

CELEBRITIES' BODIES IN ACHIEVEMENT CULTURE: A STUDY OF JOURNALISTIC APPROACHES TO AMY WINEHOUSE

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ABSTRACT	RESUMO
<p>Amy Winehouse (1983-2011) was an artist whose musical talent led her to the spotlight at an early age. Nevertheless, an elevated amount of media scrutiny focused on her body, physical appearance and personal life helped define the way in which the public viewed her. In this paper, I engage in an analysis of headlines and articles published about the singer in British broadsheets, tabloids and magazines to discuss how the press acted in the sense of turning Winehouse into a valuable, easily sellable commodity. As I analyse a selection of media pieces that focus on the artist's physical appearance (as opposed to her musical career), I also seek to establish the point that the discourse pervasive to those pieces is heavily gendered, with Winehouse often being criticised for deviating from acceptable patterns of femininity. The discussion I propose here is supported by studies developed by researchers of Fame Studies such as Mike Featherstone (2010) and by Guy Debord's seminal book <i>Society of the Spectacle</i> (1962). Under this light, Winehouse stands as an example how the press and social media deal with and approach celebrities in the age of what Byung-Chul Han has called the achievement society [<i>Leistungsgesellschaft</i>]. To the Korean philosopher, we have collectively moved past Foucault's disciplinary world towards a model where the pressure to achieve is what moves and defines us. Considering that many celebrities are perceived as overachievers, this paper discusses the toll such pressure takes on a person when undertaken publicly, with society assessing their body and behaviour to the minutest detail, fundamentally establishing patterns of scrutiny that were not possible before</p>	<p>Amy Winehouse (1983-2011) foi uma artista cujo talento musical atraiu os holofotes desde muito cedo. No entanto, uma concentração elevada de escrutínio midiático focado no seu corpo, aparência física e vida pessoal ajudou a definir o modo como o público a enxergava. Neste trabalho, desenvolvemos uma análise de manchetes e artigos publicados sobre a cantora em jornais, tabloides e revistas britânicos para discutir como a imprensa atuou no sentido de transformar Winehouse em um produto de valor elevado facilmente vendável. Conforme analisamos uma seleção de textos focados na aparência da artista (e não na sua carreira musical), também buscamos estabelecer o argumento de que o discurso que é característico destes artigos é altamente genderizado, com críticas frequentes a Winehouse por se desviar de padrões aceitáveis de feminilidade. A discussão proposta aqui é corroborada por estudos desenvolvidos por pesquisadores dos Estudos da Fama como Mike Featherstone (2010) e pela obra seminal de Guy Debord, <i>A Sociedade do Espetáculo</i> (1962). Sob este enfoque, Winehouse se impõe como um exemplo de como a imprensa e as redes sociais lidam e abordam celebridades na era do que Byung-Chul Han definiu como a sociedade do desempenho [<i>Leistungsgesellschaft</i>]. Para o filósofo coreano, fizemos uma transição coletiva do mundo disciplinar de Foucault rumo a um modelo onde a pressão do desempenho é o que nos move e define. Considerando que muitas celebridades são identificadas como <i>overachievers</i>, este artigo discute o peso da pressão do desempenho sobre o indivíduo quando esta é exercida publicamente, com a sociedade avaliando seu corpo e</p>



the digital age.	comportamento em detalhes minuciosos, fundamentalmente estabelecendo padrões de escrutínio que não eram possíveis antes da era digital.
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KEY-WORDS	PALAVRAS-CHAVE
Achievement Culture; Fame Studies; Amy Winehouse.	Cultura do desempenho; Estudos da Fama; Amy Winehouse.

