the opportunity to place their ad next to an image or narrative of a celebrity

¹³ Other famous women from this period like Beatrice Lillie and Nell Shipman also wrote autobiographies but they did so in the second half of the twentieth century and, as such, their texts are more useful for examining strategies of self-representation for that period.

¹⁴ See Charles Ponce de Leon's *Self-Exposure: Human-Interest Journalism and the Emergence of Celebrity in America, 1890-1940* for a thorough investigation of emerging celebrity journalism trends in the US.

was an attractive prospect. From the editor's perspective, then, established celebrities with stable public images were the most likely to appeal to advertisers as a safe investment.

For celebrities, to delay the production of a life-writing text until after the height of their celebrity has passed also suggests a different approach to the market. Because of its timing, the text is clearly not part of a portfolio of public relations activities for building fame or creating a public image, brand, or market for their labour: the celebrity autobiography is an exercise in market maintenance, rather than development. The content of this generation's autobiographies bears out this strategy: there is very little information offered that was not already available in some form to the public and certainly no alternate perspective on the self is proposed. In many cases, it is clear that the text is addressed to an established audience of fans and followers and therein designed to affirm what they know (or suspect) while offering behind-the-scenes evidence for the authenticity and value of the celebrity's image and labour. Just as their predecessors in the nineteenth century had done, these women take refuge in the "unassailability" of consistency (Corbett, *Representing* 135): not only is the narrated celebrity identity in harmony with the celebrity's previous media strategies and public image, but even the narratives within the text strive to trace a continuity of a self that does not change in essentials from childhood to celebrity.

The delay of a life-writing text until the end of one's career is, however, more than simply a marketing strategy for maintaining (or resurrecting) a market and cultural capital—it is also suggestive of a critical hesitation attending women's relationship to the life-writing genre. Of all the Canadian women to achieve celebrity in the first few decades of the twentieth century—and there *were* quite a few—only a handful wrote autobiographies about their lives or accomplishments. The silence of women like Kit Coleman, Flora Denison, Margaret Marshall

Saunders, Martha Ostenso, Florence Nightingale Graham (aka Elizabeth Arden), Claire Wallace, Kate Aitken, Norma Shearer, Charlotte Whitton, the “Matchless Six” (Fanny “Bobbie” Rosenfeld, Jean Thompson, Ethel Smith, Myrtle Cook, Ethel Catherwood, and Florence “Jane” Bell) and numerous others speaks volumes: the production of a text about the self was not an inevitability or expectation of public life but, rather an exceptional practice. Even the conditions under which some of the women considered here wrote (or failed to write) texts—note Pauline Johnson’s crafting of autobiographical stories but no autobiography or Allan’s unwillingness to craft another autobiography to counter the socially devastating effects of a British MP’s 1918 smear campaign—remind us that the circulation of one’s life story in the public by no means authorized or necessitated the publication of a first-person text.¹⁵

The rhetorical strategies mobilized by some women in their texts in the early decades of the twentieth century suggest that it was (or they thought it was) unseemly for a woman to cast her narrative into the public sphere without some cause and so they explicitly framed their texts as produced at the request of others. In Allan and Dressler’s texts the request comes from an unspecified source: in Allan’s Preface we learn “it was suggested” to her that she write her narrative and in Dressler’s opening, a vague “they” commanded this performance (1). Montgomery, on the other hand, is more explicit—the editor of *Everywoman’s World*, a popular women’s magazine, has commissioned the tale. These rhetorical strategies that rationalise the text and its potentially narcissistic project are suggestive of a cultural climate that necessitated such postures—it is not that these women necessarily had to wait until someone asked them to produce an autobiography, but that it was still perceived, at least by the authors, as a project that bordered on impropriety. This strategy of deferring the life-writing impetus to others appears to

¹⁵ In 1918, a British MP in a newsletter entitled, “Cult of the Clitoris,” connected Maud Allan with British citizens accused of selling secrets to Germany. At the well-publicized libel trial that ensued, the fate of Allan’s brother, hanged for double homicide in 1898, was revealed (Bishop-Gwyn 37).

fade over time. By the middle of the century, the production of an autobiography by a famous woman no longer seems to necessitate such postures as excessive modesty or the framing of the text as a pedagogical tool or response to an explicit request. As early as the 1930s with Black, McClung, and Dressler's second autobiographies, these practices are considerably muted and by the time we get to Pickford and de la Roche's autobiographies, it is understood that one produces an autobiography *because* (not in spite) of one's celebrity.¹⁶ And yet the practice of waiting some time to write one's narrative lingers for this generation—some, like Nell Shipman and Beatrice Lillie waited until well into the latter half of the century before putting pen to paper.¹⁷ Only Maud Allan published a text while both young and in the full blossom of her career, a tactic she recognizes as unusual when she suggests in her Preface that she may be criticized for “premature publication.”

Regardless of what rhetorical postures of modesty each woman briefly invokes (and indeed, they are passing rather than consistent or structuring postures), at the helm of each of these texts is a narrating “I” that is astonishingly cogent and confident. The famous woman autobiographer may speak of a past self (the narrated “I”) that was not certain about her life, labour, or success, but the present self (the narrating “I”) surveys and reports on the past with confidence. While the project of remembering and writing the memoir might be framed as more complicated and less certain, the prose that renders the past rarely waivers, and in clear, forthright terms the past is produced as though a *fait accompli*. Past activities, events, and people are, for example, fully understood and recognized for what they “truly” are: McClung, as

¹⁶ De la Roche's *Ringling the Changes* (1957) does demur from the autobiographing project but because she is a writer and not because she is a woman (10). Her argument that writers have no need for autobiographies arises from her belief (and practice, as we shall see at the end of this chapter) that the autobiographical project is an extension of, rather than an objective comment upon, a writer's labour.

¹⁷ Shipman's *The Silent Screen & My Talking Heart* was finished just prior to her death in 1970 but published posthumously in 1987; Lillie's *Every Other Inch a Lady* was published in 1972. Although their fame was decidedly shaped by the conditions of the early twentieth century, their texts form part of the survey and analysis of celebrity texts written and published in the second half of the century in Chapter Four.

we shall see at the end of this chapter, clearly sees the limitations and the potential of her younger self; Carr perceives how her experiences and experiments eventually shaped both her art and her writing although this was not apparent at the time (14, 79); and even de la Roche's firm declarations that she was weak, vulnerable, and passive like a child (70, 127, 333) brook no argument. In almost all of these texts discourses of certainty—"I was," "I wanted," "I knew"—dominate the prose and only rarely are these assertions tempered or qualified with constructions such as "I think I..." (de la Roche 158) or "I wonder" (McClung, *Stream* xi), or "Perhaps" (Montgomery, Aug. 1917: 32). (Pickford's memoir is a notable exception where tentative phrases such as "I suppose" (42, 217) and "I sometimes [feel/wonder]" (145, 175) are more prevalent.)

As she narrates, the famous woman may employ a jovial or even whimsical tone, particularly if her public image or labour was known for being light-hearted (as we saw with Dressler at the beginning of this chapter) but, in her bid to assert the cultural value and legitimacy of her labour, her public image, her celebrity, and her life-writing text, she takes her self as her focus very seriously. This determination to parse the self and its constituent parts, to keep the gaze on the production of one's self and one's labour, and the general exclusion of others (whether family members or mentors) from prominent representation demonstrates that each woman believes she is a legitimate and worthy object of study.¹⁸ Moreover, the sheer force with which she documents her life and labour undermines what postures she might assume to temper the unseemliness of this project. In the texts of Allan, Black, Montgomery and de la Roche, for example, the author claims not to recognize herself as having a career or narrative that

¹⁸ McClung, Pickford, and de la Roche's texts are not so exclusively focused on the self as other women's narratives: McClung, as examined at the end of this chapter, writes more community-oriented texts and both Pickford and de la Roche make considerable room for representing their partners. Unlike Pickford's narratives of her famous husbands, de la Roche had no market incentive for giving her cousin-companion such prominence in her text.

is interesting; however, there is something transparently disingenuous about these claims: they are all, without exception, deployed in the opening moments of the text (in some cases contained in the extra-textual spaces of the prologue or preface) and, once asserted, are systematically undermined by a self-assured “I” that narrates a very compelling apprenticeship to success and celebrity. Speaking from this secure position of proven, if not present, success, the famous woman frequently appraises her own work and the industry she has labored in, asserting strong opinions and weighing in on matters of taste: women “must be made to feel their responsibility” to political matters claims McClung (*Stream*, 27); Albani staunchly refutes the opinion that training children to sing will ruin their voices (27); and Pickford declares that kissing in public is vulgar (70) and overacting is an insult to one’s audience (71). With the clarity and direction of seasoned and established masters, they dispense advice on how to cultivate the necessary skills for success: Allan strongly advises “girls” to gain “knowledge of the world,” to “travel,” and to work hard but live “full and varied li[ves]” (40); Dressler emphatically stresses what one “must” do to “succeed on stage” (*Eminent*, 18-19).; and Montgomery, as we shall see in Chapter Three, positions her memoir as capable of “teach[ing]” the “secret” to climbing the Alpine path to “true and honored fame” (June 1917:5). Hence, the famous woman’s declaration that she is uncertain about either her career, her celebrity, or the life-writing project (if, indeed, she makes such a claim) is not a convincing one and nor, would I argue, is it meant to be: by virtue of picking up the text, readers have already determined that there is a narrative here worthy of their time and money and it would hardly serve either party’s purpose to convince the reader that she was, in fact, wrong.

The most obvious and conscientiously foregrounded “cause” for casting their narratives into the public sphere was, of course, their celebrated labour and public lives. The orientation of

these texts around labour is a critical (although not necessarily new) development in the production of women's public life writing: it arises from the cultural conditions outlined in Chapter One that made it possible for women to labour in public and to be recognized and respected for that work.¹⁹ These new labouring conditions are, however, occasionally refigured and rationalized through remobilizing older models of self-representation. As others had done before them, these women adopt retrospective and teleological structures for the accounting of their selves. In borrowing the trope of the retrospective gaze (an unsurprising choice in light of when in their careers most women crafted their texts), they took up a position that enabled them to claim both authority and legitimacy in the life-writing project and to do so with a confident "I." In addition to this conventional perspective, they also borrowed the teleological structures that had historically governed the public autobiographies of great men; however, in doing so, they produced texts that narrated not their whole lives, but rather, the formation of their careers and the production of the public identity and labour for which they are so well-known. These are, in short, texts preoccupied with what Georges Gusdorf called the "public sector of existence" wherein the subject position claimed is the public subjectivity already in circulation (36).

As a result of this subject position and trajectory, these texts are, as mentioned earlier, very conscientious about being consistent not only with previous media strategies, but also their famed labour: Montgomery, Dressler, de la Roche, and Johnson's texts, for example, are shaped by the tone and style that govern their labour, and Dressler even renders her first text about her stage career like a play complete with a title page that reads like a program for her seven "act" story. In early texts, this labour is often explicitly foregrounded in the title of the autobiography:

¹⁹ As Corbett has argued, actresses in the nineteenth century also often wrote texts focused on their public labouring lives (*Representing Femininity* 108-109). Hallett has also noted that some of the trends in public identities that we note in women's early twentieth-century celebrity had first been attempted by actresses in the nineteenth century (29-30).

My Life and Dancing (1908), *Forty Years of Song* (1911), “The Alpine Path: The Story of My Career” (1917), and *The Eminent American Comedienne, Marie Dressler, in The Life Story of an Ugly Duckling: An Autobiographical Fragment in Seven Parts* (1924). In later texts, titles more often invoke metaphor rather than direct discourses of career—*Clearing in the West* (1935), *The Stream Runs Fast* (1945), *Growing Pains: An Autobiography* (1946), *Sunshine and Shadow* (1954/1955), and *Ringling the Changes* (1957) —an indication, perhaps, that readers might be expected to know that the autobiographies of public personalities were organized around their public labour and identity.

The teleological structure, while a technique much used in nineteenth-century life writing, in the hands of these twentieth-century celebrities has an effect that clearly marks their texts from those of their mothers and grandmothers: it creates the conditions under which performances of domesticity in the private sphere can be legitimately excluded from representation. In possession of public identities that perform public labour, this generation of women could invoke the structure and form of a teleological autobiography to isolate the private sphere from an accounting of the public sphere. This does not mean that these women could construct the domestic world as irrelevant to their lives—as we saw in Chapter One, that was simply not possible—but they did try to construct it as (more or less) irrelevant to their labouring, public lives. Its absence of representation in their autobiographies thus became further evidence of the celebrity’s ability to isolate her home life from the effects of her public life. In most of the texts under consideration here, narratives of the domestic life or performances of domesticity are rare, conspicuously absent, or badly managed: in a narrative designed to showcase her connections in the music industry, for example, Albani mentions a child without having first established she was married and, as we shall see in Chapter Three, Montgomery’s

absent domestic narrative sits in tension with her domestic public image. While both McClung and Black's texts are noted exceptions to this general trend, it is significant that the representation of their domestic proclivities serves to rationalize their public, political labour.

This erasure of domesticity in these texts, however, should not be construed as a challenge to traditional gender roles or even the boundaries erected between the two spheres but an affirmation of these conventions. Conventional wisdom about female celebrities in the first decades of the century held that women could be "successful career women or supportive spouses [...]" but unlike men, they could not be both" (Ponce de Leon 129). In making the demands of the private domestic life invisible in their texts, these women implicitly affirmed such divisions and, in doing so, effaced the very real obstacles that prevented women from taking on and succeeding in public labour.

These characteristics that recur so frequently in early twentieth-century celebrity autobiography—the teleological production of the public labouring self, the retrospective gaze, and that confident, autonomous "I" capable of driving the self to success and then representing that journey—have much in common with the tools and tactics that Smith suggested were borrowed by famous women of the past from the arsenal of techniques used by men to represent themselves. As I have argued earlier, while such tools may have been designed to serve the public lives of men, they did not come unmodified into the hands of women. Yet where women of the nineteenth century transformed the public life story by virtue of the necessity of performing femininity in their rhetorical strategies and domestic content, the women of the twentieth century, newly focused on their public, labouring selves and moving away from tactics that undermine the value of their labour and accomplishments, relocated their performances of femininity to signs and signals embedded in their *public* identities and labour. For women's

celebrity autobiography of this period, then, the subject is both demonstrably a woman and a public labourer, and she is rendered in terms that perform her femininity. The feminine, public self, these texts imply, is neither radical nor masculine: femininity and public labour are not mutually exclusive activities nor does one demand the sacrifice of the other.

These arguments are clearly grounded in middle-class constructions of femininity and labour. Aware that, even for her generation, the woman who works beyond the private sphere and is well-paid and well-praised for that labour is still something of an anomaly, the representation of that labour in these texts typically embraces dominant middle-class mythologies of women's labour: namely one must subordinate the critical importance of income or, as Hallett has noted, frame this income as critical to the survival of loved ones (38); foreground the pleasures of productive and fulfilling employment; represent the products of one's labour in discourses of art and self-expression; and chart the rise to success as a function of ambition, talent, and hard work. Indeed, in all of these narratives, from Allan's mid-career memoir in 1908 to Pickford's and de la Roche's autobiographies in the 1950s, discourses of hard work are utilized to establish the significance and value of their labour and accomplishments. These "apprenticeship narratives," as Lorraine York aptly characterizes them in *Literary Celebrity in Canada*, are folded into and around the representation of the self as innately talented. Some of the earlier works like Allan's and Albani's autobiographies are quite explicit about the natural talent and skills that enabled their success while other women use narratives of their childhood to make this same point (in the child we are meant to see the seeds of what would become the adult narrator's success and, in case we miss that connection, there is often someone in the text who explicitly articulates and anticipates the child's future greatness). What is less common in these early texts are discourses of luck or serendipity—no one's accomplishments

are potentially diminished through happenstance but are, rather, framed as the logical product of a talented individual who, through hard work, has realized her potential.

Of the various trends that characterize the early twentieth-century autobiography of the labouring public self, one of the most important but short-lived developments was the emergence of a kind of life writing that did not focus on the individual's life or even her labour but on the *success* of her labour. This kind of text seems to have been quite popular at the turn of the century but, within just three decades, fell into disuse and has not reappeared as a legitimate form of celebrity self-representation since; however, as a form, the autobiography of celebrity represents a brief moment in women's life writing when the subject was defined exclusively by her celebrity. This type of text, which might be called the *celebrity* story or the autobiography of *celebrity*, can be distinguished from the *life* story or the autobiography of *a* celebrity because it is not a narrative of an individual's life, but a narrative of an individual's experience of fame. It is a vehicle for the documentation of celebrity that eschews all manner of narrative and events that do not directly contribute to the production of or proof of the individual's celebrity. These texts, it's worth noting, are part of that species of public autobiography that is, as Georges Gusdorf outlined in his seminal essay "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," "devoted exclusively to the defence and glorification of a man [sic], a career, a political cause, or a skillful strategy [...and are] limited almost exclusively to the public sector of existence" (36). Indeed, his assessment of these texts as designed to "celebrate their deeds [...] providing a sort of posthumous propaganda for posterity that otherwise is in danger of forgetting them or of failing to esteem them properly" (36), accurately captures the scope and aim of the celebrity story. Yet what distinguishes these celebrity stories within this broader spectrum of public autobiography is

their emphasis on “glorification” and celebrating not just “deeds” but the signs and experiences of being celebrated.

In these texts brief attention is usually paid to the early childhood signs of her destiny and a quick apprenticeship narrative is rehearsed, but the vast majority of the text is preoccupied with the ways in which the celebrity’s labour has been performed and celebrated. The authors of these texts are quite candid about the extent of their celebrity and the cultural significance of their talent and their labour, and whatever doubts the audience might have on this score are resoundingly squashed by a carefully detailed catalogue of their triumphs. Emma Albani’s *Forty Years of Song* is an excellent example of this approach: not only do her narratives carefully document her various engagements around the world in public venues and royal drawing rooms, but her text includes reproductions of her autograph book, images of the famous musicians she has worked with, photographs of her awards, and excerpts from letters received from royalty and other important English figures.



Figure 2.
“Madame Albani’s Decorations”
(*Forty Years of Song*, n.page)



Figure 3.
“Two Musical Autographs”
(*Forty Years of Song*, 157)

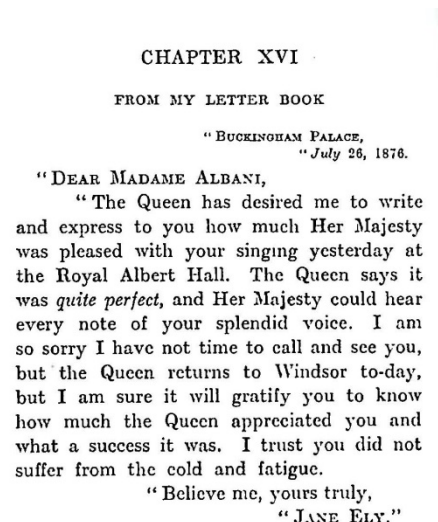


Figure 4.
“From My Letter Book”
(*Forty Years of Song*, 277)

The text, in short, is something of a modern-day scrapbook, but with the rhetorical function of reminding her readers of both her extraordinary talent and incredible success. For Albani, there is no space in such a project for the private life except where it intersects her public life: having a child represents a brief pause in her career and a narrative of the child's illness is a vehicle not for performing her femininity but for showcasing her connections to the music world when Sir Arthur Sullivan takes an interest in the welfare of the child (135-7).

For women like Emma Albani, Maud Allan, and Marie Dressler who write autobiographies of celebrity, there is no coy posturing of doubt about their cultural value—their texts proclaim it and document the evidence, and the experience itself is represented as delightful. Whereas in other women's texts, the suggestion that they are writing their texts to teach others might legitimately be read as a means of modestly rationalizing the production of the text, in the autobiography of celebrity such claims signal their importance as a role model we could learn from. Such extraordinary confidence represents a dramatic departure from traditions in women's autobiography where the necessity for posturing conventional forms of femininity often manifested themselves as self-effacing tactics and/or narratives of domesticity. Instead, these texts offer a model for gender that is not based on performances of domesticity, modesty, or psychological or physical weakness but, usually, strength, energy and robust health. In Albani's *Forty Years of Song* and Dressler's *Eminent American Comedienne*, the women are bristling with explosive energy, indefatigable in both narrative and narrating, and are rarely prone to ill health, insecurity, or emotional distress. Their unashamed drive to succeed propels them along at breakneck speed and, without a backward glance, they depart from home at a young age for training abroad. As such, in these narratives more than any of the others, Canada is barely registered as much more than an incidental space of their birth: Dressler and Allan, in

particular, make no claim to Canada nor acknowledge the nation's claim on them, allowing (and in Allan's case, promoting) confusion to flourish in the media as to their nationality. Only Albani, who was routinely advertised in Canada as French-Canadian and narrated those roots in her text, retained some vestige of her Canadian identity in her public image, although this was often obscured by her Italian stage name.²⁰

Femininity for these women is liberated from its conventional affiliation with the private sphere (which is altogether absent from representation in these texts) and those qualities that were believed to make women best suited for secluded, maternal lives in that sphere: instead, femininity is declared, performed, and confirmed by the very success of their public, labouring lives. Albani constructs herself as something of a siren, a woman so talented and appealing that men cast jewels at her feet and harness themselves to her carriage. Allan's success is represented as a function of her exceptional sensitivity to the artistic world which, she suggests, she channels into dance. Her body and its labour then belong not to the private sphere but to the public sphere as an instrument through which the world of art speaks to the public. In Dressler's case, it is the absence of conventional femininity that engendered her celebrity and she casts herself as an "ugly duckling" in her first memoir, *The Eminent American Comedienne Marie Dressler in The Life Story of an Ugly Duckling: An Autobiographical Fragment in Seven Parts* (1924). Known for her masculine features, big voice, and physical presence, she built a very successful stage and film career by creating comedy in the gap between her body and the feminine ideal.²¹

²⁰ For further discussion of Allan and Albani's transnational identities and media strategies, see my forthcoming chapter "'What an elastic nationality she possesses!': Transnational Celebrity Identities in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century" in *Celebrity Cultures in Canada*.

²¹ Her second text (which is not an autobiography of celebrity, but a narrative of her life) continues to construct her as odd and unconventional, much like the characters she played on screen, but considerably more information about her private life is represented as are her desires for a home and hearth of her own.

The capacity of these texts to successfully and convincingly confirm and rationalize the celebrity's public image through further tales of the celebrity's public life is contingent on ideological investments in the sincerity of the celebrity and the meaningfulness of public life experiences. It is critical in our reading of such texts, however, not to mistake the celebrity or her audience as somehow naïve and incapable of penetrating what is commonly conceived of as the façade of celebrity. As both Richard de Cordova and Charles Ponce de Leon have examined in detail, what constitutes a legitimate representation of celebrity subjectivity has undergone significant changes across the twentieth century and, in the early decades, the carefully crafted and orchestrated celebrity public image was the foundation of audience experiences with and relationships to celebrities. The public-life focused memoir thus prolonged and furthered that experience in terms with which audiences were familiar. In many respects, the contemporary celebrity autobiography market operates on the same principles—texts are produced and consumed as part of an elaborate continuation of the fan's experience with the celebrity; however that experience is now made up of access to both the labouring *and* the non-labouring life of the celebrity. These are the life stories, the autobiographies of celebrities—narratives of an individual's life in general. Whereas the autobiography of celebrity focuses exclusively on the condition of celebrity, these texts offer up narratives of the private life and other events that might develop or explain the celebrity's character, but do not necessarily contribute to the teleological accounting of the production of celebrity. It is, admittedly, a fine semantic line between *autobiography of celebrity* and an *autobiography of a celebrity*—after all, even narratives of the celebrity persona in non-labouring contexts might be used to rationalize activities of the public, labouring self—but, in reading the texts, the differences are readily apparent: the former is wholly focused on the creation and experience of celebrity whereas the

latter draws on discourses of the private life, encompasses experiences supposedly beyond the scope of celebrity, and may not even include an explicit accounting of the achievement or experiences of celebrity.

At the beginning of the twentieth century these two forms co-existed: one could, it seems, choose whether or not to divulge the private life or choose whether to render an extraordinarily confident and detailed accounting of one's celebrity as Albani did in 1911 or ignore it altogether as Montgomery did in 1917. Either kind of text, it appears, was a legitimate and authoritative way for a famous woman to represent herself in an autobiography, but this diversity of self-expression did not last; by the 1930s the celebrity story was already falling into disuse. The reason for this dramatic change in how the famous might authoritatively represent themselves appears to be developments in celebrity culture arising out of Hollywood. As noted in the introduction, the star system that evolved out of various technological and cultural developments in cinema (such as the focus on narrative rather than documentary films, the invention of the close up, the marketing of films by these newly differentiated and named actors, and the growth of a print media industry that responded to and shaped the audience's interest in the actors) created the conditions under which audiences developed attachments to particular individuals and sought to consume more cultural products by and about them.

The development and expansion of those consumption practices to include information about the private, non-labouring life of the individual and the privileging of that private sphere as the site of the "real self" began, as explored in more detail in the Introduction, in the nineteenth century but it fully revolutionized celebrity journalism practice in the twentieth century. In the 1890s, profiles of well-known individuals moved away from hagiographic to more realistic portraits (Ponce de Leon 33-34, 61) and, from around 1910 to 1930, such portraits of celebrities

not only became standard features in most periodicals (56), but were increasingly dependent upon representations of the private life to signal the journalist's intimacy and authority (73) and to solidify the legitimacy of the celebrity's public image. Initially, these representations of the non-working life were static, romanticized public personas that continued to draw from and feed into the public performances on screen (de Cordova 87-8); but so important were these personas and the representations of the private life they were built upon, that studios began to embed morality clauses in contracts to ensure the celebrity did not behave in ways that contradicted their valuable public image (de Cordova 131-2).²² Such clauses signal the development of a media *and* a market interested in information about celebrities that does not originate with the studio or cohere with the celebrity's established public persona—it suggests, in fact, that the public could distinguish between the public and the private self and that this private self could do irreparable damage to the marketability of the public, labouring self. What is most notable about these alternate or unauthorized representations of the celebrity's private life is that they were not received as representations *in competition with* the existing public persona but, rather, as the truth hidden *beneath*: if the studio reported one set of activities and the media reported a contradictory perspective mobilizing discourses of the private life, the latter triumphed (de Cordova 140). As such, the interest in the non-working life of the celebrity took on a new dimension wherein the public persona crafted and guarded by celebrities and studios rang true and authentic so long as alternate media reports of the private life confirmed that persona.

As the meaningfulness of a celebrity's identity becomes contingent on the information disseminated about her non-labouring life, those forms of self-representation that focus only on the public self cease to be compelling or legitimate. In this cultural climate, autobiography

²² De Cordova traces the emergence of media interest in publishing information that contravenes a celebrity's public image to the 1920s (128-9). Many scholars signal the "Fatty" Arbuckle scandal of 1921 as a key turning point: see Hallett for an extended discussion (180-212)

production shifts away from autobiographies of celebrity to autobiographies of a celebrity's life where the non-labouring, private life is not only represented, but carefully shaped to make a meaningful contribution to the legitimacy of the celebrity's public image. The impact and significance of this shift in celebrity culture and celebrity autobiography production are far-reaching. First, the celebrity subject has changed from being a function of the public sphere to now being a subject who must be accounted for by both the public and private sphere. In imbuing the private, non-labouring life with significance, not only does it become subject to the gaze of the general public but that act of gazing, over time, becomes legitimized as if the public has a right to the information that might be gleaned.²³ As that gaze and the market that sustains it grow more demanding, celebrities respond by rendering up visions and versions of their non-labouring lives for consumption and thus emerges the rise and privileging of the autobiography of *a celebrity*, a tale of the labouring and non-labouring life, as *the* authentic form for representing the public self. In these cultural contexts, the private life is constructed as if it exists outside of celebrity and therefore acts as a way to measure the sincerity of the public image effacing the reality that the celebrity autobiography, including its representation of the private life, is always shaped by the conditions of celebrity.

In many respects, using narratives of the private life to manage one's celebrity is not a new phenomenon—when famous women in the nineteenth century performed their femininity through narratives of their domestic life or when actors and actresses attempted to improve the image of their labour through representing up-standing, middle-class private lives (Corbett, *Representing* 117; Hallett 29), they were embarking on the same project. However, where those

²³ The market for this information and the media and fan's growing sense of entitlement to that information developed slowly and can be traced in several autobiographies of celebrity. Albani and Dressler, for example, explicitly note this audience expectation and deny them the "right" to pry into their non-labouring lives (Albani 106).

women often sought to balance the supposedly masculine or transgressive nature of their public life with narratives of the private life, the women of the twentieth century use the private life to reinforce the legitimacy of the actions, behaviours, and successes of the *public life*. In the early decades of the twentieth century these texts included Montgomery's "The Alpine Path" (1917), Marie Dressler's second autobiography, *My Own Story* (1934), Martha Black's *My Seventy Years* (1938), Nellie McClung's *Clearing in the West* (1935) and *The Stream Runs Fast* (1945), and Emily Carr's *Growing Pains: An Autobiography* (1946). In all of these texts, the narratives of childhood and a life lived supposedly "beyond" the public labour are predominantly designed to participate in some way in the teleological accounting of the public celebrity self: Montgomery's childhood activities in PEI, for example, are occasionally framed as the source for a particular narrative; Carr's opening narrative of her reluctant baptism is designed to illustrate that she has been "contrary from the start" (*Growing Pains* 5), a rebellious streak that serves her well in her pursuit of art; and Black's narratives of her adventures during the gold rush or her activities as a den mother to overseas soldiers, continually work to shape her as a suitable representative of the people of the Yukon. In later texts, such as Mary Pickford's *Sunshine and Shadow* (1955) and Mazo de la Roche's *Ringling the Changes* (1957), the teleological drive that renders the private life capable of anticipating and explaining the public life is more subtle. As texts (like theirs) become longer and begin to include photographs of activities from both public and private life, readers are encouraged to believe that the life story they are reading is more or less comprehensive and was written as a boon for the devoted fan rather than as a means of managing celebrity.²⁴ Yet the drive to continue and rationalize the existing public image is just as

²⁴ As early texts like Allan, Albani and Montgomery's bear out, photographs have long accompanied public life-writing narratives, however the images were typically drawn from the public rather than private life. See Ponce de Leon (64) and Janet Casey's "Realism and the Discursive Dynamics of the Popular Periodical 1900-1930" for a discussion of the rise of candid and private life images in celebrity culture.

prominent as ever and, as we shall see in a close reading of de la Roche's text, the more a text appears to be rendering up the "real" private life beyond the scope of celebrity, the more complicit the text is in shaping the non-labouring private life to affirm a pre-existing public image.

With the re-emergence of the private life as a significant rhetorical tactic in the celebrity autobiography, women are once again faced with how to represent those domestic spaces where conventional femininity was once so critically performed. Yet, with a few exceptions, narratives of the private life cease to be a significant site for the performance of femininity, and domesticity remains muted. For women who narrate the activities of home-making, the conventional roles and activities of marriage or motherhood are glossed over and those women who did not marry or have children express no desire to alter that state. Even for those few women who do use their domestic proclivities as a means of performing femininity, namely Martha Black and Nellie McClung, the activities of the domestic sphere are implied but rarely narrated: the business (and busy-ness) of care-taking and home-making, it appears, has no space in the autobiography. This silence is troubling but not altogether unexpected: as Buss and other critics have argued, the cultural climate of public life writing at this time made it very difficult for women to publicly represent the embodied realities of their private lives (*Mapping* 134). Many women, (generally those who were not public figures at the time of writing) did narrate in detail their domestic activities but the experiences of the female body in these activities often remained silenced (Buss, *Mapping* 134). As the journals of women like Montgomery bear out, women did not lack the language to express these conditions in private, but the articulation of these conditions in a public life-writing text was the project of subsequent generations.

In the celebrity autobiography, then, to mention being a mother or wife stands in for a whole host of activities that the famous woman will not or, perhaps, cannot narrate—it seems to stake a claim to normative middle-class expressions of femininity without being compelled to perform or narrate them. Yet if such stakes must be claimed, however briefly or parenthetically, why not give those conditions and experiences more narrative space in the life-writing text as non-famous women of this generation did? The answer appears to be that the teleological drive to report the public, labouring self for the famous woman still seems to preclude those narratives: the public life is still constructed as uninformed by some aspects of the private life. This distinction is made particularly clear in texts like de la Roche and Pickford's autobiographies, where only certain elements of the domestic and private life are narrated in detail. That which affects or explains their public labour is well documented—for de la Roche her domestic and working partnership with Caroline and for Pickford her all-star celebrity husbands—but other elements of home life go unreported. Children remain enigmas: passing mention of adopting children gives both de la Roche and Pickford leave to express a maternal devotion that is not actually narrated in the text, suggesting that such signals marking conventional gender roles were important but also irrelevant to their careers.

By the middle of the twentieth century, discourses of the private life were critical for rendering authentic and legitimate biographical and autobiographical portraits of famous individuals. No longer was it possible, as Albani, Montgomery, and others attempted to do, to keep the prying eyes of the media and the fans firmly on the labouring life—something of the personal, the private, and the intimate had to be surrendered. These texts suggest that the activities, relationships, and experiences of childhood and of adulthood prior to fame, were often the mechanisms by which the appetites of the media and fans might be appeased, particularly if

such narratives, often fleshed out with considerable dialogue and detail, could rationalize the public persona. Compared to the kinds of confessional discourses we will see at work in memoir boom texts, these glimpses into the non-labouring life of an early twentieth-century celebrity seem to conceal more than they reveal, yet compared to the celebrity stories of the beginning of the century, these texts mark the irreversible shift in celebrity culture toward the private, the personal, and the non-labouring world of celebrity.

Turning now to three case studies wherein the autobiographical celebrity subject has been constructed as a function of both her labouring and non-labouring life, we can trace the diverse ways that celebrity and the private life are expressed and managed by women through the early-to-mid twentieth century. In Chapter Three's examination of L.M. Montgomery's "The Alpine Path" (1917), we see how a famous woman might craft a narrative of self without narrating the experiences of celebrity or domesticity even though both were critical components of her public image and we trace the critical impact that serialized publication in a magazine has on how a celebrity autobiography is read. In the remainder of this chapter we look to Mazo de la Roche's representation of her resistance to celebrity and her construction of herself as a victim of its forces in *Ringed the Changes* (1957). These rhetorical tactics, while part of her attempt to frame herself as feminine and to remain consistent with her public image, ultimately reveal that, instead of being helpless in the face of celebrity, de la Roche was a master at orchestrating and managing her celebrity and public image. Taking an altogether different stance on the representation of femininity and celebrity, Nellie McClung's *Clearing in the West* (1935) and *The Stream Runs Fast* (1945) explicitly construct the author as a domestic creature while simultaneously reminding the audience of her accomplishments. Yet in structure and style the texts are very different, evidence not only of McClung's uncertainty about how to best manage her public

identity in a public life-writing text, but also of the continued instability and, hence, flexibility of the genre as a whole at this time.

Mazo de la Roche: A Ringer For Changes

In the celebrity of Mazo de la Roche, we are reminded of the incredible importance of print media in the production, dissemination, and consumption of celebrity in Canada in the first decades of the twentieth century. Born Mazo “Maisie” Louise Roche in Newmarket, Ontario in 1879 (Kirk; Gallus 2011), her rise to fame is generally attributed to the press attention she received after winning the *Atlantic Monthly* book prize in 1927 for her novel, *Jalna* (Panofsky; Hambleton 43-4). Although she was, according to Hammill, already a “fairly well established writer in Canada” at this time (“Sensations”), and certainly not the first Canadian to have won a large or prestigious international prize²⁵, media discourses nevertheless focused on her nationality, constructing the accomplishment as both unusual and a marker of the great state of Canadian letters (Panofsky; de la Roche 217-8). While her nationality and her gender could be whipped into exciting copy (Gallus 2011), the continued popularity of her texts ensured that she remained a figure of public and popular interest. *Jalna*, the first of 16 novels about the turbulent, passionate Whiteoaks family, arrived in the midst of both a popular and critical appreciation for romance narratives (Hammill, “Sensations”). At a time when realism and modern narratives were received with some apprehension and, in Canada, were often affiliated with the less desirable aspects of American culture (Hammill, *Women* 116), the conservative content and sentimental

²⁵ Just two years earlier, in 1925, Martha Ostenso won the Dodd, Mead, and Company Best Novel of the Year Award for *Wild Geese*.

style of de la Roche's novels were, for the most part, well-loved by the general public and, initially, well received by critics.²⁶

Like other famous Canadian women writers of this period—L.M. Montgomery, Martha Ostenso, and Marshall Saunders—de la Roche's texts, public image, and celebrity circulated beyond the borders of Canada and public interest continued to court de la Roche for the remainder of her life. De la Roche, however, adamantly maintained that such attention was unwelcome: she rarely gave interviews (Givner 2; Hambleton 8) and often represented herself as an extremely private person. In public, de la Roche often constructed her desire for privacy as both a pursuit of pleasure—once listing it as a “hobby” (Givner 2)—and a tangible effect that could, like property, be “stolen” (de la Roche 226). Much has been made of de la Roche's famous reluctance to embrace the conditions of celebrity: oft cited by critics, media, and biographers, her attitudes toward publicity have been used to construct her as difficult, mysterious, or untouched by the unsalutary effects of fame.²⁷ This image of de la Roche as private and discomforted by public attention is highly suggestive of democratic models of celebrity where the individual has been chosen and “elected” by the masses; neither desirous of attention nor, after 1933, critically popular (Panofsky), her celebrity appears to be the product of the “will” of the people. However, de la Roche was neither the helpless or hapless victim of the press nor the reluctant celebrity thrust into the spotlight by adoring fans that she is often made out to be; her autobiography, *Ring the Changes*, reveals her to be an active participant in shaping her celebrity and her unwillingness to be “known” was a strategy for handling her fame.

