Introduction: Starring the Author

Gaston Franssen and Rick Honings

Literary celebrity may, at first sight, seem an obvious component of contemporary culture. It is not hard to find examples of contemporary British or American authors who have undeniably acquired the status of international celebrity—complete with their own fan clubs, extensive merchandise industry and overwhelming media attention. Writers such as Bret Easton Ellis, Margaret Atwood, Salman Rushdie and Zadie Smith, for instance, have been styled today's literary celebrities.[1] Historical examples are equally in evidence since literary stardom is not confined to the present day. Among those writers who have often been associated with fame and celebrity are, for example, John Keats, Oscar Wilde, Gertrude Stein and Ernest Hemingway.[2] Yet even though extensive research has been conducted into these literary stars, literary celebrity *itself* remains a mysterious phenomenon. Take a closer look at these case studies, compare them, and one is soon faced with all kinds of complicated questions.

In the first place, there is the question whether the renown of a poet such as Keats is actually comparable with the 1930s media hype that surrounded an author like Stein. At the beginning of the nineteenth century,

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when the literary market did not as yet constitute an international multi-billion-euro business and the mediatization of society was still in its infancy, literary fame had a different meaning than it has in these times of professional marketing and social media. Keats was renowned in his day, that much is certain, yet it would be difficult to maintain that he was also a celebrity in the way that Stein was in her own time. Put differently, what is it, then, that makes an author a celebrity? What forms has fame taken through the ages and how have these evolved over time?

A second important question is whether we could actually speak of celebrities with respect to literary authors. A long-established tradition associates literary prestige with intellectual pleasures, cultural capital and elitist refinement, while celebrity is sooner linked up with popular entertainment, commerciality and mass production. Along these lines of argument, Dorothy Parker would more likely be called a celebrity than Jonathan Franzen.[3] Such a presumed dichotomy becomes the stronger as it resounds with widespread gender views: for instance, 'women's literature' is often associated with entertainment, commerce and a culture of hypes, whereas authentic literature is often alleged to be a male domain.[4] Such dichotomies have often been criticized, and rightly so, but the fact remains that, apparently, literary success takes different forms that cannot simply be lumped together. Are authors literary celebrities because of their sales figures and structural media attention, or, rather, because of the official recognition accorded by professional critics—and what about figures like J.D. Salinger, Hunter S. Thompson and J.K. Rowling who owe their status in part to a solid fan base? Is literary celebrity the product of a combination of compatible success factors or is it foremost an umbrella term for strongly divergent values, ranging from aesthetic and affective to economic and socio-cultural?

A third question that the phenomenon of the star author raises concerns the writer's authority—and authority over the writer. An author's stature is created within a variable tension field of power relations where different parties claim authority: writers themselves, obviously, but also their peers, critics, readers, fans, the media, literary agents, journalists, publishers, translators, theaters and film studios, and so on. All these parties have a share in—as well as interests in—determining the value and meaning of the work and the public image of its author. During their lifetime, authors are supposed to adopt a position within this tension field: in their endeavor to retain a certain measure of agency, some reject their success whereas others embrace their popularity and all the media attention. In brief, strategies to assume and retain authority can differ widely.

Norman Mailer's authorship, for instance, is characterized by an active and shrewd form of self-promotion, while, in contrast, a writer like Don DeLillo shies away from the celebrity industry in an attempt to retain and exert a form of control over his authorship.[5]

Yet, whichever position authors adopt, it is certain that they have anything but the last word. Readers, critics, admirers and other actors in the literary field appropriate the author's work and image. They already do so during the author's lifetime and even more so after their idol's death. When the oeuvre is complete and the author can no longer talk back, literary celebrity only exists by the grace of the author's afterlives—the posthumous image of the writer as created by readers, critics, editors, fans and adaptors. These individuals and groups reframe, reinterpret and re-visualize the author's words, looks, body and life. In doing so, they ensure a prolonged afterlife for their idol, but at the same time they *re-author*, in a sense, the author's image and oeuvre. The question, then, becomes: who is the author of the author's life story, and how does that story evolve after the author's death, as his image takes on an afterlife of itself?