In “Beyond Disciplinary Society” (2010), Byung-Chul Han argues that we no longer inhabit Foucault’s “disciplinary world of hospitals, madhouses, prisons, barracks, and factories” (p. 8). In the philosopher’s eyes, this system has become obsolete. It has been replaced by another regime, “namely a society of fitness studios, office towers, banks, airports, shopping malls, and genetic laboratories” (HAN, 2010, p. 8). Han tells us that, in the twenty-first century, we live in an achievement society [*Leistungsgesellschaft*]. This shift in societal paradigm is understood to have changed not only the way human beings relate to each other in the age of late capitalism, but also the way people perceive themselves; obedience is not what defines them as workers, but achievement:

They are entrepreneurs of themselves. The walls of disciplinary institutions, which separate the normal from the abnormal, have come to seem archaic. Foucault’s analysis of power cannot account for the psychic and topological changes that occurred as disciplinary society transformed into achievement society. Nor does the commonly employed concept of “control society” do justice to this change. It still contains too much negativity. (HAN, 2010, p. 8)

This shift is reflective of a movement from a society governed by negativity to one that is defined by an exacerbation of positivity which generates a new type of violence. This form of aggression is more difficult to identify precisely as it does not “presume or require hostility” (HAN, 2010, p. 8). It is subtler precisely because it takes place in a pacified society where there is “no polarization between inside and outside, or proper and foreign, takes place.” (HAN, 2010, p. 6). The philosopher identifies a systemic violence engendered by the pressure to achieve that leads to depression and mental breakdowns. Within this framework, it is interesting to think of how this pressure not only to achieve, but also to perform achievement, manifests itself in the way celebrities – perceived as overachievers in the case of artists, intellectuals and athletes – are portrayed by the media.

In *Society of the Spectacle* (1962), Guy Debord addresses how mostly everything – from personal attitude to human bodies – can be commodified in the society of the spectacle. Celebrities fulfil specific functions to enact parts and concentrate notions of

ideal beauty and sex appeal. Even notions of rebelliousness performed by film stars such as James Dean or rock stars such as Mick Jagger are turned into manageable, profitable commodities as “complacent acceptance of the status quo may also coexist with purely spectacular rebelliousness — dissatisfaction itself becomes a commodity as soon as the economy of abundance develops the capacity to process that particular raw material.” (DEBORD, 1962, p. 9). In that sense,

Stars — spectacular representations of living human beings — project this general banality into images of possible roles. As specialists of apparent life, stars serve as superficial objects that people can identify with in order to compensate for the fragmented productive specializations that they actually live. The function of these celebrities is to act out various lifestyles or socio-political viewpoints in a full, totally free manner. They embody the inaccessible results of social labour by dramatizing the by-products of that labour which are magically projected above it as its ultimate goals: power and vacations — the decision making and consumption that are at the beginning and the end of a process that is never questioned. On one hand, a governmental power may personalize itself as a pseudo star; on the other, a star of consumption may campaign for recognition as a pseudo power over life. But the activities of these stars are not really free, and they offer no real choices. (DEBORD, 1962, p. 10)

Debord goes on to stress that stardom is a phenomenon that acts against the individuality of the agent of the spectacle displayed as a star – or a celebrity – as it acts against the concept of individuality as a whole. The masses are supposed not only to worship stars, but also to wish to be more like them. In order to become a mould for others to emulate, the agent of the spectacle must renounce idiosyncrasies that do not fit in with the purposes to which he or she is put on a stage for consumption. With that in mind, the aim of this article is to produce a brief study of how the pressure to achieve combined with the massive commodification of the human body in the condition of stardom are posed by journalistic discourse when addressing popular artists. I am going to turn specifically to the way British broadsheets, tabloid media and magazines both represented and addressed the late singer and songwriter Amy Winehouse (1983-2011). The headlines and articles presented here span from 2007 to 2011, the years following the release of Winehouse’s second studio album *Back to Black* up until her death at age twenty-seven. *Back to Black* brought on a peak of media interest in the artist’s personal life as well as in her style and appearance. Most journalistic pieces discussed here not only turn away from Winehouse’s musical career in favour to exposing and debating her personal life and struggles; they also show journalists felt somehow entitled and justified to judge, make comments on, and viciously attack her physical appearance. Such an attitude appears to imply a communal sense shared by communication vehicles and its readers that the bodies of celebrities, as well as their

personal lives, are commodities in the public arena which are open for discussion.