²⁶ Not all of de la Roche's texts fared as well as *Jalna*; fans expressed a clear preference for Whiteoaks narratives and critical reviews of subsequent novels varied considerably (de la Roche claims that Canadian reviews and reviewers were consistently less favourable). Over time critics would eventually discredit de la Roche's work on the very grounds it was initially lauded—its romantic style and popular appeal—but critical assessments of her work seemed to have little or no impact on her audience and her texts continued to sell well (Hammill “Sensations”; Panofsky).

²⁷ However, rather than dissuade attention, her supposed reticence has been transformed into an opportunity for the media and, in particular, biographers to position their texts as filling the void left by her ambiguous media strategies.

Responding to a cultural climate that increasingly privileged narratives of the private life, de la Roche crafted a life that catered to her fans' tastes for romantic and sentimental tales. The resulting text skirts the line between fiction and nonfiction, allowing de la Roche to appear to capitulate to her fans' desires, while disguising a door as a window for their intrusive gaze. Challenging any romantic notions we might have about the autobiography as the expression of a unique self, *Ringed the Changes* reveals the extent to which markets shape the representation of self and how the genre does not stand apart from a celebrity's other cultural products, but can become an extension of that labour.

When de la Roche published *Ringed the Changes* in 1957, she had been a public figure and celebrity for three decades. Like Albani, McClung and other women writing autobiographies at the end of their careers, de la Roche was not writing to manufacture or stabilize a public image; her image as a "shy, somewhat embittered, wealthy literary recluse" (7) was, according to Hambleton, firmly in place long before the memoir. Nor is there any indication that de la Roche was prompted to pen a memoir in order to protect her image or market, respond to negative press, or ward off financial ruin: by all appearances, the production of a memoir was a freely-made choice. And yet it was an ironic and, perhaps, risky one: after all if a woman valued her privacy and had built for herself such a reputation, why craft a memoir of one's life, particularly at a time when authenticity in life-storying had become dependent upon representations of the private life? The answer is deceptively simple: for de la Roche the production of a memoir was not an exercise in confession, self-revelation, or even image-management, but another spoke in the de la Roche wheel—a narrative designed for a specific market and rendered in the manner which both audience and author had become accustomed with the added twist, this time, of a first-person narrator. There was to be no major conceptual or stylistic departure from the

established patterns of narrative whether those narratives constituted her public image or her fiction.

For de la Roche's fans, the content of *Ringling the Changes* affirmed what they already knew or suspected about de la Roche—she was a Canadian-born Anglophile, internationally famous but, so she believed, underappreciated in Canada (Hambleton 10), a mother to two adopted children whose origins were shrouded in secrecy (Givner 3-4), inseparable from her cousin-companion upon whom she depended (Gallus, 2011), and lived a romantic life beset with great obstacles and great successes. However, of all the narratives de la Roche mobilized to craft her self as her fans knew her (or, perhaps, wanted her to be), it is her performance of an adverse reaction to publicity that reveals the most about de la Roche's appraisal of her fans and the limits of autobiographical writing. In de la Roche's telling, her response to the conditions of celebrity begins even prior to its advent: "In the period of waiting, the ten days or so of secrecy [prior to the public announcement of the *Atlantic Monthly* prize], Caroline and I decided it would be easier for us if we were out of town. Removed from all that was familiar, we could rest, collect ourselves, prepare for the ordeal of publicity to come. Always I have hated publicity, and if all those 'in the news' were as unco-operative as I, the newspapers would require fewer pages" (216). However, de la Roche makes clear, it is not simply a matter of being shy or resenting the intrusive gaze; celebrity is constructed as having an adverse effect on her health and nerves. Tales of nervous prostration are used to suggest a direct link between her bouts of illness and the pressures attending celebrity and success. Life in the public gaze, we are to believe, is fatiguing, depressing and, above all, unwelcome:

A luncheon had been given for me on board by my publishers, where without preparation I had had to make a short speech. Afterward I was photographed on deck surrounded by sixteen men in the book business. I still have the photograph, in which, wearing a great bunch of violets, I look dreadfully like a movie star. That night, casting myself on my

berth completely exhausted, I burst into tears. I thought I knew what movie stars felt like when they took an overdose of sleeping tablets and ended all the publicity. (237)

Notwithstanding de la Roche's characteristic penchant for melodrama and playing fast and loose with facts and timelines in this scene, de la Roche successfully inscribes her significance *and* postures her affliction by likening the experiences of literary celebrity to that gold standard of celebrity, the movie stars.²⁸ This counter-narrative to the public show of glamour, invokes and confirms her reader's suspicions of the "false front" of public lives and offers the private sphere as the "real" story: what appears to be the height of success and happiness is, behind the scenes, the source of considerable agony and thus we are not to be fooled by neatly orchestrated public images.

The irony, of course, is that *Ring the Changes* constitutes one of these neatly orchestrated public images and its narratives of private suffering and the effects of publicity and attention are carefully mobilized to confirm de la Roche's reputation for reclusiveness. That de la Roche felt she could use a public life-writing text and narratives of the private and personal to construct herself as a genuinely private and sensitive soul suggests that de la Roche believed that her audience would not receive a life-writing text as an exercise in courting attention or encouraging the effects of celebrity. This assumption, it appears, was not unfounded: responses and reviews to her text failed to perceive the life-storying project as antithetical to the successful representation of a self as private.²⁹ De la Roche's success on this front reveals some of the critical assumptions governing constructions of truth-telling and the reception of celebrity autobiographies in de la Roche's time. It suggests, for example, that a life-writing text might be

²⁸ Hollywood overdoses were far more common in the time of the text's composition (1957) than the period this passage narrates (circa 1930) and related to declining not overwhelming careers; nevertheless, Wallace Reid's high profile overdose in 1922 might be de la Roche's reference (Hallett 209).

²⁹ Her obituary in *The New York Times*, for example, saw no contradiction in claiming that de la Roche was both "little known" and "shunned all publicity" and had written an autobiography ("Mazo de la Roche is Dead").

thought to operate outside or beyond the purview of the celebrity-industry, allowing for a more direct relationship between fan and celebrity by circumventing the usual mediators of celebrity (the media, agents, and other celebrity-industry mechanisms). Hence de la Roche's condemnation of publicity and other celebrity phenomena, for example, implies a critical distance from this world rather than a text thoroughly implicated in celebrity industries.

De la Roche's successful representation of herself as private in a public text also suggests that the narratives of and from the private sphere are more meaningful and granted more truth-telling power than the action (the publication of a public text) required to disseminate them. These narratives had the force of truth-telling because, as we have seen, they confirmed and consolidated the audience's previous knowledge about her, but they also would have resonated stylistically with her audience. As Hambleton has pointed out: "...the publicity releases of her publishers continued to give the same romantic stories about her life, full of the same errors (both romance and errors doubtless had Mazo de la Roche's approval); and since those stories resembled the romantic tales she spun, none of her millions of devotees were in the least disturbed" (8). While Hambleton's biography is scornful of the mass appeal and low cultural capital of de la Roche's literary output, this assessment of her memoir is apt: de la Roche does appear to craft her life narratives in the same terms that she crafts her fiction. *Ring the Changes* reads like a romantic novel where genteel, Edwardian values govern a representation of the past that is, if not tranquil, always manageable, rationale, and meaningful. Lost loved ones, poverty, and even the tragedy and horror of war are rendered in vague, pastoral terms that distance both the readers and de la Roche from the necessity of responding emotionally. By contrast, relatively minor but extremely personal events, such as her first meeting of her cousin-

companion, her nervous afflictions, or certain encounters with the press, are infused with almost epic emotional stakes.

In this telling, de la Roche has cast herself as a genteel and feminine heroine—a fitting construct for the genre but also a strategic one for a woman whose tall frame, international fame, unmarried status, and ambiguous partnership with her female cousin, conspired to construct her as socially aberrant. However, *Ringling the Changes* often glosses over the unconventional elements of de la Roche's life by rendering them as iterations of conservative values—the family and the home are of critical importance and Caroline's domesticity and strength make her an ideal helpmeet for supporting de la Roche's labour and recuperation from the perils of public life. Like Albani, Montgomery, and other famous early twentieth-century autobiographers, de la Roche does not use a domestic identity to construct her femininity—she is, in fact, quite adamant that she is a hopeless domestic body, unable to sew and dependent upon Caroline to manage the home. Instead, she makes judicious use of an emotional and psychological nervous disposition to represent herself as passive, fragile and, “weak as water” (70), a “child” who “want[s] to be told what to do [...] to have decisions made for me” (127). When coupled with her supposed sensitivity to publicity and the effects of celebrity, de la Roche's portrait of herself invokes not only conventional constructions of femininity but the Romantic tradition of the sensitive artist seeking shelter from the corrosive effects of society. In short, she convincingly constructs her as a victim of forces larger than herself rather than the adept handler and mediator of the audience's gaze and her public image.

This construction of femininity that de la Roche invokes, however, does not rely so much on real but idealized practices such as one might find in her novels. One would not be surprised to find a character like de la Roche in her fiction: in fact, she suggests at the end of *Ringling*, that

she conceived of herself “as a character in a book” (341).³⁰ In *Thirty-Two Short Views of Mazo de la Roche*, Daniel Bratton traces the symmetry between de la Roche’s life and her fiction. He suggests that *Ringling the Changes* is evidence of “the extent to which the author inscribed her life—not only the conflicts of her inner world but also the physical details of her outer world—into her narratives” (55). While Bratton insists that the life has shaped the fiction and fails to account for how the fiction has, in fact, shaped de la Roche’s representation of her life, his research nevertheless provides considerable evidence of the significant overlap between de la Roche’s fiction and her non-fiction.³¹ Moreover, this overlap is intentional and strategic. De la Roche was candid in both her personal correspondence and her memoir that she “could not deny the demand of [her] readers” (273)—what they wanted, they got because, as she rationalizes, “What the writer of fiction needs—first, last, and all the time—is a public” (113). What her public continued to want were narratives like *Jalna* and, despite the increasing criticism of the seemingly endless series, the characters, their style, and popular appeal, de la Roche provided them with the romantic Whiteoaks narratives they desired until 1960. If *Ringling the Changes* thus bears some resemblance in narrative style and characterization to her best-selling series, it is, arguably not a coincidence but a strategic marketing ploy that simultaneously guarantees her both an audience and audience satisfaction, and allows her to produce a narrative of self that conceals more than it reveals. As Hambleton has pointed out, “*Ringling the Changes* is more often a screen held up between the public and her life than a door admitting us into her private world—unless her private world was the world of romance, of make-believe, of story-telling, even when the actual chronological events of her life and ancestry are being set down” (13). De

³⁰ Critics often note similarities between Finch Whiteoak and de la Roche however, I remain unpersuaded; de la Roche’s self-portrait invokes the style and tone of these texts but not necessarily a specific character.

³¹ Givner has also argued that de la Roche inscribed her life in her fiction (9); however Hambleton has identified passages in her memoir that appear to be taken directly from previous fictional works (200).

la Roche's original title for her memoir, *Scene in a Mirror*, would seem to bear out Hambleton's point: it invokes the idea of autobiography as a mirroring project but the homonym "scene" implies a cinematic or composed tableau rather than a direct reflection of reality. According to Givner, however, the title was rejected, not for its fictional implications but, rather for bearing too close a resemblance to another title on her publisher's roster (14).

This primacy de la Roche affords to her fans and their patterns of consumption is, arguably, one of the key factors shaping her memoir—read against the conventions that characterize her writing style, the tale is very much in keeping with what her audience knew and expected from her, but read against archival data, her memoir has been characterized as “notoriously impressionistic and creative” (York, *Literary Celebrity* 60) and “deliberately misleading” (Hammill, “Sensations”). Over the years research by biographers and critics has uncovered the various fictions, half-truths, and bouts of wishful thinking that comprise de la Roche's memoir and the text is often framed as part of a life-long pattern of evasive maneuvers and vexed truth-telling practices.³² Various hypotheses have been offered up as to what compelled de la Roche to manufacture a more glamorous history for herself—York has suggested she sought to “present a more dashing image to her public” (*Literary Celebrity* 69) and Givner has argued that it was a tactic for “surviv[al]” in a world that cramped her with “patriarchal social and literary conventions” (9). No doubt both external forces and personal vanity shaped what image she thought most useful to present to her public, but what must be foregrounded in this unpacking or rationalizing of de la Roche's self-mythologizing is that this process of self-invention is an integral part of public life. All celebrities undergo a process of

³² One document in particular, a survey completed for her publisher's publicity campaign wherein de la Roche claims aristocratic French ancestry, is frequently cited as both the first and most egregious example of de la Roche's penchant for self-mythologizing. In *Ring the Changes* de la Roche neither affirms nor discredits the content of this first effort, but distances herself from its production by claiming that the questions were answered by Caroline “as best she could, with only a few mistakes” (217).

crafting an image for themselves for public consumption and what is remarkable about the life-stories de la Roche crafted is not that they were false, but that they exposed the scaffolding of that process of image-making. It is clear to us, who can trace de la Roche's personal and professional activities as well as her family history through various archives, databases, and documents, that so far from being a helpless victim of the forces of celebrity, de la Roche was carefully crafting a specific image of herself, one that seems less designed to serve some image-management or rhetorical function, than one designed to sell texts. These connections we can draw between de la Roche's representation of her life and her stylistic approach to her novels, her determination to please her fans, and her use of the familiar as touchstones for truth-telling, throw into relief how much *Ringed the Changes* is designed to capitalize on an existing market with well-defined tastes. Through de la Roche and her text we are reminded that the celebrity autobiography, instead of functioning as separate from (and therefore able to comment upon) the celebrity's other cultural products, is an exercise and extension of the same labour that produced these other products and is thoroughly implicated in mechanisms, rhetorics, and industries of celebrity.

Nellie McClung: Piece by Piece

Nellie McClung and her two autobiographies, *Clearing in the West* (1935) and *The Stream Runs Fast* (1945), represent a departure from the marked reluctance that we have seen thus far in twentieth-century women's celebrity autobiographies to engage or represent the domestic affairs of the female celebrity. For women like Mazo de la Roche and L.M. Montgomery, domesticity was a muted, extra-textual context of the narrated private life, more implied than represented, and for Maud Allan, Marie Dressler, and Emma Albani, the domestic life was constructed as irrelevant to their narratives of their fame. For Nellie McClung the

domestic life could not be isolated from her claims to public life—not only did domesticity, in the form of her first novel *Sowing Seeds in Danny* (1908), pave the way for her first public appearances but, under the auspices of maternal feminism, it came to form the foundation upon which a very active political life could be rationalized.³³ Hence domesticity and, in particular, her own domestic proclivities, were inseparable from McClung's public life and thus necessarily formed an important part of the narrative content of her life-stories.³⁴

There has, however, been considerable critical debate about the nature of McClung's invocation and mobilization of a domestic feminine essential self. Helen Buss has claimed that these political philosophies reproduce patriarchal limitations (*Mapping* 134-5) and Janice Fiamengo has suggested that by inhabiting conservative gender roles, McClung "occup[ies] [socially prescribed roles] so excessively and provocatively that its fundamental tenets are undone in the process of being affirmed" ("Legacy"). This debate has spilled over into critical assessments of McClung's autobiographies where many have argued that McClung's investment in conventional gender roles, particularly as expressed through the community-oriented memoir form, ultimately "silence[s ...] the female body" (Buss, *Mapping* 134) and effaces the self (Dean 87-9). However, the memoir-function of her texts and McClung's clear mandate to serve and

³³ According to the tenets of maternal feminism, women have a natural and inherent interest in how the public political world affects her family and, by virtue of her domestic nature, is imbued with particular skills well-suited for negotiating and mending this world (Kealey 7). Like many middle-class white women of her generation, McClung's belief that women were naturally predisposed to certain interests and skills only included certain populations of women.

³⁴ Martha Black's *My Seventy Years* also narrates more of her domestic, private life than we see in these other texts; however, unlike McClung's relatively seamless performance of a suitable continuity between a woman's private life and her public life, Black's representation of herself often highlights the incongruity of conventional gender roles and a woman's ability to represent herself as eminently suitable for her political labour. On the one hand, she seeks to frame her political labour as reluctantly assumed and performed as a duty and service to the people of the Yukon and her husband whose rightful role, she claims, she occupies only so she might fulfill his political aspirations. On the other hand, in her bid to represent herself as a suitable representative to the people of the Yukon, the narratives she offers up of her early years in the Klondike Gold Rush are the very antithesis of the kinds of middle-class Protestant femininity that McClung espouses. The tension inherent in the narratives that Black clearly enjoys telling and the conventional rhetorical postures she somewhat awkwardly assumes highlights the difficulty of using the rhetorical strategies of nineteenth-century women's life writing to represent the scope and breadth of the twentieth-century woman's labour experience.

represent a wider community do not entirely efface McClung, her story, or her self. Rather, these representations of domesticity and conventional gender roles are more than political necessities; they are the means by which her self is made manifest. As we shall see, the production of this self depends heavily on the audience: their knowledge of McClung, the author, brought to bear on the textual “Nellie” of the autobiographies actively produces a complex self that is not subordinated or sublimated by McClung’s attention to communities. Although in form, style, and content, *Clearing in the West* and *The Stream Runs Fast* are remarkably different texts, they both model a strategy for life-storying that is not only co-operative and collaborative, but dependent upon the wider terrain of McClung’s celebrity to make meaning.

Clearing in the West

Clearing in the West is an unusual text in that, as a memoir of a public woman, it ends some years before the author achieved celebrity and, as such, anticipates a sequel where the values and convictions of youth come to fruition. And yet, as a narrative of settlement in the Canadian West, the text is quite complete and finished, ending as McClung notes in *Stream*, in the “approved manner” with the young female protagonist happily ensconced in her new and proper role as a wife (2). As the couple look to the sky and note “It was clearing in the West! Tomorrow would be fine!” (417), the processes of land and domestic settlement are explicitly conflated and structured as the inevitable, successful conclusion for white Christians in the West. However, our awareness of who Nellie McClung is and what she accomplished beyond this moment not only unsettles and destabilizes this otherwise pat conclusion, but gives the lie to the proposition that marriage represents the end of any young woman’s narrative plot. As a text, *Clearing in the West* depends on the reader’s fore-knowledge of McClung’s labour and public image in order to effect not only a great deal of humour, but to inscribe McClung’s unnarrated

fame and political life. By using dramatic irony as one of the structuring principles of the memoir, McClung risks being misunderstood—in fact, as we shall see, her portraits of her domestically disinclined younger self might be construed by her detractors as proof that she is an “unnatural and disgruntled woman” (Fiamengo, *Woman’s Page* 191)—but, alternatively, the technique has rich potential for not just tracing the genesis of a political woman but for transforming a textual character into a fully-realized self.

More than any other autobiography under consideration in this chapter, *Clearing in the West* reads like a novel: its tightly structured narrative offers us an account of the youthful exploits and evolution of “Nellie Mooney,” a character with considerable pluck and ambition. Although there is a significant and demonstrable emotional distance between the author and “Nellie,” we are meant to recognize that the author is, in fact, discussing herself. These novelistic conventions and McClung’s objectification of self, Buss has argued, are troublesome for their failure to adequately convey the “fully intimate knowledge of a lived female life”; such self-representation tactics, she implies, are linked to masculine conventions of autobiography and therein preclude the expression of gendered experience (*Mapping* 134). While Fiamengo has rightly taken Buss to task for imposing on McClung particular expectations of feminist self-expression (“Legacy”), what Buss did not recognize was that some of those expectations were, in fact, met by virtue of the impact of McClung’s celebrity on how the text was read. The Nellie Mooney character is not just a function of the textual self or narrated “I,” but is constantly made more complex by the reader’s ability to bridge the gap between this narrated identity and the narrating “I,” by using what they already know about the famous Nellie McClung. The teleological impulse of the text, for example, is always conditioning the reader to understand the

child's actions in light of how they will later bear fruit in her political career, a connection frequently made explicit for us through the mouths of important figures from her youth:

Mr. Schultz [McClung's beloved teacher] had come to see me, the night before, and had praised my work. My heart was still light as I recalled his wonderful words. "Nellie," he said, "no one can hold you back—no condition can defeat you—if you keep your health; remember, no one can really hurt you but yourself." I turned that over in my mind, not quite sure of its meaning. (128)

Like the adult McClung narrating this moment, readers understand what these words now mean: McClung will, in her future political career, face great obstacles but will also, ultimately, triumph. When the childhood self bears the marks of the greatness that is to come, we are inspired to recall that future self and find satisfaction in knowing more than the characters and in recognizing a continuity of character over time. The "righteousness" of a teacher's forecast is affirmed by our own knowledge and the incident is folded into an on-going, albeit implicit, discourse of destiny wherein we are encouraged to read McClung's success as foreordained.

Throughout the narrative of *Clearing*, readers are habitually called upon to make connections between childhood incidents (such as a community picnic spoiled by alcohol or playing at politics and speech-making) and the child's future political labour. At times, however, the heavy hand of the adult narrator makes itself felt and we recognize that we are no longer witnessing events from the child's perspective. These moments where the adult McClung intrudes to comment (whether it is to take a jab at a Conservative politician or to note her own progress from being part of a crowd to sharing the platform with important figures) interrupt the pastoral world of childhood and demand that the adult be recognized. This assertion of the adult self constitutes a break in the narrative trajectory and betrays an impatience with the limitations of both the child-self-character and genre conventions; it implies that even though the traces of

the adult are meant to be identified in the actions of the child, the child cannot adequately anticipate or account for the narrating “I” that is anxious to be heard.

This is made abundantly clear (and with considerable humour) in McClung’s narration of her childhood convictions: while on the one hand we are to read young Nellie’s fiery ambition to serve her people and be “a voice for the voiceless [...] a defender of the weak, a flaming fire that would consume the dross that encrusts human souls” (312) as a child’s melodramatic articulation of the labour she will later perform, we are to resist the calls of teleology in the child’s fierce scorn of domesticity and conventional gender roles. At school, Nellie makes the “painful discovery” (148) that she is not skilled at fancy work and remobilizes masculine value-systems to rationalize her lack of skill and unwillingness to learn this domestic art. In a dramatic adaptation of Longfellow’s “The Ladder of St. Augustine,” the young Nellie declares that “the heights by great men” are not cultivated through “crochet hooks” and “mak[ing] lace for [...] petticoats” (149). In this scene we are meant to recognize, through the accomplishments of the adult McClung, that the pursuits of greatness and femininity are not mutually exclusive—one might value and excel at domestic labour *and* be ambitious. The young Nellie’s failure to understand this creates delightfully humorous and yet instructive moments in the text but they are dependent upon our recognition of the gap that separates “Nellie” from the narrator and our complicity with McClung’s politics (or, at the very least, her conviction that women have a right to occupy the public sphere).

While McClung is not above poking fun at her youthful self who, as a child, scorned the domestic world and, as a young adult, declared she would never become a reformer (343), the effect of this humour is to make room for a young woman to change and evolve. Young Nellie, after considerable indecision, comes to reconcile her ambition *and* traditional gender roles, aided

considerably by the model of her mother-in-law, an early suffragette and “wonderful” woman, wife, and mother (318). By the time *Clearing* concludes, we have already been assured that McClung is firmly folded into the domestic script, where “a child is greater than all the books and all learning, and that little first cry is mightier than the cheers of ten thousand people” (249). Yet, as mentioned earlier, the spectre of a later political career, in which McClung *is* cheered by crowds of thousands, destabilizes the book’s conclusion. Fame *and* babies are on the horizon for this young woman and when McClung narrates this life in *The Stream Runs Fast*, it becomes clear that the form hitherto used to render her life can no longer adequately accommodate the conditions of this experience.

The Stream Runs Fast

Written a decade after *Clearing in the West*, *The Stream Runs Fast* offers new content in a dramatically different style and form. It is also unusual in that it is not a second autobiography that rehearses narratives from a previous text but a sequel: it picks up where the first text left off and moves forward into McClung’s development as both a mother and public woman. The narration of these two developments in the same text is designed to reinforce McClung’s political investment in maternal feminisms—public life and motherhood, we are meant to glean, go hand in hand. In narrating this portion of her life in one text, McClung also opens up a forum for the *direct* expression of her politics through representations of her labour, public life, and the experiences of celebrity. However, it is not just the content that represents her politics; the dramatic stylistic and structural changes she makes to the project of life-storying also play a critical role in modeling the principles that guide her labour and public identity. The essay-like chapters move between narratives of her political labour, her private life, other women’s labour, and political developments in general and the episodic form is less strictly bound by teleology or chronology. These changes in self-representation have been hailed by some as moving McClung

closer to expressing “the complexity of a feminist life lived inside the traditional female roles of patriarchal society” (Buss, *Mapping* 131-2), and by others as symptomatic of a retreat into feminine autobiography traditions that efface the self in favour of the community (Dean 89-91). Yet there are alternate ways to read these shifts in McClung’s self-representation tactics: the self of *Stream* is differently constructed than the self of *Clearing* but both find ways to create a complex self that is not effaced but made manifest by devoting narrative attention to others. Here again, McClung’s celebrity plays a critical role in this process of declaring and performing her identity and, as we shall see, the text betrays an anxiety not about what her celebrity meant in the past but what, if anything, it will mean to future generations.

In *The Stream Runs Fast*, McClung has, it appears, responded to Laura Goodman Salverson’s criticism that McClung needs to “revea[l]” herself and be “more personal” in her life-writing (143). If the Nellie Mooney of *Clearing* felt like a distant character, imbued with depth and emotional significance by the active processes of readers who bring to the character the knowledge they have of the author, then in this text McClung eliminates that collaborative process and collapses the emotional distance between the narrated “I” and the narrating “I” to create a more embodied narrative self. This technique is not so much a function of time wherein the narrated events are closer to the present moment of narrating, but of emotional proximity: in place of the bemused adult narrator is an emotionally involved participant. This is particularly noticeable when McClung reproduces dialogues and arguments from her politicking days; the triumph of verbal warfare is clearly relived in the process of narrating it. Although, as Buss points out, McClung still does not seem to inhabit her body—the vague and brief narrative of morning sickness notwithstanding—the narratives do offer an embodied self wherein the psychological landscapes of the past and present self are inhabited and represented (*Mapping*

134). These moments occur frequently throughout the text and, in some cases, inspire McClung to abandon her fidelity to strict chronology. In a tactic she calls “telescop[ing]” time (6), narratives move between the past and the present, inspiring or maintaining particular emotional states of being: as she narrates her memories of Pauline Johnson, for example, she is drawn back to the present when she hears a radio broadcast about Johnson (36). Elsewhere, domestic items of the present call to mind memories of the past or narratives of the past are interrupted by the emotional impact the processes of remembering and writing them have on the present McClung. These meta-narratives of the life-storying project ultimately work to bind the narrated “I” and the narrating “I” to create the illusion of one historicized self.

At the same time that McClung crafts a textual self that inhabits a more complex, nuanced self (rather than relies on the audience’s extra-textual knowledge of the author to perform this function), there is an increasing drive to move the text beyond the self and represent the labour and lives of the communities that McClung has belonged to. The more pronounced memoir-mandate of this text appears to align it with conventional forms of women’s public life-writing, in particular, women’s traditions in acting as recorders of the community. Misao Dean has read this drive in McClung’s fiction and non-fiction to serve others as coming at the cost of her own voice (89, 91). Dean’s argument, which astutely recognizes some of the limitations of McClung’s constructions of femininity and community-oriented gaze, begins to collapse under the weight of its insistence on distinct feminine, self-effacing selves and masculine, autonomous selves. Indeed, McClung’s representation of her community reminds us of women’s life-writing traditions but her identity is not effaced by this focus. McClung has made space in the content of *Stream* to represent herself as an individual *and* the larger contexts in which her individual

labour was performed and she offers a useful conceit for understanding her representation of herself in the metaphor of the quilt:

In Canada we are developing a pattern of life and I know something about one block of that pattern. I know it for I helped to make it, and I can say that now without any pretense of modesty, or danger of arrogance, for I know that we who make the patterns are not important, but the pattern is. (xii)

The quilt is an eminently suitable device for configuring her own story within larger national histories because it is a product of a woman's creative *and* practical domestic labour. Each block has a "material" history that is constructed in isolation from and yet is informed by the pattern of the whole. While each block might be composed of material used nowhere else in the quilt, when viewed from a distance, a pattern emerges, but the pattern does not subordinate the uniqueness of each block. McClung's life-story is her block, built from her own experience and yet shaped, as all autobiographies are, by an awareness of why her audience is interested in her life: her relationship to larger issues in women's history in Canada.

Although McClung claims that the pattern trumps both the block and its maker, her memoir betrays a more even balance between attention to the experiences of the self, whether domestic, political or altogether unrelated to either (such as travel), and the cultural and social patterns emerging on regional, provincial and national frontiers.³⁵ Some chapters speak specifically to her particular experiences and some record the experiences of others but most often each chapter moves back and forth between individual and communal experiences in a way that suggests it is not easy and, perhaps, not that important to distinguish between the two. When the autobiography is used to capture a wider scope of history, as McClung has done in both texts,

³⁵ Moreover, I contend, that McClung would know that quilts are often more prized when we know and have a relationship to their maker—that is how quilts become heirlooms (and autobiographies become classics). Dean, however, reads the metaphor as an affirmation of the anonymity of the quilt-maker and as "reveal[ing] an ambivalence about the focus on a single contribution to the public life which the genre of autobiography seems to demand. The metaphor diverts attention away from McClung's own role while apparently justifying its importance" (90).

then such a history is filtered through those experiences of the individual, in turn inscribing the individual into that history. If her memoir makes the history of the individual and the history of her society interdependent, it is not at the cost of her own voice, story, or self for the memoir is designed to record both histories.

There is, however, a palpable anxiety running throughout *Stream* about McClung's personal and political legacy. Thinking ahead to the future, she worries that the memory of her generation, their way of life, and their political gains will be effaced by modernity and with that, her own contributions will be lost. Very similar concerns structure Albani's *Forty Years of Song* and Dressler's *The Eminent American Comedienne* and, like these women, McClung uses the space of her autobiography to narrate her accomplishments and her celebrity. Although she denies in both of her autobiographies that she desired fame, she is nevertheless forthright about the fact that she is famous. In *Clearing* this was implicitly articulated through the text's use of dramatic irony and in those moments when the adult McClung asserts herself. In *Stream* her celebrity and infamy are narrated in frequent anecdotes that showcase her oratory skills, her political connections, and her capacity to deflate opponents and belie her detractor's misogynist portraits. She reminds us that she is a woman who has been burnt in effigy and caricatured, but she has also had "[her] name in lights" and been the subject of "songs and poems" (xiv).

However, unlike the self-conscious scrapbooking of individual success that one finds in autobiographies of celebrity, McClung's mandate is not just to document her public life but, as we have seen, to inscribe the larger political and cultural legacies of her generation. *The Stream Runs Fast* reminds us that the individual's celebrity is inseparable from the contexts in which it was produced, and although McClung also makes ready use of those discourses of hard work and ambition so popular with her generation, this attempt to sketch a broader context in which the

individual's labour became both possible and significant is a nod, in the guise of a history, to the celebrity terrain.

In McClung's memoirs we find multiple innovations and experiments for the representation of the self that are not shared (or widely shared) in the texts of other famous Canadian women of her generation—the attention to domesticity, mothering, communities, politics, and the use of a sequel, dramatic irony and episodic essay chapters as structuring principles. Yet, like these other women, McClung was using what tools she had at her disposal to affirm and consolidate an appropriate public image for herself. The differences between her two texts remind us that even by the middle of the century, there was still considerable scope for experimenting with tactics of self-representation.³⁶ In the matter of form, fragmented and episodic narratives were as common as those employing novelistic narrative techniques and both Nellie McClung and Marie Dressler wrote one of each. For other women whose narratives were serialized in periodicals, like L.M. Montgomery, Mary Pickford, and Maud Allan, the original conditions of publication created different reading experiences and, as we shall see in the subsequent chapter, vibrant and complex new contexts for that narrative. Although all of these women were concerned with managing their public identity, there is no consensus among them as to whether that image includes one's private life or domestic labour, or even whether one is obliged to narrate the experiences of celebrity. While Martha Black and Nellie McClung, in order to manage the unseemliness of their political careers, attempt to fold narratives of their domestic lives into the development of their public lives, most women of this era appear hesitant to acknowledge that they are married or have children. For Maud Allan, Marie Dressler, and Emma Albani, narratives of celebrity are important tools for affirming their success, but L.M.

³⁶ As we shall see in Chapter Four and Five, the late twentieth century has seen the tactics of self-representation in celebrity memoirs consolidate into something approaching a set of conventions.

Montgomery refuses to narrate the condition altogether and Mazo de la Roche goes to great lengths to indicate that the trappings of celebrity are an unwelcome burden. Although all of the women take themselves as the object of their study quite seriously, the tone with which they narrate their lives varies from the light-hearted and playful to the somber and restrained. Moreover, while all seem to self-consciously perform femininity, the forms and expression of that femininity range considerably from rhetorical postures of modesty, weakness, and/or self-effacement to postures of robust health and extreme self-confidence in one's talent and (heterosexual) allure.

What had more or less solidified by the time McClung sat down to compose her texts was the decline of celebrity-only narratives and the primacy of the private life as legitimate and authoritative life-writing strategies. For McClung, however, such developments were perfectly in alignment with her politics and public image; an autobiography of celebrity for her would probably have been disastrous. However, the growing significance and representation of the private life may very well have kept some women of McClung's generation from putting pen to paper; certainly L.M. Montgomery balked when her editors requested such narratives from her. She did not, as we shall see, acquiesce to this request but nor did she write, as some of her contemporaries were doing at the time, a narrative about her celebrity either. Turning now to "The Alpine Path: The Story of My Career" (1917), we can trace Montgomery's unusual strategies for managing her celebrity in a public life-writing text and contextualize her other tactics, such as the serialized publication of her story in a periodical and her determined focus on the public, labouring self, within the developments and trends in women's celebrity autobiography already examined in this chapter. Poised in that moment just prior to the shift from autobiography of celebrity to the mandated performance of a private life, Montgomery's

text offers us a glimpse of how one woman manages to both avoid explicit narratives of the experience of celebrity and evade the market's growing desire for narratives about her non-labouring life and still, somehow, keep her readers (and editors) content.

Chapter Three

L.M. Montgomery: “The Alpine Path” Negotiates a “Recognized Place Among Good Workers in My Chosen Profession”

Of the many extraordinary women explored in the previous chapter, it might seem disproportionate to dedicate an entire chapter to the study of just one woman when it is clear that there was no single strategy for managing fame, public identity, and public life-writing projects in the early twentieth century. However, a detailed investigation of L.M. Montgomery is fruitful for several reasons. Montgomery experienced a sustained fame and popularity during her life (and long afterwards) on both a national and international level that, some critics have argued, has henceforth been unmatched by any other Canadian writer (York, *Literary Celebrity* 93); moreover, she also left behind the most expansive and voluminous body of life writing of any of the women under investigation in this project. Her personal correspondence, scrapbooks, journals, photography, and, of course, her autobiography, “The Alpine Path: The Story of My Career” (1917), collectively constitute a rich and complex life-writing archive. This archive has been the subject of intense scholarly discussion, but it is a discussion that tends to privilege Montgomery’s private rather than public life writing and, as a result, the importance of “The Alpine Path” to Montgomery’s career, public image, and life-writing practices is often overlooked.¹

While a thorough investigation of “The Alpine Path” stands to fill critical gaps in existing Montgomery scholarship, its value to this study lies in how it negotiates and manages

¹ Lorraine York’s “L.M. Montgomery and the Strategies of Literary Celebrity” and *Literary Celebrity in Canada*, and, to some degree, Helen Buss’s *Mapping Our Selves* are the only scholarly works that are critically attentive to the later editions of “The Alpine Path”. Thomas Tausky has also written on the memoir, but his article, “L.M. Montgomery and ‘The Alpine Path, so hard, so steep’,” is predominantly concerned with Montgomery’s Emily of the New Moon series. In contrast to the benign neglect attending “The Alpine Path,” most, if not all, scholars of Montgomery’s life writing have, since 1985, drawn upon the journals. In *The Intimate Life of L.M. Montgomery*, a critical collection of essays on Montgomery’s life writing, for example, “The Alpine Path” is mentioned only in passing and by only two of the contributors whereas the *Selected Journals* are used or cited by every contributor.

representations of celebrity and femininity in a period of transition from autobiographies of success and celebrity to autobiographies of celebrities' lives. Originally published in a Canadian women's magazine, *Everywoman's World*, in over six installments in 1917, "The Alpine Path: The Story of My Career" showcases some of the dominant trends of the period such as the production of labour-focused narratives of self and the serialized publication of these narratives in periodicals. However, the text also signals some of the complexities of negotiating a public image in a cultural climate where, as we saw in Chapter One, conventional gender roles were still of primary importance in performing one's middle-class respectability and femininity, and a human-interest journalism was emerging that was increasingly preoccupied with the private lives of public figures, as we saw in Chapter Two. Montgomery was, both publicly and privately, thoroughly invested in those conventional gender roles and had built for herself a public image as a "genteel lady writer" who could be relied upon to convey wholesome, conservative values (Hammill, *Women* 4); however, it was a public image produced somewhat reluctantly, having long resisted the media's probing gaze (Lee, "Protecting Her Brand").² "The Alpine Path," as the longest, largest, and almost certainly, the most complex personal narrative and public relations campaign Montgomery launched and disseminated during her lifetime, bears the traces of Montgomery's conflicted concessions to the public interest in her life and labour. The text both invites readers to continue their experience of the Montgomery brand and circumscribes their access to her life by limiting her narrative to a discussion of her career.

