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THE ROAD TO HEALTH:
Narrating Distance in Three Contemporary British Addiction Narratives

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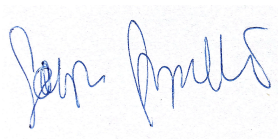
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This thesis contains 28 683 words.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sonja Pyykkö', is written over a light blue grid background.

Sonja Pyykkö

Berlin, 9 January 2018

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1. Introduction: “This, then, is my journey.”

To write about addiction is nearly always to write also about recovery; whether because writing requires the kind of control that the addicted individual rarely has over their lives, or because the public simply is not interested in stories about unrecovered addicts, almost every addiction narrative begins with addiction and ends with some version of health. Stories about dependence have been told many times over since Thomas De Quincey’s essay *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* was first published in 1821, but what most of them even now share with De Quincey is his personal, confessional mode of narrating; typically, it is either one’s own or a close family member’s real-life experiences of addiction that are taken as the basis of writing. As such, most addiction narratives fall under the category of “life writing”, which Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson describe as “a general term for writing that takes a life, one’s own or another’s, as its subject” (4). Furthermore, the vast majority of addiction narratives are also “autobiographical” in the sense that they take the life and experiences of the writer herself as their main topic (ibid.). Rather unlike addiction narratives, of which De Quincey’s 19th century essay is one of the earliest examples, the autobiographical practice of writing the self can be traced much further in history; typically, all the way to Saint Augustine’s *Confessions*, a set of religious and philosophical writings about the monk’s own life, published in the fifth century AD (Anderson 17).

According to Smith and Watson, life writing has in the past couple of decades become an increasingly popular form of literary expression (127). So popular, in fact, that critics and columnists alike commonly describe it with business-derived terms, such as “industry”, or “boom” (e.g. Rak 1, Smith and Watson 127), that are rarely used in connection with other literary genres. Likewise, also critical discussion seems to focus much more on the cultural machinery surrounding the texts than is customary for discussing novels, for example. Smith and Watson begin their chapter on the contemporary memoir with a claim that “life writing has become a prized commodity”, before setting the scene in strictly economic terms of supply and demand; according to them, publishers “seek the next hot topic” in order to identify and profit from the needs of “niche audiences”, for instance by targeting “coming-out stories to gay and lesbian readerships” (127). Julie Rak even devoted an entire book to discussing the production methods of life narratives, calling it *Boom! Manufacturing Memoir for the Popular Market* (2013).

Naturally, commercial motives of the famously dwindling bookselling industry are part of the reason life writing has become such a popular genre, but limiting the discussion only to those motives seems rather unjust. After all, regardless of the books' popularity among whichever "niche" topic is being targeted by the publishing industry, life narratives always, at least implicitly, also ask the question of who has the right to represent their own life in writing; whose experiences do we deem worthwhile and whose do we dismiss as simply "marginal" – meaning, of course, that they are of no possible interest to anyone, except for the people sharing the same conditions, whether in terms of race, class, gender or sexual orientation, like in Smith and Watson's example.

Perhaps due to the confessional roots of autobiography, and addiction narratives as its subgenre, the real story in addiction narratives seems to be very close to the one told already by Saint Augustine – transformation of the self. For Augustine, that transformation happened through his conversion to the Christian faith, while for the writers of addiction narratives, the main context for self-transformation is recovery. In a way, this is also a type of conversion, as Smith and Watson point out, continuing, in their typical business lingo, how "addiction narratives have become commodified as conversion stories [...] circulated broadly to readers eager for tales of abasement and recovery" (148).