It is in particular this third question—about the interaction between, on the one hand, authorial self-presentation and, on the other, the public appropriation we encounter in the author's reception and afterlife—that we focus on in this volume. Since there is a wealth of articles and studies in the field of authorship, celebrity and afterlives, we have opted, for this Introduction, to precede the various contributions with a partly historical, partly conceptual framework, where we problematize the concept of literary celebrity authorship. For this purpose, we will draw upon existing research literature so as to provide our readers with reference points in the broad area of research at the interface of celebrity studies, literary studies and cultural history. The subject of this collection demands that we outline and interconnect three concepts in this Introduction: celebrity, authorship and afterlife. In the first section we examine the history of celebrity as well as the theories that have been developed around it. Then, focusing on authorship, the second section offers a further characterization of literary celebrity authorship as a function with several variables. The third section is devoted to a conceptualization of the notion of afterlife. Finally, in the fourth section we provide a preview of what is to follow in this volume, where our central thread remains the intriguing interplay between the self-representation of literary celebrities and the way in which their image is appropriated and transformed by readers, critics, fans or other actors. Celebrity authorship and its afterlives, it will transpire, are inextricably

interwoven, but their mutual relationship often proves, in practice, to take on the shape of a fierce struggle for authority over the writer's image.

<div align="center">Celebrity & co.</div>

Opinions differ as to the origin of celebrity. Richard Schickel states firmly in *Intimate Strangers: The Culture of Celebrity* (1985) that 'there was no such thing as celebrity prior to the beginning of the 20th century'.[6] In *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (1962) Daniel Boorstin argues that it is particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century that celebrity culture manifests itself.[7] Fred Inglis identifies an earlier starting point in *A Short History of Celebrity* (2010): the mid-eighteenth century, when, he argues, the development of urban culture and the theater as the art of performance *par excellence* were of crucial importance.[8] Robert van Krieken goes even further back in time in *Celebrity Society* (2012) as he points to the similarities between contemporary celebrity culture and the court culture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the role of its 'economy of attention' in the construction of social identities.[9] Finally, if we take fame to be synonymous with celebrity, the roots of celebrity culture can be seen to reach as far back as classical antiquity: in *The Frenzy of Renown* (1986) Leo Braudy points to Alexander the Great as one of the first clear examples of one whose fame took unprecedented forms.[10] For some, then, celebrity culture is a recent phenomenon, for others it is something of all time.

It is not just the dating of celebrity but also the precise definition of the concept that has led to a multitude of viewpoints. Many researchers arrive at a taxonomy of fame, where they distinguish celebrity from other forms of renown. It is interesting to note that this taxonomy frequently implies a moral judgment. Reflections of a moral nature are found, for instance, in James Monaco, who in *Celebrity: The Media as Image Makers* (1978) distinguishes between heroes and celebrities, with the former category achieving fame because of a special accomplishment, while the latter category's fame is first and foremost a media construct.[11] Boorstin offers a similar contrast: he views fame as a form of heroism or natural greatness, while he associates celebrity with artificiality and superficiality. In modern times, Boorstin argues, renown has become a 'human pseudo-event', mass-produced by press agents and distributed through media channels.[12] It is this new type of well-knownness that Boorstin labels as 'celebrity' in his often-cited definition: 'The celebrity is a person who is

well-known for his well-knownness.'[13] In the same vein Braudy, in a reference to *The Frenzy of Renown*, links fame with 'reticence and the sanction of neglect', whereas celebrity is supposedly attention crazy. Fame, he reiterates, includes 'an element of turning away from us', whereas 'celebrity stares us straight in the face, flaunting its performance and trying desperately to keep our attention'.[14]

Here, however, we prefer a more pragmatic approach rather than these morally biased definitions of celebrity. With Su Holmes and Sean Redmond, compilers of *Framing Celebrity: New Directions in Celebrity Culture* (2006), we conclude that 'the terms fame, stardom and celebrity have a degree of liquidity'; the various forms of fame converge and do not, by definition, exclude each other.[15] A less biased approach is encountered in the work by researchers like Richard Dyer or P. David Marshall, who examine celebrity from a semiotic and sociological perspective.[16] They do not primarily concentrate on what celebrities are but, rather, on what they *do*—or, more accurately, what they enable us to do. The advantage of such an approach is that celebrity culture is perceived as a dynamic sociocultural framework within which opinions on personality, individuality and the boundary between the public and the private have, throughout the centuries, taken form. Within such a framework celebrities serve, Dyer argues, as 'star images', intertextual structures consisting of images of celebrities and statements made by them and about them, which are produced and consumed by a particular audience.[17] Such star texts, according to Dyer, dramatize 'what it is to be a human being in contemporary society'.[18] Celebrities, in other words, are (real or imaginary) individuals whose fame reaches such proportions that they start to function as 'discursive battlegrounds', as Marshall argues in line with Dyer, in which we shape and negotiate 'the norms of individuality and personality within a culture'.[19] The specific way in which celebrities fulfill this function depends on the societal (sub)domain in which they manifest themselves. A distinction can therefore be made between 'celebrity sectors' or 'domains', each with their own forms of renown and different scales, specific conventions and concomitant value judgments.[20]

This non-essentialist approach of celebrity does not alter the fact that it is possible to distinguish specific historical and social developments that have been indispensable for the establishment and dissemination of celebrity culture. Sundry classical studies on celebrity see the recurrence of three developments: the growing influence of the (mass) media, the increased attention to the personal and the individual, and the commodification of

public selves. We provide a number of examples of such studies, with the admission that our summaries do not do justice to the nuances and scope of the individual publications: our concern is to demonstrate that these three developments are indeed thought to be fundamental to the development of celebrity culture.