Unlike other labour narratives, however, Montgomery stops just shy of narrating her celebrity. "The Alpine Path" is bound up in a very careful and tenuous negotiation of Montgomery's celebrity that both refuses to narrate it and yet refuses to hide it. Implicitly, as we

² Montgomery's agency in this process of creating and controlling her public image has been widely acknowledged and well-documented (Pike 245; Devereux 246; Gammel, *Intimate* 127; York, *Literary Celebrity* 79-90; Hammill, *Women* 4; Rubio & Waterston, "Introduction" II:x-xi.).

will see, her fame rationalizes the text (why she can speak), determines its content (what incidents contributed to the present state of fame) and its perspective (how and from what position she speaks): she will not deny that she is famous but nor will she directly say so. Explicitly, Montgomery substitutes narratives of labour for narratives of fame as a way of both confirming the value of her work and rationalizing that unspoken, but everywhere present, condition of being famous. However, even in this project of transforming discourses of fame into discourses of labour, Montgomery forgoes strong assertions of greatness and tempers her narrative with a prescribed humility that would have her deny there is any cause for a life narrative at all. This humility and modesty is carefully deployed to posture an appropriate femininity that, as we saw in Chapter Two, has historically enabled women to navigate the public genre of autobiography but, curiously, Montgomery refuses to mobilize her domesticity as part of that project even though domesticity was not only a cornerstone of constructions of femininity but of her public image as well. Reluctant to narrate either her celebrity *or* her private life, Montgomery's vision of a celebrity autobiography offers a kind of labour-focused narrative only possible in the time prior to the consolidation of the private life as the ultimate source and site of truth-telling. Yet what is most fascinating about "The Alpine Path" is not its labour focus but its capacity to implicitly inscribe her celebrity and her domestic identity in ways that concede to certain gender scripts but innovate with genre scripts. It is no easy task, Montgomery's text reveals, for women working in genres designed to facilitate the expression of men's experiences to heed both the demands of the genre and those of their culture that might limit what and how women narrate of their experiences. Yet Montgomery's tactics for managing both are as engaging as they are unusual, reminding us that not only were gender and genre scripts in flux in the first decades of the twentieth century, but this indeterminacy enabled famous women like

Montgomery to adapt, innovate, and experiment as they worked toward finding a suitable vehicle for the expression of their particular public identities.

“The Alpine Path”

“The Alpine Path” opens conventionally enough with an invocation of the circumstances that compel her to write and a tracing of her family lineage on Prince Edward Island. By the end of the first installment (June 1917), she has begun to offer anecdotes of her halcyon childhood, memories that grow more narratively coherent as she ages. In total, roughly half of “The Alpine Path” is given over to these narratives that, we are meant to glean, later became the foundation or sites of inspiration for some of her poetry and fiction. In the third installment (Aug. 1917), the pace changes and we move quickly from a meandering history of influence and inspiration to a speedy history of the practical application of her experiences and skill: in just a few paragraphs we cover her first public performance at age nine to a growing list of publications and her career as a school teacher. By the fourth installment (Sept. 1917), the style and format of the autobiography shift dramatically as Montgomery relies more and more heavily on quoting extensively from her journals (the exception being a brief section on the experience of writing and publishing *Anne of Green Gables*). Equally puzzling as this shift in format is the conspicuous change in content in the fifth installment (Oct. 1917): whereas narratives had, hitherto, been closely related to either the influence or pursuit of her literary career, the last fifth of the text turns into a travelogue of Montgomery’s honeymoon in the UK. In the final paragraphs, her literary accomplishments since her honeymoon are quickly summed up and she concludes with lofty sentiments borrowed from Keats’s *Endymion* that rationalize literary “immortality” as the product of hard work and sacrifice.

“The Alpine Path,” it is clear, is not an autobiography of celebrity. Unlike Maud Allan’s *My Life and Dancing* (1908) or Emma Albani’s *Forty Years of Song* (1911), Montgomery is not interested in cataloguing her cultural conquests in order to affirm her cultural worth. In fact, there appears to be a marked decision to avoid narrating any experience or consequence of success or celebrity. In place of a narrative of being famous, “The Alpine Path” tells us what it is like to become famous—what events, talents, and happy accidents coalesced to produce the current, though unnarrated, state of being a famous woman writer. In some respects, then, Montgomery’s text resembles McClung’s first memoir, *Clearing in the West* (1935), which similarly focused on childhood adventures and talents, and traced the origins of the narrating adult. However, whereas McClung’s intention to write a sequel inscribing her public life is implied in *Clearing*’s conclusion, Montgomery offers no such hints or promises in her memoir, nor does she ever allude to the possibility in her journals.

In many respects, Montgomery’s decision not to narrate her celebrity life makes a good deal of sense. As we saw in Chapter One, Canadians were acutely sensitive to the movement of women out of the home and into the public sphere and probably exceptionally so when Montgomery was composing (1916) and publishing (1917) this memoir, the years in which Canadian women began to achieve suffrage. The perceived conflict between the demands of a woman’s public/laboring life and her capacity to fulfill her obligations to the private sphere engendered considerable anxiety, as evidenced by the unflattering depictions of Nellie McClung as a bad mother or the careful way which media articles promoting public women assured us of their attentiveness to their homes.³ These cultural conditions created a highly unstable ideological terrain for public women to navigate and such instability made it increasingly

³ For example: *Everywoman’s World* often profiled important and/or famous women and, beginning in 1917, dedicated a regular monthly column to featuring an exceptional public woman. These articles, however, were careful to represent both the public and private accomplishments of the featured woman.

difficult to know how fame contextualized one's image and labour or how to respond. Montgomery's image, name, and labour, far from being contained within quiet private spheres, circulated widely and garnered her a strong fan-base whose desire to know her better and consume more products about and by her, seemed to contradict their ideological investment in women's domesticity and place in the private sphere. Moreover, in Montgomery's experience, fame was not only perceived as an agent of change, but one that had been coded negatively: in "The Alpine Path" she notes a reviewer who recently condemned her work as showing "the insidious influence of popularity and success" (Oct. 1917:8) when, unbeknownst to the reviewer, the material had been written long before *Anne* had brought Montgomery stardom. In this cultural climate, it would have been difficult for Montgomery to revel in or even relate the excesses of celebrity life without compromising the rural, modest, and genteel public image that she had hitherto cultivated (Hammill, *Women* 4, 110; Pike 245; Karr 125). If other Canadian women at this time—such as Maud Allan, Emma Albani, and Marie Dressler—found ways to narrate that life and maintain their public identities it was because their public personas could accommodate these narratives.

However, if a narrative of her life as a famous woman could not or should not be narrated, "The Alpine Path" makes clear that Montgomery was not content to let convention and gender scripts completely overwrite her success. The alpine path metaphor that governs the text comprises an important part of Montgomery's strategy to signal but not speak of being a celebrity. This metaphor, invoked in the text's title and elaborated upon in a poem, structures the memoir: in lieu of the lofty "heights" of success, she will tell us of the trek up the alpine path to that point (June 1917:5). The alpine path is thus figured not as a space but as a journey or vehicle—it is a means of arriving at one's goal and a story of this path allows one to rationalize a

focus on the past journey rather than the present condition. As a construct, the alpine path metaphor is, of course, a patently false one: the path to fame is neither pretty nor does it end, but the framework it provides reiterates and confirms popular notions that success is the product of hard work while effacing the experiences (and considerable labour) of being famous.⁴ Although “The Alpine Path” is clearly not concerned with recovering the “hard and steep path” of being famous (June 1917:5), Montgomery’s journals demonstrate that she did not lack the vocabulary to articulate that experience; rather, its absence in the autobiography suggests that she found it incompatible with her image or counter-productive to her purpose.

The poem from which Montgomery appropriated the alpine path metaphor, “The Fringed Gentian” (author unknown, originally published in *Godey’s Lady Book*), is reproduced, in part, in “The Alpine Path” and it is through this text that she finds a means of speaking directly of fame, albeit in abstract, general terms, and of indirectly signaling her own fame. Only the final eight lines of the poem are reproduced in “The Alpine Path”; however, the full text, as found in her journals, is useful here for it more clearly marks Montgomery’s strategic approach to representing her celebrity:

The Fringed Gentian

Lift up, thy dewy fringed eyes,
Oh, little Alpine flower,
The tear that trembling on them lies
Has sympathetic power
To move my own, for I, too, dream
With thee of distant heights
Whose lofty peaks are all agleam
With rosy dazzling lights.

⁴ Although Montgomery continually mobilizes discourses of “arrival” throughout her autobiography to signal success and the end of the “hard and steep path,” we know from Montgomery’s journals that there was no “end” to the alpine path—the work continued to be hard, there was never quite enough money, success was never assured, publishers demanded and deceived, fans pestered and annoyed, and stardom threaten to fade: indeed, if the governing metaphor of the memoir’s tale of fame was an alpine path, the journals’ might justly be characterized as a Slough of Despond.

Who dreams of wider spheres revealed
Up higher near the sky
Within the valley's narrow field
Cannot contented lie.
Who longs for mountain breezes rare
Is restless down below
Like me for stronger, purer air
Thou pinest, too, I know.
Where aspirations, hopes, desires
Combining fondly dwell,
Where burn the never-dying flowers
Of Genius' wondrous spell.
Such towering summits would I reach
Oh, little flower, the secret teach
The weary way make plain.
Then whisper, blossom, in thy sleep⁵
How I may upward climb
The Alpine path, so hard, so steep
That leads to heights sublime.
How I may reach that far-off goal
Of true and honored fame
And write upon its shining scroll
A woman's humble name. (*SJLMM* III: 316-7)

The speaker, in likening herself to an alpine flower, embraces an appropriately feminine metaphor but one that also suggests that delicacy does not preclude hardiness. Moreover, as a flower, there is something natural and valuable about the speaker's desires, a promotion of a gendered experience of fame that is made explicit in the final line. The poem thus not only constructs a specifically female experience of celebrity, but goes to some effort to signal the appropriateness and value of this goal and the labour required to achieve it.⁶ Hence, while Montgomery frames the poem as a critical articulation of her youthful aspirations (June 1917:5), it clearly services her adult agenda of rationalizing her fame as a woman. In her journals, she

⁵ The poem, as quoted in her journal, uses "When" instead of "Then" but this is likely a transcription error of Montgomery's or the journal's editors. I have preserved the version of this line that is found in both the *Nimbus* and *Everywoman's World* editions of "The Alpine Path."

⁶ If we recall from Chapter Two, Nellie McClung also used poetry about fame to articulate her ambition but, unlike Montgomery, McClung's adaptation of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "The Ladder of St. Augustine" uses a specifically masculine subject and model of success.

suggests that the verse was a more accurate representation of her ambition than the texts of canonical male authors: “It is only newspaper rhyme—and yet through all my childhood and girlhood it was more of an inspiration to me than all Milton’s starry splendor” (*SJLMM* III: 316). In “The Alpine Path” she even protects the verse from her own critical qualifications; she does not call it “only newspaper rhyme” but a verse from a “current magazine” (June 1917:5). Moreover, the exact source of this verse is left unstated so that when she later suggests in her memoir that *Godey’s Lady Book* produces “literary pabulum” (Aug. 1917:16), “The Fringed Gentian” remains untouched by this condemnation.⁷

However, what Montgomery does not draw our attention to was that the unknown author of “The Fringed Gentian” was writing a direct response to William Cullen Bryant’s popular and well-anthologized poem, “To the Fringed Gentian.”⁸ In this context, it becomes apparent that the author was not simply seeking a means of expressing the artistic passions of women, but that she was doing so in response to a very masculine construction of a similar scenario:

To the Fringed Gentian

Thou blossom bright with autumn dew,
And coloured with the heaven’s own blue,
That openest when the quiet light
Succeeds the keen and frosty night.

Thou comest not when violets lean
O’er wandering brooks and springs unseen,
Or columbines, in purple dressed,
Nod o’er the ground-bird’s hidden nest.

⁷ Montgomery’s criticism of *Godey’s*, a monthly magazine that had much in common with *Everywoman’s World*, seems to be characteristic of what Tiessen has called Montgomery’s multiple and contradictory “evaluations of mass culture” (234). As a famous author circulating in mass, international markets she had a vested interest in protecting the value of those kinds of cultural products but she was also, simultaneously, invested in the value of high culture and its usefulness for signaling her own cultured accomplishments.

⁸ It is unclear when Bryant’s verse was first published but it is found in his 1847 collection, *Poems*. In light of Montgomery’s previous teaching career and the prominence of the poem in American anthologies for school children (Rubin 120), it is probably a fair assumption that Montgomery was familiar with this poem.

Thou waitest late and com'st alone,
When woods are bare and birds are flown,
And frosts and shortening days portend
The aged year is near his end.

Then doth thy sweet and quiet eye
Look through its fringes to the sky,
Blue—blue—as if that sky let fall
A flower from its cerulean wall.

I would that thus, when I shall see
The hour of death draw near to me,
Hope, blossoming within my heart,
May look to heaven as I depart.

In Bryant's poem, a detached and contemplative masculine speaker addresses the flower and notes its hardiness, beauty, and isolation. It functions to remind him of approaching death and, from its relationship to the sky, the speaker understands how he must model his own approach to death and spiritual concerns. The author of "The Fringed Gentian" has borrowed much from Bryant but the changes significantly inscribe the importance of women's experiences and redirect our gaze from spiritual to more worldly matters, endorsing not just the aspiration for fame but *women's* aspirations for fame. Moreover, the lesson to be learned from the flower that is so self-evident to Bryant's speaker, is, in the adaptation, a "secret" that must be imparted but never is: the poem never tells us how to "upward climb" (*SJLMM* III: 317). In the context of Montgomery's autobiography, however, these lines then function as a rhetorical device that rationalize the production of the text—"The Alpine Path" will uncover that "secret": "It is indeed a 'hard and steep' path;" Montgomery writes immediately after quoting the poem, "and if any word I can write will assist or encourage another pilgrim along the path, that word I gladly and willingly write" (June 1917:5). This confident "I" that narrates this process, however, reminds us that Montgomery speaks not from the beginning but the end of this path—from success and fame. The rhetorical device of likening herself to the flower is thus particularly apt: just as the

flower is capable of revealing the secret to getting to the top because it has been or is there, Montgomery thus imaginatively roots herself in one spot—the valley below—in order to trace her movement to the current heights.

This division of the self into an “I” that is humbly rendered up as the narrated site of experience and an “I” that boldly narrates from a space of accomplishment is a sophisticated strategy for both inscribing her fame and success and yet mobilizing sufficiently modest discourses of experience. Although it was not until Barthes’s 1972 essay, “To Write: An Intransitive Verb?” that a distinction between the textual “I” who “recounts” and the textual “I” who is “recounted” was articulated as a specific site of theoretical investigation (140), it is clear from its use in “The Alpine Path” that this strategy has a long and important history in women’s writing. However, where Barthes sought to open up a discourse of “I” that probes and questions autobiography’s unproblematic assumption of a unified “I,” Montgomery’s strategy depends upon a unified “I.” The humble postures of narrated experience are meant to characterize the speaking “I,” therein mobilizing important gender scripts and genre conventions that render Montgomery’s project appropriate, but the “I” who narrates does so from a space of affirmed recognition, ensuring that these conventions do not diminish the value of the subject, her labour, or her fame.

This temporal disjunction between the two “I”s (one is on the path, the other has “arrived”), invites audiences to anticipate that moment when the narrated self will catch up to the narrating self. However, the production of a speaking, unified “I” of the present is indefinitely deferred: at the moment of arrival when Montgomery can finally speak to her success, the text ends:

The “Alpine Path” has been climbed, after many years of toil and endeavour. It was not an easy ascent, but even in the struggle at its hardest there was delight and a zest known only to those who aspire to the heights.

“He ne’er is crowned

With immortality, who fears to follow

Where airy voices lead.”

True, most true! We must follow our “airy voices,” follow them through bitter suffering and discouragement and darkness, through doubt and disbelief, through valleys of humiliation and over delectable hills where sweet things would lure us from our quest, ever and always must we follow, if we would reach the “far-off divined event” and look out thence to the aerial spires of our City of Fulfilment [sic]. (Nov. 1917:40)

Having traced the climb and thus rationalized both success and the confident “I” that narrates, Montgomery can now declare rather than imply her accomplishment. However, this declaration also refuses to narrate that experience and the “I” disappears; in its place is a “we” that is returned to the alpine path where success is, once again, “far-off” and not at all certain: “*if* we would reach...” (emphasis added). These rhetorical strategies distance Montgomery from the romantic, masculine, and grandiose discourses that characterize “arrival” at the very moment she could legitimately mobilize them.⁹

Montgomery’s reluctance to inscribe her closing (and, as we shall see, her opening) with confident statements of her success and fame appears to be a concession to gender scripts rather than a genuine uncertainty about her celebrity. These performances of modesty and deferment are important but they do not overwrite or supplant the considerable material that inscribes her confidence in her self-worth. There are, for example, frequent moments of slippage between her “I”s when the confidence of the narrator retrospectively informs the actions or thoughts of the

⁹ York has also suggested that the language of the conclusion is religious and “Bunyanesque” (“Strategies” 104), a discourse that would suitably frame this declaration of having achieved such grandiose “heights” and the “City of Fulfilment”. Yet Montgomery’s invocation of a *Pilgrim’s Progress*-like journey also serves to further rationalize the importance of her text. If we recall the conclusion of Bunyan’s text, Christian passes into the gates of heaven not because he has been a goodly pilgrim on the path but because he has a Certificate of his election—without this text pilgrims like Ignorance find themselves barred from the lofty heights of heaven. In “The Fringed Gentian,” the unspoken “secret” is the token required by alpine path traveller to scale the “heights sublime” and Montgomery, having positioned her text as the articulation of that “secret,” has effectively transformed her text from being an aid to “another pilgrim along the path” (June 1917:5) to the key to their success.

“I” narrated. This is most notable in those moments when Montgomery suggests she had anticipated her own success: “down, deep down, under all the discouragement and rebuff, I knew I would ‘arrive’ some day” (Aug. 1917: 33). These discourses of ambition and arrival that occur throughout the text work to remind the reader that Montgomery is speaking from that state of arrival even if she cannot, as yet, speak to it. The potential unseemliness of this ambition is defused by Montgomery’s careful framing that suggests her celebrity was almost inevitable because she was marked, not just with a hunger for success, but with a foreknowledge of it.¹⁰

This is most effectively performed in the journal entries she quotes:

March 21, 1901

...This [she has noticed her verses are improving] encourages me to hope that in the future I may achieve something worth while. I never expect to be famous. I merely want to have a recognized place among good workers in my chosen profession. That, I honestly believe, is happiness, and the harder to win the sweeter and more lasting when won (Sept. 1917:8).

Unlike retrospective narrative, a journal entry suggests a legitimate, unaltered representation of the past self and here the entry is designed to drive home the modesty of Montgomery’s ambitions and, of course, implicate their realization—not only did she “achieve something worth while” and become “famous,” she appears to have anticipated it. What is missing, however, from the context of this quotation is that in her journal entry from March 21, 1901, Montgomery was not performing a naïve anticipation of her later celebrity but, in fact, tracing the history of her “star” (*SJLMM* I:261). By 1901 she had achieved considerable success in writing and she could expect money for her efforts, was often asked for stories, and was circulating “in several periodicals as one of the ‘well-known and popular’ contributors” (*SJLMM* I:290). Thus the entry from 1901 is not a candid or uncanny anticipation of her success but part of a larger confirmation of it.

¹⁰ Very similar rhetorical tactics were used by McClung in *Clearing in the West* (1935). See Chapter Two.

We might also note in this quotation that Montgomery strategically disavows a desire for fame and channels her ambitious energies into pursuing goals defined by labour. This distinction between fame and honest labour is a critical strategy for Montgomery to inscribe her fame while seemingly distancing her from it. As the excised portions of the “original” quotation make clear¹¹, Montgomery carefully controlled how “The Alpine Path” responded to and represented her fame:

I never expect to be famous—I don’t want to be, really, often as I’ve dreamed of it. But I do want to have a recognized place among good workers in my chosen profession. That, I honestly believe, is happiness and the harder to win the sweeter and more lasting when won. (*SJLMM* I:258).

What is important here is not that Montgomery dreamt of fame but that she felt the need to remove that sentiment from her public memoir and create a more modest articulation of her expectations. These changes suggest that Montgomery believed there were limits to what discourses of ambition she could safely mobilize—that it was more acceptable to articulate ambition in pursuit of labour than for the purposes of securing fame.

The judicious editing of this quotation quite neatly encapsulates Montgomery’s approach to representing her celebrity in “The Alpine Path” as a whole: she has established her fame without seeming to have narrated it and has rendered her ambitions and narrative in the more

¹¹ In comparing what editorial decisions Montgomery made in copying her journal into “The Alpine Path,” it is worth keeping in mind that the journals may not necessarily represent the “original” unedited text. “The Alpine Path” was published in 1917 and draws frequently from her journals but the existing journals were also recopied beginning in 1919 and, as their editors have pointed out, we will never know how much was altered and changed in that transcription process (Rubio & Waterston V:xvi). We do know that the process was instigated by a desire to control her posthumous public image—it is thus possible that the transcribed journals were rewritten to bring them more into line with the narratives already disseminated by “The Alpine Path” or elsewhere. This, however, seems unlikely for several reasons: first, when Montgomery began the transcription process, she began with her very early journals and would not have reached the relevant sections we see in “The Alpine Path” for several years. Moreover, “The Alpine Path” did not stay in circulation long: we know from Montgomery’s journals (V:109) that the text was, at best, circulating privately amongst friends and possibly fans who had assembled the relevant issues from *Everywoman’s World*. As the text neither circulated for a long time nor had a lasting impact on the public’s cognizance of her life story (as her record of the misinformation perpetuated about her life suggests), it seems unlikely that the journals were rewritten with “The Alpine Path” in mind and more likely that Montgomery edited selections from the journals for her memoir with the purpose of bringing them into alignment with her public image.

socially acceptable discourses of hard work and labour. This organization of the text around her career, with its careful history of her Prince Edward Island experiences and the writing endeavors that culminated in the production of both Montgomery the celebrated writer and *Anne of Green Gables*, is clearly a useful ploy for inscribing the value of her labour and her place in the public sphere. In taking her public profile as a writer as the subject to be accounted for, Montgomery embraces the teleological structures of public life-storying and in mobilizing the alpine path construct, can not only rationalize an account of the journey rather than the accomplishment, but can easily parse from representation those elements of her private life that do not account for the making of the writing career.

Montgomery's focus on her public labour is, as noted in Chapter Two, characteristic of the period and the overall shift in women's public life writing at this time to labour narratives. Although originally entitled "My Literary Career" (*SJLMM* II: 201), the final full title, "The Alpine Path: The Story of My Career," nevertheless maintains Montgomery's emphasis and explicit direction to her readers about the scope and limitations of the kind of first-person narrative she was willing to share. This focus is reiterated in very clear terms in the opening paragraph:

When the editor of *Everywoman's World* asked me to write "The Story of My Career," I smiled with a little touch of incredulous amusement. My career? Had I a career? Was not—should not—a "career" be something splendid, wonderful, spectacular at the very least, something varied and exciting? Could my long, uphill struggle, through many quiet, uneventful years, be termed a "career"? It had never occurred to me to call it so; and, on first thought, it did not seem to me that there was much to be said about that same long, monotonous struggle. But it appeared to be a whim of the aforesaid editor that I should say what little there was to be said; and in those same long years I acquired the habit of accommodating myself to the whims of editors to such an inveterate degree that I have not yet been able to shake it off. So I shall cheerfully tell my tame story. If it does nothing else, it may serve to encourage some other toiler who is struggling along in the weary pathway I once followed to success. (June 1917:5)

As in her approach to representing her celebrity, Montgomery postures an appropriate modesty about her labour and her success. She even appears to invoke some of the rhetorical tactics used by nineteenth-century women to inscribe their experiences in appropriately genteel forms: evading direct claims to greatness, disavowing a comprehension of or aspiration to a place in the public sphere, and redirecting the impetus for the production of the text onto an appropriately masculine authority figure (Etherington-Wright 133). Very similar rhetorical postures can also be seen in the openings of Maud Allan and Mazo de la Roche's autobiographies, but what makes Montgomery's posture remarkable is that it does not seem particularly sincere.¹² There is something coy about this posture: the repetitive questions, the placement of career in quotation marks when it is confidently invoked in her title, and her posture of "incredulous amusement," are suggestive of a feigned modesty, particularly in light of the closing sentiment that declares her "success." Moreover, the feminization of the masculine authority that is supposed to guard her against charges of unseemly narcissism (twice she frames the editor as subject to "whims"), would seem to confirm that Montgomery is simultaneously invoking and corrupting the very conventions that are intended to make her fame and her narrative more respectable. Carole Gerson, noting a similar trend in the introductions and prefaces of 19th century professional

¹² Allan's preface to *My Life and Dancing* (1908) and de la Roche's *Ringing the Changes* also open with a hesitation to pick up the pen and story the self. Allan's rhetorical tactics, in particular, are worth quoting in full:

When first it was suggested to me that I should write this small book it seemed to me to savour a little of imposing on the wonderful kindness with which my work and myself have been received. But when the suggestion was backed up by the advice, almost demands, of friends in whose judgment I have confidence, my scruples vanished, and I decided *liberare animam meam* to liberate my mind, as the Classic author puts it.

If it gives pleasure to or interests the friends who have appreciated my work, or even bring those who have misunderstood it to a better understanding, and especially if it prove helpful to any young girl whose ambition it is to take up an artistic career, I shall feel most amply rewarded. I shall feel that I was justified in braving criticism on the score of the premature publication of even so brief an outline as this of my life's work. (Preface)

Like Montgomery, Allan hesitates to assert herself, opens and closes with conditional constructions, deflects the autobiographical impulse to an external (presumably male authority), characterizes her narrative as diminutive or "small," and uses discourses of career to shape her focus and rationalize her text.

women writers, confirms that when “they invoke apology, their overstatement of the conventions invites an ironic reading [... and this] excessive humility may seem to be a strategic manoeuvre that underscored the assertiveness of the ensuing text” (59-60). Montgomery, it would seem, is playing a little game that compels her to play by the rules devised for women to navigate masculine genres but she is doing so in a way as to align her with other women who have also rendered those rules not only visible but slightly ridiculous.

The remainder of “The Alpine Path” further belies the uncertainty of the introduction for it is designed to inscribe her life in terms of her career and ensure that her readers are well aware of the hard work her success necessitated. Lorraine York has characterized this strategy as an “apprenticeship narrative,” a narrative tactic mobilized by literary celebrities who often struggle to shape the public’s perception of writing as “real” labour and to “temper fame’s legendary swiftness with proof of cultural value, in the form of literary apprenticeships steeped over a longer period of time” (*Literary Celebrity* 4). In *Literary Celebrity in Canada*, York convincingly traces such a narrative at work in “The Alpine Path,” but Montgomery’s text does not, it should be noted, consistently invoke an apprenticeship narrative—in fact, this rhetorical strategy is limited to the second half of the third installment. The rest of the text remains equally focused on rationalizing and historicizing Montgomery’s career and labour but uses other constructs to do so: in the first three installments (June-August), for example, she uses discourses of natural aptitude and biological destiny to justify her work. Her family, she demonstrates, has a long history on Prince Edward Island, a space so special that its “tang” she suggests “gets into our blood” (June 1917:5), making her famous portraits of that landscape and its people appear to be almost an inevitable and biological product of her geographic origins. However, it is not just generations of P.E.I. “tang” that Montgomery embodies, but also the family’s long history of

literary talent and strong-willed women. Interestingly, while she attributes this talent to her mother's side of the family, it was the men and not the women who possessed this predisposition. Montgomery thus positions herself as the slightly unnatural, but logical result of this family history—a woman with a man's talent but the strength of character to overcome whatever complications this might engender: “if the love of writing is bred in your bone you will be practically non-squelchable” (Aug. 1917:16). Biological destiny, it appears, will not be denied.

A discourse of biological destiny might help Montgomery rationalize her fitness for pursuing a writing career but it runs a serious risk of raising the spectre of another kind of labour for which she is supposed to be particularly suited—domesticity. Like other famous women in the early twentieth century, Montgomery was caught in the nexus where conventional gender roles were at odds with the emerging possibilities for cultivating celebrity. As noted in Chapter One, even as their labour enabled them to cultivate vibrant and sustainable public lives, women were still expected to be mothers and wives first and foremost. Montgomery was, however, privately and publicly heavily invested in these gender roles (Hammill, *Women* 211) and actively incorporated and promoted a domestic component to her public image as a genteel and feminine woman who embraced conventional gender roles (Hammill, *Women* 4, 110; Pike 245; Karr 125). In “The Alpine Path,” however, this domestic content is conspicuously absent. Her narratives of her childhood place her in a vaguely nurturing, albeit motherless, environment but primacy is afforded to natural rather than domestic spaces. There are no narratives that reveal any inclination for the domestic arts; all interests, skills, and ambition are focused on anticipating her future work as a writer. Without warning, we are told that she married but not to whom or why, and the indifference with which this event is narrated is out of character for an otherwise vibrant

and engaged narrator.¹³ Ewan Macdonald remains unnamed and unnarrated throughout the text, an absence that becomes increasingly conspicuous when Montgomery narrates (in strikingly detached prose for an author with a reputation for romantic fiction) episodes from their honeymoon. Of life after the honeymoon, “The Alpine Path” is silent, offering only a list of texts she has written since then to account for the last six years. Into that stretch of time, Montgomery might have written of her delight in finally becoming a mother, of her children and married life, or even her work in the church and community, but she does not, refusing the most obvious opportunities to inscribe a domestic plot into the story of her life.

While Montgomery’s evasiveness about her private and domestic life in “The Alpine Path” appears to contradict her well-established reputation as a domestic creature, this gap in her narrative needs to be understood in the larger context of how Montgomery managed the representation of her domestic and private life in the media in general. It is well documented that Montgomery resisted the developing human-interest journalism that probed for personal and private information about public figures. In a journal entry dated Nov 10, 1908, she wrote: “I had a letter to-day from a Toronto journalist who had been detailed to write a special article about me for his paper—wants to know all about my birth, education, early life, when and how I began to write etc.” Somewhat begrudgingly she accedes to his wishes but on her own terms: “Well, I’ll give him the bare facts he wants. He will not know any more about the real *me* or my real life for it all, nor will his readers” (*SJLMM* I:342). However, as Ponce de Leon has demonstrated, changing trends in journalism now favoured intimate and realistic rather than hagiographic

¹³ The suddenness of Ewan Macdonald’s appearance in her memoir is in keeping with Montgomery’s tactics for integrating Macdonald into her other life-writing texts (in her private journals, he also similarly just “appears”); moreover, according to Christine Etherington-Wright, the “appearance” of a fiancée as a *fait accompli* is a fairly typical convention of early twentieth-century women’s memoirs (150). All we learn of Macdonald in “The Alpine Path” is that his employment as a pastor in Ontario was the impetus for Montgomery’s move from her beloved Prince Edward Island; otherwise he remains an enigma.

portraits of celebrities (33-34, 61) and a realistic and authentic profile was increasingly contingent upon accessing and representing the individual's private life where, it was believed, the "real" person could be found (42-75). In this cultural climate, Montgomery's attempt to ward off reporters with just "the bare facts" was doomed to fail. In Benjamin Lefebvre's compendium of media articles on Montgomery in the *L.M. Montgomery Reader*, it appears that, for the first year or two after the publication of *Anne of Green Gables*, Montgomery could and did restrict the flow of information about her, keeping the focus on her "writing life" and masking the more personal details about the writer.¹⁴ However, as the journals attest, the volume and frequency of requests for information on Montgomery only increased and, although she composed a stock retort of "'information' regarding my childhood and 'career'" for distribution in January 1910, this did not close the door on public interest or speculation (*SJLMM* I: 348).

Neither press nor publishers, it seemed, could be satisfied with the kind of distance and anonymity Montgomery seemed to crave and so, in this first decade of her celebrity, we see a public image and public relations strategy emerging. Wherever possible, Montgomery attempted to keep the gaze on her writing, but it was a strategy that worked best if she was the author of the article. Such a narrow scope was not sustainable in interviews where reporters increasingly needed to showcase their intimacy with their subject and they did so with Montgomery by describing her appearance and the setting of the interview, and by asking questions unrelated to her writing career. As early as 1910, Montgomery was crafting a public identity steeped in conventional constructions of domestic femininity that were, Lefebvre notes, occasionally more

¹⁴ One 1908 article in the *Boston Journal* even obscures her gender (Lefebvre, "Introduction" 8). In 1909, we see her continuing to resist the pressure to reveal herself: in response to her publisher's anxious request for a new photo, she writes in her journal, "I hardly think it so very "urgent and important" that the great American public should see my face" (*SJLMM* I: 348).

conservative about gender roles than she had articulated in private (“Introduction” 9).¹⁵ It was, however, an eminently sensible posture to strike: not only did it coalesce nicely with the domestic worlds of her fiction, lending her and, in turn her texts, legitimacy and authority, but it was a very safe and sensible image to cultivate in a culture still heavily invested in traditional gender roles. As Holly Pike’s analysis of the publicity material in Montgomery’s scrapbooks demonstrates, it was, indeed, a very marketable image (245).

As Montgomery’s personal life changed, this portrait evolved to include Montgomery as a contented wife and doting mother who, Karr suggests, “[saw] the need for public-spirited women, [but] preferred to devote herself to home and family” (125). After 1911, we see media articles foreground Montgomery’s domestic identity as “Mrs. Ewan Macdonald, a charming wife and mother” and some even print Montgomery’s personal family photos and signal an intimate familiarity with the details of Montgomery’s home (MacMurchy 185). In short, there is much evidence to suggest that Montgomery not only began to co-operate with journalists—granting interviews and carefully choosing and staging photos—but that she was taking an active role in promoting a particular construction of her private life. The details of this life were still carefully monitored—as Montgomery writes in her journal, she was not ready to reveal to her fans “the dusty, ash-covered Cinderella of the furnace cellar” (*SJLMM* II: 374) or the drudgery of everyday domesticity—but an idealized portrait of her life in the private sphere was becoming a strategic part of her public identity. However unlike her explicit documentation of her writing life for the media and fans, this domestic identity was far more covertly performed: although she

¹⁵ In 1910, interviewers in Boston elicited from Montgomery information about her rural life in PEI, her living arrangements with her grandmother, and her opinions on Boston, suffrage, and women’s domestic responsibilities. (See “Says Woman’s Place Is Home,” Dwight’s “Want to Know How to Write Books?” and “Miss L.M. Montgomery” in Lefebvre’s *Reader*.) Not only did these articles expand the scope of public knowledge about Montgomery well beyond tales of “childhood and career,” but their preoccupation with her physical appearance soon became a staple component of most Montgomery profiles.

rarely offered explicit narratives of her life as wife and mother, she was routinely quoted or summarized as espousing women's primary place in the home. Moreover, the contexts within which she conducted her interviews—at home, on her honeymoon, etc. —and the images she provided to reporters were clearly designed to showcase that she practiced what she preached; she just left it to the journalists to narrate that portion of her life.

In light of Montgomery's media strategies when she, and not a reporter, held the pen, the scope of "The Alpine Path" is not surprising: while a narrative of the intimacies of her private life would have no doubt been eagerly consumed by readers, it would have been strikingly out of character for Montgomery. In many respects, then, "The Alpine Path" appears to function as simply a longer, more detailed version of her previous attempts to keep the focus on her writing career. However, just as she finds ways to mark and reframe her fame without speaking directly to it in "The Alpine Path," Montgomery finds alternate ways to code her domesticity. The domestic plot, while absent from the content of the text, is nevertheless implicitly inscribed in the *contexts* of the memoir's production. Montgomery, as we will see, relied heavily on her audience's awareness of the domestic brand she had forged in her previous media work and their capacity to use that identity to make sense of the text's vague domestic signals and, more importantly, fill certain gaps and silences with conventional gender scripts. Moreover, as an examination of the memoir's original serialized publication in *Everywoman's World* magazine reveals, there was a concerted effort on behalf of both the editors and Montgomery to produce a domestic frame for the narrative and further integrate it into the magazine's domestic mandate. However, in this original context there is considerable tension between the primacy that Montgomery gives to her career and the unspoken but everywhere articulated assumption that women's proper sphere is both domestic and private. As a result, the text bears the traces not

only of the pressure on Montgomery to perform an explicit domesticity but also the editor's mandate to produce that domestic context for her.