In “Body, image and affect in consumer culture” (2010), Mike Featherstone approaches the pressure and expectations that contemporary culture places on the bodies and physical appearances of celebrities, stressing that the ideal of self-improvement, one very akin to Byung-Chul Han’s description of achievement society, is a constant as “each fall from grace to deal with weight problems, alcoholism, drugs, or just the ravages of the celebrity lifestyle, is often followed by a period spent in a health farm, clinic or retreat” (FEATHERSTONE, 2010, p. 201). Besides,

if a star or celebrity should bump down to earth and fall down the league table, the bodily dimension of the failure is often given prominence, with paparazzi photographs and video-clips required to illustrate the demise. Then there is always the ‘come-back’, the potential to re-mobilize the public and re-animate media interest through heroic body work: the overweight stars that ‘start-over’ with gruelling fitness routines with personal trainers, or who run a sponsored marathon, or walk to the North Pole, etc. A life which constantly swings between successes and failures, between a beautiful healthy body and an abandoned ill-disciplined body that bears the marks of constant excesses, has a strong media human-interest angle. The transformation of appearance becomes seen as an increasingly acceptable and even worthy pursuit by the media and public, not only for stars and celebrities, but for ordinary people too, who are asked to follow the ‘makeover culture’. The ‘look good: feel good’ transformational logic of consumer culture is presented as within the reach of all. (FEATHERSTONE, 2010, p. 201-2)

On September 26, 2008, the British branch of the women’s magazine *Cosmopolitan* published an article titled “Amy falling apart!” which featured an unflattering photograph of the artist and the subheading: “Amy Winehouse reveals facial deterioration during shambolic performance at the End of Summer Ball”. The author of the article is not provided by the magazine’s website, which lists “Cosmo Team” as having written the piece. By clicking on the link provided for more information on the author, the reader is redirected to a page that merely shows other unsigned articles. It is not clear what are the magazine guidelines for providing the name of the journalist responsible for a piece or not. The first interesting linguistic aspect in this piece is the way the unidentified journalist chose to title it. The construction “Amy falling apart” followed by an exclamation mark does not inform the reader of the circumstances of what is about to be reported nor the writer’s position in relation to the subject; is the journalist sympathetic to Winehouse or not? Besides emulating the language of tabloid media in its register and choice of framing, the writer employs ambiguity: “falling apart” refers both to Winehouse’s perceived physical decay and to her psychological state and career. At the beginning of the piece, the journalist

states that Winehouse's appearance "sparked even more health fears" after a concert in London the previous night. Nevertheless, the writer reveals a tinge of sarcasm in his/her tone as a comment between brackets states that it is hardly possible to become more worried about the singer, hinting at previous occurrences where she was the cause for concern. The following paragraph brings an assortment of observations that range from her body weight to the clothes she was wearing. Winehouse is referred to by an epithet that refers to her biggest hit in the charts: "The Rehab singer turned up at the high-profile event looking emaciated and on the verge of collapse, wearing grubby looking leopard print shorts, a skimpy vest and her signature beehive" (COSMO TEAM, 2008). From this sentence onwards, the aforementioned "concern" for Winehouse fades into the background as the journalist reveals her/his criticism of the singer's fashion choices. Therefore, Winehouse's weight is the first target of criticism: she looks "emaciated". The same magazine often published articles with tips for losing weight, with "7 skinny '08 habits to try" (January 2, 2007), being published around the same time they were covering Winehouse's "fall from grace". The journalist then proceeds to target her "grubby" shorts. Not much is said about her performance or the songs she played onstage. The magazine mentions that her goddaughter, who is also a singer, joined her onstage, but that information is offered merely as an introduction to a comment made by someone merely identified as a "source" stating that: "It was tragic - she seemed totally wasted. She was jumping all over Dionne as the poor girl tried to sing for the crowd. Amy didn't really sing a single note - it sounded more like she was grunting down the mic" (COSMO TEAM, 2008). The same source is then quoted as saying Winehouse looked like "a woman possessed", without clarifying what precisely that would entail. Before finishing the piece, the unidentified journalist offers Winehouse a slightly condescending piece of advice: "Get yourself better, Amy".