The rise of the mass media, the first development, plays an important role in the cultural critical analysis that Boorstin unfolds in *The Image*. Boorstin points to the influence of what he terms The Graphic Revolution, the dizzying growth of 'man's ability to make, preserve, transmit and disseminate precise images' due to the advent of the printing press, photography, film, radio and television, giving us 'the means of fabricating well-knownness'.[21] Renown, fame or prestige are forms of illustriousness that can still manifest themselves on a relatively small scale, within a particular domain or professional field, Boorstin argues, but celebrity moves far beyond this scale owing to the mass media. It is a line of reasoning that we also meet in David Giles, who states in his *Illusions of Immortality* (2000) that 'the ultimate modern celebrity is the member of the public who becomes famous solely through media involvement'.[22] However, being a media psychologist, Giles is fully aware of the importance of the media's effect on the audience. In his book he therefore also addresses the audience's need to identify with the idol and build up a personal relationship with it.

This is then the second development that is deemed to be of overriding importance for the rise of celebrity culture: a growing interest in the personal, the individual and the private. Graeme Turner, for one, points out that 'the private lives' of celebrities often 'attract greater public interest than their professional lives'.[23] Christine Geraghty similarly observes that the fame of celebrities 'rests overwhelmingly on what happens outside the sphere of their work'.[24] The audience, then, does not admire celebrities solely for their athletic performance or their talent for singing or acting: the fascination also extends—and perhaps even more strongly—to their lifestyles, their preferences and tastes.

A third development concerns the commodification of the self. The idea here is that celebrities are selves turned into products. This is one of the points raised in *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America* (1994), Joshua Gamson's analysis of the 'celebrity industry' as 'a commercial industry much like other commodity-production systems'.[25] In *Celebrity Culture* (2006) Ellis Cashmore has a related point of departure: what is 'distinct about today's celebrity culture', he argues, is that

celebrities have become 'commodities in the sense that they've become articles of trade that can be bought and sold in a marketplace'.[26] Of course, the audience cannot literally 'buy' celebrities but by engaging with them—for which it willingly pays, be it in a direct and literal sense or in an indirect and symbolic sense—the audience can consume and enjoy their style, their attitude or charisma.

The three developments underpinning celebrity culture are neatly traced and defined as the 'moulding forces' of celebritization by Olivier Driessens in his article 'The Celebritization of Society and Culture'.[27] What he understands by celebritization is 'the societal and cultural changes implied by celebrity', as distinct from celebrification, which is 'the process by which ordinary people or public figures are transformed into celebrities'.[28] The three developments discussed earlier recur in Driessens under the headings (1) 'mediatization', seen as the interrelation between media technological change and social-cultural practices as well as institutions, (2) 'personalization', seen as 'the (increasing) centrality of the disembedded individual over the collective', resulting in increasing attention to the personality and the private lives of celebrities, and (3) 'commodification', the process in which the celebrity becomes both the marketable product and the producer of labor.[29] These three forces constitute and shape celebrity culture but they do not always and everywhere do so in the same measure. The specific relation of the three forces in 'the matrix of (meta) processes and factors influencing the creation and importance of celebrity' determines the nature and function of fame in specific historical periods or socio-cultural domains. This also explains, then, the variety of opinions about the historical roots and definition of celebrity culture: if the emergence of the modern individual at the time of Humanism is made the focal point of an analysis, this will necessarily result in a different interpretation and an earlier dating of celebrity culture than if the media revolution is taken as a major point of departure.

It is the combination of these three developments—mediatization, personalization and commodification—that we also believe to be crucial to the rise of literary celebrity culture. From the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, these forces begin to get a grip on the literary domain: they manifest themselves in the form of the magazine revolution and the rise of mass media (mediatization), the establishment of a 'regime of singularity', where the artist ranks as a unique personality (personalization), and the professionalization of the book trade (commercialization).[30] It is at that moment that literary celebrity culture develops. Yet the literary

author is not, by definition, in pursuit of fame, success and media atten-
tion: the conditions that apply to literary authorship sometimes prove to
be at odds with the celebritization of culture.