"The Alpine Path" is full of strategic silences that allude to but stop just short of inscribing conventional domesticity. Montgomery's refusal to narrate her current experience of fame, for example, is a critical strategy that seeks to protect her domestic, rural brand from the effects of nine years of mass market international fame. By narrating only the labour that built the career and not her experience of celebrity and success, the memoir hermetically seals her off from the unsalutary effects that fame was believed to have on both individuals and their labour. The fruits of that success are also absent: by remaining silent on the subject of how one might take a European honeymoon or run a household on a pastor's salary, Montgomery allows the audience's assumptions to supply a narrative that enables both husband and wife to assume roles more befitting traditional gender scripts.

"The Alpine Path" further implicates and builds Montgomery's brand as an advocate of conventional domesticity through its representation of (or, more accurately, its failure to represent) how she balanced her domestic work while nurturing a writing career at the same time. As we can see in the opening of the fourth installment, the absence of such narratives suggests that there is nothing remarkable or strenuous about managing both at once:

"Grandfather died in 1898 and Grandmother was left alone in the old homestead. So I gave up teaching and stayed home with her. By 1901 I was beginning to make a "livable" income for myself by my pen" (Sept.1917:8). Of the domestic labour that occupied her from 1898 to 1901 we are told nothing as if to signal that domestic labour is neither real work nor did it imperil her creative powers. Into this silence, readers are invited to remember the fate of Anne Shirley at the end of *Anne of Green Gables*. Like Montgomery, Anne must give up her teaching career when

Matthew dies and return home to be with Marilla, but it is a sacrifice that is both proper and filled with its own domestic rewards:

Anne's horizons had closed in since the night she had sat there after coming home from Queen's; but if the path set before her feet was to be narrow she knew that flowers of quiet happiness would bloom along it. The joys of sincere work and worthy aspiration and congenial friendship were to be hers; nothing could rob her of her birthright of fancy or her ideal world of dreams. And there was always the bend in the road!
“God's in his heaven, all's right with the world,” whispered Anne softly. (307-8)

Although Anne appears resigned and contented by this turn of events, it is significant that the narrator articulates what Anne (and Montgomery in “The Alpine Path”) cannot—a kind of mourning for a lost career and closing horizons. The promise of fulfillment from domestic labour is offered as a kind of compensation but, more important, this “path” does not preclude or prohibit that natural impulse toward creative work. Moreover, this discourse of paths and flowers further encourages the audience of “The Alpine Path” to read parallels between Montgomery's experience and Anne's and to inscribe a contentment with domesticity that Montgomery could not or would not (we know from her journals that the abandonment of her teaching career and her return home were marked by unhappiness and depression). Fans would know that for Montgomery there is, like Anne, a “bend in the road” that signals further career prospects and marriage.

In contrast to the unspoken but implied harmony between domesticity and writing, Montgomery is quite explicit that labour performed outside of the house is affected by domestic obligations; just as her teaching career must be abandoned upon the death of her grandfather, she narrates the difficulty she had maintaining her writing career while working outside the home. We linger with Montgomery in her memories of trying to write in the bitter cold hours before the teaching day began and we are made to feel the exhaustion that attends copy-editing work so that, when evenings must be given over to “keep my buttons sewed on and my stockings

darned,” moments to write must be stolen during work hours (Sept. 1917:8). What Montgomery represents (and fails to represent) is suggestive of an implicit critique of women’s labour outside of the home: her previous jobs clearly affected her ability to write or had to be abandoned in order to attend to family duty. In rehearsing some of the common criticisms of the dangers of women working outside the home, “The Alpine Path” signals Montgomery’s conservative politics and, more important, protects her own career from being implicated in these arguments. The absence of narratives about domestic labour and a writing career implicitly suggests that the labour performed in one arena will not affect or encroach upon the labour in another, an argument she made more explicitly in other media interviews and articles.¹⁶

Not all of Montgomery’s strategic silences about her private, domestic life create opportunities for conventional gender scripts to flourish. Part of the way through the fifth installment, the memoir conspicuously shifts its form and content from narratives of her career to journal entries from her honeymoon; however there is still a strict frugality governing Montgomery’s representation of this private life. These narratives are restrained, even dull, travel entries that perform a kind of vague domesticity while still evading personal narratives. Ewan Macdonald is noticeably absent from these honeymoon narratives, but it is an absence that is legitimized, in some respects, by the shift in form: one expects to find gaps in travelogues and journal writing, particularly when it is clear that only excerpts and fragments from these texts are being represented. Journal entries also allow Montgomery to avoid the teleological impulse of retrospective narrative—she does not need to make the honeymoon or the travel speak to or

¹⁶ For example, in the *Toronto Star Weekly* article, “Career and Home Go Together Well For a Woman If She Can Conduct Her Career at Home, Says L.M. Montgomery, Author of ‘Anne of Green Gables’” (Muir 207-211), Montgomery outlines a system for balancing her domestic obligations and a writing career, but it is a system that relies heavily on the premise that these “professions” can be “successfully combine[d]” because they are performed in the same space and do not affect each other (she does not, of course, explain how one might keep these worlds from colliding).

culminate in a particular point because the narratives can stand as isolated incidents of the past. Yet without this impulse, these narratives also appear directionless: they cannot be recuperated into the alpine path construct of her writing career, for success and “arrival” occur several years before marriage, nor is there a clear association between her experiences travelling and the content of subsequent novels.

This unusual (and unexpected) turn in the content and form of her narrative bears the traces of Montgomery’s conflicted concessions to her audience and her editors. In some respects, on the subject of her marriage, Montgomery couldn’t remain silent: an allusion to her role as a wife was not only a critical component of her brand but also necessary for bringing the content of “The Alpine Path” in alignment with other versions of her life already circulating in the media. We also know that Montgomery was under some pressure to perform more of her private life, particularly her love life, from the editors of *Everywoman’s World* for whom she first wrote the text:

I had an amusing letter from the editor of *Everywoman’s World* today. At least, it was amusing to me. I recently wrote the story of “My Literary Career” for them at their request -- only I didn’t call it that. I called it “The Alpine Path” ...
I sent “The Alpine Path” to the editor and he writes, professing himself as delighted with the story, but laments that there is nothing in it “concerning my love affairs.” He is sure I must have had some. Will I not write an additional thousand words and tell my “adoring Canadian girls” of my pangs and passions!!!!
Ye Gods! Suppose I were to do it! ...
The dear public must get along without this particular tid-bit. I have snubbed that editor very unmistakably, telling him I am not one of those who throw open the portals of sacred shrines to the gaze of the crowd.
But for my own amusement I am going to write a full and frank -- at least as frank as possible -- account of all my “love affairs”. Possibly my grandchildren -- or my great grandchildren -- may read it [Tells narrative of her love affairs]
But I write not of these things for the Editor of *Everywoman’s*. My grandchildren may include what they like in my biography. But while I live these things are arcana. (*SJLMM* II:201-206)

The editor's interest in a narrative of "pangs and passions" stems not from a desire to provide a comprehensive portrait of Montgomery's life but to capture the largest market share possible for the magazine and, perhaps, to further integrate Montgomery's narrative into the magazine's domestic mandate. It is significant that he does not anticipate that such narratives would run counter to the magazine and Montgomery's middle-class domestic brand, whereas Montgomery is justifiably apprehensive about the impact of Herman Leard and Ed Simpson stories (represented in the journals but excised from the above quotation). We are reminded by the presence of these stories in the journal and their absence in "The Alpine Path" that what Montgomery thought was appropriate content to disseminate while she was living was considerably different from the information she would allow to inform her posthumous public image. Indeed, the publication of Montgomery's journals has dramatically shifted how critics represent and understand Montgomery but, during her lifetime, it was crucial for her own sake and the sake of her brand to tightly control the dissemination of these private musings and personal experiences.

While the absence of a domestic narrative in Montgomery's memoir offers some strategic advantages to managing the conditions of her celebrity and safeguarding the value of her career and fame, it nevertheless remains puzzling that for a woman whose public image is so intimately bound up in performances of an idealized domesticity, the narrative has done so little to confirm or protect that image. We know from Montgomery's journals that she ascribed considerable value and importance to the labour of the domestic sphere, working hard to manage her household, raise her children, and participate in community functions; moreover, we know from her media strategies that she performed a conservative femininity and invoked domestic contexts in her interviews. "The Alpine Path" thus appears, in some respects, at odds with what we know

about Montgomery until we recover the conditions of its original publication in *Everywoman's World* magazine in 1917. There the domestic world is unavoidable: not only is the memoir literally woven between advertisements for face creams and foot ointments and editorials on child-rearing and house-chores, but an extra-textual domestic frame has been consciously crafted by both Montgomery and the editors. Over the six issues in which Montgomery's memoir was serialized (June - November 1917), articles, editorial commentary, and advertisements were frequently designed to support and, in some cases, recontextualize the content of the text; moreover, photographs from Montgomery's personal collection, often accompanied by first-person commentary, consistently frame the first page of each new installment. These features, missing from both the 1974 Fitzhenry & Whiteside and the 2005 Nimbus editions of *The Alpine Path*, change how we read the text and how we understand its role in affirming and crafting Montgomery's public image.

Although, as her journal bears out, Montgomery and the editors of *Everywoman's World* did not always have the same vision for the scope of her life story, it nevertheless made perfect sense for Montgomery to produce a memoir for *Everywoman's World* and for the periodical to pay handsomely for the privilege of serializing it: *Everywoman's World* was a Canadian magazine whose branding was perfectly aligned with the public image that Montgomery had hitherto crafted. Created in 1914 as a vehicle for more effective advertising for Canadian products to Canadian audiences, *Everywoman's World* was entirely focused on marketing to women who, it was believed, made the vast majority of purchasing decisions on domestic items (Johnston, *Selling Themselves* 240). The magazine carried much the same content as its American counterparts, (stories, sage advice on domestic chores and capturing Mr. Right), but with distinctly Canadian content. Its by-line, "Canada's Greatest Magazine," was no idle boast:

Everywoman's World was a profitable Canadian magazine with an English-language circulation of 100,000 and by 1917 could claim the largest circulation of any Canadian magazine (Johnston, "Women's Writes"). Its popularity was a testament not only to the power of the middle-class domestic market in Canada at the time, but also the savvy decisions of its editorial board. The commissioning of a memoir from Montgomery was one such example—not only would the memoir guarantee a high circulation for the six months it was serialized (and thus premium prices for advertising space) but Montgomery also represented the kind of feminine middle-class genteel domesticity it sought to cultivate. The benefits of this arrangement would not have been lost on Montgomery: the magazine's branding affirmed both the nature and value of her public image and gave her access to the largest Canadian audience possible through a Canadian publication. Moreover, it allowed her to inscribe the domesticity of her brand that her text could not or would not articulate; in essence, she could trade in on the momentum generated by her existing public identity and the magazine's explicit domestic mandate in order to craft a narrative of self that was, as we have seen, predominantly silent about the private and the domestic.

As a narrative of a woman's career, "The Alpine Path" fit more into the magazine's growing interest in public women and their work—an appropriate development given both suffrage and women's war work, but one consistently qualified by an attention to a woman's primary responsibilities in the domestic sphere. In the October 1917 issue, for example, Nellie McClung is nominated as Alberta's "Leading Woman" and while her active public life is foregrounded, she and the editors are both careful to confirm that her children and husband receive every possible attention (M.M.M. 10). These unspoken anxieties about women's priorities are articulated in one August 1917 article entitled, "The New Perfect Womanhood Development": "It was not so much that girls were unskilled in domesticity—skill might come

with experience—but deep in their hearts they had begun to feel that there was degradation in working inside the house, that social advancement and a place in the public eye were the highest good in life, the care of children irksome and that ‘motherhood was naught’” (White 12). Thus while the magazine embraced and promoted women’s work in public and political spheres, it was still nevertheless tied to a domestic mandate in part because of the conservative traditions of its audience but also because it was designed to be a vehicle for selling domestic goods to the middle-class market.¹⁷

To this end, it appears that the editors expended considerably energy integrating Montgomery’s narrative of her career into the magazine and its mandate. In the June issue, in which Montgomery’s narrative begins, there is an editorial for a reader claiming to want more information on a specific woman’s career (not Montgomery) “and articles of that kind” (Dawe 54). Installments of “The Alpine Path” are promoted each month and the July issue also features one of Montgomery’s short stories, “The Schoolmaster’s Bride.” This narrative, which closely resembles an episode in *Anne’s House of Dreams* (also published in 1917), invites readers to draw parallels between these fictional narratives of life in PEI and the content of that installment.¹⁸ More important, the appropriateness of women’s writing careers is everywhere articulated in *Everywoman’s World*, from classified ads that seek writers to a monthly phrenology column which, in the August issue, addresses the question “Will My Daughter Be An Author?” In this particular piece, the author argues that good writing is borne of hard work, dedication, and study and offers phrenological readings of various authors’ visages *including* Montgomery’s: “L.M. Montgomery -- a face of balance and refinement. The smooth high

¹⁷ See Anne-Marie Kinahan’s “Votes for Stoves: *Everywoman’s World* and the Canadian Citizen-Consumer in the Early Twentieth Century” for further information on how the magazine tied together women’s domestic and political work.

¹⁸ I am indebted to Benjamin Lefebvre for pointing out this symmetry between the story and novel.

forehead shows love of stories and sympathetic perception, the height and squareness above the temples and the arched eyebrows suggest poetic feeling and artistic taste, while the full eyes show facility of expression” (Farmer 8). This “reading” of Montgomery functions as a glowing endorsement of not just her profession, but her suitability for the profession, and the photograph that accompanies this article buttresses the claim that Montgomery is, indeed, a feminine, genteel woman.¹⁹ In addition to this specific attention to Montgomery, the article offers a philosophy of the labour of the writing profession that, not coincidentally, affirms Montgomery’s own sentiments in that month’s installment of “The Alpine Path.” Echoing her narratives of the hard work and sacrifice entailed in her “apprenticeship,” the column declares with various illustrative anecdotes that great writing is borne of “facility and skill that [...] come only with labour, time and patience” (8). This same issue is also dedicated to promoting women’s pursuit of post-secondary education and, not coincidentally, in this issue’s installment of her memoir, Montgomery narrates her own college education.

The editors, it is clear, worked hard to integrate Montgomery’s narrative into the magazine, but it is equally important to recognize that Montgomery was also an active participant in the production of an extra-textual domestic frame for her text. Each installment of “The Alpine Path” was accompanied by photographs from (presumably) Montgomery’s personal collection and first person commentary. The majority of these photos are of Montgomery at different ages or snapshots of Prince Edward Island landscapes that are featured in her memoir or her novels, but domestic spaces are represented on several occasions. In the first installment she provides an image of the home where she was born and in the second installment another home

¹⁹ This characterization of her image so amused Montgomery that she clipped it into her 1908 journals (I:344). Montgomery began the task of recopying her journals in 1919 and often incorporated images produced long after the original entry was composed. Her original journals are thought to be lost or destroyed (Rubio & Waterston, “Introduction” I: xxiv).

is represented with a caption that notes both the home and the surrounding landscape. By the fifth installment, however, there is a marked turn in the kind of images that accompany the text—instead of images that complement the text, the images and captions depart from the narrated content and offer a domestic life hitherto unrepresented in the text of “The Alpine Path.” On the first page of this installment we are not only offered an image of her Uncle’s home, Park Corner, with a caption telling us that she was married here, but there are also two photos of her children, Chester and Stuart, who are conspicuously absent from the content of her narrative.



Figure 5. “Fifth Installment”
(Clara Thomas Archives)



Figure 6. Enlarged “Fifth Installment”
(Clara Thomas Archives)

These images create a conspicuous gap between the text and the extra-textual frame that the audience must bridge in order to make these images make sense. In this process, the audience might draw upon either their previous exposure to Montgomery’s public image as a wife and mother or, if they were less familiar with Montgomery’s life story, the more general cultural

climate that would fold these images of a woman and two children into a conventional relationship as mother and children.

Editorial interventions also prompt readers to make this connection and recast Montgomery's career ambitions as maternal drives: her proud exclamations about receiving her first copy of *Anne of Green Gables*, "the material realization of all the dreams and hopes and ambitions and struggles [...] mine, mine, mine, something which I had created" (Oct. 1917: 8), are used to frame an image of a different kind of labour altogether—her child, Stuart.²⁰ The facing page for this installment of "The Alpine Path" also contains a lengthy article entitled, "A Word with the Mother," counseling women on coping with their first born and, at the bottom of Montgomery's page, editorial commentary reads:

Nine years ago this fall, Lucy Maude [sic] Montgomery of Prince Edward Island published her first and most popular novel, *Anne of Green Gables*. Mark Twain declared "Anne" to be "the sweetest creation of child life yet written."

Mrs. Ewan Macdonald, as she is now, has written for the readers of "Everywoman's World" this fascinating story of her own life, which is so full of interest to those who love the author of 'Anne'. ("Nine years ago")

While this editorial commentary "outs" Ewan Macdonald as the unnamed pastor of the Ontario church who necessitated Montgomery's relocation, it also ensures that the audience reads the images of the children in the context of this marriage. However, in distinguishing "Lucy Maude [sic] Montgomery" from "Mrs. Ewan Macdonald," the commentary renders the illusion that we are, in fact, dealing with two authors—one who has written a best-seller and another who has written her life-story. The implication that Montgomery has changed, that she is "now" someone else, is problematized by the realization that it is not the life-story of Mrs. Ewan Macdonald, the wife, that we have just read but that of Montgomery, the author. This context sits in tension with the text of the life-story, a site of friction that is only resolved through the audience's pre-

²⁰ I am indebted to Benjamin Lefebvre for pointing out this relationship between Stuart's image and the "mine, mine, mine" text.

existing knowledge of Montgomery's private life and reading strategies shaped by conservative gender scripts.

Montgomery is, to a great extent, the source of this tension between the extra-textual frame which tells one kind of story about her life, and the memoir's text which seems to tell a very different kind of story: she knew what kind of magazine she was writing for and provided them with the very images that write a domestic life that she would not write into the text. The editor's attempts to further integrate the narrative into the magazine's domestic mandate, however, just as often exacerbate as bridge that gap between context and text. It is important to note that this production of domesticity (and the friction that attends it) is lost in subsequent editions of "The Alpine Path": neither the Fitzhenry & Whiteside nor the Nimbus edition retain any of the magazine's features or even the photographs. As a result, the contemporary reader's experience of *The Alpine Path* in book format is decidedly different: not only are we experiencing the text in a different cultural climate and reading Montgomery through the lens of her journals (and the identity crafted therein), but we are probably reading editions of the memoir that lack the critical contextual frameworks that shaped how the text was first understood (the relevant issues of *Everywoman's World* have just recently been made available through *Early Canadiana Online*). Without this context, it is more difficult to appreciate the role of "The Alpine Path" role in Montgomery's performance of a domestic identity.

Montgomery's strategies for managing her fame through a memoir were complex, nuanced, and sophisticated but they were also inconsistent and even, at times, contradictory: she refuses to offer a narrative of her domesticity even though this quality is both critical to her image and the context of the text's publication in *Everywoman's World*; she hesitates to mobilize masculine genre conventions that would assert her success and yet is clearly dissatisfied with

feminine conventions that would undermine her success; and she crafts a narrative “I” that speaks from but will not speak of fame and success. Yet if Montgomery’s struggle to frame her image and her life story within gender scripts and genre conventions results in inconsistencies and contradictions, it also, importantly, allows for considerable innovation. Montgomery’s narrative of her labour is considerably more than an attempt to rationalize her fame; it is a way to safely articulate both her celebrity and her ambition. Moreover, her willingness to radically disrupt the style and format of her narrative by representing significant portions of her journal speaks to both the struggle of famous women to find a form for representing their success and a cultural climate receptive to experimentation within the life-writing genre *and* within a single life-writing text. Indeed, it is often by comparing “The Alpine Path” with these journals published eighty-six years later that we can recognize and appreciate Montgomery’s negotiation of the cultural conditions of being a famous woman in Canada in 1917.

Nevertheless, we must remember that these are Montgomery’s perceptions of and responses to the cultural conditions as they affected her and the particular image she sought to maintain—as we saw in Chapter Two, other women of Montgomery’s generation felt very differently about their ability to proclaim their success and represent their fame. By the time Nellie McClung and Mazo de la Roche crafted their autobiographies in the mid-twentieth century, women who relied upon feminine and/or domestic public images were not hesitating to narrate their experiences with fame, suggesting that the cultural climate for women’s celebrity in Canada was shifting. As we shall see in Chapter Four, “Women’s Fame in Canada, 1950s-2000,” the second half of the twentieth century brought considerable developments in celebrity culture with the advent of television (and, later, the Internet and social media), the continued expansion of women into the paid labour force, and the growing acceptance of women’s activities and

celebrity in the public sphere. Yet, at the same time as women's celebrity became increasingly normalized, so too did its expression in life-writing forms: if the early-to-mid twentieth century is characterized by a relatively high degree of experimentation in narrating celebrity, the mid-to-late twentieth century represents a time of consolidation into genre conventions and a market that demanded detailed access to both the public and private lives of celebrities. In such a market, a text like "The Alpine Path" would not have fared well: Montgomery's refusal to document her private life *or* narrate the experience of being famous may have proven both useful and successful for managing cultural conditions in the early twentieth century, but with changing cultural contexts, the narrative tactics of celebrity autobiographers in Canada necessarily evolved to reflect the marketplace in which they now operated.

Chapter Four

Women's Fame in Canada: 1950s-2010

This chapter begins where Chapter One left off, in the 1950s, an auspicious decade in the development of celebrity cultures in Canada for several reasons. First, post-war Canada was anxious about gender roles and women in the labour market. Yet the heightened emphasis on conventional femininity no longer seemed to preclude women from pursuing careers in the public spotlight, particularly if those careers could be folded into the master narrative of domesticity. In the tradition of the Women's Pages at the turn of the century, women were still cultivating celebrity through careers as the public voice of the concerns of the domestic sphere. Women were also careful to frame non-domestic careers in sports or television, for example, as reproducing forms of femininity that are desirable traits in a spouse and mother—beauty, grace, etc. While it was not until second-wave feminism and the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (1970) that the ideologies that shaped these gender roles were articulated and challenged in very public ways, much of the unsavoury taint that had previously attended women's celebrity before the war had faded away; it was no longer a question of *whether* women should be public figures but of how they might cultivate celebrity and what kinds of public image could or should be fashioned.

If these shifts in attitude towards women's celebrity came to fruition in the middle of the century, they were the culmination of a long process begun decades earlier, but what does mark the 1950s as a distinct decade of dramatic change in Canadian celebrity cultures was the advent of television. From a handful of stations at the beginning of the decade to coast-to-coast national broadcasting at the end of the decade, television had a profound impact on how celebrities were produced and disseminated in Canada. Not only did television introduce Canadians to new personalities under new conditions and thereby foster different relationships to these individuals,

but the medium dramatically affected how the other mass media in Canada were able to cultivate and disseminate celebrity. The 1950s also saw another important moment in the cultivation of Canadian arts and entertainment—the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, more commonly known as the Massey Commission. The commission and its recommendations did not, as we shall see, directly enable celebrity culture in Canada, but they did prompt the expansion of official government intervention into and policy for Canadian arts and culture that reached well beyond the existing Broadcasting Acts. This, over time, led to several critical developments that *did* have a significant impact on celebrity cultures in Canada, most notably the mandated minimum Canadian content for television and, later, radio, and government spending (in the form of funding and, later, cuts) that paved the way for privatization and the commodification of arts and cultures for profit. Under these seemingly contradictory impulses—government regulation and privatization—celebrity in Canada through Canadian institutions became increasingly viable as a route to fame for men and women in Canada.

In taking as its beginnings the 1950s and moving forward into the early twenty-first century, this chapter covers a significant and rich period of celebrity history in Canada. A great deal changed in how celebrity was produced, disseminated, and consumed over these decades; this chapter takes as its focus the significant technological and ideological changes that affected how Canadian women experienced celebrity in Canada. We begin with a brief history of the major developments in Canadian culture, like the Massey Commission, that shifted and shaped how celebrity in Canada could be produced. Of particular interest are the effects of the television era and the digital age on the capacity of other mass media to produce and disseminate celebrity in Canada, and thus these form a separate section, “Mass Media & Celebrity in Canada.” As in

Chapter One, I pay specific attention to the effects of these cultural and media developments on women's labour and their capacity to transform that labour into opportunities for celebrity. The labour challenges faced by these post-war generations are different, however; no longer fighting to rationalize their place in the labour market, the women of the mid-to-late twentieth century struggle instead for access to equal pay and opportunities. At the same time, they negotiate lingering investments in gendered labour and women's domestic obligations that not only make it challenging to be successful and/or famous, but often compel particular performances of private domesticity in their public lives.

These histories, as we shall see, offer us a framework and context in which to consider the celebrity memoirs of the second half of the twentieth century. Not surprisingly, there are considerably more celebrity autobiographies written by women during this period: not only were more women cultivating celebrity across a broader range of fields and capitalizing on the opportunities in the growing entertainment industries, but the usefulness of the memoir as a tool for both profit and image management was becoming increasingly clear by the end of the century. Now, instead of a dozen primary texts, we have *dozens*. They cover many of the same industries as before—music, dance, literature, politics, and film—and a few new ones as well—notably sports, television, and “human interest” (those media spectacles who for reasons related to their lives rather than their labour, have captured significant and prolonged media attention). In these memoirs, we can trace how the various gender ideologies and discourses of the mid-to-late twentieth century have been adopted, adapted, and remobilized for the purposes of cultivating compelling and legitimate public identities and life narratives; later in this chapter we see how the present neoliberal and postfeminist cultural climate has shaped the discourses of gender in many memoir-boom texts. These texts, which constitute the vast majority of memoirs

written in this half of the century, are not just bound by ideology but by other structural and stylistic similarities; indeed, as the scope for celebrity production, dissemination, and consumption widens and grows for Canadian women across the mid-to-late twentieth century, the strategies of self-representation in a public life-writing text appear to shrink. Whereas the few celebrity memoirs in the early part of the century were, in their tactics, suggestive of experimentation and innovation, the abundance of such texts today and the similarities they demonstrate across form, style, and ideology suggest that the memoir has taken up an acknowledged, culturally and economically valuable role in the project of celebrity brand cultivation and image management. At the end of the twentieth century, the celebrity autobiography indeed appears to have become an established technology and media of celebrity culture.

Celebrity Culture in Canada

In Chapter One, we examined how the effects of industrialization and the development of mass media created the conditions by which modern forms of celebrity culture could be both produced and disseminated in Canada. We saw how women were affected by these developments and how ideological investments in gender shaped their access to paid labour, public life, and the tools and technologies of celebrity. We learned that celebrity in English-Canada was, for the most part, the domain of the privileged: white, middle-class, English-speaking heterosexuals who could navigate both the cultural and technological industries of celebrity with relative ease. For those few women who could transform their labour into celebrity, every aspect of their relationship to the public sphere was governed by their gender and most (if not all) found themselves compelled to perform in public some vision or version of middle-class constructions of femininity. For some this took the form of domesticity, a

performance that drew upon their private lives and roles as wives and mothers but, as we saw in Chapter Two, some forms of the celebrity life story eschewed this particular performance and were able to do so until trends in celebrity culture arising out of Hollywood reintroduced the private life as important and, eventually, critical to authentic constructions of self.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the conditions of celebrity in Canada had shifted and changed, although certain elements remained constant. Mass media continued to be a critical space for the production and dissemination of celebrity although television, as we shall see in the subsequent section, had significantly altered the terms of how this was done. Celebrity was (and arguably still is) more commonly within the purview of the middle class and English speakers, although the growing use of the internet to launch entertainment careers and the increasing number of non-English language television and radio broadcasting programs and channels have created more opportunities for a wider scope of Canadians to make names for themselves. Moreover, human rights legislation in Canada secured and protected the rights of women in 1977, racial and ethnic groups in 1985, and all sexual orientations in 1996 from discriminatory practices which, in theory, enabled women, non-white women and queer women more access to the tools and technologies of celebrity industries.¹ In practice, however, non-white and queer women are still distinct minorities in Canadian celebrity culture, notwithstanding the excellent work women like Buffy Sainte-Marie, Rosemary Brown, and k.d. lang have done to combat prejudice and make alternate constructions of Canadian womanhood visible and legitimate.

¹ The 1977 Canadian Human Rights Act explicitly forbade discrimination along the lines of sex, religion, and disability. With the repatriation of the constitution, Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms called for equality under the law on grounds including racial groups and took effect in 1985. All provincial human rights legislation had to accord with the Charter which was amended in 1996 to include sexual orientation (Department of Canadian Heritage).

In addition to these ideological and legislative developments which have opened (although not necessarily delivered) more opportunities for diversity in Canadian celebrity culture, the second half of the twentieth century has seen an expansion and escalation of the industries involved in the production and dissemination of celebrity. In Canada this has been driven by multiple, complex and overlapping phenomena, two of which are highlighted here as of particular importance: first, the government investment in, regulation of, and development of Canadian media and culture industries, technologies, and institutions has enabled more opportunities for Canadians to transform their labour into celebrity; and second, the transformation of culture into for-profit industries and the harnessing of celebrities to this project which have escalated the cultural and economic value of the star power of celebrities and in turn provided more platforms for the production, maintenance, and mobilization of their fame.

These developments, which enabled celebrity cultures in Canada, can be traced back to the massive growth of arts, entertainment, and mass culture that characterized post-war Canada and the US. The 1950s represented what some critics have called a boom or “upsurge” in Canadian arts—not only were the products of mass culture and mass media generated and consumed in huge quantities, but highbrow institutions and festivals like the National Ballet of Canada and the Canadian Opera Company were founded (Woodcock 54, 66). The role of the 1951 Massey Report in producing this cultural climate has long been contested.² As the 1983 Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee noted, the Massey Report “did much to alter the cultural landscape of Canada,” but, it cautioned, “the cultural growth of the period since 1951... might well have taken place spontaneously, with or without the encouragement of formal policy recommendations” (qtd in Woodcock 63). As several critics have pointed out, the Massey

² The Massey Report documented the findings of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences and was released just at the beginning of this upswing in the arts.

Commission has been mythologized, even romanticized, as the beginnings of arts and culture in Canada (Litt; Edwardson, *Canadian Content* 57) when, in practice, the government had previously supported various arts initiatives (Tippett 91; Edwardson, *Canadian Content* 35). Moreover, in terms of its promotion of celebrity cultures, the Commission's recommendations tended to eschew those industries most likely to produce celebrity—popular culture and mass media—and focused its energies on promoting those highbrow cultures which they presumed could consolidate, morally uplift, and intellectually educate the nation (Litt; Edwardson, *Canadian Content* 53).

Despite the Massey Commission's predilection for elite arts cultures, it did pave the way for later developments in the production of celebrity in Canada: first, in terms that both the government and the general public could support, it clearly and formally articulated a need for "made-in-Canada" culture (Rutherford 10) and the necessity of the government's active role in this project and, second, it created or enabled various councils, commissions, and acts for the development of arts, media, and culture in Canada. Some years later when the Trudeau administration sank significant resources into developing an unashamedly federalist national culture (unlike the Masseyites, making significant use of both popular and highbrow cultures), it was to the Massey Commission they turned for a frame of reference for rationalizing government spending and involvement (Litt). As Edwardson has noted, like the Masseyites, this administration saw culture as a means of manufacturing a nationalism that served their interests but, unlike the inconsistent or scattershot application of the Massey Report recommendations, this period saw the formation of firm policies of government support and regulation of cultural industries that paved the way for "the current situation in which federal bureaucrats have become the guardians of Canadian cultural life" (*Canadian Content* 18).

If we now take for granted that the Canadian government has an obligation to support Canadian cultural enterprises like theatres and festivals and to regulate culture by ensuring that American entertainment does not entirely efface Canadian content on our televisions and radios, such assumptions were born from these (and other) moments in Canadian cultural history. In many respects, such interventions have been to the advantage of Canadians seeking to use Canadian institutions to reach Canadian audiences and cultivate celebrity; without Canadian content regulations in television and radio, for example, the fate of these media might look considerably more like our cinemas which are not governed by quotas and continue to be dominated by non-Canadian films. However, Canadian content regulations are only effective in creating Canadian celebrities if these cultural products are consumed and preferred over those produced by other nations, a challenge Canadian cultural industries have historically always had to negotiate given the proximity and availability of British and, later, American cultural products. Thus, on the one hand, the various governments of Canada have been interested in and engaged with promoting and regulating Canadian culture, but on the other hand, they have been less dedicated to the difficult and expensive responsibility of overseeing how this culture might compete successfully with American popular cultures. Moreover, these governments (Conservative governments in particular) have been cognizant of the profitability of cutting funding, privatizing, and encouraging competition within these industries: it was only a few years after the Massey Commission that Diefenbaker's Conservative government opened up various parts of Canadian media and culture, most notably television, to competition (Edwardson, *Canadian Content* 13, 80). More recently, Stephen Harper's Conservative government has been making sweeping cuts to arts and media funding: CBC's federal funding, for example, has been cut by over 200 million dollars since 2009 (Eastwood).³ While arts and

³ In 2009, \$1166 million was allocated to CBC for "operating expenditures"; the projected allocation for 2014

culture funding typically fares better under Liberal governments, the Liberal party has certainly not been blind to the economic potential of culture: the Trudeau administration, in addition to funding various cultural initiatives, used “economic incentives and industrial point systems [to place] Canadian content within the dynamics of profitability and cultural commodification” (Edwardson, *Canadian Content* 18).

What we are left with today is a sense of culture as an industry and a cultural climate that has become acclimatized to the tendency of both governments and private industries to treat cultural policy “like a form of economic policy” (Litt). Culture in Canada, in short, needs to pay dividends in either financial, cultural, or political capital and, wherever possible, turn a profit. This mid-to-late twentieth century approach to arts, culture, and entertainment has had a profound influence on the development of celebrity in Canada because celebrities can function like brands that attract and maintain consumers, ensuring or, at least, increasing the likelihood that particular cultural products will be well received, popular, and hence profitable. Desirous of making Canadian content both visible and profitable, various bureaucratic bodies throughout the late twentieth century have promoted the development of star systems and the usefulness of celebrities: as early as 1970, the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media reported that Canada had “too few” stars (qtd in Edwardson, *Canadian Content* 243); in 1977 the CBC was taken to task for its “no star policy” (Edwardson, *Canadian Content* 244); in 1982, the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee tied stars to industry success and explicitly promoted the use of famous individuals for this purpose (Edwardson, *Canadian Content* 249-50); and, more recently, in a 1999 Performance Report, the CRTC called for the active development and promotion of a “home-grown ‘star-system’ [in English Canada] similar to the one existing in Quebec” (CRTC).

(based on the 2012 federal budget) is \$958 million (Eastwood).

The careers of many Canadian celebrities in the late twentieth century have markedly benefited from these drives to cultivate and profit from a star system and a market for Canadian content. Anne Murray's celebrity, as we shall see in Chapter Five, owes much to the Canadian content regulations for both television and radio. These same regulations cultivated multiple opportunities in television in the form of interviews, television specials, variety shows, and guest spots that enabled individuals from outside of television to expand and develop their public image across multiple platforms. In promoting Canadian public figures, these programs were also often able to fulfill content quotas *and* potentially garner higher ratings. Certainly Margaret Trudeau's brief television career in the 1980s was tied to these aims: on the heels of two tell-all memoirs and a well-publicized separation from Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, Trudeau's work in television arose from and capitalized on her fame, although it also secured her much-needed employment (*Consequences* 185; *Changing My Mind* 203-5).

While famous women like Anne Murray, Margaret Trudeau, Rita MacNeil, and others used and were used by television, many other Canadian institutions and industries have also cultivated and promoted famous women: Karen Kain, for example, has played a prominent role in the visibility and profitability of the National Ballet of Canada since 1973 and publisher Jack McClelland of McClelland and Stewart did much to promote the early careers of authors like Margaret Atwood and Margaret Laurence. In some industries, the foregrounding of Canadian issues and celebrities has been a strategic ploy to remain competitive with American cultural products: magazines like *Chatelaine*, for example, have proven to be useful sites for Canadian women like Margaret Trudeau and Margaret Atwood to cultivate their public image. Since 1998, Canada's Walk of Fame has been annually celebrating the achievements of various Canadian women like Buffy Sainte-Marie in 1998, Linda Evangelista in 2003, Dr. Roberta Bondar in 2011

and many more, although it is worth nothing that they routinely induct twice as many men as women.⁴ No doubt aware of the significant cultural and economic value of their work to Toronto businesses, the Walk of Fame website frames its mandate in terms that harness patriotism to industry: “*We are in the business of celebrating Canadian excellence and inspiring the next generation of emerging Canadian talent*” (emphasis original, “About us”).

The use of famous Canadian women by both public and private industries to turn a profit is, of course, not particular to the late-twentieth century: women like Maud Allan, Mary Pickford, and L.M. Montgomery used and were used by various industries to develop the cultural and economic value of both products and individuals. Nevertheless, the logic of late capitalism and neoliberalism in the second half of the twentieth century has vastly intensified these processes. Celebrity is now routinely and *openly* cultivated for the specific purpose of generating value that can be mobilized through various industries to sell us both things and ideas:

...celebrit[ies] [are] commodities, products to be marketed in their own right or to be used to market other commodities. The celebrity’s ultimate power is to sell the commodity that is themselves. [...] Within a highly fragmented but increasingly globalised mass market the use of celebrities has become a very efficient method of organising cultural significance around products, services, and commercially available identities. (Turner, Bonner, and Marshall 12)

What Turner, Bonner, and Marshall (and many other celebrity critics) trace in general also holds true for Canada where cultural policies have, for several decades now, been morphing into economic policies and the current neo-liberal economic climate continues to “favou[r] free markets and consumer choices” (Beaty and Sullivan 18-9). Not only is Canada producing more cultural material than ever before but “there is currently a greater level of diversity in cultural products, and of cultural producers and audiences, than at any time in Canadian history” (Beaty and Sullivan 15). In such a cultural climate, the cultivation and/or use of celebrities as

⁴ Only in 2008 were as many women as men inducted into the Walk of Fame.

mechanisms for the production, dissemination, and consumption of these materials seems increasingly visible, significant, and lucrative.