The piece from *Cosmopolitan* echoes another unsigned one published by the same magazine a year prior, entitled "Amy's losing it". In it, Winehouse's concert is also defined as "shambolic". The journalist's tone is slightly more aggressive as Winehouse is mocked more openly: "Poor old Amy. Despite her husband being held in prison, she still put on a brave face and tried to kick off her UK tour in Birmingham. But all did not go well..." (COSMO TEAM, 2007b). This anonymous journalist also felt at liberty to offer Winehouse some advice: "Our advice for Amy? Go away. Rest. Get well and then make your fantastic comeback!" (COSMO TEAM, 2007b). Both pieces are similar in tone, structure and content: in a *faux* sympathetic tone, the journalist employs tabloid media conventions to feign concern while making a spectacle out of the subject of the piece. There is an alliance between writer and reader of this sort of outlet that implies they are free to mock and humiliate celebrities that stray from conventionally

acceptable behaviour. As Featherstone has pointed out, these pieces imply there was a script Winehouse was supposed to follow after failing to please to go back into public opinion's good graces.

In "Rock and roll or rock and fall? Gendered framing of the rock and roll lifestyles of Amy Winehouse and Pete Doherty in British broadsheets" (2014), Pauwke Berkers and Merel Eeckelaer list and discuss the several frames mainstream media usually employ to refer to artists perceived as living a rock and roll lifestyle. They specifically address the cases of Amy Winehouse and Peter Doherty, artists contemporary to each other and portrayed by the media in somewhat similar ways. The researchers aim to investigate if celebrities that are perceived as living such lifestyles are portrayed differently according to their gender. In order to do so, they turn to the way journalists employ "relational complicit practices – admiration/justification/negation of male and victimization of female enactment of hegemonic masculinity – to maintain masculine monopoly over the archetypical rock and roll lifestyle." (BERKERS; EECKELAER, 2014, p. 3). While this article is not specifically focused on gender issues, it is still interesting to think if and how gender plays a role in the commodification of the body of the celebrity. The way *Cosmopolitan* addressed Winehouse was filled with gender markers and clichés such as the mad, abandoned or heartbroken woman. In that sense, Berkers and Eeckelaer tell us that while men who engage in what we may classify as a "rock and roll lifestyle" are usually rewarded "or at least condoned for legitimating hierarchical gender relations" (2014, p. 9), with male journalists praising their rebelliousness or life choices. On their turn, women who present similar behaviour are usually judged for not being able to "perform femininity 'correctly'" (2014, p. 9):

Women who enact a rock and roll lifestyle deviate from emphasized femininity by refusing to complement hegemonic masculinity. As they threaten intergender relationality and consequently male dominance, these women are likely to be sanctioned for performing unfeminine behavior (that is, not being 'pop'), making the archetypical rock and roll lifestyle (symbolically) unavailable to women. Focusing on women only, previous studies have indeed shown that music critics often act more like 'men' than as journalists, representing female artists as women – instead of musicians – comparing them to other women only. Such journalism focuses on the physical appearance of female artists, marking them as the Other, or dismissing feminine pop music altogether. (2014, p. 8-9)

Taking gender into account when addressing how the bodies of celebrities are exposed and explored as part of the product that is being sold by record companies can help us to develop a wider understanding of the pressure exercised by achievement society's expectations upon overachievers. Winehouse's success was often portrayed in the media as "part of the problem", something that she could not handle (Cf. PAUWKE;

EECKELAER, 2014 & ORR, 2011). Nevertheless, fame, recognition and success were hardly elements to which Winehouse was not used. With the help of her father, who acted as a manager-figure, she actively pursued a career in showbusiness. Hers was not the story of an overnight success. The singer was encouraged to achieve greatness in her craft both by her family as well as by industry people. Winehouse became interested in music early in life, influenced by her uncles and paternal grandmother, all of whom were jazz musicians (MULLHOLLAND, 2004). In 1992, Winehouse's grandmother suggested she attended the Susi Earnshaw Theatre School. The singer, who was 9 years old at the time she was admitted to the school, attended it for four years. There she furthered her vocal education and learned to tap dance (SANDALL, 2008). Winehouse then attended the Sylvia Young Theatre School full time until changing schools at age 15 (YOUNG, 2011). She was a professionally trained artist and entertainer. Along with other children from Sylvia Young she appeared on an episode of *The Fast Show* at age fourteen. The singer went on to attend the Mount School, Mill Hill; the BRIT School in Selhurst, Croydon; Osidge JMI School and then Ashmole School (BRADDOCK, 2007). Winehouse began working professionally before she even turned fifteen as an entertainment journalist for the World Entertainment News Network. She also sang with local group the Bolsha Band. (ELISCU, 2011). In 2000, she became the featured female vocalist with the National Youth Jazz Orchestra. (MULLHOLLAND, 2004). After a friend sent a demo tape of her singing to an A&R person, Winehouse was signed to Simon Fuller's 19 Management in 2002 (WINEHOUSE, 2012). In 2003, she released her debut studio album, *Frank*.