THE CURIOUS CASE OF LITERARY CELEBRITY AUTHORSHIP

In *Illusions of Immortality* Giles raises the question whether William
Shakespeare and Maureen Rees, the Welsh cleaner who became nationally
famous through the BBC reality TV series *Driving School*, 'are destined to
share the same pedestal in the public imagination'. 'Clearly not', is how
he answers his question. Giles does not elaborate why he pits an early
modern author against a contemporary television personality in his ques-
tion, but his reasons are easy to guess: one is a historical figure, the other
a present-day figure; the writer is male, the cleaner female; and, last but
certainly not least, Shakespeare is a canonical author of high literature,
whereas Rees is a television personality associated with mass media and
popular culture. A famous literary author, the suggestion seems to be, is
not just any celebrity. But what, then, makes literary celebrity authorship
a special case?

Literary authorship is a relatively recent invention. At the time of the
Middle Ages or the early-modern period, anonymity or joint writing prac-
tices were often still the rule: texts circulated in the public space and could
be copied or adapted relatively easily. Various economic, technological and
ideological developments in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth
centuries created the breeding ground for a new notion of authorship: the
disappearance of patronage as a source of income, the industrialization
of the book printing process and the evolution of a world picture that
centers around the individual forced the writer to present himself as an
independent, unique individual with his own style.[31] This new and 'radical
conceptualization of the creative process', write Martha Woodmansee and
Peter Jaszi in *The Construction of Authorship* (1994), 'culminated less than
200 years ago in the heroic self-presentation of Romantic poets'.[32]

The Romantics introduced a 'modern regime of authorship', where
the writer ranked as a unique, exalted figure.[33] It is a presentation of the
author wholly consistent with Dyer's idea that celebrities appear to be 'of a
different order of being, a different "ontological category"'.[34] It is hardly
surprising that this is the period when we encounter the first clear examples
of literary celebrities, such as Byron.[35] This poet confirmed the idea that
the true artist was superior to other people and should also distinguish

himself socially and culturally with an unusual lifestyle and a distinctive public image. 'By the end of the Romantic period', is the conclusion Tom Mole draws in his study of Byron as a celebrity, 'one could meaningfully speak of a celebrity or a star as a special kind of person with a distinct kind of public profile.'[36]

However, since the introduction of this modern regime of authorship, the self-presentation of the author has also taken very different forms— forms that are hard to reconcile with the character of celebrity culture. In the second half of the nineteenth century, for example, high-modernist authors defended viewpoints that were at odds with such processes as per-sonalization and commodification.[37] T.S. Eliot, for instance, put forward his 'impersonal theory of poetry', stating that 'the progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality'.[38] At the same time, high-modernist authors like Wallace Stevens or James Joyce rebelled against the commodification of culture. Modernism, as Fredric Jameson points out, 'conceives its formal vocation to be the resistance to com-modity form, not to be a commodity'.[39] Half a century later, postmodern authors shape and interpret their authorship in ways that are equally hard to reconcile with the forces of celebritization, witness Paul Auster's sub-version of the writer's authority or Don DeLillo's critical treatment of 'the press of publicity on privacy, the fetishization of celebrity, and the com-modification of art'.[40]

Admittedly, some of these authors have been proved to have actually capitalized on the dynamics of the market and the media or to have played into the hands of the literary paparazzi with their reclusiveness.[41] However, the fact remains that they publicly promulgated a view in which author-ship was at odds with market successes, media attention and the author-ity of the author. Furthermore, this reluctance to focus undue attention on the author is reinforced by an academic tradition that has structurally questioned the significance of the person 'behind the work'. For instance, 'the Author-God' got short shrift from Roland Barthes in his famous essay 'The Death of the Author' (1968), while poststructuralist critics like Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida exposed the author as a humanist illusion, a mask hiding the unlimited, ultimately inhuman semantic potential of language.[42]