Because celebrities and celebrity cultures are so valuable, they have long been repackaged for export to new international markets. As I argued elsewhere, there is a long history in Canada of moving beyond our geo-political borders and cultural institutions in order to produce and disseminate celebrity:

Now, more than ever before, we are dependent on international and transnational cultural, financial, media, and corporate institutions to play some role in the production of celebrity culture, and the result of this new global celebrity-scape is that celebrities born in Canada are more and more often crafting public identities that do not necessarily harness them to explicitly or exclusively Canadian identities. These transnational celebrities, celebrities whose identities don't just circulate beyond the boundaries of Canada, but are constructed and received as exceeding the claims of any one nation, often do not deny their connections to Canada but nor do they rely on them to make meaningful contributions to their labour, identity, or celebrity. (Lee, "Elastic Nationality")

In these global markets, celebrities are routinely shaped and marketed for export—a point driven home, recently, by Avril Lavigne's transparent appeal to her Japanese market with the song and video "Hello Kitty." When Canadian-born celebrities, from Mary Pickford to Shania Twain and Celine Dion, have long documented in their memoirs the processes of being retrained and repackaged for non-Canadian markets, it raises the question: what do such activities mean for celebrity cultures in Canada? They mean that the processes of celebrity production, dissemination, and consumption no longer correspond to geo-political boundaries. Audiences are increasingly fragmented into niche markets and production and consumption strategies might have to work in order to construct, impose, and mobilise regional or national identities. They also mean that, much as Hollywood-style celebrity became the gold standard for celebrity in the first half of the twentieth century, circulation in global markets has seemingly become the new standard for celebrity in the second half of the century: indeed, as we saw in the introduction,

some critics of Canadian celebrity suggest that circulation in Canada alone does not confer celebrity status (Byers). By such standards, famous women like Margaret Trudeau, Pamela Wallin, Rita MacNeil, Adrienne Clarkson, Karen Kain and many others, would not be considered celebrities, an argument soundly defeated by the extensive cross-media public lives cultivated by these women and the range of issues about their working and non-working lives that are disseminated through Canadian media. The contemporary global celebrity-scape has not made Canadian celebrity irrelevant but it has expanded what forms and functions of celebrity are possible for Canadians. For those who circulate only or predominantly within the nation, Canadian media platforms are of particular importance; they are the primary tools for cultivating, disseminating, and maintaining a public image and, as we shall see, how they have developed over the last half century has had a profound impact on what celebrity in Canada now looks like.

Mass Media and Celebrity in Canada

Print, Radio, Film, and Television

If the first half of the twentieth century saw the firm establishment of daily newspapers, radio, and film as modes of manufacturing and disseminating celebrity in Canada, the second half of the century saw their power and significance shift with the advent and rapid growth of television. Print, which had been not only the dominant mass medium of the first half of the century, but *the* critical site for the dissemination of celebrity, was the greatest affected. In the 1950s, the daily newspaper with sections devoted to entertainment news and women's issues had long been a staple of Canadian mass media. Most households received at least one paper: in fact, in 1950 there were more daily paid papers in circulation than households in Canada (Communications Management 5). With television, the pervasiveness of the print paper went into a steady decline and, in 2011, it was estimated that only 30% of households took paid

subscriptions (Communications Management 5)⁵. Not only has newspaper readership declined, but multiple factors—such as their limited and often regional circulation, their increasing dependence on international “megabureaus” for content, and the tradition of unattributed articles—have made it difficult for journalists to make names for themselves. A handful of columnists and cartoonists have enjoyed national and international syndication, but the practices of syndication can give non-Canadians like “Ann Landers” and “Dear Abby” virtual domination over a field for decades. In some cases Canadian columnists whose names circulated widely, such as Olympian Bobbie Rosenfeld or editor and activist Doris Anderson, had already achieved fame in some other arena. In short, the conditions that allowed women like Kit Coleman and E. Cora Hind at the turn of the century to craft names for themselves had disappeared and, as Lang notes, “as women’s participation in journalism became more commonplace, the spotlight that focused on them dimmed”(5).

As a mode of disseminating celebrity, the daily newspaper has, in the late twentieth century, been doubly disadvantaged: not only has its audience market share dropped drastically, but as venue for learning about celebrities it has been superseded by other print formats such as the tabloid and subscription magazines. In this market, American periodicals continue to dominate and *Hello Canada* is perhaps the only Canadian celebrity-spotting equivalent; however, a handful of Canadian publications like *Chatelaine*, *Maclean’s*, *Toronto Life*, and, until 2005, *Saturday Night*, make an effort to direct our gaze to, if not Canadian celebrities, then celebrities in Canadian contexts. As a medium by which an individual might cultivate celebrity, magazines appear to offer more opportunities for writers, commentators and photographers to

⁵ Most papers now issue the news in both print and online formats and while print continues to be the preferred choice of newspaper readers, in 2012 the Newspaper Audience Databank estimated that 50% of Canadians “interact with newspaper content every day” and 80% do so every week in one form or the other.

circulate attributed work although, as Doris Anderson, editor of *Chatelaine* from 1957-1977, points out in her autobiography, *Rebel Daughter*, the conditions were hardly easy or welcoming for women for many years.

There have, of course, been other avenues for women to cultivate celebrity in print, most notably in novel-writing.⁶ As L.M. Montgomery, Nellie McClung, Marshall Saunders, Martha Ostenso, and Mazo de la Roche had done in the first half of the century, so too have Margaret Laurence, Alice Munro, Carol Shields, and, of course, Margaret Atwood built empires and traded on their marketable names. It's worth noting, however, that fewer celebrity novelists in the latter half of the century are producing autobiographies—of the previously noted women, only Laurence published public life-writing texts: *The Prophet's Camel Bell* (1963) and *Dance on the Earth: A Memoir* (1989).⁷ As Lorraine York and other critics have pointed out, these “CanLit” celebrities of the second half of the twentieth century belong predominantly to a “generation of writers who came to prominence in the 1960s.” As York goes on to argue in “Canadian Celebrity Authorship Moves On,” the success of this group has created a model of literary celebrity that, under the current publishing conditions (the collapse of various Canadian publishing houses and the pressure on writers to have a very successful first book), has had a serious impact on how success and celebrity are conceived. In comparison, the stars of

⁶ In *The Metaphor of Celebrity: Canadian Poetry and the Public, 1955-1980*, Joel Deshayes offers a compelling reading of a period when poets experienced a heightened attention to their products and lives; however, with the exception of Gwendolyn MacEwen, most of these celebrated poets were men.

⁷ Loren Glass has argued that post-modernity has “witnessed a greatly diminished interest in the personal lives and styles of literary figures” and that life writing (both biographical and autobiographical) about these figures is less common because it no longer “offer[s] a master key for interpretation” (189-9). His argument that life writing about modernists can function a “master key” for their work is troublesome; it would probably be more accurate to suggest that there is less life writing about literary figures because we no longer try to use their lives as “keys.” However, in some cases there is still a great deal of life writing about or by Canadian literary figures: there are several full-length biographies about Margaret Atwood (and many shorter ones) and Farley Mowat made a career of writing autobiographies.

subsequent generations of writers seem not to shine quite as brightly and they certainly do not attract the same kind of consistent media attention that has long courted Atwood.⁸

Radio ownership, like daily newspaper subscriptions, had in the 1950s reached saturation point: almost everyone in Canada had a radio in their home and many Canadians also had one in their car (Vipond 39). Like their consumption of magazines and movies, Canadians were also consuming predominantly American programs (Rutherford 13). Television had a massive impact on radio: sales and listening declined dramatically (Rutherford 471) and, over time, the car rather than the living room became one of the primary sites of radio listening (Vipond 56). In order to stay competitive, radio programming changed: stations, instead of trying to appeal to a broad audience, sought out and specialized in particular markets and organized themselves around “themes” (Rutherford 471; Crean, *Newsworthy* 95). One of the effects of these and the other programming changes was, according to Susan Crean, to “effectively bani[sh women] from the airwaves except as recording artists” (*Newsworthy* 95).⁹ While no doubt, any programming change that eliminated women’s shows would have had a dramatic impact on women’s presence on radio, women were increasingly present in other capacities and other formats. Before television made her a national personality, Betty Kennedy was, on radio, “one of Toronto’s most popular media personalities”; not only was she the Public Affairs Editor of the largest radio station in Canada, CFRB, for 27 years (starting in 1959), but as host of “The Betty Kennedy Show” she interviewed many notable Canadians including the Prime Ministers (Potts, “Kennedy”). Kennedy’s career trajectory was, indeed, rare at the time but, by the 1970s, more women were taking significant roles in radio before moving to television. Jan Tennant, Valerie Pringle, Barbara Frum, Pamela Wallin, and Dini Petty, all of whom are perhaps better known for

⁸ See York’s extensive work on Atwood’s celebrity in both *Literary Celebrity in Canada* and *Margaret Atwood and the Labour of Literary Celebrity*.

⁹ A discussion of Canadian women as recording artists follows in Chapter Five.

their television work, began as radio personalities and, unlike the first generation of women broadcasters, Jane Gray, Kate Aitken, and Claire Wallace, were not relegated to domestic and etiquette programming. This does not suggest that these women were not expected to perform or were complicit in performing gender stereotypes and certain forms of femininity, only that the range of programming that women (albeit almost exclusively white women) had access to for cultivating careers and celebrity was expanding.

In film, the vast majority of opportunities for Canadian women to become celebrities still materialize south of our border in feature films. As Mary Pickford and Marie Dressler did before them, some of our most famous film stars of the second half of the twentieth century—Yvonne De Carlo, Geneviève Bujold, Margot Kidder, Anna Paquin, Ellen Page, and Rachel McAdams—come to us via American productions and/or distributors; even those women, like Catherine O'Hara, whose fame was launched through Canadian television shows, appear in our cinemas in American productions. Sarah Polley's career has proven to be a notable exception to the general pull of US film culture. Initially made famous by her role in the Canadian television production, *Road to Avonlea* (an adaptation of Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* novels), Polley has since balanced her acting work between Canadian and non-Canadian films and has cultivated an impressive directorial and writing career in film which often draws upon and adapts famous works of Canadian literature.¹⁰

Unlike television, however, Canadian cinemas have no Canadian content quota and thus the domination of our screens with American films has continued unabated.¹¹ Over the years,

¹⁰ Polley's adaptation of Alice Munro's short story "The Bear Came Over the Mountain," *Away from Her* (2006) was critically well-received. Polley also has the rights to Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* and is in the process of writing a film adaptation (Schou).

¹¹ It would be misleading, however, to suggest that a quota system would rectify the situation—as critics like Charles Acland and Ted Madger have pointed out, the failure of the Canadian feature film industry to compete with the American industry is rooted in multiple and complex factors.

various incentives for bolstering Canadian feature film production—from tax deductions to funding packages—have met with mixed success: in the 1970s over 700 feature films were made in Canada (Melnik 113) but, outside of Quebec, no “star system” has emerged in English-Canadian cinema. As Liz Czach rightly points out, “In English Canada, the conditions for generating and circulating a *cinematic* star image as outlined by de Cordova, Ellis, and Dyer, has thus far failed to materialize. The low number of features produced yearly does not enable Canadian actors to build up a substantial body of work in feature films” (“Television” 63-4). In an industry that struggles to be “heard above the din of Hollywood” productions (Melnik 253), television has been both a blessing and a curse. In its early days, television had a dramatic impact on general movie attendance—dropping from 447.7 million tickets in 1952 to 107.7 million in 1960 and to 78.9 million in 1970 (Rutherford 471)—and, later, the VCR, satellite, cable, the Internet, and Netflix continued to make it easier and cheaper for audiences to stay at home. However, at the same time, television has also become an important market for Canadian films: such an arrangement not only keeps a portion of the film industry in Canada in business, but these productions help television stations meet their Canadian content quotas (Melnik 252). In this cultural climate, the “cross-over” star, one who works in multiple venues such as Canadian film and Canadian or American television, has become increasingly common in Canadian celebrity cultures.¹²

Television, it is clear, has had a profound effect on how other mass media in Canada produce and disseminate celebrity. As both the dominant mass medium (Vipond 47) and the “major institution of the public sphere” of the late twentieth century (Dahlgren x), television has not only affected how other media manage celebrity, but has proven to be a significant force in

¹² See Katherine Anne Roberts and Liz Czach’s contributions in *Celebrity Cultures in Canada* for case studies of Canadian men who have become “cross-over” stars.

the production of new kinds of celebrities, celebrity-fan relationships, and celebrity cultures. In Canada, the conditions of its development have played a major role in the kinds of celebrities Canadian television has produced. In its early years, television, like radio, was placed under the auspices of the CBC who enjoyed a veritable domination of the field as both content regulator and content provider (Rutherford 42; Vipond 48-9). In 1952, there were two CBC stations in operation—one in Toronto and the other in Montreal—private stations were permitted but they had to carry the “full basic CBC network services” (Vipond 47-8). In 1958, CBC television went national. With coast to coast coverage (including Newfoundland in 1959) and a virtual monopoly on both radio and television broadcasting, it was now theoretically possible for a Canadian media corporation to foster a national culture and thus a common set of celebrities who could speak to and, presumably for, a nation. Heady stuff but it was not to be: in 1958 John Diefenbaker’s Conservatives passed a new Broadcasting Act that disarmed CBC’s tremendous cultural hegemony by allowing for privately owned radio and television stations to exist independently of and in competition with the CBC. It also created the Board of Broadcasting Governors or the BBG (in 1968 replaced by the Canadian Radio-Television Commission or the CRTC and, in 1976, renamed the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission), who would now regulate all stations (Edwardson, *Canadian Content* 199; Vipond 49). By 1960, 75% of Canadians owned a television (Vipond 48-9), 94% of Canadian homes were within range of a Canadian station (Rutherford 47), and “primetime viewing had become the single most common cultural experience of Canadians” (Rutherford 8).¹³ Television in Canada was everywhere and within 12 months of the 1958 Broadcasting Act, there was more than just CBC on the dial. By 1963 CTV had coast to coast television coverage, new and independent stations were emerging

¹³ Rutherford’s research does not always agree with Vipond’s. He puts television ownership in 1960 at around the 81% mark (137).

across the country, and programming from south of the border continued to attract Canadian viewers (Vipond 49).

As broadcasting stations emerged and grew, programming diversified, and the television set ceased to be a luxury item, Canada, along with other television-viewing nations, quickly moved from a period of what John Ellis has characterized as television “scarcity” to a period of television “availability” (*Seeing Things* 2). In just six years, from 1953-1959, three hundred TV shows went on the air on CBC and the development of such programming created something of a “talent rush” in Canadian television, as stations sought to fill their schedule with programs that would attract big audiences and big advertising revenue (Cole 24). As Rutherford has noted, Canadians might now be united by the shared experience of television viewing but they were diversified by their programming choices, a condition exacerbated in this contemporary period of television “plenty” (Ellis, *Seeing Things* 2) and our increasing range of options—cable, satellite, DVD, online streaming—for program delivery.

Television has thus been an extraordinary common but not necessarily a coherent site of cultural experience. If today one’s appearance on television captures a smaller portion of the overall viewing audience and is thus, perhaps, a less persuasive affirmation and consecration of fame than it once was, as a mode of disseminating one’s celebrity television is still not to be trifled with: unlike print, one’s performance in this medium has a significant and immediate impact on one’s public image and celebrity. In fact, as television increasingly became a medium for celebrities to showcase or promote their labour whether through late night or day time talk shows or more structured devices like the music video, the failure to cultivate a telegenic personality could hamper the development or maintenance of celebrity. Hence with the rise of television came the increasing pressure on celebrities to not only look good—which had profound

repercussions on women's celebrity—but to sound good. These were, as James Bennett argues in *Television Personalities: Stardom and the Small Screen*, skills and not everyone possessed or could develop them.

As a mode of disseminating celebrity, television was (and arguably still is) a powerful gatekeeper, one that has, over time, shaped our expectations of what constitutes persuasive, attractive, and authentic self-presentation and confirmed the primacy of visual media—first launched by the photograph and cinema—in celebrity cultures. As a mode of celebrity production, it has had a dramatic effect on not just the kinds of celebrities that develop but also how audiences relate to these celebrities. As Bennett has argued, the television celebrity is different from the celebrities of other media, particularly when the star is not an actor but a “personality” on non-fiction programs. Such individuals, he argues, are often received as simply “being themselves”—a perception that not only effaces the labour and skill of cultivating a telegenic presentation, but creates significant complications for how the individual circulates outside of their program (117). Television celebrities also forge different kinds of relationships with audiences: because television-viewing, even when programs are streamed online or watched on DVDs, is still predominantly an everyday ritual of the domestic space, television and its celebrities become implicated in discourses of ordinariness, authenticity, and intimacy (Bennett 26). Television offers us stars who, unlike film stars, can become intimates of our domestic lives and therein appear to be accessible, knowable, and perhaps identifiable: the stars of television seemed to be our friends, albeit more glamorous, interesting, and well-paid.

In Canada, however, those “friends” are not necessarily fellow Canadians. By adopting the same transmission and receiving standards as those used in the US, the Canadian television broadcasting system opened itself up to an influx of American programming, a phenomenon that,

even with changes in broadcasting technology, has remained a relative constant in Canadian television culture (Rutherford 41). In an attempt to promote Canadian culture and ward off American domination of Canadian television, the BBG introduced Canadian content regulations: by April of 1961 it was expected that all Canadian stations would carry 45% Canadian content, increasing this percentage to 55% by April of the following year (Hylton, Buchanan and Buchanan). Canadian content has since been a staple of Canadian broadcasting regulations, although how it is defined, evaluated, and proportioned into time slots has changed over time.¹⁴ These regulations, however, had (and continue to have) a significant impact on the kinds of Canadian programming that are developed and thus the kinds of celebrities that are likely to arise from such programs. In early Canadian television, for example, game shows and variety shows were particularly popular as relatively affordable forms of Canadian programming whereas drama continues to be one of the most expensive programming formats (Rutherford; Tate 101). News programs and sports also filled significant prime time Canadian content scheduling and have consistently been amongst the most popular Canadian television viewing formats.¹⁵ (Moreover, as the CBC's recent struggles to cover hockey and Olympic programming remind us, sports programming in Canada is also very lucrative.¹⁶) It is not surprising then that it is from these formats that, as Liz Czach has argued, our best-known television personalities tend to arise:

¹⁴ According to Paul Rutherford's *When Television was Young: Primetime Canada 1952-1967*, Canadian content could, in the early years of television, include a variety of non-Canadian programming such as a baseball world series or an address from President Kennedy (107) or even commercials and promotional announcements (309). A more recent example: in 1999 regulations changed, allowing stations to use entertainment magazine and reality programs to meet Canadian content quotas (Tate 101).

¹⁵ In 1990, for example, news, current affairs and sports program constituted a massive portion of Anglophone Canadian television viewing: 81% for news, 62% for public affairs, and 79% for sports programs. Only 2% of drama programs watched were Canadian (Collins 29-30).

¹⁶ In 2010 and 2012, the CBC briefly lost the Canadian rights to cover the Olympics to CTV. More recently, Rogers Communications has recently acquired the rights to broadcast NHL games and Hockey Night in Canada for the next twelve years (beginning with the 2014-2015 season), programming rights previously held by the CBC ("Stroumbouloupoulos named").

If Canada does have the semblance of a star system, it is one that has been developed and sustained through television. Historically the most watched Canadian television has been public affairs and sports programming, and thus unsurprisingly some of our best-known celebrities are personalities from non-fiction programming. [...] Given the absence of domestically produced movie stars, personalities produced through television (hosts, anchors) as well as regularly seen on television (politicians, sports figures) are the closest thing English Canada has to a star system. (“Television” 65)

Although Czach questions whether English-Canadian television *can* produce celebrities, her point about programming and the kinds of stars or “personalities” that arise from Canadian television is critical.¹⁷ Because news, sports, and, in the early years, games and variety shows have been the cheapest to produce and the most popular with Canadian audiences, then it is there, in those formats, that fame in Canadian television was most likely to be found. However, such formats have historically given primacy to white men as hosts and moderators, and typically given women secondary, subordinate, or supportive roles (Rutherford 199-200). Yet some women did become national stars: “Your pet Juliette,” Juliette Cavazzi, successfully transformed her popularity as a recurring guest into her own show in the 1950s (“Your pet”) and Betty Kennedy, already well-known in Toronto from her radio show, became something of an institution on national television over her 33 year tenure as one of several panelists on CBC’s *Front Page Challenge* (Potts, “Kennedy”). Until the 1970s, however, white women were most likely to cultivate celebrity on television in fairly narrow contexts: typically on programs with

¹⁷ Using de Cordova’s distinction between a star or celebrity and a “picture personality,” (see pages 9-11 of the Introduction), Czach suggests that “our most recognizable actors are contemporary picture personalities” (“Television” 71). There is some truth to her argument— television has played a critical role in developing and maintaining celebrities in Canada and yet some of Canada’s famous television stars have not generated speculation or discourse about their private lives. However, what bears reiterating from the Introduction, is that while Czach is correct in that there is not a fully integrated “star system” in English Canada such as what there is in the US, there are certainly stars in Canada and Canadian television. Whether these stars or personalities also circulate as celebrities whose private lives are subject to inquiry and speculation is not always as readily apparent in Canadian contexts as it is in American contexts: certainly the production of an autobiography suggests that the star perceives or wishes to generate a market for that discourse. Moreover, as Bennett has pointed, television stars, in particular those in non-fiction programming, are typically received as playing themselves (117) and this, I argue, can make it more challenging to distinguish between discourses about the labouring life and non-labouring life. In some cases of Canadian television celebrity (see Julie Rak’s work on Don Cherry in *Celebrity Cultures in Canada* for example), this public image and its performance in and across multiple media can still form the basis of celebrity.

entertainment formats.¹⁸ In response to concerns raised by the report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, there was a more concerted effort in the 1970s to put women (still white women) in front of the camera in serious and significant roles (Crean, “Culture” 51). The next two decades saw women like Jan Tennant, Barbara Frum, and Dina Petty taking more prominent positions in news and current affair programs although it was not until 1992 that a woman, Pamela Wallin, was invited to co-anchor a national evening newscast (“Pamela Wallin”).

The movement of non-white women and visible minorities such as disabled women into Canadian television is occurring slowly, piecemeal and, it seems, somewhat reluctantly. Some, like Jaya Chandrasekar, have had prominent and long-standing roles with programs marketed to specific racial demographics (Wedge). Adrienne Clarkson, on the other hand, was brought into programs with a much larger (and whiter) target audience and while this exposure no doubt fueled her impressive television and political career, it also initially exposed her to racially charged media coverage: when she joined CBC’s *Take 30* in 1965, it was reported that she was the first “Oriental” in Canadian television’s history to head a show and was characterized as an “Oriental Femcee” (“Oriental Femcee” 34). In general, it is fairly safe to claim that for the entire tenure of Canadian television in the twentieth century, non-white women have not had the same advantages as white women for cultivating television careers and celebrity. In fact, it was not until 1999 that the CRTC instituted policies to ensure that programming on Canadian television represented the “diversity of Canadians” (Bateman and Karim).¹⁹

¹⁸ Non-white women were not well represented in any format on Canadian television.

¹⁹ Prior to that, the CRTC had issued regulations in 1986 regarding discriminatory representation on programs and, in 1994, had investigated the on-air equity measures of Canadian broadcasters. See Bateman and Karim for a history of CRTC and other media and broadcasting bodies’ regulations that deal with creating equity in Canadian television programming.

While the long-term effects of these regulations and other employment-equity legislation on women's capacity to cultivate celebrity in Canadian television in the twenty-first century remain to be seen, in the short term such ideological drives have, particularly when coupled with new technologies, paved the way for special status networks and specialty channels that service particular under-represented demographics. With the launch of digital television in 2001, for example, the CRTC privileged services that "were classified as making the strongest contribution to diversity in television programming" such as Women's Television Sports Network (Neverson 35). Just two years earlier, the Aboriginal People's Television Network was launched, a network that arose from and built upon several decades of programming initiatives in indigeneous television (Roth 25).²⁰ Lorraine York, drawing on the excellent work of Kathleen Buddle, has noted how broadcasting networks such as the APTN can cultivate celebrity within non-mainstream public spheres that are routinely overlooked because they operate within particular, often limited, markets ("Celebrity and Indigeneity"). It is worth noting that the relatively small size of these audiences and public spheres often does not, however, have any bearing on the significance of the individual to the audience; rather, local and localized stars can potentially cultivate heightened affective responses from fans by virtue of their physical and cultural proximity and the renewed attachments to a shared culture, language, landscape, or heritage the stars public image and labour can inspire.

However, such potential for celebrity cultivation only exists so long as there is a platform for its cultivation and dissemination: here the fate of the Women's Sports Television Network is instructive. Launched in 2001, WSTN broadcast for only two years. In sociologist Nicole Neverson's opinion, the demise of WSTN in 2003 was due, in large part, to onerous regulatory

²⁰ See Lorna Roth's helpful and concise article, "First Peoples' Television in Canada: Origins of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network," for a more detailed history of the various initiatives into indigenous broadcasting networks and programming that preceded the APTN.

stipulations and the inability to make ideological investments in gender equity profitable: a female audience for mainstream sports programming had not materialized, Nicholson argues, and the general television sports climate was gendered masculine (27-9). The loss of this first-ever platform for 24-hour television of women's sports represented not only lost opportunities for the development of raising the profile of women athletes but also lost opportunities for women sportscasters and presenters like Norma Wick and Jennifer Hedger to break into this field (28). Today, on mainstream sports networks, women and women's sports continue to be under-represented: it was not until 2006, for example, that *Hockey Night in Canada*, CBC's "most profitable property" (Stursberg 148), had its first (and temporary) female colour commentator, Cassie Campbell ("About Cassie").²¹ As M. Ann Hall has noted in *The Girl and The Game: A History of Women's Sport in Canada*, media interest in women's sports is generally quite dismal although it peaks during the Olympics and tends to focus on white women and women in individual (rather than team) sports. Historically, those women who were attractive, feminine, and whose sport could be read as accommodating conventional gender roles (ie. ice skating, dancing, and swimming), were far more likely to circulate in the press—case in point, Barbara Ann Scott, the photogenic ice skating legend of the 1950s—and, Hall argues, not much has changed. Hall's study, however, ends with the twentieth century; a revised edition would have to account for the rising profile of team captains like Cassie Campbell, Hailey Wickenheiser, and Christine Sinclair although there is still much truth to Hall's argument that women who are beautiful and successful garner more media attention and corporate sponsorships, and that various industries continue to sexualize and commodify the bodies of sporting women (196).

²¹ I am indebted to Julie Rak's work on Don Cherry's celebrity for bringing Stursberg's claims about *Hockey Night in Canada* to my attention.

Thus while television brought sports into the lives of millions of Canadians (Hall 137), it is often our cultural preoccupation with how women's bodies should look that has transformed some sporting women into celebrities and not others. The same is true of women on television in general: beauty is considered to be a critical component of being telegenic and therein intimately connected to the production of television celebrity. These constructions of beauty are, notably, middle-class and inseparable from conventional constructions of femininity—television stars on both non-fiction and drama programming are typically able-bodied, slender, petit, graceful, and are unlikely to look “old” or have short hair, asymmetrical features, or muscular bodies. As both Doris Anderson and Rita MacNeil have noted in their memoirs, not all women are welcome on television. Yet, despite not fitting what they perceived to be the appropriate or typical telegenic mold for women on television, both women did have recognizable and regular roles for some time on television. Like many Canadians cultivating celebrity on television, these roles were predominantly in non-fiction programs, a programming format that continues to be both popular and affordable amongst the specialty channels and broadcasting networks like HGTV, the Food Network, and APTN.

However, while the expansion of television channels and delivery formats has created more platforms upon which more women can potentially cultivate televisions careers and celebrity, a prominent profile on one channel or network does not guarantee exposure on other networks or even other print and radio media in English Canada. This is, in some respects, surprising in light of the virtual domination of the English-Canadian media landscape by just a handful of companies: Bell and Shaw hold what is considered to be a “duopoly” in the Canadian television market, although both Rogers and CBC are also considered major stakeholders, and Bell, Rogers, Shaw and Telus account for 70% of the general media landscape with all but Telus

vertically integrated and capable of producing and disseminating content across multiple media platforms (Fontaine). Yet, despite the massive potential of these companies to develop and mobilize Canadian celebrities across multiple platforms, they appear to be less organized and designed to do so as compared to the major music industry labels or as compared to relatively isolated but tightly-knit markets such as in Quebec. Certainly the potential exists, but Canadian celebrities at present appear to move across media platforms on an ad hoc basis in pursuit of their career rather than as part of a systematic corporate structure for developing and profiting from particular personalities.

Internet

The second major mass media development of the twentieth century, the Internet, did not become a major contender in celebrity culture industries until the social platforms of Web 2.0 emerged in the twenty-first century. These have had a profound impact on how celebrity circulates and on how celebrity can be generated although, in this latter category, the medium is less powerful than is often supposed. Some critics have argued that through social media, the average person has access to the tools of celebrity because these platforms enable individuals to circulate widely and wildly in an alternate medium and, as Ellis has argued about celebrity in general, such performances “feed back into future performances” of the public self (*Visible Fictions* 91). Joshua Gamson has argued that the Internet has not only “drastically widen[ed] the pool of potential celebrity by lowering the entry barriers” (1065), but it has also given audiences the power to “create celebrity” (“Unwatched Life” 1067-8). Theresa Senft has called this phenomenon “micro-celebrity” but the terminology she and Gamson employ is misleading (qtd in Marwick 141): by virtue of using Twitter and Facebook we have not all become celebrities. Through the unequal investments of interest and non-reciprocal exchange of information, the

celebrity on social media does not have a network but an audience.²² A celebrity's audience is too large to control or manage, and it consumes (sometimes even produces) information and representations of the celebrity beyond the contexts and materials originating with the individual. In other words, even popular bloggers are not necessarily celebrities unless they begin to circulate in alternate modes and media beyond their control, generating an audience invested in narratives about them beyond what they themselves have produced.

The production of celebrity through the internet, then, generally means that one might begin online as YouTube talent like the Stella sisters or a behind-the-scenes content creator like Amber MacArthur but rarely does one remain exclusively online: in both cases, these young Canadian women moved quickly into television.²³ Thus while popularity online represents a kind of democratization of celebrity wherein the populace has signalled its approval of a particular digital experience, the translation of that popularity into celebrity more often than not necessitates the intervention of the conventional industries of celebrity: recording studios, television, politics, etc. (Turner, *Understanding* 84). As a result, the seemingly nation-less digital spaces—in itself a misconception since online content does not circulate heedless of national borders and their regulatory bodies—are soon enough translated into national and transnational industries.

Instead of producing a vast number of celebrities, the digital age has, for the most part, simply provided an alternate mode by which celebrities (and traditional media programming) circulate: it is, at present, more of an instrument of celebrity maintenance than production.

²² As Bennett argues, there is also a degree of skill involved in using the digital tools of Web 2.0, particularly for those who use them to become famous (178).

²³ Lennon and Maisy Stella's acoustic cover of "Call Your Girlfriend," where both girls kept time on margarine containers, went viral in 2012. Both are now pursuing music careers in the US and regularly appear on the television program *Nashville*. Amber MacArthur (also known as Amber Mac) is one of the few Canadian women (perhaps the only one to date) who has used her tech-savvy skills to launch a very successful television, podcasting, and writing career.

However, as a mode of circulation, its terms of engagement are significantly different from those of any other mass media that have come before. Now anyone *anywhere* with access to the technology represents a potential producer or disseminator of information about a celebrity. The fragmented, decentralized modes of production have, as P. David Marshall and others have pointed out, meant that the celebrity and her affiliated industries have lost control over the celebrity terrain (although it bears pointing out that such control has been illusory for a very long time) (“New Media”).

In this digital terrain, the celebrity not only has a voice but is often expected to maintain some form of online presence. Celebrity websites are, in many ways structured like the autobiographies of *celebrity* explored in Chapter Two (texts by Maud Allan, Emma Albani, and Marie Dressler) because they are typically preoccupied with the celebrity’s labour and public experiences of celebrity. However, those forms that are dynamic and composed in the first person such as Twitter or Facebook, foster a new kind of intimate (albeit inherently unequal) relationship between celebrity and fan that is often predicated on allowing the fan real time backstage access to the celebrity’s so-called private life (Marwick 139). It remains to be seen whether these forms of first-person life writing will have an impact on the market for and composition of celebrity autobiography: it is equally possible that the memoir market may decline or may be bolstered (or remain unaffected) by the fan’s investment in these new, cheap, direct, and immediate forms for accessing their favourite celebrities. Julie Rak, in her investigation of the popular memoir boom, believes that online personal narratives may not necessarily “displace more traditionally published memoirs,” and are even, occasionally, transformed in some form or fashion into print media (*Boom* 209). Jann Arden’s life-writing projects certainly bear out both of these arguments: in 2002 and 2004 Arden published selections

of her online journals with Insomniac Press and in 2011 Arden published a more conventional print memoir with Knopf Canada. It makes sense that celebrities will continue to promote their labour, image, and narratives in multiple media, across multiple platforms and this relationship between the online presence and the modes of self-representation in other media warrants further study than what can be accomplished here.

Gender and Celebrity in Canada

As we saw in Chapter One, women's experiences of celebrity in the first half of the twentieth century were shaped by ideological investments in women's biological destiny as wives and mothers and a suspicion of mass culture. These attitudes erected numerous obstacles and barriers that made it difficult for women to access culturally and/or economically valued forms of labour and the public sphere (including mass media), to transform that labour into celebrity, to articulate a contentment or pleasure in the perks of celebrity, and to do all of these things without inciting censure or scandal. Although audiences and media were, on the whole, willing enough to fête *individual* instances of success—to claim them for Canada, celebrate their triumphs, and (re)cast them in a flattering light that upheld conservative values—as a general concept, there remained a deep-seated suspicion of and anxiety about women as subjects of the public gaze. In the latter half of the twentieth century, this concern about the unseemliness of women's aspirations to attain and enjoy fame is in marked decline and one finds fewer and fewer explicit and direct suggestions that women's gender precludes them from achieving both respectability *and* a public life. However, the spectre of domesticity continues to haunt the public woman. As critics have noted, there was a great deal of consternation in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s at the notion that women were not finding their domestic lives suitably fulfilling (Sangster 31). Even as it became normal and common for middle-class women to work outside the home, the

kinds of paid and unpaid labour women could (and still) perform suggest a lingering investment in women's supposedly natural affinity for the labours of the domestic sphere. These new expressions of outdated ideologies, as we shall see in this section, continue to affect women's ability to transform their labour into celebrity, their experiences of celebrity, and the kinds of public images that women feel pressured to promote. Well into the twentieth century and, by all appearances, into the twenty-first century, women, it seems, continue to experience celebrity differently than men.

In the second half of the twentieth century, women in Canada *almost* achieved paid labour force participation parity with men. In 1951, 22% of the labour force in Canada were women (up from 13% in 1901); by 1971 women constituted 34% and in 1991, 45% of the paid labour force (Frager and Patrias 153). By the turn of the twenty-first century, in 2001, this had risen again to 46.2% and, at last count in 2009, women in Canada made up 47.9% of the paid labour force (Statistics Canada, "Table 1"). If the number of women in paid labour is not quite equal with men, certainly the percentage of women working has been increasing: in 1901 only 16% of women were working (Frager and Patrias 25), in 1941 this had risen to 23% (Frager and Patrias 26), in 1981, 47.7 % and by 2009, 58.3% of working age women were employed (Statistics Canada, "Table 1"). Not only were more and more women working, but women who might previously have been unexpected to work—married women and women with children—were making up a significant portion of the labour market: in 1941 less than 4% of married women worked, a number that rose steadily—approximately 10% every decade (Crompton and Vickers 8)—until 1971 when 37% of married women were working (Eichler 64).²⁴ Although by 1980 it seems that it was less remarkable for married women to be employed (by this time,

²⁴ To be exact, Crompton and Vickers's statistics state: 1941, less than 4%; 1951, over 11%; and 1961, 22% of married women were working.

approximately 50% were), it was not until the twenty-first century when it was also common for mothers with children at home to be working (Eichler 64, Status of Women 12).²⁵

These statistics reveal that in the second half of the twentieth century, it has become not only common but normal and expected for women in Canada to enter and (after a few years away for childrearing) remain in the paid labour force; however, participation parity does not mean employment parity. These and other inequities of the labour market were, with the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (established 1967), publicly addressed and articulated. The Commission's 1970 Report documented the extent to which women's work in Canada was systemically underpaid, undervalued, and concentrated in areas constructed as commensurate with women's "natural" skills in care-taking (nurses and teaching) and service (clerical and other). In 2009, women's labour was still concentrated in these traditional areas (67%) and women were noticeable minorities in certain fields and occupations (Ferrao). The persistence of a gendered labour economy, however, continues to enable some forms of celebrity: women in Canada can *still* cultivate a media presence and fame based on entering or succeeding in fields dominated by men, such as the upper-echelons of politics, the corporate sector, industry, and science. In 2008, women still earned on average considerably less than men (Williams) due to a variety of factors including their increased likelihood to be employed part-time, their unequal access to some of the highest paying forms of employment and, for mothers, their interrupted work cycle and domestic obligations. These conditions of women's labour mean that, in terms of transforming their labour into opportunities for celebrity, those labouring in fields that are neither culturally nor economically valued still have significant difficulty cultivating fame.