From the moment the record industry took notice of Winehouse, she was approached as an artist who had the potential to become a huge success, a profitable acquisition to their catalogue. According to senior A&R man Darcus Beese, the man who signed her at Universal, Winehouse was “kept as a secret” by managers and producers for a considerable amount of time as they prepared her for stardom. Thus, it becomes clear that nothing in the process of catapulting the artist to fame and success happened by chance:

How did you first learn about Amy Winehouse?

I was sitting in my office one day when a producer/manager came in to see me. He managed the Lewinson Brothers, a team of producers who have since worked with Joss Stone and others. He played me their productions and suddenly this voice came on, and I asked, “Who the hell is that?!” and he said, “I can't tell you - it's something that we've done for 19 Management which we have to keep very quiet.” I said he'd have to tell me what it was, but he wouldn't.

It took me months to find out who it was just by continually asking around. I

called 19 Management, but they wouldn't return my telephone calls. Finally, I bumped into Felix Howard, who had been writing with the Sugababes, and he played me some songs that he'd been working on. I recognised the voice and asked him who it was and he said Amy Winehouse. All in all, it took me about six months to actually find her. (BOUWMAN, 2004)

Winehouse worked hard to achieve success. When she faced trouble in her personal life, she was voraciously exposed by the media through cruel jokes and unflattering photographs. There were no more boundaries. Many artists become internationally famous without having to suffer through tabloid-fascination over their personal lives. Nevertheless, the rhetoric behind the concept of her not being capable of handling fame implies an inherent frailty we have no reason to believe was factual. Winehouse was always under pressure to perform well and tour the world, to look nice, to be kind and patient towards fans and journalists alike. If one takes into account Han's assertions about the diseases peculiar to achievement society, it seems that by constantly harassing a human being with so many expectations, there was a communal anticipation that Winehouse would inevitably break down at some point. In that sense, it is interesting that Pauwke and Eecklaer have found that the frame most commonly used by journalists to refer to Winehouse was the "concern frame", with journalists underlining the artist's supposed sudden success, one that according to them she had been catapulted into before inevitably "unravelling". Her physical appearance and assumptions about her health – including inferences about eating disorders – were pushed as supporting evidence to some journalists' claims that the singer was a cause for concern. The researchers compare their findings on articles regarding Winehouse with those regarding Peter Doherty. Here, journalistic discourse is flagrantly gender-biased:

Whereas Pete Doherty is predominantly framed as an artist who dares to live on the edge, many journalists interpret similar behaviour in Amy Winehouse as damaging, harmful, and unhealthy, particularly for the artist herself. This concern frame is the main topic in 27.5% of all articles about Winehouse compared to 8.5% in the case of Doherty. In the case of the former, most articles stress the consequences of her alcohol and drug addiction. Journalists are 'concerned with her well-being' (The Guardian, 23 July 2007), whereas new incidents 'raise fresh concern' (The Guardian, 22 August 2007), even to a point where journalists 'no longer feel easy making jokes about it' (The Guardian, 29 August 2007). (...) Many journalists also refer to her physical appearance, describing her as 'stick thin' (The Guardian, 17 August 2007) with 'spindly little legs' (The Guardian, 14 September 2006). Supposedly, she is a 'self-confessed depressive and sometime anorexic/bulimic' (The Independent, 20 February 2007). Furthermore, Winehouse is often said to have problems dealing with her fame, when she was 'catapulted to being a superstar' (The Guardian, 17 August 2007). Moreover, journalists – on a quest of 'saving Amy' – focus on explicit paternalistic

advice to take better care of herself and focus on her music. (2014, p. 16)

The celebrity is treated here as a passive victim who did not have much choice in the matter of her own stardom. Nevertheless, Winehouse's life story shows us she constantly made an effort to excel in her field and earn recognition from her peers and well as from music fans.