In order to fully comprehend this complex interplay between celebrity and authorship, it is important to acknowledge that authorship, much like celebrity, is a socio-cultural construct. Authorship and celebrity are two different ways in which subjectivity can take form in modern, western cul-

ture, whereby they sometimes reinforce, sometimes repel each other. That authorship is a historically and culturally situated form of subjectivity was demonstrated by Michel Foucault in his 'What is an Author?' (1969), a text that still ranks as an important passage point in theoretical discussions on authorship. Foucault contends that the author is the product of an interdiscursive practice, whereby he understands discourse as a collection of statements and opinions structured according to connected ordering principles. Statements from the author himself, but also from critics, editors, journalists and readers delineate a corpus of 'legitimate' statements, which is subsequently ascribed to the author. The author, then, is the end result of these practices—of 'a complex operation that constructs a certain being of reason that we call "author"'. The individual that is earmarked with this title is, according to Foucault, 'a projection, in more or less psychologizing terms, of the operations we force texts to undergo'.[43] In *The Order of Discourse* (1971) Foucault therefore defines the author as 'a principle of grouping of discourses, conceived as the unity and origin of their meanings, as the focus of their coherence'.[44] The author is, in other words, a function: a function that allows an orderly manner of talking about a collection of texts, statements, actions and judgments. This view on the 'author function' ties in with Dyer's and Marshall's take on celebrity as an intertextual, discursive construct: the writing (or idolized) subject is no longer the producer of texts or statements, but the product of various (legal, economic, or literary) discourses.

Literary celebrity is, then, the product of two telescoping discursive constructs: the author function and the 'celebrity function'.[45] These functions sometimes converge and confirm each other, as at the time of Romanticism or in our present-day 'meet the author' culture.[46] Then, again, they clash violently, seemingly irreconcilable, as in high modernism or in a poststructuralist view of literature. Literary celebrity authorship, in other words, is a function with several variables, and authors, critics, publishers as well as readers constantly redraw the lines between authorship and celebrity. Taking on board the considerations from the previous section, we are now in a position to specify these variables thus: literary celebrity authorship is a discursive construct of subjectivity whereby, in varying proportions, a major role is played by (1) information about the author's life and personality, (2) the technical, medial and commercial dissemination of the work and the authorial image, (3) views on the nature and properties of literary writing as they circulate in public discourse, and (4) the way in which the author lives on in his or her afterlife.

AFTERLIFE AND CELEBRITY CRITICISM

Whoever wants to chart the history of literary celebrity authorship, then, has to face the difficult task of mapping a shifting constellation of discursive battlegrounds, where a variety of forces, actors and interests meet and clash. In this volume we wish to do justice to these complex issues by not focusing solely on the author's self-presentation, or, for that matter, concentrating exclusively on the reception of his work and performances but, instead, by highlighting their interaction—and, moreover, by depicting the long lines of development of this interaction. Hence, we have included the author's afterlife as our fourth variable in the equation discussed earlier.

Afterlife, the English equivalent of German *Nachleben*, is a concept rooted in the mid-twentieth-century art theory of, among others, cultural scientist Aby Warburg; in the past decade, however, it has received a reappraisal in the discipline of cultural memory studies.[47] Such researchers as Astrid Erll and Aleida Assmann have shown that the afterlife of literary works can teach us a great deal about 'transcultural memory' and 'the incessant wandering of carriers, media, contents, forms and practices of memory, their continual "travels" and ongoing transformations through time and space'.[48] Rereading and rewriting canonical works, or, rather, books that have sunk into oblivion, contributes, according to Erll, to the 'continuation' and 'actualization' of their 'social life'. Research on this afterlife charts the function of these works diachronically: it offers insight into 'the continuing impact of literature, how it manages to "live on" and remain in use and meaningful to readers'.[49] Erll distinguishes three perspectives from which to tackle a work's afterlife: a 'social perspective', which 'emphasizes the active appropriations of a literary text by social actors'; a 'media culture-perspective', which directs attention to 'the intermedial networks'—translations, quotations, adaptations—'which maintain and sustain the continuing impact of certain stories'; and finally, a more 'text-centered perspective', which enquires whether 'there are certain properties of literary works which make them more "actualizable" than others, which effect that the works lend themselves to rereading, rewriting, remediating, and continued discussion'.[50] In her reflections on the concept of afterlife Assmann offers a reminder that there are two sides to it: an afterlife 'can be a matter of intentional, painstaking and costly human construction', but it may also be the result of unconscious, 'internal dynamics of an affective impact'.[51] A good example of such research

into afterlives, which also illustrates how Erll's three perspectives and Assmann's two sides are bound up, is Ann Rigney's study into the rich and changeable afterlife of author Walter Scott.[52]

The concept of afterlife as developed by Erll, Assmann and Rigney lends itself very well to being deployed in further research into literary celebrity, particularly so if we are, as in this volume, interested in the inter-action between authorial self-presentation and afterlife. In order to deploy the concept to this end, however, two additional considerations must be taken account of. First, it is essential to acknowledge that in the case of literary celebrity it is not just the author's work but also his personality— the public image or authorial persona—that lives on in the afterlife. The 'star text' (Dyer) or 'celebrity sign' (Marshall) is also reread again and again and experienced differently each time. Then, boundaries between oeuvre and persona are soon found to blur, since authors often reflect in their work on their status as a public figure, while the audience attempts to interpret the authors' personalities with the help of statements from characters in their works. In short, work and author often prove to be inextricably intertwined.