My purpose here is to examine how addiction narratives represent this transformation from addiction to recovery using the concept of *distance*. Like conversion narratives, also addiction narratives typically establish metaphorical distance between the present narrator and the retrospective representation of the follies of her past. However, the amount of distance each of the narratives sets between its narrator and her experience is by no means a constant; rather, depending on the narrative and what it strives to achieve, the representation of distance also varies. I have selected three examples of contemporary British addiction narratives, each of which treats the distance between the narrator and her experience a little differently. These are *Glass Half Full: A Positive Journey to Living Alcohol-Free* (2014) by Lucy Rocca, *The Outrun* (2016) by Amy Liptrot, and *Coming Clean: Diary of a Painkiller Addict* (2017) by Cathryn Kemp. The first one, *Glass Half Full*, for example, begins with Rocca already 16 months sober, and only moves forward from there, in effect gaining distance between her and her experiences of addiction. That is very different to the way *The Outrun* narrates Liptrot's experience of addiction, at times closing the distance by representing the past as if it was

happening *now*, before letting it grow more distant again. Yet another way to represent distance is presented by *Coming Clean*, which relies on cancelling that distance in its entirety through the use of simultaneous narration – a technique that has recently gained popularity in life writing for reasons I will discuss later. My question then is, how does the changing distance between the narrator and her experience affect the representation of addiction and recovery in these narratives, and what can be made of those differences in terms of the ideologies they perpetuate.

After the general and theoretical introductions in the first and second chapters, the third chapter, *The Road to Health: Narrating Distance from Addiction to Recovery*, will examine, one at a time, how each of the three narratives represents the distance between the recovering narrator and her addicted experience. I establish *distance* as a textual construct, responsible for arranging the narratives' overall structure. My focus is mainly on *temporal distance* between the narrating event and the narrated experience, although the ways in which that temporal distance functions varies from each text to the next.

The first part, *Distancing the Past in Glass Half Full*, will examine how the narrative structure of Rocca's story rests on a growing distance between the narrator and her addicted past, and how that narrative structure combines with the temporal logic of the blog form and the needs *Glass Half Full* has as a self-help narrative to establish *expertise* where before there was only *experience*.

Unlike that strict divide to addicted and sober experience, the second subchapter, *Overcoming Distance in The Outrun*, will examine how Liptrot negotiates the distance between addiction and recovery in terms of both time and space, interweaving it into her departures and arrivals between Orkney and London. In place of the vastly separated experiential worlds of *Glass Half Full*, *The Outrun* in effect mixes the addicted and sober experience, creating what postclassical narratology refers to as the "continuity of experience" in autobiography (Löschnigg 258).

The third part of the third chapter, *Simultaneous Narration and Paradoxical Distance in Coming Clean*, focuses on how cancelling the temporal distance between the narrator and her experience can actually end up creating a different kind of distance; occurring between the events and their representation. Here, I rely mostly on Dorrit Cohn's concept of the "fictional present" (*The Distinction of Fiction*, 106) and its more recent applications in postclassical narratology.

Although my primary focus is on the structure of the texts themselves – how they represent distance in their narrative structures – the examples from Rak and Smith and Watson above show that the “industry” is an important factor in the kinds of representations that are published. I will extend the discussion to cover also these aspects related to producing the narratives themselves. I call such aspects meta-textual, knowing full well how this use is not in accordance with Gérard Genette’s concept of “metatextuality”, by which he means the “relationship that links a commentary to the text it comments on” (82). For my use, the complex genealogy of Genette’s numerous types of transtextuality is not relevant, and referring to each kind of relationship according to his conceptual system would only serve to distract from my point. I use meta-textual only to distinguish between the *textual* kinds of distance, occurring between two actors within a text – the narrator and the experience narrated, for example – and *meta-textual* kinds of distances, occurring between the text and its genre, or the text and its message, as is the case in ironic distance. I will come to these later.

The fourth chapter, *Good Intentions: Mapping Ideology onto Recovery*, will continue the discussion about the “industry”, focusing on how a wider sphere of cultural meaning is produced and circulated by and with these narratives of addiction and recovery. If the purpose of the third chapter, *The Road to Health*, was to ask the question of *how* – how do the texts represent the distance from addiction to recovery, how do they function – the fourth chapter, *Good Intentions*, will instead focus on the *why*, asking why is the distance between addiction and recovery represented in the way that it is in each narrative, and what kind of ideological structures support and enable these representations. I will identify and define neoliberalism, masculinism and psychoanalysis as, to quote Slavoj Žižek, the “key ideological machines” (*In Defence of Lost Causes*, 60) operating both in and around these texts.