Tabloid articles about Winehouse also demonstrate the level of entitlement the media usually displays when it comes to making comments and passing on judgement not only on the personal lives of celebrities, but also on their bodies. In 2010 alone, *The Daily Mail* published several articles focusing on Winehouse's personal life. Those pieces frame the singer in a manner that not only implies she was weak, but also that she was dependent on the men in her life. In February, an article titled "Maybe I'm part of Amy's problem: Father Mitch Winehouse comes clean" was featured on the newspaper's online and print editions. In the piece, Winehouse's personal life as a child and teenager is exposed in detail, with quotes from both of her parents. The interviewer presents a myriad of conjectures as to why the singer "turned out the way she did" (BARAK, 2010). Winehouse's voice is only heard throughout the article in brief quotes related to specific situations that are described, usually to reinforce the point the journalist is trying to make. She is never asked, however – as people close to her are – to say anything about what Barak frames as her problems, the central theme of the article. In the excerpt below, taken from Barak's article, Winehouse sounds almost child-like:

Over dinner, her behaviour is erratic. She disappears to smoke, and – her father suspects – drink. She barely touches her food and I wonder if her anorexia has returned. Less than half an hour later, Mitch is upset again when Amy is rude to a guest. She finally walks away like a little girl sent to the corner. "I need to go now," she murmurs. "My daddy wants me to go. I have been a bad girl. I drunk too much." (BARAK, 2010)

Two other pieces published by *The Daily Mail* that I am going to approach here are titled "Amy Winehouse may be off the market... but it's business as usual as she parties until 5am" and "Amy Winehouse out until 2am again but this time she manages to stay sober thanks to new boyfriend Reg Traviss". Both were written by the same journalist and published two weeks apart from each other, in June 2010. The first one brings demeaning and condescending passages such as:

The 26-year-old singer, who is newly in love and dating film director Reg Traviss, performed a short set at the Jazz After Dark bar and restaurant where she emerged looking somewhat worse for wear in the early hours. Wearing a low-cut checked dress, Amy struggled to contain her inflated chest as she set about putting on a show for the cameras outside. (JOHNSON, 2010a)

As well as crude remarks about her physical appearance:

Teaming her outfit with her trademark ballet shoes, and wearing a black over-dress at times, the Back to Black star cut a somewhat grubby appearance with her orange skin indicating she'd been a little too zealous with the fake tan. (JOHNSON, 2010a).

There is a clear transition between the two pieces, however. In the two weeks that separate the dates of publication of each article, a character gains prominence the tabloid's pages. Winehouse's new boyfriend goes from being quickly cited on articles to being framed as sort of saviour. While the second article is less focused is criticizing and ridiculing Winehouse's appearance, her more acceptable demeanour are attributed to her relationship with the aforementioned Travis:

After mingling at the bash, it was then on to one of her favourite haunts, the Jazz After Dark bar in Soho, where she stayed until 2am. But unlike her visit there earlier this month, where she emerged looking very worse for wear, Amy departed hand in hand with Reg, 33, and appeared to be very sober. No doubt Reg's presence may have had something to do with Amy's good behaviour. With his clean-cut image, he is widely seen as the man who could tame Amy from her wild ways following her marriage to former heroin addict Blake Fielder-Civil, who she is now divorced from, and who was jailed for assault last year. According to recent reports, Amy went back to a London rehab clinic recently - apparently in a bid to please Reg, who was not happy with her hedonistic partying ways. (JOHNSON, 2010b)