As a second consideration, it needs to be taken into account that behind Assmann's clear division—afterlife as an intentional construction and as affective dynamics—there lies a multitude of intentions, actors and effects. The afterlife of the author may be a painstaking and costly construction by the author himself, but publishers, editors, heirs and fans too make strategic choices as they pronounce upon the author. In this way they also contribute to the way in which the authorial image will go down in history. At the same time, the affective dynamics of the afterlife is equally characterized by an interplay of different institutions and varying condi-tions. Without intending to, an author—or the image of that author, cre-ated by others—can appeal to the audience's emotions, interact with social developments, or be claimed for a political message by certain groups. And even the researcher examining this complex interplay takes part in the dynamics of the afterlife. The boundaries between intention and uncon-scious response, between past and present, and between production and reception likewise prove vague and changeable.

The work of Walter Benjamin, an early explorer of the relation between literature, afterlife and fame, offers leads for incorporating these adjust-ments. In his essay 'The Task of the Translator' (1921) Benjamin exam-ines translation as a form of afterlife. According to Benjamin, translations should not be understood as attempts to achieve 'likeness to the original',

because, he argues, in its afterlife 'the original undergoes a change'. Over time, a translation is interpreted and experienced differently: words take on different meanings and connotations, style is appraised differently, the nature of social resonances changes. Moreover, it is not just the work itself that becomes 'different' but 'the mother tongue of the translator is transformed as well'.[53] The translator should, therefore, not so much attempt to convey the original message but, rather, 'the particular intention toward the target language which produces in that language the echo of the original'; the translator, then, does not translate the content, but 'the way of meaning' of the original. Ultimately, aspiring to such a translation constitutes an ideal rather than a realistic goal since, Benjamin argues, the 'ways of meaning' in the original and the translation will always be different: 'Whereas content and language form a certain unity in the original, like a fruit and its skin, the language of the translation envelops its content like a royal robe with ample folds.'[54] Strictly speaking, a translation is even impossible, according to Benjamin: it will always be transformative and distortive. It is this process of transformative translation, a process that Paul de Man in his reading of Benjamin would later come to term 'destructive' and 'disarticulated', that constitutes the afterlife of the literary work.[55]

Although Benjamin focuses on translations of literary works here, his line of reasoning can be usefully brought to bear on the afterlife of such a cultural phenomenon as literary celebrity authorship. After all, the re-interpretations and reappraisals of an author's afterlife over the centuries can easily be understood as 'translations' of the authorial 'star text' or 'celebrity sign' in different contexts. Indeed, Benjamin posits: 'Where [the afterlife] manifests itself, it is called fame.'[56] The author's fame is detached from its historical and social context in order to be rewritten in a different language and time. As with the original work and its translation, the original 'way of meaning' of the authorial image will always differ from its afterlife. The cultural critic wishing to analyze fame is therefore faced with a task that is comparable to the translator's. Graeme Gilloch summarizes this task thus: 'Benjamin envisages and presents criticism as a process of destruction and (re)construction. The disintegration of the artwork and its liberation from traditional interpretations and contexts (afterlife) permit its relocation, reconfiguration and redemption as part of a wider pattern (as mosaic, as constellation).'[57] A criticism of celebrity, then, detaches the idol from its time and reconfigures it from a contemporary perspective. It is in this partly destructive, partly reconstructive analysis of fame

that 'historical understanding', according to Benjamin, finds its ground: 'Historical "understanding" is to be grasped, in principle, as an afterlife of that which is understood; and what has been recognized in the analysis of the "afterlife of works", in the analysis of "fame", is therefore to be considered the foundation of history in general.'[58]

Benjamin's reflections on afterlives hold an important lesson for the researcher wishing to examine the history of literary celebrity. Research into afterlives confronts us, as Marek Tamm reminds us, with 'the important hermeneutical lesson that historical thinking involves a dual reflection: the penetration of its objects from the past, and the recognition of the historian's own time and contingency.'[59] Criticism of literary celebrity should not, therefore, be fixated on retrieving the idol's creative intention or original personality; rather, the celebrity should be seen as a fragment, a part of a historically, socially and culturally situated configuration. It is the critic's task to lay bare how the discursive construction of literary stardom could come about, how it has evolved and what role the audience—which includes the critic himself—has played. Thus, the analysis of past celebrities inevitably also constitutes an act of self-analysis: it is analysis of the ways in which, and the reasons why, we as admirers and fans appropriate and (re)create the idolized individual after our own image. Critics of literary celebrity, in other words, investigate the work, the life, the personality and the performance of a particular author, but also reflect on those individuals that, according to Barthes's famous words, were born at the moment the Author-God died: ourselves, as readers in the present.[60]