2. Texts and Contexts

This chapter will introduce the primary texts and define the theoretical framework in which I aim to examine them. As already mentioned above, life writing itself is an umbrella term, developed after different ways of writing the self became increasingly popular in the 1980s and the boundaries between them grew harder to define (Anderson 144). To reflect the variety of ways in which addicted and recovering selves can be written, I have tried to select three different types of texts as my primary sources, trying to capture – continuing in the steps of Smith and Watson’s economic-terminology – a kind of vertical cross-section of the literary market for life writing about addiction.

The “bottom shelf” example in this metaphor is Lucy Rocca’s *Glass Half Full*, which is a combination of characteristics typical to blogs, self-help literature and life writing, but leaves the exact genre open to interpretation. As such, it is an example of what Henrik Skov Nielsen calls an “underdetermined text”, meaning that the paratextual information, given on for instance the book’s covers, is not really sufficient to determine its genre, or even whether the work is fiction or non-fiction (288). I will later discuss the complicated question of the genre of Rocca’s text in more depth, but for now it is enough to concede that the references it makes to the writer’s blog do point to it being autobiographical in the widest sense of the term, meaning it is a work of non-fiction and based on Rocca’s own experience. She has since co-authored an entire franchise of self-help books with titles like *The Sober Revolution: Calling Time on Wine O’Clock* (2013), *Your Six Week Plan: Join the Sober Revolution and Call Time on Wine O’Clock* (2013), and *The A–Z of Binning the Booze* (2017), and is the founder of a global peer-support network designed for women with alcohol problems, Soberistas.com.

The mid-market is represented by Cathryn Kemp’s *Coming Clean*, which combines aspects of illness and addiction memoirs into a representation of Kemp’s life after she was first diagnosed with pancreatitis, a chronic infection of the pancreas, and then became addicted to the opiate painkillers that were given as treatment. *Coming Clean* was first published in 2012 by Sphere with the more scandalous title, *Painkiller Addict: From Wreckage to Redemption – My True Story*, accompanied with graphic, neon-coloured cover art, before being re-released by Piatkus in 2017 as *Coming Clean*, paired with a sophisticated light blue cover and

the more delicate, alliterative title. This re-branding shows the dual audience for which Kemp writes. Her book is “literary enough” to pass for what could be called “women’s middlebrow trauma fiction” (Andermahr 14), yet voyeuristic enough to appeal to the readers of “misery memoirs”, a widely scorned but nonetheless popular genre that typically focuses on the writer’s “‘inspirational’ triumph over childhood abuse and deprivation” (Anderson 115). Interestingly, Kemp has since specialised in an even more “niche” subgenre, the historical misery memoir. After the success of her own memoir, she has worked on several books with elaborate titles, like *We Ain’t Got No Drink Pa: A Little Girl’s Struggle to Survive in the Slums of 1920s South East London* (2015), most of which she has either co-authored, ghost-written, or published under a *nom de plume* – the distinction seems purposefully blurred. Unlike the underdetermined *Glass Half Full, Coming Clean* makes a point of its non-fiction status. It begins with an “Author’s Note”, in which Kemp declares *Coming Clean* “a work of non-fiction”, clarifying that the “events and experiences detailed here are all true”, after which comes the usual caveat of having “faithfully rendered” events “as [she] remembered them, to the best of [her] ability” (i). I will discuss the implications of the concepts of experientiality and referentiality in more detail below.