²⁵ In 1976, 39.1 % of mothers with children at home were in the work force whereas by 2009, this number had risen to 72.9% (Status of Women 12)

These labour statistics, while they are suggestive of the cultural and economic value of women's work across this period, speak to the *general* labour market, fields in which fame and celebrity are less likely to occur. Just as in the first half of the twentieth century, celebrity in this period is still predominantly a function of labouring in the entertainment industry wherein women have long been able to compete with men in most markets.²⁶ While the Status of Women Report offered no explicit discussion of women's capacity to achieve celebrity (being preoccupied with the question of equitable access to paid labour and the opportunities that arose from such labour) and restricted the investigation of women's "public life" to questions of women's participation in politics (333), the report did suggest that women working in the arts could generally expect equitable treatment in terms of both government funding and market opportunities. It was noted, however, that Canadian mass media actively perpetuated unhelpful stereotypes about women (15) —a pattern of representation that no doubt limited women's opportunities to pursue meaningful work and develop a respected public image in television and radio in particular—and that women's domestic and family obligations often prevented them from "the highest development of their art" (151-2).²⁷ At the beginning of her career, a woman seeking to pursue and excel in her labour (whether in an entertainment industry or otherwise) had less time for this project than a man did in the same field by virtue of her domestic obligations. Moreover, this situation has not dramatically changed in the last few decades. According to the statistics gathered by Statistics Canada and published in a 2012 Status of Women Canada publication, while the burden of domestic labour on women may have eased, it has not abated or been fairly redistributed: in 2012 it was calculated that on average women spent twice as much

²⁶ In the earlier twentieth century, as Chapter One discussed, women's access to paid labour was a relevant factor in their capacity to achieve celebrity because it represented their access to the public sphere and forms of culturally and/or economically valued labour.

²⁷ In *The Girl and the Game: A History of Women's Sport in Canada* Hall also notes that at this time (1960s and 1970s), women athletes were highly sexualized in the media (146).

time as men on childcare activities (50.1 hours) and housework (13.8 hours) and were twice as likely to spend more than 10 hours a week looking after an elderly person (7).²⁸ It is not difficult to see how the hours committed to unpaid domestic labour could significantly affect the time available to devote to a career unless a woman was single, without children or care-taking responsibilities, or able to delegate these tasks to hired help. Not surprisingly, many famous women's life narratives from this time period detail how they managed their domestic lives with hired help (although such help is often represented as made necessary and possible by success).²⁹

When a woman has, by virtue of hard work, media exposure, the assistance of various corporate bodies or industries and the formation of an engaged audience, managed to turn her labour into celebrated labour and her image into something of a brand, her public image and the discourses in circulation about her are frequently focused on her non-working life rather than her work and cultural products. As Christine Geraghty has argued (and critics like Su Holmes and Diane Negra have agreed), in celebrity discourses women are “more identified with the private sphere” (Holmes and Negra 13) and their private and personal lives are often considered more interesting and valuable than their working lives (Geraghty 187). While all celebrities circulate to some degree in relation to their non-working life, these critics contend that the private lives of famous women must withstand more intense scrutiny and are far more likely to be framed, evaluated, and disseminated in discourses that invoke conventional, even conservative, gender roles. Since the postwar period, Karen Sternheimer has argued in “The Enduring Dilemmas of Female Celebrity,” public discourse about famous women has mobilized middle-class heterosexual constructions of femininity and firmly linked women to the home and family. Many

²⁸ Although it did not specify as such, the report appears to presume these statistics refer to women and men in heterosexual relationships.

²⁹ See, for example Florence Bird's *Anne Francis: An Autobiography* (1974), Doris Anderson's *Rebel Daughter: An Autobiography* (1996), Celine Dion's *My Story, My Dream* (2000), and Shannon Tweed's *Kiss and Tell* (2006).

other critics have traced similar threads, noting how the “scripts” of “family values” are frequently used to assess famous women (Holmes and Negra 18), and how relationships, marriages, babybumps, and motherhood are, particularly in the last few decades, fetishized in ways that not only direct attention to a woman’s capacity for domestic life in private settings but also to her body (Sternheimer 44; Meyer 58).³⁰

The forms these general trends have taken in Canada have varied over the decades. In the postwar period, the general anxiety about gender roles and the critical importance of the “state of the family” (Adams qtd in Hall 111), meant that women whose labour and image could be made complicit with pacifying these general concerns had a significant advantage in promoting themselves in the media. In the 1960s and early 70s, we see women like Buffy Sainte-Marie, Joni Mitchell, and Adrienne Clarkson pushing the boundaries of what famous Canadian women might look (or sound) like or what politically charged issues they might be concerned about. At the same time there were still a considerable number of women like Margaret Trudeau, Anne Murray, and Karen Magnussen who up-dated but did not challenge the forms and functions of clean-cut, feminine middle-class public images. Indeed, throughout the late twentieth century the vast majority of famous women in Canada embody and promote in their public image some version of middle-class heterosexual femininity whether “small-town girls” with a heart of gold, like Elizabeth Manley and Rachel McAdams; “sex-kittens” like Shannon Tweed; or political agitators and intellectuals like Rosemary Brown and Margaret Atwood.³¹ Not all famous Canadian women were born or raised in middle-class families but their public images are likely to embody and promote those values. Those who are seen to fall away from those values, who,

³⁰ These critics do not speak specifically of women’s celebrity in Canada but of Western celebrity cultures in general in the mid-to-late twentieth century.

³¹ As with any attempt to delineate “types” of celebrity images, these categories speak only to dominant and recurring discourses in the celebrity terrain and should not be treated as static or definitive.

for example, appear to be over-sexed or sexual predators—whether such a media image is, as with Pamela Anderson, carefully crafted in the public eye for the purposes of furthering a career or, as with Karla Homolka, the function of media representations of deviant behaviours in the private sphere—such women are often recast as lower-class “trash.” And because Canada lacks many of the mechanisms by which socialites and the lower-classes have become more visible—particularly through reality television programs—fame in Canada remains a mainly middle-class affair.

Nevertheless, the second half of the twentieth century has seen significant changes to political and cultural constructions of gender and this has shaped how and what gendered public identities are expressed, performed, and legitimized. If conventional middle-class femininity as embodied by Margaret Trudeau and Anne Murray in the early 1970s was not only a sensible but very marketable public image to cultivate, second-wave feminism soon gave these and other women the tools and discourses by which to recognize and challenge how particular gender ideologies were structuring their experiences in both public and private life. While such discourses enabled Trudeau to manage her very public separation from her husband and her children, it also paved the way for other women like Florence Bird and Doris Anderson to cultivate celebrity for their political work. The 1980s saw gender play move into mainstream popular culture, particularly through the music industry, and this made alternate discourses and performances of gender not only possible but a vehicle through which women like Carole Pope and, later, k.d. lang, could create a career and public image. While the “girl-power” and newly retooled “earth-mother” movements created a strong market for particular images and feminist-sounding discourses in the 1990s, as critics have noted, they offered little in the way of a substantial rethinking of conventional gender roles: the “seemingly progressive rhetoric” about

gender, Amanda Gengler argues, continues to be repackaged in ways that “sell products and ideas that keep girls doing gender in appropriately feminine ways, leading them to reproduce, rather than challenge, gender hierarchies” (68). In our contemporary cultural climate, as we shall see in the following chapter’s investigation of the diva figure, ideological investments in neoliberalism and postfeminism have directed attention away from the structural and social influences of gender performances and have privileged performances of celebrity that mobilize discourses of self-made success, personal strength and responsibility, and triumph over adversity.

How these discourses play out in the memoirs of the period depends a great deal on what kind of image the celebrity is circulating and cultivating, and what discourses were most effective for that purpose at the time of writing. Margaret Trudeau’s three memoirs, *Beyond Reason* (1979), *Consequences* (1982), and *Changing My Mind* (2010) offer an instructive case study in the various gendered images and discourses that can be used to frame and reframe personal narratives. *Beyond Reason* and, to a greater extent, *Consequences*, use the discourses of second-wave feminism to represent this new chapter in Trudeau’s life as a kind of feminist liberation —separated from husband, home, and children, and finding herself otherwise untrained for a labour market more interested in capitalizing on her notoriety than her developing artistic skills. The fairy tale of marrying the prince and living happily (and wealthily) ever after, these texts imply, is not only a foolish ambition but almost always destined to fail: the modern woman must learn the hollow promise of such a dream and how to “mak[e] it on her own.”³² In her third memoir thirty years later, some of these same experiences, such as marital discord and leaving her husband and children, are recast as the effects of mental illness—a framework that effectively quashes whatever feminist principles her previous texts may have invoked and

³² The caption under Trudeau’s image on the cover of *Consequences* reads: “She was the Prime Minister’s beautiful young wife. Now she’s a woman making it on her own.”

substitutes in their place some of the more conservative tropes of postfeminism. These discourses of madness mobilized by contemporary famous women, Emma Bell's research has demonstrated, are typically conservative and in service of conventional gender roles:

They [famous women] remake and rebrand their selves in noticeably similar forms, making revelations of mental ill health through reality and life products and dramatic physical makeovers, displaying commitment to public service and charity, and claiming redemption through motherhood. They seek public roles as charity ambassadors, psychological and diet gurus, and producers of products for children. Setting the record straight, then, often means asserting, "I'm not bad, I'm mad....!" [...] In the final stages of transformation, the credibility of the ex-"bad girl" depends on her accessing an ideological safe-space for rebranding and media exposure. Most often, this is achieved by promoting an image of a good, sane, mother who has successfully achieved female heterosexual normality--and therefore sanity and renewed cultural value. (202, 218)

While *Changing My Mind* does appear to earnestly desire to raise awareness for those who have relatives or themselves suffer from mental illness (the text even concludes with three essays from prominent mental health professionals), the patterns of representation noted by Bell are distinctly apparent in this text: Trudeau's children are instrumental in her recovery and her drive to recover, and her newfound stability enables her to be a better mother (300-303), to find a job and earn her keep (310-13), and to use her public image for charitable work (314-15). These middle-class feminine accomplishments and values, the final chapter, "Me, at Last," suggests, are the symptoms of her sanity and the signs of the "real" self that has emerged and triumphed over adversity. This framing of normative gender identities as the accomplishment and expression of the "real" self is, Brenda Weber has observed, an all too common discourse: "It is only when order is established that subjects celebrate their spectacular emergence as normatively gendered selves, thus leading many makeover texts to culminate in statements of 'I'm me now!' or 'I'm finally a woman!'" ("Stark raving" 345-6).

The ways in which current political climates shape the content and style of these women's life narratives is most easily recognized in cases such as Trudeau's where similar

narratives are retold at different times or where texts invoke out-of-date discourses, as Doris Anderson does when she espouses some of the troubling ideals of second-wave feminism in *Rebel Daughter* (2000). However, because the majority of celebrity autobiographies of the mid-to-late twentieth century have been written during the memoir boom, a period characterized by neoliberal and postfeminist discourses, it is not surprising that ideologically, these texts often have much in common in terms of their representations of gender and celebrity even across women who experienced celebrity at very different times. The signs of these political and ideological influences are not just apparent in what these texts represent and how they represent it, but also in what these texts fail to represent: rarely do these women acknowledge the advantages conveyed by their middle-class roots and aspirations (in fact, many work hard to frame their pre-celebrity life as rough, poor, and rural), their whiteness, or their beauty. Success is consistently represented as being significantly if not predominantly a function of their drive, ambition, and hard work—the onus is clearly on the individual, not to challenge the conditions that might discriminate against her success, but to succeed in spite of them. If they speak to the impact of their gender on their capacity to cultivate celebrity, it is often framed as a condition of the past (1970s and 1980s) rather than the present and as a function of particular sexist or misogynist individuals rather than a general cultural climate.³³ Few women who cultivated their celebrity after this period speak critically of the social and cultural conditions of being a woman in their memoir although there is some discussion, particularly in the memoirs of famous singers, of the intense pressure they feel to look thin and beautiful. This criticism, however, is directed at the music industry and typically fails to interrogate how or why the industry functions in this way.

³³ Carole Pope's *Anti Diva* (2009) is an important exception: her text actively critiques what she sees as the political bankruptcy of late twentieth-century heteronormative feminisms and she argues for the necessity of resisting systems that attempt to trivialize or commodify women's anger (238).

As feminist critics of celebrity have noted elsewhere, the postfeminist promise that women today can have and do it all, has generated (and been generated by) the intense media gaze upon how famous women conduct their domestic lives (Cobb; Holmes and Negra 2). This invasive gaze is, of course, not new: throughout the twentieth century famous women have found their private affairs subject to scrutiny and unauthorized representation.³⁴ In the late twentieth century, however, this gaze arguably intensifies as a function of the growth of the tabloid industry, the development of increasingly sophisticated technologies for accessing and recording the private life, and a cultural climate that is heavily influenced by postfeminist and neoliberal ideological investments in the primacy of the individual and increasingly tolerant of and even hungry for portraits of the intimate and unauthorized. Not surprisingly, celebrities writing during the memoir boom respond to this heightened emphasis on and investigation into a woman's capacity to manage her domestic life, with life narratives that reproduce this gaze and invite the public in to bear witness to their domestic felicity or, more often, their struggle to achieve this condition. The narrative arc of these texts thus encompasses the story of rising to success but, in documenting the experience of celebrity, it also routinely offers the story of the private life as affected by success. In fact, it is consistently the private life and not the public life that experiences some kind of trauma and failure, the recuperation from which is offered as a secondary plot of the text: Margaret Trudeau's family life and mental health; Karen Kain's burnout and depression; Shania Twain's public split from her philandering husband, etc. Even when such a plot does not govern the memoir, intensely private narratives—of sexual assault, the physical body, failed relationships, eating disorders, depression, and other mental health

³⁴ In the early twentieth century, Emma Albani, Marie Dressler, and L.M. Montgomery all recorded in either their public or private life-writing texts their resistance to the prying eyes of the media and public, and noted a particular interest in their "thoughts on love" (Dressler, *Eminent* 202) and "love affairs" (Montgomery, *SJLMM II*:202).

concerns—are routinely incorporated into the text, often framed as an effect of celebrity and success.

This theme in the boom-period memoirs of famous women is not surprising when considered in light of Su Holmes and Diane Negra’s assessment of the contemporary media climate:

...in the postfeminist representational environment that is now widely understood to characterize the current era, femininity is routinely conceptualized as torn between chaos and (over) control, serenity and agitation. In this regard, female celebrity models for managing the (feminized) “work-life balance” are often positioned as only precariously and temporarily stabilized; we are invited to play a “waiting game” to see when their hard-won achievements will collapse under the simultaneous weight of relationships, family, and career. One reason why stories of professionally accomplished/personally troubled female celebrities circulate so actively is that when women struggle or fail, their actions are seen to constitute “proof” that for women the “work-life balance” is really an impossible one. (2)

Navigating this terrain, the contemporary memoir by a famous woman typically picks up and reiterates these themes—charting the difficulties of achieving balance and documenting a handful of examples where she personally failed in this project. However, the discourses mobilized to render these narratives are, as they are in the media (Cobb; Meyers 68; Sternheimer 44), likely to be conservative, affirm traditional gender roles, and give primacy to the conventional features of middle-class heterosexuality—relationships, marriages, babies.

Consider, for example, how little distinguishes Anne Murray’s conservative 1960s perspectives on domestic obligations and the present narrating “T”’s perspectives on this subject:

Usually I deflected questions about my private life, or simply lied. On more than one occasion my remarks would prove to be uncannily prescient. A reporter would ask me what my future plans were and I’d say, “I’d like to be out of the business by the age of thirty. I want to marry and have children, and having a career at that point would be incompatible with motherhood and family life. Besides, if I were touring, then my husband would be at home, and what kind of life would that be? Who, after all, would want to be known as Mr. Anne Murray?” Which more or less is exactly what happened to Bill, with painful consequences for both of us and our children. (93-4)

Like Murray, Doris Anderson and Adrienne Clarkson also narrate how assumptions about the incompatibility of a public life and domestic obligations at this time created particular strife at work, at home and/or in the media, but unlike Murray, these women understand and critique the inequity of the situation and the cultural climate that persuaded them to assume both the responsibility and the blame. Instead, Murray's fatalism here seems to imply that disrupting conventional gender roles is not only harmful to all participants but inevitably so.

Murray's construction of motherhood as a function of the private sphere and as incommensurate with the activities of celebrity is, however, a common theme in contemporary media and life-writing texts: women are routinely condemned if they are seen to be transparently commodifying and/or profiting from motherhood—whether as the mother of a celebrity or as a celebrity who has children—because motherhood continues to be constructed as a natural and selfless act that remains at arm's length from the world of commerce (Cobb; Weber 1113). By situating the private sphere as the “proper” home for mothering, these discourses also create the conditions by which an invasive public gaze into private lives can be legitimated; in other words, the media can justify paparazzi tactics in order to document the domestic sphere in its “natural” state and they appear to relish, as Holmes and Negra have pointed out, evidence that bears out the suspicion that famous women cannot successfully manage the demands of both the public and private sphere or prevent one world from negatively affecting the other.

Whatever personal traumas are narrated, however, the narrating “I” always speaks as though firmly recovered, a model of the balance, happiness, and contentment that is supposed to accompany surviving such challenges. In this way, the celebrity autobiographies of this period attempt to tap into the prevailing discourses of chaos and control but redress the media's fixation on the “collapse” or disaster by modelling, through the frameworks of both neoliberalism and

postfeminism, the signs and symptoms of normative middle-class gender identities. Such identities require famous women not simply to parade their private, specifically domestic, lives as partners, spouses, and/or parents before the public but to transform these details into elaborate, emotional, dialogue-laden narratives that detail the highs, the lows, and the banal everyday.

These contemporary strategies of self-representation stand in marked contrast to how relationships, parenting and other intensely personal experiences of emotional, psychological, and physical pleasure and duress are represented in celebrity memoirs at other times in the twentieth century. In the early decades of the twentieth century, as we may recall from Chapters Two and Three, women like Marie Dressler, Emma Albani, and L.M. Montgomery refused to even name or narrate their spouses never mind transform them or other non-career related details of their lives into stories. Even in the 1960s and 1970 amongst the memoirs of women like Beatrice Lillie, Florence Bird, and Nancy Greene, we see a marked evasiveness about representing the home, the body, and details of non-work related relationships of adulthood and what is represented is typically done from the perspective of a polite observer rather than an invested participant. While there is, undoubtedly a clear trend across the twentieth century of an increasing media and memoir attention to the intimate details of these parts of a celebrity's private life and to fold these details into dialogue and plot, it would be inaccurate to suggest that it has been a constant or consistent development. Memoirs in the 1950s by Mazo de la Roche and Mary Pickford, for example, offer considerable insight into some of their relationships, and memoirs by some celebrities today, like Adrienne Clarkson or Karen Kain, represent little more than what they might expect the public to already know. In general, however, the trend in celebrity autobiography (not just amongst women or Canadians) has been not simply to render

up the private as a means of authorizing the public image but to transform the personal life into a narrative of equal weight, importance, and interest to the narrative of achieving celebrity.

If, ideologically, these texts are often marked by investments in neoliberalism and postfeminism, and therein find similar means and modes for representing celebrity and gender, the celebrity texts of the memoir boom also have a tendency to look quite similar. As noted in the Introduction, the contemporary celebrity autobiography is both familiar and easily recognizable with its glossy glamour photo and celebrity name splashed across the front cover, its trade paperback length and size, photo inserts taken from various stages of life and career, its polished and confident prose, and novel-like narratives chronologically and teleologically accounting for the development of the public and private person. While some texts do deviate from these general trends in style and structure—Jann Arden’s first two texts, *if i knew, don’t you think i’d tell you* (2002) and *i’ll tell you one thing, and that’s all i know* (2004) are selected excerpts from her online journals, and Karen Kain’s *Movement Never Lies: An Autobiography* (1994) is designed to be a coffee-table book—these exceptions throw into relief how boom texts seem to have cultivated a rather firm set of conventions for celebrity self-representation.

While memoir boom celebrity texts have a great deal in common—ideologically, structurally, and stylistically—there is not always consensus about the value and function of celebrity and there is the occasional text that takes up the project of interrogating how gender performances affect one’s navigation of celebrity industries as we shall see in Chapter Five’s exploration of boom-period music memoirs. However, if the effects of gender are frequently overlooked and effaced—particularly in texts written by heterosexual white women—it is a function of ideology and not the product of a cultural climate where gender no longer shapes or conditions how one navigates the celebrity terrain. As this chapter has outlined, a great deal has

changed for Canadian women in the second half of the twentieth century in terms of the technologies available for cultivating and disseminating celebrity and the cultural and economic value of this project. However, celebrity remains a project structured by and in pursuit of inequity which admits and promotes very few performances of gender that deviate from a white, middle-class, feminine, heterosexual ideal. While not all female celebrities are white, middle-class, feminine, and/or heterosexual (although many, in Canada, are), the cultural values associated with and arising from this demographic remain privileged in the discourses of celebrity and the performances of gender and identity that occur in Canadian contexts.

Chapter Five

Music Celebrity in Canada: National Ties and the Diva Dilemma

“My friend Erin has a theory that years ago Anne Murray’s genes were spliced and distributed throughout Canada to ensure a dynasty of divas in every province. In Alberta we have Jann; Ontario, Shania; Quebec, Celine; B.C., Sarah; P.E.I., Tara; Manitoba, Joni; Saskatchewan, Buffy; and in Nova Scotia, there is Rita.”
-Nick Lewis, *Calgary Herald*

This witty, if anachronistic, mapping of the landscapes of Canadian diva-hood reminds us that, despite the increasingly transnational character of the music industry and music celebrity, regional identities have an enduring legacy in the Canadian music industry.¹ In *Canuck Rock: A History of Canadian Popular Music*, Ryan Edwardson argues that these kinds of investments in the significance of a music celebrity’s regional or national roots are more often a function of how Canadian fans read and construct a celebrity’s identity rather than any conscious alignment or performance of this identity by the individual (19).² While no doubt this is true of some of the women in the epigraph—certainly Joni Mitchell and Buffy Sainte-Marie have not encouraged those particular regional identities—in most situations, these claims and constructions of the fans are also buttressed by extensive industry infrastructures in Canada (including the consecrating powers of bureaucratic policy, awards, honours, and ceremonies), the Canadian media, and the celebrity’s representation of herself.³ In fact, a great deal of effort is expended in masking or obscuring the transnational reality of the Canadian music industry because, in the Canadian market, such regional and national ties are valuable. Not only do these identities and ties work to shore up the mythologies we craft about our nation and its cultural products, but such ties have

¹ The success and celebrity of Buffy Sainte-Marie and Joni Mitchell pre-date that of Anne Murray. This anecdote also incorrectly maps Mitchell on Manitoba when she was born in Alberta and grew up in Saskatchewan.

² Unless otherwise indicated, all citations for Edwardson in this chapter are from *Canuck Rock*.

³ Mitchell has publicly refused to participate in any tribute organized by local groups in Saskatoon and requested her personal memorabilia be returned to her (“Joni Mitchell wants no part”). Sainte-Marie, on the other hand, has worked hard to foreground racial and cultural rather than regional ties.

marketable affect-producing potential. The contemporary music industry is, after all, in the business of affect production, and regional and national ties have become another means of generating affect.

This final chapter on the autobiographies of Canadian music celebrities affords us an opportunity to explore how national identities and infrastructures are navigated and maintained in a cultural climate increasingly characterized by transnational industries. What does it mean to speak of Canadian celebrity today and how and why do those enmeshed in this transnational industry mobilize their regional roots? The texts examined in this chapter also provide an opportunity to examine more recent expressions of women's experiences of gendered celebrity through the figure of the "diva"—the celebrity who knows she is a celebrity and purposefully speaks and behaves from that subject position. The diva is, as we shall see, a polarizing figure: for some, she represents a corruption of the essential self by the trappings of celebrity; for others, the diva figure is liberated from its misogynist legacies and remobilized as a position of power worth celebrating. Nevertheless, in most cases, celebrity continues to be represented as an observable condition rather than a subject position; there is, in fact, a marked tendency to position the self as outside of the condition of celebrity and a corresponding emphasis on establishing the celebrated individual as ordinary and "normal." The exception to these trends is found in both the figure and the memoir of Celine Dion and it is not, as we shall see, a coincidence that the celebrity who embraces divahood *and* speaks from a carefully crafted celebrity subject position is the one most often accused of artifice.⁴

While Dion's *My Story, My Dream* (2000), written in collaboration with Georges-Hébert Germain and translated by Bruce Benderson, receives particular attention here, this chapter also

⁴ Following the lead of Erin Hurley, I refer to the anglicized version of Dion's name, Celine Dion instead of Céline Dion, because this is the name appended to the image and persona that circulates in English-language markets.

draws on a range of memoirs written by women in the music industry who, in the last decades of the twentieth century, experienced celebrity in Canada as Canadians: Liona Boyd's *In My Own Key: My Life in Love and Music* (1998); Rita MacNeil's *on a personal note* (1998) with Anne Simpson; Carole Pope's *Anti Diva: An Autobiography* (2000); Jann Arden's *if i knew, don't you think i'd tell you?* (2002), *i'll tell you one damn thing, and that's all i know!* (2004), and *Falling Backwards: A Memoir* (2011); Anne Murray's *All of Me* (2010) with Michael Posner; and Shania Twain's *From This Moment On* (2011). Although many more women achieved celebrity in the music industry than the seven noted here, these ten texts appear to represent, to date, the sum total of music celebrity memoirs produced by famous Canadian women (in English) during this period.⁵ Yet from this small sample, we can extrapolate some salient points about the music industry in Canada and late-twentieth century trends in representing self and celebrity. The dominance of pop and country music stars here, for example, is indicative of how these genres have historically been more open to women and the difficulty women have had and, arguably, continue to have, in cultivating careers outside of that market. Not surprisingly it is Boyd, a classical guitarist, and Pope, a 1980's rock icon, who are the most explicit about the barriers, prejudices, and misogyny they experienced in cultivating their careers. It is also not insignificant that all of these women are white—a reminder, perhaps, of not only the systemic and institutionalized prejudices built into particular musical genres like country and the music industry in general, but of the continued struggle of non-white women in Canada to cultivate celebrity and to find a voice, market, and/or publisher for a life-writing text about those

⁵ Every effort has been made to identify and include autobiographies by famous Canadian women with music careers in the late-twentieth century but there are likely a few texts that have been missed. Several authorized biographies and interview collections such as Blair Stonechild's *Buffy Sainte-Marie: It's My Way* (2012) and Malka Marom's *Joni Mitchell: In Her Own Words* (2014) have, for example, been published recently and could potentially be taken up as collaborative life-writing celebrity texts.

struggles.⁶ Also telling is the dominance, here and in the industry in general, of singing celebrities: those working in non-singing roles like radio deejays, composers, musicians in non-popular music genres, and producers have considerably more difficulty cultivating celebrity because the post-war music industry has both fostered and capitalized on the significant cultural and economic value of the affect generated by popular music and has helped localize this value in the individual who sings (Marshall, *Celebrity and Power* 150-84). As always there are exceptions to these general trends—here Liona Boyd reminds us of the possibilities for classical musicians like herself and Glenn Gould—but not surprisingly, celebrity for both Boyd and Gould has hinged upon the promotion of their work and identities as solo artists rather than as members of an orchestra.

This chapter begins with an exploration of the structural conditions shaping the music industry in Canada and how these have created opportunities for some to cultivate celebrity. As we shall see, the transnational nature of this industry works to promote music and identities that can readily circulate beyond Canada and those with successful international careers often document in their memoirs the processes by which they had to be retrained and stripped of their regional mannerisms for export. The re-inscription of a Canadian identity in many of these memoirs might serve to declare a celebrity's nationalistic leanings or inspire similar sentiments in her readers, but these identities also prove to be a particularly useful strategy for controlling how fame qualifies and characterizes the self being represented. Across most of these texts there is a concerted drive to disavow the effects of celebrity and to represent the “real” celebrity as “ordinary.” In the second part of the chapter this aversion to celebrity and the promotion of a regional identity as a tool for signalling the “ordinary” self “beneath” the trappings of celebrity

⁶ In Twain's memoir she self-identifies as having indigenous relatives and family. Unlike Buffy Sainte-Marie, this identity does not form a major part of her public image or labour.

are explored in some detail. Using the diva as the antithesis of this construction of the “ordinary” celebrity, we shall see that the criticisms levied at Celine Dion are symptomatic of a tendency to pathologize celebrity and to vehemently deny the legitimacy of celebrity as a “real” subject position. But Dion’s memoir, much like the memoir of Mazo de la Roche explored at the end of Chapter Two, highlights what it means to embrace celebrity as a subject position and to narrate the self as a multiply constituted terrain. As with de la Roche, these signs we see of the celebrity terrain in the celebrity autobiography throw into relief how discourses of celebrity are still invested in notions of authenticity and essential selves, and continue to tie them together; through memoirs like these by Dion and Carole Pope, we are able to trace not only a resistance to the processes that would delegitimize and pathologize celebrity, but an interest in the playful possibilities of immersing oneself in celebrity and speaking from and of this terrain.

Music Celebrity in Canada

After World War II, the music scene in Canada changed rapidly: by the 1950s not only were new genres and new technologies for the production and consumption of music emerging, but musicians were enjoying an increasingly prominent place in the public sphere through television, film, and print cultures (G. Carr 8-9). While music cultures in general were thriving, the vast majority of musical products were imported and few albums or musicians originated from Canada in part because the nation lacked both the infrastructure and incentive to cultivate, produce, and disseminate Canadian popular music talent. By the 1960s, the vast majority of successful singers had, like Buffy Sainte-Marie and Joni Mitchell, developed their careers in the US or, like Juliette Cavazzi, found fame through the television variety show.⁷ Not only were there few recording studios but radio stations were, as several critics have documented, loath to

⁷ See Chapter Four for an extended discussion of television and celebrity in Canada.

play domestically produced records unless they had proven themselves in the US markets (Edwardson 56) and domestic music was more likely to circulate regionally rather than nationally (Edwardson 45).

In a bid to protect and promote a Canadian music industry, the CRTC mandated a 30% Canadian content requirement (Cancon) for all AM stations by 1971, a quota extended to FM stations in 1975 (Edwardson 155).⁸ In 1998, these quotas were raised to 35% (Edwardson 227) where they remain today for commercial radio stations playing popular music (other station formats continue to have different quotas) (CRTC “Canadian Content”). Although opinions are divided about the continued importance and efficacy of Cancon regulations today, critics are fairly united in recognizing the impact they had on developing the infrastructure of the music industry from recording studios to concert venues (Henderson 314) and increasing the career opportunities for Canadian talent. Reminiscent of the talent rush that accompanied CBC’s first years in television, the advent of Cancon in the 1970s precipitated a boom in the Canadian music industry as radio stations sought to fill quota and industry professionals scrambled to provide them with product (Edwardson 216). Not only were there now increased opportunities to cultivate a career and to do so in Canada rather than in the US, but popular artists could expect to garner more airtime and therein cultivate stronger relationships with their audiences (Edwardson, *Canadian Content* 229). While these were very favourable conditions for celebrity production, Anne Murray represents a popular example of how such concentrated focus easily led to over-exposure in the Canadian market: so overplayed was she that it was popularly joked that AM radio stood for Anne Murray (Edwardson, *Canadian Content* 229). Moreover, the jest still has

⁸ “Canadianness” was and continues to be marked according to the MAPL system wherein a song must fulfill at least two conditions: the music (M) must be composed by a Canadian; the principle artist (A) performing the music or lyrics must be Canadian; the performance (P) must be recorded in Canada; or the lyrics (L) must be written by a Canadian (CRTC, “The MAPL system”).

some currency today: in Jann Arden's memoir, *Falling Backwards* (2011), she jokes that Murray's first hit, "Snowbird," "was the only song on Canadian radio for eleven years" (36).

The opportunities for cultivating musical celebrity in Canada were also shaped by the Canadian content rules that governed television. As noted in Chapter Four, certain programs like news, current affairs, and variety television shows like *Don Messer's Jubilee* and *Singalong Jubilee* were developed as affordable programming to meet the Cancon regulations governing television broadcasting: the latter two, in particular, played a critical role in helping Canadian singers create and maintain a public presence for Canadian audiences. Juliette Cavazzi was, perhaps, the first woman in Canada to cultivate musical celebrity through these programs but, again, it was Anne Murray's career that demonstrated both the power and the liability of television coverage. Like Cavazzi, Murray got her start on television variety shows and, as she writes in her memoir, "TV exposure was the engine that helped power record sales" (206), but she quickly felt over-exposed and early in her career turned down an opportunity to do her own show on CBC (69-71).⁹

While variety programs played a critical role in giving Canadian artists national exposure, it was the launch of MuchMusic in 1984 that created a permanent and dedicated national platform for promoting Canadian popular music. Moreover, because MuchMusic lacked sufficient videos to fulfill its content quota, it stretched its material with interviews and life-style programming and continually recycled its program throughout the day, giving Canadian artists from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s not only significant, repeated exposure but a vehicle for

⁹ In all but Arden's memoirs, exposure on television is signalled as meaningful to the cultivation of a music career and the formats for that exposure are consistently those favoured by Canadian broadcasters to fill Canadian content quotas and/or attract maximum audiences: the variety show, the music video, the talk show interview, and the made-for-tv special.

behind-the-scenes celebrity discourses about their music and lives (Edwardson 192). With the development and expansion of speciality channels in the late 1990s and early 2000s, music television became increasingly available in Canada from relatively minor Canadian players like Aux and bpm:tv to major networks from the US like BET (Black Entertainment Television). MuchMusic (owned and operated by Bell) also diversified to include new channels such as M3 (previously known as MuchMore or MuchMore Music), MuchLoud, MuchVibe, MuchRetro, and Juicebox (previously known as MTV2 and PunchMuch). Canada's country music television station, CMT (previously known as New Country Network), began broadcasting in Canada at the same time as MuchMusic did in 1984 but, because it drew its programming from the US, was not a significant player in the promotion of Canadian country music until it relaunched as a Canadian station in 1995. Since then CMT has been required not only to fund the development of Canadian music and music videos, but to ensure 40% of music videos meet Canadian content regulations (CRTC, "Decision CRTC 2001-154").¹⁰

The role of these stations in the cultivation of Canadian artists today has, however, changed considerably from the early years of MuchMusic: according to Edwardson, stations like MuchMusic now rely more on videos of established rather than new artists, import more non-Canadian programming, and have generally been redesigned for export to other markets (193-4). Indeed, while the development of various infrastructures for the production and dissemination of Canadian music has created the conditions for the expansion and diversification of the music industry, the industry model nevertheless continues to privilege the development and dissemination of a few stars rather than a roster of talent. By the turn of the twenty-first century, music celebrity had consolidated into a handful of bankable names whose back catalogues

¹⁰As music videos encompass both visual and audio media, a variation of the MAPL system is used to determine the "Canadianness" of the video.

dominated the airways, making it particularly difficult for emerging artists to cultivate audiences (Edwardson 235). To some extent this has been offset by the opportunities offered by new media, but as Scott Henderson has rightly pointed out, we currently lack the capacity to reliably and consistently measure the impact of new media in developing new talent and it is no longer appropriate to use older models for measuring the success and circulation of talent (such as radioplay and the Nielsen Soundscan charts) (312-3). As argued in Chapter Four, whatever modes of dissemination new media have enabled, musical celebrity is still predominantly channelled through the standard institutions of production: the music is still recorded in professional studios under the direction of (usually) multinational music labels, and celebrity is still generated and affirmed by social media, print media, and, often, awards. In fact, as multiple critics of Canadian music award ceremonies have pointed out, such honours typically confirm celebrity and consolidate already achieved success (as measured by radioplay and album sales) rather than launch unknown acts (Edwardson 186).

While Cancon regulations for radio and television broadcasting have had a significant impact on cultivating various platforms for Canadian music celebrity, and awards and prizes have simultaneously consecrated that celebrity and branded it Canadian, what is masked by these nationalistic incentives is the extent to which the Canadian music industry is transnational rather than national. As Canadian music critic Will Straw reminds us, the production of stars is *not* an index of the “health” of our domestic music industry (205). The 1990s are a case in point: at the same time that Canadian artists like Shania Twain, Celine Dion, and Alanis Morissette were dominating the airwaves and sweeping up Canadian and American awards, the domestic music industry was losing market share to massive media conglomerates (Edwardson 210-11) and

domestic trade magazines like *RPM* and *The Record* were struggling for survival.¹¹ Canadian stars can flourish while the industry suffers because we share a musical culture with the US and Cancon is not concerned with the systems of music production and dissemination.¹² The MAPL system used for quantifying “Canadianness” (see footnote number 8), is organized predominantly according to the citizenship of the participants who compose, write, or perform the music (only one point is awarded for the national space of the performance/recording) and strives only to quantify music at its most basic unit - the song. What is routinely overlooked are the systems of production and dissemination which have been and continue to be dominated by transnational media conglomerates that can mobilize the full extent of their vertical integration in the industry to promote particular individuals.