The only direct comment the journalist makes about Winehouse's appearance refers to her "inflated curves" which she "squeezed into a very low-cut print dress". While one could argue Johnson's comments are distasteful and impolite, they are still on the complimentary side when compared to what he said in the article published on June 3rd. In this context, it is impossible to disentangle the media's marketing and commodification of Winehouse's personal life without referring to the fact gender is viscerally marked in these pieces. When Winehouse's demeanour was read as being "wild" or closer to the writer's perception of a rock and roll lifestyle, she was either portrayed as a victim or criticized for her poor performance of femininity. Daphne Barak, a female journalist, focuses on Winehouse's supposed anorexia and mental instability. On his turn, Johnson, a male, is first critical of her clothing, criticizes her "grubby" appearance and her "fake tan" only to contrast those aspects with his views on the "New Amy", a woman who dresses in an attractive way, holds herself well and does not drink anymore in order to please a male partner who is credited for her

perceived improvement. Nothing is said by Johnson about her musical performance, but Reg Traviss is praised by the journalist as a man who strikes him as being able to “tame” Winehouse. The abhorrently sexist narrative proposed here shows the journalist is not coy about his latent sexism: a woman that does not behave accordingly to his expectations of femininity must be tamed by a man with a “clean-cut image”, one the conservative readers of *The Daily Mail* might respect. It should be noted that an early version of the headline for the second article read, “Amy Winehouse struggles to contain herself on night out with new boyfriend Reg Traviss”, which reinforces the idea that the journalist identified a point of tension between the ideal performance of femininity Winehouse should now play and her rebellious nature. The media anxiety towards what was often framed as Winehouse’s inadequacy invites us to analyse how it proceeded with the coverage of the singer’s death in July 2011.

In “A musical matter of life and death: the morality of mortality and the coverage of Amy Winehouse's death in the UK press” (2012), Paula Hearsom tells us that the newsrooms of several newspapers and magazines had already prepared themselves for the “likeable occasion” of Winehouse’s death by writing obituaries for her in 2010:

In personal interviews conducted in 2010, several broadsheet obituary writers confirmed that they had already written Winehouse’s obituary and, therefore, the speed at which they were put live following her death was unsurprising: “At last we can wheel out those pre-written columns as we photograph her body being wheeled out of her house!”. Although they are highly formulaic in many respects, obituaries are often open to considering ethical debates and, even though they are not opinion pieces, the opening lines in particular sometimes frame a judgemental verdict. For Winehouse, the juxtaposition was always the astonishing musician versus a troubled personal life. (HEARSOM, 2010, p. 188)

Hearsom also underlines the fact that it was also probably due to the fact the obituaries had been mostly written long before Winehouse’s actual death that Reg Traviss, her current partner at the time when she passed away, was mostly overlooked. Newspapers and magazines focused on her marriage to Blake Fielder-Civil from 2007 to 2009 instead. Although the critic mentions that obituaries had been written in 2010, journalists from *The Daily Mail* and other tabloids would not refrain from anticipating the artist’s death from as early as 2009. It appears that her death was already perceived as something that could be instantly marketed into profitable commodities. In “Will Amy Winehouse live long enough to make another album? Her last-ditch Caribbean detox has gone nightmarishly wrong” (2009), journalist Alison Boshoff wrote about Winehouse’s record company’s expectations that she would soon record a new album that would be as great a success as *Back to Black* (2007). She adds, rather derisively: “What are the chances of success, though? In recent months, Amy has been hospitalised

three times after alcoholic benders lasting up to three days. One time, she ended up on a drip for dehydration” (BOSHOFF, 2009). It becomes clear that journalists and their reading public usually feel entirely entitled not only to discuss famous people’s lives, but also to pass on judgement about the way they live. In Winehouse’s case, her body took centre stage while the men and women from the press discussed if she took too many drugs or if she drank excessively. If she was perceived as having dressed herself poorly or failed to behave in a manner the writer saw as appropriate, criticism would also ensue. Even music magazines engaged in that practice, as shown by the *NME* electing her “the worst dressed” at their awards ceremony (*NME*, 2009). It appears that, in this matter, the only difference between tabloids and news outlets that present themselves as serious broadsheets is the way in which their approach is framed. While tabloids would blatantly make fun of and ridicule Winehouse, broadsheets and music magazines would usually turn to a specific occurrence – as a concert where the singer was late or failed to perform in a manner that satisfied the writers – and proceed to describe their concerns for the artist’s health (Cf. *NME*, 2008 & BRIDGE, 2009). Be it as it may, Amy Winehouse’s body was photographed from every possible angle by high-resolution digital cameras held by unauthorized photographers. Those pictures would very quickly find their way into online and print press pages to feed the increasing demand for updated evidences to support the narrative of her inappropriateness and poor life choices. Fans and critics alike would look for Winehouse’s latest escapade. The event of her death was not exempted from getting sucked into the spectacle that was created around her life:

Within minutes of the BBC ‘broadcasted’ announcement during the late afternoon of July 23rd 2011, Wikipedia’s ‘Amy Winehouse’ and ‘27 club’ pages had been updated to include her death. In just over two hours *The Telegraph’s* full obituary was online. Concurrently Twitter feeds ‘narrowcasted’ condolences from the famous intermingled with the morality-driven discussions from the public. It was estimated that over the weekend her death was announced, 10% of all Twitter usage (20 million users) were discussing her death. During the following week ‘special issues’ of both *OK!* and *NOW* were published and, within a month, a biography updated and republished. (HEARSUM, 2012, p. 182-83)

Furthermore, Amy Winehouse was pursued even in death as a tabloid columnist from *The Sun*, one of the newspapers that most often attacked her, was invited to her funeral at Golders Green Crematorium by her manager and described the ceremony to his readers the following day (HEARSUM, 2012, p. 190).

Through this article I aimed to propose a discussion of how celebrities’ bodies are portrayed and explored in the achievement society. If, as Byung-Chul Han has argued, the pressure to achieve is a governing factor in contemporary human behaviour to the

point it leads to exhaustive depression and disorders such as burnout syndrome, the pressure put on a life-long overachiever such as Amy Winehouse is difficult to fully unpack. As this paper has shown, Winehouse was often approached in news pieces that aimed at discussing her personal life, with her musical career often working as a mere pretext for journalists to engage in a routine of exposing her body in an abusive way. The 24-hour coverage of Winehouse's life, with photographers constantly posted outside her Camden home, with the 5'3" singer being chased down the street by hordes of men with flashing cameras in hand was passively watched by the world as a spectacle, but one that was broadcast in a violent way. Tabloid articles illustrated by photographs taken without Winehouse's authorization would scrutinise her body, criticise her thinness, expose evidences of drug use and make fun of her clothes. Besides showing that we are not, perhaps, entirely free from the twentieth-century's obsession with surveillance, it is still true that our society is fixated upon achievement and success. Furthermore, those journalistic pieces can be interpreted as manifestations of the violence of positivity described by Han. While none of those photographers, journalists, and critics physically harmed Winehouse, they still cornered her in every possible way. Exploring the artist's personal life for profit was a violent practice that consisted of invading her privacy on daily basis. That behaviour made it possible to supply the apparently endless demand for articles on the singer's "outrageous" personal life and habits.

Those elements considered, I still argue that Winehouse should never be portrayed as a passive victim of the industry that tried to engulf her. She showed time after time through her music and refusal to comply to behavioural expectations placed on her that she was not a mere pawn. To portray her as a victim would be to belittle her as an artist. Nevertheless, each person who adhered to the logic of the spectacle that was created around Winehouse's life should take responsibility for their violence against her. This includes those who looked for articles vilifying Winehouse to feel better about their own lives, as well as those who wrote and monetised them. The women who helped disseminate the same old constructs of gender that suggested Winehouse should be ashamed of not behaving as it was expected as well as the men who preyed on her private life to photograph and mock the artist in the moments she most needed privacy are equally culpable. Seven years after Winehouse's passing, it is possible to hope for a more responsible approach by the media when addressing the issue of drug addiction and celebrities. When Demi Lovato suffered a heroin overdose in July 2018, most news agencies and newspapers urged readers to understand that drug addiction is an illness, not a character flaw. While Twitter users were quick to point out the possible hypocrisy of doing so when Winehouse was so viciously attacked, one can still hope it was an effective change in the way we look at addiction

and celebrity culture as a society that led to more respectful reactions to Lovato's personal problems, not a mere adaptation to what readers now deem as acceptable behaviour towards famous artists.

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