Charting celebrity authorship

The authors in this volume have taken on the challenging task that Benjamin sets the cultural critic: they investigate the interaction between the original 'way of meaning' of literary celebrity, the social, political or commercial appropriations that characterize its afterlife, and the reconfiguration of authors' images in contemporary society. These dynamics constitute the lens with which they propose to examine the history of literary celebrity anew. In each of this volume's chapters, one author from the history of English or American literature is given a key role. The list of authors may not be exhaustive by any means but it is illustrative, and in this way we hope to do justice to the diversity of dimensions which characterizes literary celebrity.

The chapters on Keats and Smith, for example, feature the historical dimension of literary celebrity. Eric Eisner examines the construction of Keats's ongoing afterlife through actual friends and its connections to the formation of a general Romantic culture of reading, writing and commemoration through nineteenth-century 'ideas' of friendship and the love of literature. The relationship between literary authorship and contemporary celebrity culture takes center stage in the article by Odile Heynders, who uses the media's obsession with the commercial success and 'glamorous' looks of Smith as her starting point. Heynders shows how Smith counters the overwhelming media attention with a clever combination of public appearances, use of social media and critical reflections on fame and celebrity culture in her literary work. Read side by side, the two essays show how literary celebrity has evolved between the nineteenth century and our days.

The extent to which writers actively contribute to—or fiercely oppose—the mediatization and personalization inherent in celebrity culture is another major dimension, particularly so, perhaps, in the chapters on Stein and Salinger. The authorial, public and personal identity of Stein, Rod Rosenquist argues, was strangely 'doubled' by a series of imitations and cartoons that constantly reproduced her style and picture. According to Rosenquist, this posed a very real and disturbing problem to Stein, which she tried to resolve by thematizing her celebrity in texts like 'Identity A Poem' (1935) or *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937), texts in which she embraces and questions her fame at the same time. Salinger's unwillingness to become a literary celebrity even reached legendary proportions, as Gaston Franssen's article demonstrates: Salinger categorically refused to be photographed or interviewed and consequently soon became known as 'a literary recluse'. However, it was precisely Salinger's silence, says Franssen, that was to occasion a rich afterlife fueled by wild rumors, gossipy biographies and fictional appropriations.

A third recurrent dimension concerns the role played by visual culture in the representation of authorship. With the mediatization of modern culture, in the form of such technological innovations as lithography, photography, film and, later, the Internet, the author has morphed from a faceless scribe into a public personality whose portrait circulates freely in the public space. This is convincingly demonstrated in the chapters on Herman Melville and Eliza Cook. A kind of Salinger *avant-la-lettre*, Melville did not want his portrait to divert attention from his work. In his article, Kevin Hayes describes how Melville's face became the focus of his readers' curiosity, while the author himself harshly judged this obsession

for the author's 'mug', which, according to him, resulted from the introduction of new printing techniques such as the daguerreotype. That a portrait can indeed fundamentally affect the image of the author is clear from the reception Cook met with, which is the focus of Alexis Easley's article. Cook was an early example of a media-savvy author who combined radically conventional poetry with experimental performances of sex and gender. This is evidenced, according to Easley, by the way in which Cook was portrayed over the years: the unconventional image that the author created for herself was reflected in illustrations that emphasize Cook's masculine appearance, stressing her deviation from the feminine norm.

The creative and at times even radical appropriation that is part and parcel of the author's afterlife constitutes the fourth and last dimension of literary celebrity to be discussed in the various chapters. Appropriated and adapted by others, the authorial persona often takes on a life of its own after the author's demise, as is shown in the chapters on Edgar Allan Poe and Wilde. Evert Jan van Leeuwen describes Poe as a poet who went to great pains to capture the attention of public opinion. Poe published much-talked-about hoaxes, gruesome stories and haunting poetry, and presented himself as a captivating performer. In his afterlife, Van Leeuwen shows, it was foremost the gothic aspects of Poe's authorial image that were to dominate his reception. His biography was subsequently colored in with literary themes from his work, whilst in numerous films and series, which sometimes bear very little relation to either his oeuvre or his life, Poe lives on as a commercial product—a marketable gothic caricature, modeled after his own stories. Last, Sandra Mayer maps the protean afterlife of Wilde: she sketches how the inexhaustible potential of Wilde's star image has resulted in a wide array of contemporary films, festivals, theater plays, biofiction novels and merchandise products. A variety of parties have appropriated the writer: one time Wilde is the Irish author, sometimes a proto-postmodernist, another time he is a gay icon. Focusing on how Wilde is represented in contemporary drama, Mayer comes to the conclusion that the pull of the celebrity author, despite the neo-Victorian agenda of turning the spotlight on the 'supporting cast' in the familiar Wilde narrative, is as strong as ever.