As Edwardson documents in *Canuck Rock*, these giant US-based corporations have had a profound effect on the Canadian music industry throughout the second half of the twentieth century. In the postwar period, as music cultures transcended borders, the balance of influence still rested with the US because they were producing the vast bulk of music and “material resources and systems of distribution were centralized in pockets of the United States” (54). As the US industry consolidated into large, vertically integrated conglomerates, branch plants were established in Canada. These branches were not designed to foster and develop a Canadian music

¹¹ In 2000, *RPM*, which played a critical role in kick-starting the argument for Cancon regulations, closed its doors and in 2001, *The Record* followed suit leaving English Canada with no Canadian print publication on the industry (Straw 214).

¹² This shared musical culture arises from the fact that Canadians produce and consume music that is rarely distinguishable from American music. Institutional practices played a critical role in cultivating that condition: a 1975 CRTC policy carved popular music into four formats for Canada’s FM radio stations based on US models (Abramson 268) and Canadian radio stations favoured the music proven on the US charts, which prompted Canadians to develop similar consumption habits and tastes which in turn influenced the kinds of music Canadian artists and industries produced. Although some critics might argue for the existence of a Canadian sound, particularly to our rock music, music culture is, on the whole, transnational rendering Canada a market for non-Canadian artists and rendering Canadian artists internationally marketable. Scott Henderson, for example, argues that there is a distinctive Canadian sound to a particular period of Canadian rock music (“Canadian content”) and in *Canuck Rock*, Ryan Edwardson examines other critics who have made similar arguments (14-18). However, like Edwardson, I remain suspicious and apprehensive about attempts to qualify or quantify what Canadian music sounds like.

industry, but to locate and cultivate local talent that could be mobilized in the well-established, vertically integrated systems of the parent company (Edwardson, *Canadian Content* 263-4) and to sell successful international stars to Canadian audiences (R. Sutherland 36). Over the late twentieth century, these US-based multinational conglomerates continued to edge Canadian-based industries out of the competition: in the 1980s multinational labels accounted for 80% of sales in Canada (Edwardson 190), and after the music industry in general consolidated during the 1990s, by 2006, four multinational companies were claiming 90% of Canada's recording industry revenue (210-11).

The Canadian music industry is, in short, dominated by transnational and multinational companies. These institutions may draw talent into other (usually American) spaces or they may operate in Canada according to Canadian laws producing music that Canadians will buy; nevertheless, while their practices are shaped by constraints like Cancon regulations, their goal is always to create a marketable product that transcends national boundaries. In his exploration of the transnational conditions of country music production in Canada, Bram Dov Abramson notes that "culture in the national context is always a product of particular practices anchored in the institutions (businesses, organizations, agencies; privately-run, state-run, 'public') that overlay national space but that extend beyond borders and over other spaces and places; [...] the local is interpellated into this transnational configuration of institutions; and [...] this interpellation of Canadian cultural producers resigns them to a marginal role in a larger industry" (257). Under these conditions, the production of celebrity for English-Canadian musicians is almost impossible without non-Canadian industries, institutions, and platforms. This is not to suggest that one cannot cultivate a celebrity that circulates predominantly within Canada—women like Rita MacNeil, Sarah McLachlan, and Jann Arden are only recognized, public figures in Canada

despite musical success in other markets—only that such celebrity is still informed and cultivated by multinational companies. Hence when Stompin' Tom Connors protested the awarding of Junos to Canadian artists who cultivated their careers in the US by publicly returning his own awards in 1978, his political concerns anticipated the direction of the Canadian music industry and its institutions. Yet the model he offered, while patriotic, was barely feasible in his day and is nearly impossible today if a Canadian artist wants to access the mechanisms through which contemporary celebrity is produced.

To be a Canadian music celebrity, then, is not only to be affiliated with Canada—typically on the basis of birthplace and/or citizenship—but to be enmeshed in multiple, transnational institutions and industries. The effect of this transnational condition according to Edwardson, is to “separat[e] big-name artists from their domestic context” (*Canadian Content* 278) and, he argues, what national identities are crafted onto these individuals for the purposes of marketing them to Canadian audiences, are a function of the Canadian fans' desires (*Canuck Rock* 19). Like Edwardson, Richard Sutherland also notes the strong affective ties Canadian audiences have for Canadian-affiliated artists and, like Straw, he sees that success and that identity as having “very little to do with a Canadian-based industry” (35). If the national identity of the music celebrity is thus related loosely or not at all to the development of her career (save the advantages such citizenship can wield in securing domestic airplay through Cancon rules) and is more a function of the public image disseminated and consumed by Canadian media outlets and Canadian fans than the individual's construction of herself, then it follows that in the autobiographies of such individuals, especially in texts directed at an international rather than national market, their representations of the influence of their regional or national roots will be limited to narratives of their youth and early career. This, however, is not the case: as we shall

see in the following section, regional and national ties are prominent and explicit in the autobiographies of Canadian music stars but their strategies for making meaningful connections between their sites of origin and their current state of celebrity vary considerably. These texts betray significantly different levels and kinds of commitments to Canadian spaces—where Celine Dion’s attachment to Quebec is narrated but ambiguously shapes her public identity, Jann Arden and Shania Twain vigorously cultivate specific regional identities—yet what is of particular interest is how these identities are mobilized as strategies for managing and representing the conditions and experiences of celebrity. Canadian landscapes, these texts suggest, matter: they matter to the fans but they also shape the processes of cultivating, managing, and articulating celebrity.

National Ties and the Diva Dilemma

In this chapter’s epigraph, Anne Murray was invoked as the great grand-dame of all Canadian music divas, her genes having been split up and sewn into regional landscapes across the nation. The anecdote, clearly made in jest, nevertheless draws upon Murray’s strong national identity in ways that uncannily anticipate some of Murray’s textual strategies in her collaboratively written autobiography, *All of Me* (2010). As we shall see in this section, most of the celebrity autobiographies under discussion in this chapter purposefully narrate specific Canadian spaces and invoke critical regional and national identities that affirm their ties to Canada. As in the anecdote, Murray crafts herself in national terms while many of the others are more concerned with regional spaces, but such identities, while effective for inscribing a nationalism that will appeal to Canadian readers, have a second, equally important function. The specificity of regional identities is, in many cases, used in the celebrity autobiography to distance the celebrity from the trappings of celebrity—in effect making Canadian spaces (and the values

and identities that they appear to cultivate) incompatible with fame. To this end, these texts invoke the notion of a core essential self cultivated in and by these regional places that remains unchanged by the workings of fame: celebrity is thus often coded as negative and harmful, and “divas,” particularly through the figure of Celine Dion, are constructed as the ultimate model of gendered celebrity that needs to be avoided. Turning next to the figure of the diva as constructed by both Carole Pope and Celine Dion, we will recuperate the value of this form of gendered celebrity and examine how it can, and in Dion’s case does, function as an autobiographical subject position that eschews the essential self and speaks from, of, and *as* a celebrity terrain.

“Ground zero” for women’s music celebrity in Canada is Anne Murray, or so *All of Me* (written with *Globe & Mail* arts reporter, Michael Posner), seems to suggest. Others may have come before (251) but Murray, the text claims, was the “first” to make CBC “succum[b] to the temptations of the star system” (69) and “the first Canadian woman to receive a star buildup” (73). These claims are buttressed through both narratives and photo inserts that showcase Murray’s long time *and* extensive connections in the music industry: Murray not only seems to know everyone (and have a story or two about them), but strategically positions herself as a fan who became a peer of her contemporaries and as a role model for the next generation. Her seniority to other Canadian women like Shania Twain, Jann Arden, Rita MacNeil, and Celine Dion is even made visible in the photo inserts which show these other women flanking Murray’s central position.¹³ Murray’s contemporaries, like Buffy Sainte-Marie and Joni Mitchell, on the other hand, are noticeably absent from these photos and are pointedly represented as having worked their way through the US star system (73-4); what makes Murray special, we are meant

¹³ Celine Dion and Shania Twain flank Murray in an image from backstage at the 1997 Juno Awards and in another image, Sarah Brightman and Jann Arden flank Murray in a backstage shot of the 2008 Juno Awards. Rita MacNeil features in an image from 1992 when Murray and MacNeil met the Queen. In this image, none are facing the camera and the central focus is on two unnamed men but Murray’s physical and sartorial proximity to the Queen are obvious whereas MacNeil is further from the Queen (after Murray) and partially cropped out of the image.

to realize, was that she was the first *Canadian* woman to use the *Canadian* system to cultivate a new and impressive bar for women's music celebrity.¹⁴

As such, Murray's identity is firmly tied not to a region but to the nation: her Nova Scotia roots are narrated but quickly subsumed into the text's efforts to construct her as a metonym for the nation. The means by which this construction is accomplished without inviting charges of vanity (indeed, several reviews cite the text's modesty), is to situate these claims as originating from the desires of the fans and the media: she was "Canada's designated star" (72); she "had somehow become identified with Canada" (73); and she was a "creation [and] meta-entity known as Anne Murray, Canada's Snowbird" (67). While her reputation and celebrity are framed as having been "designated," "identified," and "creat[ed]" by others, the text still carefully invokes the standard discourses of hard work and talent in order to assert Murray's agency and role in cultivating her success. Nevertheless, Murray does not dispute these characterizations of her celebrity or significance—occasionally she amends their scope but, on the whole, they are mobilized uncontested and are affirmed by the personal and historical contexts the text narrates.

These media and fan discourses that construct Murray's identity and celebrity as intimately connected to the nation are buttressed not only by narratives of Murray's attachment to Canada, but also through a framing of her career as a function and expression of the developments of the nation. Canada, we are told, was "coming of age in the late sixties," leaving behind its stagnant and staid conservative past to "seiz[e] a new sense of identity and possibility" (67-8). This new energy, identity, and nationalism were, Murray suggests, finding expression in music and thus her career, having developed in this cultural context, becomes symptomatic of the new nation. Her rapid ascent to celebrity where she figures as "just a passenger, not the captain"

¹⁴ Carole Pope, who came to fame about a decade after Murray, is not represented in either the narrative or the photos although Pope includes an image of her and Murray in her text, *Anti Diva*.

on the “rocket ship” (74) of her career becomes an expression of the will of the people of this new nation and resistance to that phenomenon is framed as an expression of “old Canada”:

In that first [TV] special, aired in October 1970, we shot a number of sequences in Springhill and Northport. There, perhaps for the first and last time in my career, I encountered someone who resented my sudden celebrity. We were filming at the Liar’s Bench in Springhill, once a gathering place for the town’s coal miners and Maritime yarn-spinners—hence the name. A crowd gathered and I heard a woman shout, “Who does she think she is, goddamned Elvis Presley?” That negativity was typically small-town, and it stung me. But it was also the old Canada speaking, the reflexive voice insisting that stardom, and everything it entails, is somehow incompatible with the way we Canadians see ourselves. (71)

The “new” Canada, Murray implies, is not only capable of producing celebrity, but can recognize both what it has and is that is worth celebrating. The model of celebrity that Murray provides makes it easy to reconcile that activity with positive, modern values: in her telling, celebrity need not be a corrupting force but this is because she insists on an essential core self whose values remain unchanged throughout her experiences (124, 285, 307-8, 319). Stripped of its pejorative baggage, stardom is not “incompatible” with Canada but the result of its new nationalisms and thus to celebrate Anne becomes an act of celebrating the nation.

Murray’s celebrity is, in *All of Me*, a national phenomenon—propelled by and reflective of a changing national cultural climate, as the text suggests, and significantly enabled by both radio and television Cancon regulations, which the text does not suggest—but it is also characterized by an earthiness and stability that disavow the excesses of celebrity. In the closing moments of the text we are reminded that celebrity is neither corrupting nor fake but a manageable accessory of public life that can, it seems, be taken up and put away at will: “Scrub off the makeup, discard the beaded gowns, and you’re left with what I was and will always essentially remain: lucky, hard-working and blessed with a good set of vocal cords, yes, but in the end—as my brother Harold suggested that memorable night at Radio City Music Hall—‘just

Anne.’ Just a girl from Springhill, Nova Scotia” (319). Characterized by makeup and beaded gowns, fame sounds glamorous but not corrosive, performed but not essential. Once again, this is made possible because, Murray insists, she’s “just Anne,” presumably the same Anne who, prior to fame, called Springhill, Nova Scotia her home. By invoking a regional rather than national identity here, and by linking it to an essential, everyday self at the heart of the public person, Murray mobilizes a rhetorical strategy that other celebrities also frequently use to argue for their ordinariness—the trope of the “real” hometown girl beneath the fame. In this trope, the regional (often rural) spaces of childhood are framed as critical to the formative development of a person’s identity and personality and this pre-celebrity identity is used as the yardstick by which to measure both success—gauged by the distance travelled *from* this space and, often the socio-economic conditions that attended it—and the individual’s stability and/or normativity—gauged by the *proximity* to the identity forged in those places under those conditions.

This trope, as it is used in Murray’s and other celebrities’ memoirs, is heavily invested in middle-class, hetero-normative, and neoliberal constructions of “ordinary” selfhood. “Home” is often characterized as an idealized domestic space of love, support, and family ties (Murray’s memoir is a case in point); however, even when an individual’s particular experience of home is in sharp contrast to this ideal (as it is, for example, in Shania Twain’s text), it is this implied middle-class ideal that is invoked in order to showcase the failings of the home. The regional space of home, often represented as a rural backwater, is meant to give rise to the character of the individual but not necessarily the career or celebrity. Yet, regardless of what obstacles are presented by home life or the labour of cultivating a career and success, the onus is on the individual to escape and transcend these conditions. In this way, the trope depends upon neoliberal investments in the sanctity and significance of the individual as an agent in the

formation of their fates: Murray may have reaped the benefit of a particular cultural climate but, she claims, anyone might have taken advantage, she “just happened to get there first” (69). The success story of the smalltown girl thus places the responsibility for success squarely on the individual who is represented as neither disdainful nor ashamed of her humble beginnings, but nevertheless capable of rising above (rather than rectifying) the limitations and constraints that conspired against her.

That Murray can use this regional trope to close a memoir that has otherwise worked hard to frame her success and public image in national rather regional terms, suggests that she is mindful of the significant ideological weight this trope can carry in the representation of celebrity identities. Moreover, her failure to elaborate or explain this parting phrase also indicates that Murray and her co-writer fully expect the audience to recognize the meaning and function of framing Murray as “just a girl from Springhill, Nova Scotia.” No doubt such a gamble is warranted as this trope is not particular to music, women’s, or Canadian celebrity autobiographies—it is frequently deployed by many celebrities in their life-writing practices including many of the texts investigated in this study. It is, however, a troubling construct for the notions it invokes about identity formation and performance. First, it invokes and affirms the idea that selves are essential and can be stable, and that failure to change over time is not a mark of artifice but of authenticity and legitimacy. Instead of constructing identity as performative, fragmented, and discursive as many contemporary theorists do, this philosophy of identity construction privileges stasis and continuity. The construction of celebrities as being in possession of what Richard Dyer has called an “irreducible core,” has long been a useful construct for fans and celebrities because it appears to lend coherence and structure to the fragmented and multiply-constituted condition of celebrity (*Heavenly Bodies* 10-11). Such

discourses, however, depend upon a construction of fame as a kind of exterior, one often coded as artificial or, at least, less real and truthful than the individual as she is understood in non-public contexts. The “real” self becomes a function of its distance from celebrity and its effects as measured by whatever modes and discourses of identity are privileged as the most useful and authoritative at a particular moment in time; in this way celebrity not only becomes synonymous with artifice but easily pathologized and loaded with pejorative baggage.

When a celebrity sets up an essential regional pre-celebrity identity as more legitimate and valuable than an identity affected by the conditions of celebrity, she also invariably claims this identity as her subject position in her memoir. Celebrity in such contexts becomes a condition that can be observed and the speaking “I” positions herself as if she were outside of and separate from it rather than thoroughly implicated in it. In the memoirs of Jann Arden and Shania Twain, for example, strong, explicit links are also made between regional spaces and the sense of a continuous “real” essential self and, like Murray, these constructions are used to frame the celebrity as “normal” and untainted by the effects of celebrity. Looking to the texts of Arden and Twain, we can trace a range of tactics for performing an “ordinary” self tied to particular Canadian regions: whereas for Arden, her regional specificity is built into her public image and is paradoxically the means by which she can disavow celebrity, for Twain her ties to Northern Ontario become the means by which she can attempt to craft a new public identity. While for both, these regional identities are critical modes for establishing their “real” identities, the anxiety that attends these performances helps us begin to trace how and why they and other women in this study distance themselves from that exceptional, *unordinary* creature who proudly wears the effects and excesses of fame—the diva.

For Jann Arden, her image as a local Calgary/Alberta “good ol’ prairie girl” who uses self-deprecating humour to characterize herself and her experiences of celebrity, has long been a staple of her public life (Onstad 46). It’s an identity widely embraced and disseminated by Canadian media outlets from newspapers to the *Rick Mercer Report*, and is conscientiously maintained by Arden herself in her public appearances and public life-writing texts including her on-line journals, the published selections from those journals, *if i knew, don’t you think i’d tell you?* (2002) and *i’ll tell you one damn thing, and that’s all i know!* (2004), and her more conventionally structured memoir, *Falling Backwards* (2011). Like Marie Dressler (see Chapter Two), Arden often produces humour in the gap between her body, experiences, and celebrity and the ideal: it is hard to be the height of glamour and sophistication, she continually reminds us, when one shops at Winners and is prone to scatological misadventures. In her insistence on the distance between her life and the “glamour, glamour, glamour” of celebrity (*i’ll tell you* 96), her ordinariness is signaled not only by her activities and the language they are narrated in, but also by the specific locations where her “everydayness” is enacted: kitchen tables, bathrooms, Winners, and Costco.¹⁵ The broader geographical spaces of Calgary and Alberta are also constructed as incompatible with celebrity cultures, although the limiting factor is often Arden herself. In an entry dated October 22, 2000, Arden writes, “I don’t know anyone famous. I don’t hang out with anyone famous. I live in Alberta for God’s sake” (*if i knew* 97). Canada is not, however, characterized the same way: celebrity is possible and does occur in Canada and Arden narrates her interactions with that culture and its exemplars.

However, fame is also frightening and unstable in Arden’s telling—in itself, it is “empty” (*if i knew* 170), and while being the site of intense devotion is “humbl[ing]” (*if i knew* 170),

¹⁵ It is also worth noting here that the journal form of her first two texts enables and buttresses these postures of everydayness.

being the site of intense scrutiny is dangerously transformative and can “change” a person (*i’ll tell you 21*). In one entry, Arden imagines herself as the “high-dive girl” in a “circus” who, for the entertainment of others, must jump into a bucket that is too small but soon discovers that the bucket was big and she is very small (*i’ll tell you 147-8*). In the same text, Arden represents herself in a hand-drawn image as a rather wide-hipped mermaid in a fishbowl labelled “MY CAREER” (111), presumably a comment about the spectacle and transformative nature of fame and the oddity of being a plus-sized woman in a double-zero industry. Both entries suggest that there is something carnivalesque about celebrity, but its potential for transforming her into a “freak” is managed by asserting the primacy and strength of her essential self and by drawing a firm line between her life and her life on stage. In her first text, *if i knew*, she writes:

The stage is not my life. You have to keep most of yourself in a box somewhere when you’re on it. If you don’t, it’ll take you and make you hopeless and untrue. You won’t remember your life or your friends or your own heart. It is a fine balance. Two worlds--one real and one not. Which is it? That is the trick one has to master every day. The life and the dream. Making one master and one slave. (181)

This threat of being consumed by celebrity and becoming artificial as a result is, as we shall see shortly, the spectre of the diva; the antidote is containment, boxing away the “real” self. In this way, much like Murray, Arden situates the stage and its trappings as something that can be mastered and performed but also left behind. Throughout all of Arden’s texts, in fact, the experiences of celebrity are frequently framed as a part of a job rather than a lifestyle: it is a job that requires her to travel and have a public life but it is, she suggests, temporary: “Thankfully, the ‘look at me’ stuff is short lasting and I will be back at Costco before you know it” (*i’ll tell you 135*).

Like Arden, Shania Twain cultivates a strong regional identity in her autobiography, *From This Moment On* (2011), but for Twain this is a new rather than established model of self-

representation and a tactic firmly connected to the contexts of the memoir's composition and publication. In 2008, Twain more or less withdrew from public life after a very messy and public split from her husband and producer Robert "Mutt" Lange after he allegedly cheated on her with her best friend; in 2011, Twain married again, this time to the former husband of her former best friend. *From This Moment On* is one tactic in a larger arsenal of public relations strategies designed to recuperate Twain's career and public image: other notable strategies included multiple television and magazine interviews and a "docu-series" produced for the Oprah Winfrey Network that, over six one-hour episodes, follows Twain on her journey to heal her emotional wounds and rediscover her public singing voice. The general mandate of both the memoir and the broader campaign is to construct Twain as being in possession of a hitherto unknown private life that is now made available: in this identity and life—an identity intimately shaped by regional roots and legitimated by discourses of emotion and intimacy—lies the "real" Twain and thus the "real" story.

Prior to this publicity blitz, Twain's connections to Northern Ontario were relatively well-known but this past was not well-integrated into her labour or public image; at most, such biographical details were used to chart the height of her success and celebrity. In this campaign, her past is frequently put to similar use but in longer, narrative-driven texts such as the docu-series and *From This Moment On*, her hard-scrabble childhood and her early responsibilities caring for her siblings after her parents died are not only mined for emotional content but mobilized to craft a new identity as "Eilleen Twain." Eilleen is a woman shaped by the conditions of her family life in rural northern communities; she is the practical, earthy, and sometimes naïve woman who has always resided behind the more glamorous "Shania" public image. The legacies of her regional roots are, the text suggests, so strong that upon entering the

US market, she was sent for “media training” to “ton[e] down my Canadian accent” and “to put the brakes on my naturally impulsive sense of humor and my tendency to express myself freely and, um, colorfully” (233). Notwithstanding the memoir’s use of American spelling, this make-over for the international market is represented as having only shaped the performance of the public Shania; behind the scenes, Twain argues, she remained the same woman whose identity, discourses, and values were shaped by her experiences in the rural spaces of Canada. It is through this identity that she initially experiences success and celebrity: as she moves into the Nashville music scene, for example, she explicitly frames herself as a fish out of water and self-identifies in these contexts as a “Canadian newcomer” (230, 240) and a “foreigner” (255). When required to drop the polite pretenses of celebrity to handle rude photographers or unwelcome advances from music industry executives, it is Eillean from the North who speaks and who, using her experiences handling brothers, domestic violence in the home, and rough tree-planting crews, rallies the strength and courage to stand up for herself.

However, like Murray and Arden, Twain suggests that this real self must be safeguarded from the effects of fame and so she cultivates “two very different existences”:

The private world for me, Eillean, is safe for her to be herself, to swear, to drink too much, to wear the wrong clothes, to sing out of tune, to be late, to behave regretfully—the list of imperfections that I’m allowed to display without being judged or criticized goes on and on. As Shania, however, I’ve spent years being overly attentive to how people perceived me, at all times. [...] Trying so hard to keep up with what I expected from Shania, I began retreating from people and keeping them at arm’s length. This can get to be such a habit that it spills over into your personal life. I found myself feeling increasingly distant from childhood friends and even from my family. (282-3)

If the habits of fame eventually put her Eillean persona in jeopardy, the text suggests, the actions of opening up her private life to her friends and the general public through this text and other media work, are framed as part of the process of recovering Eillean. It is thus Eillean, the small-town girl who made it big, and not “Shania” who is the guiding construct for *From This Moment*

On. It is Eilleen who narrates this memoir and demonstrates in her humorous and forthright narrative style that she has not forsaken the “unrefined Northern upbringing” or the “bushwacker language” (233). Yet what legitimates Eilleen as both the subject and narrator of this text is not only the text’s invocation of regional tropes and pre-celebrity essential selves, but its discourses of intimacy, emotion, and the private life. No doubt cognizant of the incredible truth-telling and affective power of contemporary confessional discourses, the memoir and public relations campaign are built upon strategic revelations of Twain’s private life and emotional experiences. Twain “opens up” about both the traumatic conditions of her childhood, the emotional and psychological impact of her best friend and husband’s betrayal, and the long road to recovering her self-confidence and happiness. These intimate narratives are designed to satisfy the public’s curiosity by invoking and duplicating the invasiveness of the media’s gaze but they also seek to regain control of the content and meaning of these events by reframing them in ways that serve the celebrity’s purpose—here, for Twain, it is imperative to any potential career comeback that she cast her new marriage to her best friend’s husband in the best possible light. The text carefully crafts Twain as an empathetic subject not simply by sharing intimate details of her life and her suffering, but by embodying the emotional content of these past narratives: when her dog is killed by a malicious neighbor, for example, or when she discovers the betrayal of her husband, the narratives reproduce the emotional content and intensity of this long ago moment. The past is *felt* in the present, not unlike when singers seem to embody the emotional content of their songs in order to sing them with conviction and create the necessary affective response in their listeners.

Even when subject to significant hardship and emotional trauma at the hands of others, Twain is careful not to cast herself as a helpless victim: the actions of others may have seriously

affected her but the text frames Twain as a fighter who will, in true neoliberal fashion, rise to the occasion and overcome adversity. Thus like many celebrity memoirs that trace a narrative arc of climbing to career success and having to overcome significant personal tragedies, Twain speaks from the envied position of success and stability. This happiness and contentment Twain documents in her present life with her child, her new husband, and her emotional and creative recovery are, however, built upon the postfeminist promise that women can and have it all but are most content when emotionally satisfied in their personal lives. *From This Moment On* is a critical instrument in the public performance of this private felicity and in doing so it implicitly inscribes Twain and her emotional life as governed by normative, middle-class ideals. Eileen, we are meant to believe, may have had an unusually difficult youth and a spectacular career as an international star but deep-down inside she is supposedly not that different from her fans and audience: she is ordinary and “normal” and the text is designed to bear witness to the continuity of this essential core identity formed long ago in Northern Ontario.

These repeated invocations of a core self that can be protected against the effects of celebrity and the use of regional spaces in Canada to create the benchmark for that core self that we find in the texts of Murray, Arden, Twain and others is, arguably, less a function of nationalism than a strategic means for managing the representation of celebrity. This is not to say that narratives about Canada are not intended to stir up latent nationalistic sentiments in Canadian readers—as Katherine Anne Roberts and other Canadian critics have noted, the linking of Canadian spaces with celebrities can have a profound effect on Canadian viewers/consumers/readers—only that such responses are often designed to affirm affective investments in the celebrity (and her cultural products).¹⁶ The music industry has long mobilized

¹⁶ When fans or consumers perceive an emotional or geographical proximity to a space occupied (or just mentioned) by a celebrity, it forges an intimate connection to the celebrity with whom now one has an increasingly nuanced

the latent nationalisms of consumers, whether in the guise of the Juno Awards or regional allusions in songs, to affirm and reaffirm attachments to Canadian musicians, as Edwardson, Straw, and Sutherland remind us. These tactics can work in music celebrity autobiographies in similar ways, creating opportunities for celebrities to forge stronger connections with their Canadian readers, but not all readers of these autobiographies are going to be Canadian or be provoked into affective attachments to the nation by such regional identities. Shania Twain's text, for example, is designed for international distribution but the inscription of a specific regional identity in her text is still a critical tool for managing her celebrity, for it is the platform upon which she performs an identity as "ordinary" and accessible to her fans, regardless of where they call home.¹⁷ This drive to be "normal," "everyday," and "ordinary" that underlies the regional identities and disavowals of the trappings of celebrity is not uncommon in celebrity discourse in general but, in the popular music industry, there is particular pressure on celebrities to actively close that gap between themselves and their audiences.¹⁸ As celebrity and music critics like P. David Marshall frequently point out, popular music stars need to cultivate affective strong ties to their audience and be seen as "virtual[ly] a member of his or her own audience in

para-social relationship and to the space that affords that connection. As Roberts has noted, these effects can happen even when national or regional spaces and identities are implied or read onto the Canadian celebrity moving in non-Canadian contexts.

¹⁷ *From This Moment On* was published and distributed by Atria Books in New York and promoted in both Canadian and American media outlets. Undoubtedly, it would have also been distributed to any region where Twain had a significant fan base. Most music autobiographies under consideration in this chapter, however, are clearly designed for Canadian audiences, and printed and distributed in Canada by Canadian publishers or Canadian branches of international subsidiaries such as Key Porter Books (MacNeil), Insomniac Press (Arden), Alfred A. Knopf Canada (Arden), Random House Canada (Pope) and Vintage Canada (Murray).

¹⁸ As Ponce de Leon outlines in his excellent book, *Self-Exposure*, conventions for representing celebrities in the early twentieth century went through various phases where human frailty, everydayness, or middle-class values were occasionally emphasized as desirable traits. In the late twentieth century we have become well accustomed to the ways in which these discourses are structured by investments in the private life as meaningful and truth-telling and how this non-public everydayness can be mobilized by paparazzi, public relations activities, industries, fans, and celebrities to serve very different purposes. As Su Holmes has suggested, audiences can derive a great deal of pleasure from the "exposure" of the celebrity's "ordinary" self and might use this as a way of closing the perceived "gap" between themselves and the celebrity (30). However, seeming too "ordinary" raises particular tensions about the arbitrariness and artificiality of the individual's celebrity (Gamson "The Unwatched Life" 1063), hence a great deal of emphasis often falls on talent and hard work in these discourses.

order to sustain his or her influence and authenticity, and the commitment of the fan” (*Celebrity and Power* 161). The ways in which music celebrities cultivate those forms of identification vary considerably, particularly across musical genres because of the necessity for music stars to appear to embrace the lifestyles and personas espoused by their music. In most of the music memoirs under consideration here, there is a marked emphasis on establishing a common ground with readers by constructing the self as “ordinary” by mobilizing the same kinds of heteronormative, middle-class constructions of a (relatively) conventional femininity at work in their music: in text as in song these women are preoccupied with feelings, relationships, beauty, desirability, and family.

If the representation of self as ordinary and normal can function to align a celebrity with her fans and help legitimise and authenticate her memoir, it is a rhetorical tactic that necessitates, to some extent, that the celebrity disavow or even pathologize the effects of fame: recall Arden’s dire warning that to make the stage your life is to allow yourself to become “hopeless and untrue” (*if i knew* 181) and Twain’s lament for the celebrity habits that “spill[ed] over” into her private life (283). These very effects—artifice, contamination, and moral bankruptcy—are embodied in the figure of the diva who has, by definition, been transformed by success: the diva loves the stage and all that it entitles her to; it is her driving passion and obsession. In both behaviour and physical appearance, the diva is seen to embrace not just the prerogatives of celebrity but often of excess as well. In Canada, Celine Dion has long been identified as the quintessential diva—not only is she an extraordinarily successful singer with a huge voice, but she appears to embrace and immerse herself in the “trappings” of celebrity, wealth, glamour, and conspicuous consumption. Dion is, in fact, frequently invoked as the yardstick by which others, particularly female music celebrities, measure their capacity to ward off the effects of fame: in

Shania Twain's "docu-series," "Why Not? With Shania Twain" (2011), the revelation of Dion's extravagant backstage requirements during her tenure in Vegas is designed to showcase Twain's far more modest and normal aspirations (Episode 3); in *All of Me*, Murray also cites Dion's "extensive entourage" and offers anecdotal evidence of Dion's general diva-like behaviour (265).

This characterization of divas like Dion in pejorative terms is not only a legacy of the perspectives on celebrity espoused by Leo Lowenthal and Daniel Boorstin in the mid-twentieth century, but it is also potentially connected to long-standing misogynist concerns about the power and attention of the public woman who claims centre stage with her impressive presence.¹⁹ As Susan Leonardi and Rebecca Pope explain in their exploration of divas in opera and contemporary popular music, *The Diva's Mouth: Body, Voice, Prima Donna Politics*, traditional, "masculinist" representations of the diva frame the singing female star as "corrupt, monstrously selfish, ruthless competitive[...] destructive and deadly" (13). These constructions that emphasize her as "dangerous and 'unnatural' [...] seek] to reinforce traditional gender categories and the compulsory heterosexuality those categories support" (13). In this context the diva precludes the possibility for normative (read: conservative) gender roles because she is, presumably, self-obsessed and unable to engage in behaviours that do not directly service her own needs. Moreover, she is considered unstable and, not unlike the "waiting game" that Su Holmes and Diane Negra identify as attending famous women who appear to "have it all" (2), the diva is often represented as a ticking time bomb who will eventually implode. When she does, she is represented as a chaotic (think Britney Spears) or tragic (think Whitney Huston) star

¹⁹ Mid-twentieth century perspectives on celebrity characterized the forces of celebrity production and consumption as culturally powerful but as lacking substance and real value. See footnote 5 in the Introduction for further clarification.

who was unable or unwilling to resist the lure and artifice of celebrity and be true to her “real,” essential self.

As a diva in this tradition, Celine Dion is something of an anomaly because she has gone out of her way to perform a conventional heterosexual femininity, complete with two lavish weddings, baby dreams, charitable work for children’s foundations, and *Miracle*, a joint project with Anne Geddes of maternal-themed songs and Dion-with-infants photographs. Pro-Dion media material makes significant use of postfeminist discourses to frame Dion as a successful working mother and the “Down to Earth Diva” (Dickie), and to separate her from both celebrity and its attendant discourses of artifice. Amongst her detractors, however, Dion’s public performances of motherhood are marshalled as evidence of her capitulation to celebrity. Her failure to shift or remake her glamorous public image in maternal contexts (see, for example, her magazine photo shoots with her children in magazines like *People* or *Hello Canada*) is sometimes read as a sign of her having co-opted her children in service of her public image and a resistance to representing the “real.” Celebrities like Dion who embrace their public image and the celebrity condition both on stage and off are readily characterized as, at best, “gauche, kitschy, or as they say in Quebec, *kétaine*” (Wilson 17) and at worse, fake because, it is assumed, they are either masking their “real” essential self or have allowed it to become corrupted by the mechanisms of fame. Moreover, in the kind of cultural feedback loop that the music industry seems to specialize in, the artifice of the star is read onto her cultural products and any perceived failings in the authenticity of the cultural products are read back onto the star (inversely, fans do the same when invested in the legitimacy of a musician, her music, and her performances).

Not all invocations or allusions to “divas” and diva-like behaviour carry with them the pejorative baggage that so often attends Dion. In the anecdote that opened this chapter, we see an

example of “diva” being used as a value-neutral shorthand for female singing celebrities. There is also, according to Leonardi and Pope, something of a “revisionary” tradition in discourses of the diva that “construct the diva’s voice as a political instrument” and make her voice a “metaphor of and vehicle for female empowerment both on and off the stage” (18) and theorists Wayne Koestenbaum and Alexander Doty have done much to recuperate the value of the diva as a figure in queer public cultures. It is to these two latter traditions that Carole Pope alludes when she self-identifies as a “diva” in her memoir: she is a queer, a feminist with a voice, and a performer who embraces camp as a “strategy of comportment” (Bradshaw 70). However, in both the text’s title, *Anti Diva*, and various other chapter titles within the text, Pope also frames herself as anti-diva, by which she means against the contemporary (1990s) popular iterations of the diva which she perceives to be a corruption of the feminist power and potential of the woman’s voice on the public stage.²⁰ Pop celebrities like Britney Spears and The Spice Girls and even the famous Canadian women’s festival Lilith Fair are, she argues, at best failed attempts to usefully mobilize discourses of women’s power and at worst, “thinly-veiled exploitations[s] of women’s sexuality” (233). On the other hand, Dusty Springfield, Pope’s one-time lover and diva-extraordinaire, is represented as a difficult, even demanding star but a diva with integrity nevertheless. Indeed, Pope’s model or, perhaps, ideal of divahood, then, is one that is characterized by a strong feminist agenda, an unapologetic occupation of the spotlight, and a willingness to use her fame for her own benefit and, potentially, for the benefit of other women (if only by virtue of fighting for the right to occupy privileged public spaces of power).

In light of Pope’s music, public image, and perspectives on the diva, it’s not surprising that Pope neither advocates the “ordinary” nor represents herself as such. Her perspectives on

²⁰ Leonardi and Pope’s definition of an “anti-diva” is considerably different: in their work, an anti-diva is a “reluctant diva” who invokes and performs conventionally feminine tactics of self-presentation in public (45-6).

celebrity are, in some ways, just as complex as her self-appointed position as the anti-diva diva, for she revels in the excesses of celebrity: its glamour, its destruction, and its gleeful and perverse destruction of the glamorous:

I'm obsessed with show biz and the cult of personality. The cutthroat food chain of flesh and fantasy that destroys everyone in its path. It's a world in which I feel so at home, a world where a diva, like me, gets to live in a bubble of her own creation. [...] I embrace my sick world. I crave all the trappings of success, and yet I'm so disdainful of them. I admit it: I'm a hypocrite. Most of us are fascinated by stardom, even the tasteless no-talent brand that takes up so much of popular culture today. We thrill to the disintegration of golden boys and girls as they fall off their sun-drenched pedestals into a morass of drugs and alcohol. (xii)

In Pope's telling, celebrity is a world of "showbiz," "fantasy," and "bubbles" —it is a fragile world of ephemera, but despite its superficiality and glossy surfaces, it has real effects. While she recognizes the dangers inherent in this world, she does not seek to separate herself from it nor does she mobilize pathologizing discourses to characterize it as wrong, bad, or fake. Celebrity, with its fragile shiny surfaces, can be embraced and can be enjoyed without investing in the notion that there is something beyond the surface that is more truthful, legitimate, or authentic. Pope's approach to fame here shares much in common with the kinds of camp performances of queer divahood that Pope sometimes embraced during her tenure as the androgynous lead singer of Rough Trade. The spectacle of camp as performed by queer divas is one built upon embracing and performing a construction and doing so in terms that elide the usefulness of categories such as real or fake. In these contexts, the queer diva performs knowing it is a performance for an audience who understands how to read these surfaces without invoking structures or discourses which could threaten the legitimacy of the performance.