Obviously, the various chapters in this volume accent different issues. Some chapters highlight the self-fashioning of the author; other chapters accentuate the immediate reception, or, rather, give center stage to the posthumous afterlife of authors. But without exception, each and every one of them sheds light on the mechanisms of literary celebrity culture.

The contributors explore the author's celebrity sign and analyze its role in the construction of different forms of authorship; they reveal how author and work are appropriated by social actors and become part of intermedial networks; and finally, they investigate the function of particular works or specific personality traits in the overall process of authorial celebrification. This process turns out to entail a constant shift in authority: different parties demand a say in the determination of the value and meaning of literary authorship. Writerly authority, and authority over the writer emerge as the power over which writers, publishers, readers and fans do battle in the arena of literary celebrity culture.

NOTES

1. See Baelo-Allué 2011; York 2013; Ommundsen 2009; English and Frow 2006.
2. Eisner 2009, pp. 48–67; Goldman 2011, pp. 19–54; Galow 2011, pp. 53–79; Braudy 1997, pp. 19–28
3. See Hammill 2009, pp. 27–54; York 2016.
4. Huyssen 1986, pp. 44–62; Glass 2004; Easley 2011.
5. Glass 2004, pp. 175–196 Moran 2000, pp. 116–132.
6. Quoted in Van Krieken 2012, p. 11.
7. Boorstin 2012, p. 13.
8. Inglis 2010, p. 5.
9. Van Krieken 2012, p. 16.
10. Braudy 1997, pp. 29–51.
11. Monaco 1978, pp. 5–14.
12. Boorstin 2012, p. 45.
13. Boorstin 2012, p. 57.
14. Braudy 1997, pp. 390–449; Braudy 2011, p. 1072.
15. Holmes and Redmond 2006, p. 10.
16. Dyer 1998; Marshall 1997.
17. Dyer 1998, p. 60.
18. Dyer 1986, p. 7.
19. Marshall 1997, p. 65.
20. Van Krieken 2012, p. 50; Marshall 1997, p. x.
21. Boorstin 2012, pp. 13, 47.
22. Giles 2000, p. 25.
23. Turner 2004, p. 3.
24. Quoted in Holmes and Redmond 2006, p. 99.
25. Gamson 1994, p. 58.
26. Cashmore 2006, p. 3.

27. Driessens 2013, p. 649.
28. Driessens 2013, p. 643.
29. Driessens 2013, pp. 650–651.
30. Donoghue 1996; Heinich 1995 (also see Danko 2008); Mole 2007.
31. Bennett 2005, pp. 44–54.
32. Woodmansee and Jaszi 1994, p. 3.
33. Woodmansee and Jaszi 1994, p. 2.
34. Dyer 1998, p. 43.
35. McDayter 2009; Eisner 2009.
36. Mole 2007, p. xii.
37. Huyssen 1986; Glass 2004.
38. Eliot 1921, p. 47.
39. Jameson 1979, pp. 134–135.
40. Martin 2008; Osteen 1999, p. 643.
41. Rainey 1998; Moran 2000; Jaffe 2005; Conroy 2004; Rosenquist 2009.
42. Barthes 1977, pp. 142–148; Burke 1998.
43. Foucault 1998, p. 213
44. Foucault 1981, p. 58.
45. Marshall 1997, p. 245
46. Todd 1996, p. 9; English and Frow 2006, p. 51.
47. Tamm 2015, p. 9.
48. Erll 2011a, p. 11.
49. Erll 2011b, p. 4.
50. Erll 2011b, pp. 3–4.
51. Assmann 2015, p. 82.
52. Rigney 2004; Rigney 2012.
53. Benjamin 2002a, p. 256
54. Benjamin 2002a, p. 258.
55. Paul de Man 1986, p. 84.
56. Benjamin 2002a, p. 255.
57. Gilloch 2013, p. 86.
58. Benjamin 2002b, p. 460.
59. Tamm 2015, p. 7.
60. Barthes 1977, p. 148.

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