Pope's politics of performance and her perspectives on fame have extraordinary potential for unsettling patterns of self-representation in the celebrity autobiography. While *Anti Diva* does not invoke an "I" that issues forth from the frothy, glittery surfaces of celebrity, camp, or queer

divahood neither is the text structured to position itself or its “I” as the real self beneath the fantasy. The narrating “I” that Pope performs is cohesive and stable; it suggests a mature woman reflecting back on her past, but it does not invoke the self as a continuous, essential identity traceable over time nor does it seek to discredit the meaningfulness or authenticity of the identities performed on stage or off in the past. Ironically, it is the kind of 1990s diva that Pope most loathes who realizes the potential of embracing and speaking from the “bubble of her own creation” and disrupting the real/fake, private/public dichotomies that work to discredit the authority of surfaces—Celine Dion. Like Pope, Dion embraces the glamour, the wealth, and the “trappings” of celebrity; like Pope, Dion refuses to invest in discourses that construct celebrity as artificial or the public life as different from or capable of being legitimized by the activities in the private sphere; and like Pope, Dion embraces the theatre and spectacle of performance. However, while Dion’s performance style has frequently been likened to the excess and camp of the drag queen (Wilson 113-5), her investment in the authenticity and sincerity of these public displays makes many of Dion’s detractors uncomfortable and suspicious. What Dion offers us in the English edition of her memoir, *My Story, My Dream*, (and, presumably, in other language editions of the text as well) is an opportunity to trace what it means to not only be invested in the sincerity and legitimacy of particular constructions of celebrity, but to embrace that construction as the site from which to speak. Like Pope, Dion challenges the notion that the conditions and experiences of celebrity are fake or not real, that there is something beyond the glossy surface that can be accessed, and that, by invoking that world “beneath” celebrity, one can get outside of celebrity, but where Dion differs is that she also takes up these ideas in her strategies of self-representation: because she is all celebrity all the time, her memoir offers us a picture of what it

looks like to assume the condition of celebrity and the celebrity terrain as a subject position in a life-writing text.

Celebrity, for Dion, is all-encompassing lifestyle, way of being, and a legitimate subjectivity: it necessarily involves large teams of people who groom, produce, and manage her image, her life, and her career and while she acknowledges this is not necessarily normal, her performances of selfhood in the public sphere declare that it is real and really her. Her world, according to *My Story, My Dream*, has been created and defined by “the sealed-off universe of show business” (143) from a very young age (Dion was pulled out of school to develop her career). As if to demonstrate exactly how unusual and sheltered her life was and is, we are told that Dion didn’t always realize or recognize she “wasn’t leading the life of Miss Everybody” (229), understood “in theory” that there was a “life outside of show business” (11), and documents the range of “simple and easy” experiences, such as walking down a busy street, going shopping alone, or having a purse full of personal effects, that are, by virtue of her fame, unavailable to her (15). Hers is a rarefied world of extravagance, style, wealth, fame, and fans that, if it precludes her from the ordinary, allows her to immerse herself in the extraordinary. One narrative in particular stands out in this respect: when Dion and her husband walk through their newly built custom home for the first time, the home is lit by hundreds of candles, violins and a harp serenade them, two mimes take their place amongst the marble statues, a waitress dressed in a costume from Caesars Palace casino serves them drinks, and they “weep” with joy (335).

This moment, when the home is both shown and show and becomes an overproduced spectacle designed to provoke strong affective responses, serves as an uncannily apt metaphor for Dion’s public image and career. As many who are familiar with Dion are aware, Dion’s music, concerts, public image and appearances are saturated with theatrical elements designed to

give us something to gaze upon and through which we might experience, channel, or express intense feelings (even when those feelings, as music critic Carl Wilson points out, inspire one to reject her). It is though this performance and embodiment of excessive emotion that Dion connects to her fans and fosters what Lauren Berlant would call an “intimate public”: a public sphere of women’s culture made intimate by how it enables its consumers to feel connected by a sense of sharing “emotional lives” and to have these and other feelings “sanction[ed]” (ix). As Berlant rightly points out, such connections can be forged even when the fans “share nothing of the particular worlds being represented” (ix); hence, Dion’s particularly glamorous and wealthy image does not impede the capacity of her fans to cultivate strong ties to her and her music. This staging of Dion’s spectacular emotional life is one of the driving forces of *My Story, My Dream*: the general plot structuring the text is the pursuit of emotional and career fulfillment—two trajectories that are inseparable, the text suggests, because at the centre of both is the same man, her husband and manager, René Angélil.²¹ Thus the story of Dion’s emotional and personal life is always the story of her career and the story of her career (both in music and public appearance) is always about the emotional life in general, if not hers in particular: home is always show and shown.

Dion is remarkably candid about this cross-over between love and show business: her love for René is “the central theme of my whole life, of all my shows, my trademark and my banner” (282). This does not, however, make her love or her shows, the text suggests, any less genuine or “real” —the conditions of being produced for the public, corporate, choreographed, excessively sentimental, and spectacular are symptomatic not of artifice but of the nature of show business. To be a successful performer is to have every word coached (78-9), every gesture and smile choreographed (190), and to be taught and conditioned how to pose and to speak in

²¹ In June 2014, Dion’s company, *Feelings Inc.* announced that Angélil will step down as Dion’s manager.

public (148). Images are crafted “as if you’re working on a canvas”: “...the look you choose is also a tool. It takes into account the spirit of the times, of the world in general, and its general mood. And of course, it takes into account your vision” (173). Even the production of the memoir is, rather transparently, a collaborative, if not corporate, exercise: while Dion’s signature takes precedence on the jacket, the collaboration with Georges-Hébert Germain is made explicit on the inside page and Dion’s open letter to Germain. Moreover, Germain is a well-known and well-integrated part of the Dion publicity machine: he wrote Dion’s official biography, *Celine*, in 1997; an English version, *Celine: The Authorized Biography*, and an abridged version of the English biography, *Celine Dion: Tour de Force*, in 1998; a biography of Dion’s mother, *Thérèse Dion: La vie est un beau voyage* in 2006; and, most recently, a biography of Dion’s husband, *René Angélil: Le Maître du Jeu* in 2009.

The conditions of celebrity seemingly attend every aspect of her life—both work and personal—and its representation, but the text refuses to characterize this as anything other than glamorous, privileged, desirable, and unusual. What liabilities such celebrity engenders are, compared to Pope’s assessment of “the cutthroat food chain of flesh and fantasy that destroys everyone in its path” (xii), predominantly benign—Dion claims to be subject to rumours and speculation (266), to have “frightening power” to sway the public (264), to be continually offered the “services” of others (332), and to have to work hard, make sacrifices, and make demands in order to safeguard her voice (306, 366). (Dion does, however, document a short period when she was particularly “overwhelmed” (268) and prone to a recurring nightmare in which swarming fans chase her off the top of a city building.) Moreover, the memoir does not attempt to get “outside” of celebrity in order to comment upon it—Dion is immersed in this world and the narrating “I” that speaks does so not just as a celebrity, but as the persona

mobilized in both her public image and her music. This is evident not just in the content and type of narratives offered up to support her public image as spectacularly wealthy, happy, and famous, but how these narratives are rendered. The tone and style of the text, for example, are markedly sentimental and unapologetic, and discourses of dreams and fairy tales are frequently used to affirm both the desirability and the other-worldliness of her life. Yet, even while her world is unlike our own, the narrative style renders it simple and good: it is a world that lacks hate, greed, hurt, or harm, where all tragedies are a function of the effects of familial or romantic love, and where sincere emotion speaks for itself in open and honest terms.

If the Dion of *My Story*, *My Dream* sounds a lot like the Dion who sings power ballads like “My Heart Will Go On” and the Dion interviewed on television and in *People* magazine, it is to be expected: celebrities typically craft memoirs that are consistent with the public image they have cultivated and put into circulation, and popular music stars are under particular pressure to cultivate a “real-world” image that is consistent with the conventions of the musical genre they work within. However, what is unusual and, for some critics, symptomatic of Dion’s artifice is that in memoir and in her public image in general, Dion refuses to acknowledge or reveal that there is something beneath these frothy surfaces of celebrity. What we have seen and heard, her strategies of self-representation suggest, is all there is: she refuses to invoke discourses or constructs that would suggest there is depth beneath the surface, a private not yet in the public, and a “real” identity or life lurking behind the artifice of celebrity. Unlike Murray, Arden, Boyd, Twain, and MacNeil, Dion does not construct an alternate self or private life that can act as a source for the public life or a barometer that can gauge the sincerity of the public performances. Rather, with Dion, there is a sense that she is always already available, a sentiment captured in the memoir when, upon issuing a press release about her successful IVF pregnancy, she remarks:

“...our happiness had to be known. For twenty years we’d shared a kind of intimacy with the public at large. I wanted to share our joy just as they shared our suffering” (21). In the memoir, Dion even ventures to determine the exact date on which she began to be fully “intimate” with the public—the day she publicly announced she was getting married to René:

A lot of people have almost firsthand experience of our intimacy. Especially since that day, November 8 [1993], I’ve been speaking very freely to the media—René has as well—about our love, our misgivings, our joys and sorrows, our feelings, and even about our arguments. Almost everything that we do somehow ends up known, in one way or another. We believe that the best way to avoid being harassed by the paparazzi is to be faster than they are and beat them to the punch. She who serves herself is best served. So, in a way, we are our own paparazzi. (280)

These discourses of openness and intimacy work to mask what has been strategically concealed: Dion’s beauty and her intense devotion for René, for example, are made to appear to be “natural.” We hear little of what happens backstage to prepare Dion to be glamorous (nor is the ghost of plastic surgery raised despite Dion sporting a very different nose after her makeover for international markets), but what is more disturbing is the way Dion’s teenage lust for her much older manager is framed as a woman’s natural response to a good man rather than the function of intense teenage hormones and an extraordinarily sheltered life. In this latter scenario, we see how the text comes to grief in its attempt to represent how Dion’s life has been conditioned by the excesses of celebrity experience from an early age (removed from school, travelling the world, and living as a much sought-after and isolated pop icon) and its attempt to frame her emotional experiences as natural, if excessive, and the platform on which she can connect with her fans.

It is, clearly, a short step from perceiving gaps and strategic silences in Dion’s narrative and public image, to looking elsewhere to fill or rationalize such absences. To do so, however, betrays a dissatisfaction with the surfaces offered and that can, by privileging some other sign, symptom, or space as the site of truth or the real, inadvertently construct and impose discourses

that work to delegitimize celebrity surfaces. Dion is, not surprisingly, routinely subject to this kind of critical analysis. Because she speaks in and as the celebrity image that she and others have constructed and refuses to perform, render, or invoke an alternate identity that is not based in some way on her public modes of being, Dion seems to invite an opportunity to expose her public surfaces as unauthentic and artificial. The means by which critics typically do this is by constructing some alternate sphere as revelatory of the “real” story behind the one Dion and her team have constructed and disseminated and/or by condemning the surfaces of celebrity, particularly when divas like Dion appear to have embraced and been transformed by these conditions. In these critical assessments of Dion, however, we can trace lingering investments in not only essential selves but a distrust of the legitimacy of public images and other celebrity phenomena that bear the traces of being manufactured by participants in the celebrity terrain. For example, Dion is frequently taken to task for not playing an instrument or writing her own lyrics or music and this is read as evidence that “her music lacks the requisite emotional (biographical?) honesty or sincerity to be deemed authentic. Because Dion is clearly in show business, her emotion must be ‘all show,’ or so the argument goes” (Meier 254). In the absence of active involvement in the music production, Dion is figured as empty, a “vessel” (Wilson 67), and the site of someone else’s creative labour (Hurley 145), revealing the critical investment of music critics in particular in the trope of the artist and the authenticity of music that can be attributed to the talent and vision of that figure. This apprehension about the practice of singing songs others have crafted is not simply about the possibility that the singer may have no other talents, but, arguably, symptomatic of the drive to authenticate musical production by closing the gap between performer and performance by locating the source of the performance in the performer.

It is this absence of a source, a site beyond, outside, or beneath the public performance where the performance and the personality of the performer can be grounded, that makes Dion seem to some critics not only wholly manufactured but empty of originary meaning. In *National Performance: Representing Quebec from Expo 67 to Céline Dion*, Erin Hurley uses simulacrum theory to argue that the public Celine Dion lacks an original, real, or authentic source (146-165). Dion's flexible, mobile brand, she argues, accommodates a range of discourses that embody an ambiguous commitment to representing and embodying her Quebecois heritage. Although Hurley does not use *My Story, My Dream* to make her point, the memoir certainly substantiates some of her claims. While the narratives of Dion's past inscribe her Quebecois roots, they are devoid of affect or sentiment (at least compared to the scale reserved for her representation of love). The two primary methods by which the text constructs her as connected to this heritage—her native tongue and the conditions of early celebrity cultivation—are, in some ways, readily transcended: Dion learns English and has her memoir made available in that language, and she moves into the transnational music industry. In both the memoir and her work in the English-language music industry, there is, in fact, little sense of a residual Quebecois identity or culture that informs Dion's cultural products or public image. It is an identity that is taken up, performed, and abandoned seemingly at will much like the Canadiens jersey she wears for a concert in Quebec (Dion 248) or her 1993 Grammy acceptance speech which, she suggests, was designed to perform her regional roots:

When I reached the podium, I said a few words in English and then spoke to the Quebecois in French with my native accent, the accent of my childhood. I knew they were watching me from the other side of the continent and that they were proud of me. I also knew they were the only ones who could understand what I was saying. It was as if I was speaking directly into their ears. At the same time it was a way of telling the American public that I came from somewhere else. And that I stayed in touch with my roots. (269)

Such performances, both at the Grammys and then again in this narrative, are necessitated by Dion's seemingly seamless transition into the transnational English-speaking music industry: because there is nothing in her music, appearance, or celebrity that appears to declare that identity, it must be explicitly re-integrated (at key moments) into her public image.

Dion is maddeningly ambiguous in her commitment to representing her Quebecois heritage in her public life outside of Quebec contexts: she can act as an “internationally visible national allegory for Quebec” and yet can also “loa[n] herself/her image out to any number of discourses—national, international, corporate, etc” (Hurley 144). Yet where Hurley believes this ambiguity and flexibility to be symptomatic of Dion's vacuousness and artifice, these moments (both in her live and textual performances) are suggestive of the signs of transnational celebrity. The transnational subject is, as I have argued elsewhere, mobile and flexible, uncontained by any one nation or claimed by multiple (Lee, “Elastic Nationality”). Under such conditions it is possible for the transnational celebrity to, in fact, “appea[r] as a *tabula rasa* on which local meanings and desires are inscribed” (Giardina 204); hence in Quebec contexts Dion is read as Quebecois, in Canadian contexts she is read as Canadian or Quebecois, and in international contexts she might be read in a variety of ways—American, Canadian, etc. Indeed, “Dion's public image is [...] pliable, a perfect screen upon which any national fantasy might be projected” (Hurley 142), a strategy enabled in the *My Story, My Dream* through the narration of multiple sites of home and belonging and the embracing of, above any regional or cultural identity, the culture of celebrity. The subject position of celebrity diva that Dion experiences and embraces unhinges her from any specific geographical location, and in her text it becomes a way of life, even a culture she narrates and embodies. It is a lens through which she views the world including her childhood and early career in a very specific region and while these roots are

narrated, they clearly have little impact on how her transnational celebrity is experienced or narrated.

In some respects, the transnational nature of Dion's celebrity and public image is the ultimate, if not quite the inevitable, conclusion of the mechanisms of an industry designed to produce talent for export and international circulation. Dion has been successfully packaged in both image and sound for movement across multiple markets but it is also her own ambiguous commitments to her Quebecois roots and her willingness to call multiple regional and national spaces home that have encouraged her transnational condition. The international movement of one's image, celebrity, and music does not, however, always or inevitably produce transnational celebrity or a public image liberated from close ties to a specific place: both Shania Twain and Leona Boyd are transnational celebrities but are still explicit and open about their ties to Canada—if not so much in their general media work and public image, then certainly in their memoirs. And those whose music circulated more widely than their image—Jann Arden, Rita MacNeil, Carole Pope and Anne Murray—remain more transparently attached to Canada and the music and celebrity cultures of the nation.

Regardless of how and where one's image or music circulated, regional and national ties (contested or not) are important and meaningful. The market value of, for example, the affect produced by performing such ties has been documented by others but what this chapter has demonstrated is that such ties have a critical ideological function in the project of managing celebrity. "Home" and the identity cultivated there are frequently used to establish the celebrity's ordinariness, a construction that is, at least in the contexts of pop music celebrity identities,

dependent upon heteronormative, middle-class, and often conservative ideals.²² The capacity to maintain or, in some cases, regain, this “normal” identity throughout the experiences of celebrity is read as a sign of stability and authenticity; the inability to resist the effects of celebrity on one’s core, essential, or “real” self is framed as a failure—a symptom of weakness, contamination, and lost agency and authenticity. The diva has traditionally been received as embodying this latter condition but, as we have seen through the works of Pope and Dion, there are alternate ways to read celebrity vis-à-vis the diva. Although distinctive in their approaches, both are adamant that celebrity is neither an implicitly negative condition nor one that necessitates a secondary, private, or “real” core in order to substantiate it. In Dion, in particular, we have a crucial example of what it means to whole-heartedly and transparently take up the mantle of celebrity, and to embrace it and use it as a subject position. In this way, her text reminds us of the artifice of other celebrity texts that assume a subject position that is distanced from the conditions and experiences of celebrity. One cannot get “outside” of celebrity in order to comment upon it, but this is nevertheless an attractive and popular posture to assume; indeed, as the criticisms levied at Dion would suggest, it is also still a very legitimate posture to assume.

Those who, like Murray, Arden, and Twain, take up that position that claims to speak of a life and as an identity untouched by the effects of fame are not naïve but strategic: their texts and identities are legitimated by working within the prevailing discourses and ideologies for articulating desirable and authentic celebrity identities. Such texts reveal a great deal about the shifting tropes, tactics, and rhetorical modes of celebrity discourse. Perhaps what these particular texts reveal is not only the continued primacy of the non-labouring life in celebrity discourse in general and celebrity memoirs in particular, but also the extent to which this private life and the

²² As I have argued elsewhere, other musical genres necessitate performing other kinds of identities that are also, often, rooted in the experiences of pre-celebrity regional spaces. See my work on rap and identity authenticity in “Reconsidering Rap’s “I”: Eminem’s Autobiographical Postures and the Construction of Identity Authenticity.”

emotional, psychological, and corporeal experiences of it can be and, to some extent, must be narrated. So far from such revelations constituting breaches in taste, privacy, or seemliness, the contemporary confessional climate encourages such intensely intimate disclosure—both voluntary and involuntary. Not all celebrities are or will be caught up in this trend but for those working in the music industry, an industry built on public performances of emotion and a coherence between public image and cultural products, it will undoubtedly remain a critical component of life-writing for some time.

Conclusion

Celebrity Autobiography: The Off-Broadway Show

Ryan Reynolds: “This whole show, I think, is just structured around, you know, celebrities’ occasional lapses in judgement.”

Interviewer: “Would you call the actual writing of the autobiography the lapse in judgement?”

Reynolds: “That right there is the key lapse in judgement. It’s being a celebrity and saying ‘You know what? People need to hear who I really am.’”

-“CBS Sunday Morning”

After a brief run in Los Angeles and a special on the Bravo network, “Celebrity Autobiography: In Their Own Words” debuted in 2008 in New York City and today continues to play to rave reviews (Intheirownwords). Created and developed by Eugene Pack and Dayle Reyfel, this ensemble comedy depends upon a handful of actors, comedians and even, occasionally, celebrities to read selections from the memoirs of celebrities. It’s a minimalist show: on stage there is only a microphone and, perhaps, a chair, and the only prop is the text itself. It is, in essence, just a series of readings lasting 80-90 minutes but it is the “performance” that makes it a show—readers presume to inhabit the celebrity and bring the text to life through a dramatic reading designed to render both memoir and celebrity ridiculous. Using heightened emotion, pitched voices, pregnant pauses, and raised eyebrows, “Vanna White” boasts of her ability to turn letters better than anyone else, “Zsa Zsa Gabor” details her experience in jail, and “Burt Reynolds” shares his perspective on making love to Loni Anderson.

Critically, the show has been well received: it’s won several critics’ choice awards and is consistently reviewed as “hilarious” and “side-splitting funny.” It’s not difficult to imagine the humour of the production—Ryan Reynolds does an exceptional job of channeling Burt Reynolds particularly when Burt’s account of his sexual prowess is read alongside Loni’s version from her memoir. However, a great deal of the humour of the show is derived from unflattering representations of celebrities: women are made to seem breathy, over-emotional, and naive, and

men are under-emotional, stupid, and pre-occupied with the signs of their masculine virility. These representations are designed to invoke and confirm an audience's suspicions about celebrities and celebrity culture in general—celebrities are simple, narcissistic, and ignorant of normal (read: middle-class) life—and dramatically uses the memoir as script, evidence, and prop in this argument. While the show invokes some of the more pejorative assumptions about celebrity, its very existence seems symptomatic of a cultural climate where audiences have become relatively sophisticated consumers of celebrity culture and its processes of image management. The show depends upon an audience that can recognize and bridge the gap between a celebrity's intended public image and the alternate versions or interpretations of this image in circulation, and it demands that audiences, with the help of a nudge, a wink, and a well-timed pause, recognize and resist the rhetoric of celebrity identity construction (even as they fall under the spell of the performance's construction of celebrity identities). The success of the show suggests that audiences are (or fancy themselves) critical consumers of the memoir and are, perhaps, suffering from memoir fatigue: as noted at the beginning of this study, the genre and its tropes are easily identifiable and extremely popular. In the last two decades the celebrity autobiography has become an established and omnipresent tool for celebrity image management and, in a market saturated with examples that, for the most part, take themselves and their project very seriously, there is some pleasure to be had in repurposing the now-ordinary tales of being extraordinary.

The fate of the celebrity autobiography in the hands of Pack and Reyfel's comedy troupe reminds us that the consumption of these texts is one of the least understood (or, at least, under-analyzed) components of the memoir's relationship to the celebrity terrain. There is no telling what uses and abuses the celebrity autobiography will endure; what claims it might be used to

substantiate and this has caused some celebrities like Margaret Atwood to be justifiably apprehensive about engaging such a public life-writing project (Elliot 107). It is equally difficult to gauge the impact of these texts on the terrain they attempt to negotiate: *how does* the production of a memoir shape the celebrity terrain? It is difficult to quantify the memoir's impact particularly when it works to consolidate an existing public image or is only one tool in a larger arsenal of public relations strategies. Moreover, its efficacy will change over time as audiences become more or less familiar with the individual, as the individual's public image shifts, and as the text is read in new, perhaps unsympathetic, contexts.

We do know, however, that the memoir is carefully crafted in anticipation of being consumed under more-or-less ideal circumstances—that is, for a specific, presumably benevolent audience of fans or would-be fans at a particular moment in time. Memoirs, as this study has demonstrated, bear the traces of these contexts, not just in what they represent of the condition of celebrity but what their forms, styles, and rhetorical strategies reveal about the task of producing legitimate and authoritative identities and narratives. These conditions and strategies have changed considerably over the twentieth century: what might have constituted an authoritative representation of celebrity selfhood at one point in time is, for another audience at another time, at best uninteresting and, at worst, illegitimate and laughable. The twentieth century has seen the rise of labour as critical organizing device for the celebrity life story but how much of the non-labouring, personal life forms a part of that narrative has, as we've seen, shifted dramatically. A text like Emma Albani's *Forty Years of Song* is only possible in a world where the non-labouring life is interesting but not necessarily important, where a public figure has significant input and even control over how her image and narrative circulate in the limited modes available, where a celebrity need not be modest about her accomplishments nor aspire to be just like everyone else,

and where there is value and meaning in identities formed strictly by and for the activities of the professional life. In the early twentieth century the memoir was not yet an inevitable tool of public image management and the few texts that were produced suggest there was scope for experimentation and opportunities, for some, to reinvent themselves anew.

As the media both cultivated and responded to a growing interest in the non-labouring lives of celebrities, we see celebrity memoirs shifting to respond and reflect that market and its mechanisms for rendering meaningful and significant representations. By the middle of the twentieth century, women like Nellie McClung, Emily Carr, Mary Pickford, and Beatrice Lillie are crafting narratives that harness the details of their personal lives to support both their image and labour in the public sphere, but we also see the increasing use of idiosyncratic and personal details unrelated to either—McClung’s travels to Mexico, for example, or Lillie’s love of dogs and her anguish at her son’s death. For women, this increasing interest in the private sphere now makes it impossible to completely overwrite their domestic lives as women at the beginning of the century could do. Yet domestic lives could be implied rather than narrated, and many women did not even attempt to represent themselves as skilled in the domestic arts, preferring instead to represent themselves in the romantic artist tradition as devoted to their craft. Husbands and children (and in some cases animals) become a way to signal appropriate maternal and nurturing urges but are rarely documented in detail.

By the end of the century, however, the activities of the private sphere frequently form primary or significant secondary narrative trajectories: the experiences of this life need not be related in any direct way to the image and labour of the public sphere and are often rendered in elaborate detail using dialogue and discourses of emotion, psychology, and the body. In many of these texts, a great deal of emphasis is placed on being “normal” or achieving “balance” in this

private life, qualities that are intimately bound up in middle-class constructions of gender, home, and family. There is, seemingly, an inverse relationship between these two lives: the more extraordinary the experiences of celebrity, the more necessary it is to posture a rewarding and fulfilling but otherwise unextraordinary private life. Women who buck this trend and embrace the effects of celebrity in their private lives risk being characterized as deviant, artificial, difficult, and even bad mothers, and their memoirs must work particularly hard to reframe and recontextualize the meaning and significance of their non-labouring lives.

What “Celebrity Autobiography” reveals about the cultural climate for and consumption of celebrity autobiographies today is that discourses of the private life are still key to producing and legitimizing celebrity images. Even as the show seems to suggest that this trend has become unseemly and indicative of a “lapse in judgement,” it still depends on these very discourses to substantiate its vision and version of a celebrity. Not only does the memoir function as an authoritative script and resource, but most readings from this text use narratives about experiences in the private life or emotional responses to events in the public sphere; it is there, in the personal, the show reminds us, that we can glean the “real” celebrity. Discourses of the “real” abound in the show’s structure and promotion: “we couldn’t make this stuff up” is the promotional tagline, it’s “all in their own words” claims the website (“About Celebrity Autobiography”), and Pack emphasizes in his media work that the show uses “*actual* celebrities’ *actual* autobiographies” (“CBS”). The celebrity autobiography and its content are real but also, the show suggests, *really* representative: the performance may hinge on parody and hyperbole but it is an exaggeration of qualities and characteristics presumably present. The humour is a function not of crafting a new persona for a celebrity but of mobilizing concepts *already* in circulation in the celebrity terrain and offering them back to the audience using the text to

buttress its interpretation. Thus, even though the show invites audiences to consider themselves critical consumers of celebrity culture and independent of the market for and production of celebrity and celebrity gossip, it is structured by their presence in the celebrity terrain and functions to keep them there. The joke is, several members of the comedic troupe have noted, partially on the audience who are still consuming the very texts that are being ridiculed, albeit in an oral rather than textual form, and who can find such performances entertaining because they have already consumed sufficient information about a celebrity's private life (Wong). These critical representations of celebrity are, in short, *not* a sign of being outside of celebrity, but, rather, fully implicated in it: whether it's an audience chuckling at a rendering of Liz Taylor or Anne Murray's claim to be, beneath the makeup and the gown, "just Anne," the representation, production, dissemination, and consumption of celebrity always occur within the terrain of celebrity.

There is, however, still a great deal of cultural cachet to be gained by positioning oneself as outside of the mechanisms of celebrity production and consumption. It is a position made desirable or attractive by the continued pathologization of celebrity cultures as shallow, false, and without meaning and it continues to render the illusion that celebrity is a subject position that can be taken up or put away at will and that one can consume, disseminate, or produce celebrity without forming part of the celebrity terrain. Both audience and performers in "Celebrity Autobiography" are thoroughly embedded in the very terrain that they critique, particularly so when the performer is a celebrity. Ryan Reynolds is only one of the many A and B-list Hollywood personalities who have participated in the show—past performances have included Alec Baldwin, Christie Brinkley, Tony Danza, Matthew Broderick, and others. Few of these individuals have memoirs themselves but their willingness to participate or, in the case of

Brooke Shields and George Takei, to have their texts taken up in the show, is cited by Pack as evidence of both the benevolence of the show's premise and its interest in "making fun of the memoirs" rather than "skewering [...] celebrities" (Wong). If the participation of celebrities functions, for Pack, as both a publicity coup and ringing endorsement, he remains publicly oblivious to how this show serves the interests of these celebrities who might otherwise have little interest in a cameo role in a small theatre's production. Whatever enjoyment they might derive from such a performance, celebrities stand to cultivate considerable symbolic power by being seen to be outside of and critical of the mechanisms of celebrity. They may not be using their own memoir to this effect as many of the women in this study have done, but the wielding of this text as an instrument for distinguishing oneself from the condition of celebrity and for aligning oneself with the audience remains a critical function of the contemporary memoir. It is a strategic ploy and often a very compelling one but it is nonetheless an illusion: Mazo de la Roche and Shania Twain can no more step outside of their celebrity subject position in their memoirs than Alec Baldwin or Matthew Broderick can when they take up someone else's memoir and claim to speak in their stead. Their celebrity and their public identity inevitably texture their performance. This is not simply the pleasure of witnessing a skillful rendering or a celebrity take shots at another celebrity; it is about the satisfaction of having one's previous suspicions or assumptions about two celebrities confirmed—Ryan Reynolds *really is* a cool guy and Burt Reynolds *really is* (or thinks he is) quite macho—and the enjoyment derived from the juxtaposition of two seemingly contradictory celebrity personas in one performance. (This gap between performer and celebrity is routinely exploited for laughs often along gender lines but also, wherever possible, along the lines of personality, and this is most effective when a celebrity performer's personality seems at odds with the celebrity she will be reading.)

Because the reading must necessarily interact with an audience's familiarity with the celebrity's terrain, the show pointedly ignores those memoirs of famous people that the audience may not be familiar with. A reading of Mazo de la Roche's *Ringed the Changes* or Nellie McClung's *Clearing in the West*, for example, would go over like a lead balloon for this New York City audience and would likely have the same effect amongst the vast majority of Canadian audiences too. On the other hand, if Jann Arden were to take up Karen Kain's *Movement Never Lies*, Colm Feore read from Peter Mansbridge's *One on One: Favourite Conversations and the Stories Behind Them*, Rick Mercer channelled his inner Shannon Tweed, and Shaun Majumder were to speak through Don Cherry, the show would undoubtedly do extremely well with Canadian audiences. Both Penguin Canada and the CBC have already recognized and used the lucrative potential of harnessing contemporary celebrities to biographical and writing projects about or by famous Canadians: in Penguin's Extraordinary Canadians series, well-known writers like Douglas Coupland, Adrienne Clarkson, and Andrew Cohen crafted biographies of famous Canadians and presented them for a related television series; in 2001, CBC launched the very popular and powerful Canada Reads program, an annual "battle" of the books where high profile Canadians act as advocates for Canadian books ("Canada Reads"); in 2004, CBC's *The Greatest Canadian* television series again used Canadian personalities to champion a candidate (women were notably absent from the top ten contenders although they constituted exactly half of the advocates); and, in 2007, CBC's *The Greatest Canadian Invention* mini-series featured high-profile Canadians like Margaret Atwood, Steve Nash, Mike Holmes, and Debbie Travis.

These formats are not, of course, unique to Canada but part of the workings of transnational celebrity cultures that continue to mobilize the visibility and the authority conveyed by some individuals to promote other individuals (famous or not), products, and politics. In life-

writing and life-storying contexts, these Canadian projects also harness the authority that is now firmly embedded in the first-person “I,” the famous narrator, audio-visual material, and discourses of the non-labouring life, and put them to work in service of promoting programs and individuals who may not circulate outside the nation. Canada is, however, more than simply a geo-political space with its own unique cast of celebrity characters who act out global trends; as we have seen throughout these chapters, it is also a site where celebrity is produced, disseminated, and consumed under particular cultural, political, bureaucratic, technological, and affective conditions. Such conditions make their mark on the celebrity autobiography—sometimes in how they are written, influencing form, style, rhetorical strategies or the subject position assumed, and other times in how they are read and folded into (or estranged from) what histories and mythologies of the nation we are, at any given time, crafting.

The celebrity autobiography has always been and remains an instrument designed for particular terrains shaped by time and place. In retail terms, these texts are “perishable” items: tangible goods that go out of style. Most celebrity autobiographies have a kind of shelf life during which the individual represented and the discourses used to represent her identity and narratives are considered significant and authoritative—for this brief moment text and author must be promoted vigorously but, in due course (indeed, quite rapidly today), a new celebrity text takes the spotlight pushing the older one off the shelf and into the remainder bin. Even for some of Canada’s most enduring celebrities, like L.M. Montgomery, the public memoir acts for and in a particular moment in time and, in the long run, suffers from popular and critical neglect; the *private* journals of celebrities, on the other hand, remain non-perishable items in the scholarly and fan marketplace, endowed with all the significance and authority our cultural climate invests in the workings of non-public spheres. Yet, because public memoirs by public figures are

designed to speak to and in the public sphere, they offer critical insight into the forms and rhetorics of legitimate (albeit often conservative) identity performance at different moments in time: celebrity autobiographies tell us what was *in* style and help us unpack what ideological investments made such postures convincing and compelling or, perhaps, necessary.

Celebrity identities are not, however, pure expressions of ideology nor are their texts pure expressions of the terrain: as we have seen throughout these chapters, celebrities speak from the a subject position that they had some role in crafting but they are able to use their texts to contest the conditions of their celebrity and/or the pressures exerted upon them to perform their identities in particular ways. There is room in the celebrity memoir to adapt, adopt, and innovate, to contest and reject, and to undermine and destabilize, and this occurs as much through what is said and how it is said as through what remains unsaid. Recognizing these tactics at work in celebrity autobiographies necessitates not only a thorough understanding of the celebrity, her cultural labour, and the history and trajectory of her public image tactics, but an ability to contextualize these efforts amongst broader trends. Thus this project has endeavored to chart trends across multiple samples over time and to situate them in relation to the various ideological and technological developments that were shaping the production, dissemination, and consumption of celebrity. Feminist models have provided the framework here for thinking through the capacity of celebrity identities to be actively negotiated, socially and culturally situated, *and* ideologically interpellated and for theorizing the performative nature of celebrity identities. These models have also been instrumental in conceptualizing how women have experienced, negotiated, and narrated their experiences of celebrity as gendered subjects and helped situate the memoir as a critical technology of image management that both speaks of and captures the condition of being a famous woman at a particular moment in time.

As Graeme Turner observes in *Understanding Celebrity*, “the development of the celebrity’s public profile [...] is serious business” (35). Indeed, in the celebrity industry there is probably no more serious, critical, or lucrative business than the crafting, disseminating, and maintaining of a celebrity’s public image. In this project, celebrity autobiographies have long played an important, although not always substantial role. In many respects, the autobiographies of celebrities have always been and always will be “off-broadway” shows: they are significant in their own right, but tangential to and understood in relation to the main event which occurs elsewhere in other forms. They are, as we have seen, intimately related to and reflective of what is happening in those other forms but they remain only one of many discourses available to the contemporary celebrity for the promotion and representation of celebrity identities and narratives. Indeed, the contemporary celebrity has a significant range of options available for publicly intervening in and shaping her public image in first person-discourses. If, at the beginning of the twentieth century, this project was limited to making a public appearance and pursuing opportunities for representation in print cultures, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the celebrity can mobilize multiple far reaching platforms in print, radio, television, film, digital, and social media cultures. Yet, even with all of these tools at their disposal (and, perhaps, the knowledge that the celebrity memoir market is overrun with products and increasingly unsympathetic consumers), celebrities are still choosing to embrace the labour-intensive project of memoir production and they are doing so *in addition to* rather than in place of these other activities. This trend suggests that not only is the celebrity memoir still considered to be a useful, desirable, and profitable tool by celebrities, industries, and audiences, but that is also has a potential function or meets some need that other forms, modes, and media cannot or do not. And because the celebrity memoir is clearly capable of shifting and evolving to reflect,

reproduce, and shape the ideological assumptions that govern the representation of celebrity identities in other media, it seems unlikely that this form will be rendered obsolete by these other media activities : it will, undoubtedly, continue to change in form, style, and rhetorical strategies as it has done throughout the twentieth century and it may very well slip back into relative obscurity when this “long memoir boom” finally draws to a close (Gilmore, “Neoconfessional” 658), but by all appearances, the celebrity autobiography is here to stay.

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