The top-shelf variety of the literary memoir is represented by Amy Liptrot’s *The Outrun* (2017), which tells Liptrot’s story from alcohol addiction to recovery by narrating it alongside her movements between Orkney, where she was born and returns to recover, and London, where she spent most of her addicted adult life. Because of the way Liptrot aligns her recovery with her growing identification to the natural world, *The Outrun* has been compared to two other critical successes in the British contemporary life writing scene, Richard Mabey’s *Nature Cure* (2005) and Helen McDonald’s *H is for Hawk* (2014), some reviewers even identifying a new subgenre in the suture between nature writing and the memoir (Myers). As with *Coming Clean*, the different editions of *The Outrun* also play with different aspects of the book. The first edition, published by the Scottish Canongate, emphasises the book’s “literariness” with a front cover that places vague review quotes (“Remarkable”, “A revelation”, “Matchless”) over abstract, almost lyrical cover art, at the cost of any mention of genre. Quite different is the American, W. W. Norton edition, which places a photograph of Liptrot standing on a beach on the front cover and adds the qualifying subtitle, *A Memoir*.

Given the examples, it seems rather obvious that genre in life writing is as much, if not more, about marketing and finding the right audience for the books, than it is

about their textual contents. In addressing questions of genre, I will be mostly relying on *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* by the previously mentioned Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, whose work provides a good overview of the contemporary field of life writing. As a handbook, it has its own limitations, mostly in terms of aiming for too much neutrality in contested matters, which I try to overcome by referring to Linda Anderson's *Autobiography*, a part of the Routledge New Critical Idiom series, which offers a far more concise and also a more critical perspective on many of the recent debates.

However, as I mentioned above, genre is only of secondary interest to me. Its relevance is subject to when and where it connects to my primary research question; how these narratives use the changing distance between the narrator and her experience to construct different representations of addiction and recovery. As such, my focus is on the *narrative structure* of each of the works, making narratology – or, to be exact, postclassical narratology – my primary theoretical framework. Postclassical narratology is well suited to the kinds of questions I am asking these narratives. “Classical narratology”, as Monika Fludernik and Jan Alber refer to it, using David Herman's terminology, was born out of French structuralism in the 1960s, and aimed at discovering a “universal” theory of narrative (1-3). Against that backdrop, postclassical narratology is characterised by its plurality, triggered when the “narrative turn” of the 1990s forced narratology to expand both outwards and inwards, as sciences from sociology to communication studies started developing concepts introduced by narratologists, while narratologists began incorporating for example gender, race, and class based criticisms from other disciplines into their work (ibid. 2-4). This opening up is the key moment in the definition of postclassical narratology, turning it from the “relatively unified discipline or field” of classical narratology and into the “transdisciplinary project that consists of various heterogeneous approaches” that postclassical narratology is today (ibid. 6). I will briefly discuss the three distinct forms of transdisciplinarity Alber and Fludernik recognise, according to their relevance to my research.

Firstly, unlike is typical in classical narratology (Alber and Fludernik 3), I am not examining the novel, but a much wider sphere of texts ranging from the high-literariness of Liptrot's *The Outrun* to Rocca's *Glass Half Full*, a self-help narrative that was originally published as a blog (I will come to this in the next chapter). This is what Alber and Fludernik term a *contextual* change from classical to postclassical narratology (3). The novel-oriented theories of classical narratology cannot account

for the complex relationship between the real and the imaginary that characterises contemporary life writing in the same way that postclassical narratology can.

Secondly, although my research is narratological in the sense that it analyses the form and structure of the narratives themselves (see Alber and Fludernik 2), many of the questions I ask extend beyond the purely textual and into the world around them; these are, for example, questions of ideology that I address chiefly in chapter four, *Good Intentions: Mapping Ideology onto Recovery*. Alber and Fludernik call this a *thematic* change, defining it as a move away from the universal questions with which narratologists mainly occupied themselves to better reflect advances in social theory, especially gender and race based criticisms, since then (3).

The third and final reason postclassical narratology is better suited to my research is the *methodological* change Alber and Fludernik take as characteristic to postclassical narratology (3). To answer the kinds of questions I have about the texts, I refer to not only the chiefly linguistic methods of the classical narratologist, but also methods of inquiry developed by feminism and psychoanalysis, as well as occasionally referring to sociology and philosophy, for example.

The final body of knowledge to which I refer is a little harder to define. It is usually called the “theory of autobiography” (e.g. Löschnigg 255), although that is a little misleading considering the fundamental questions of identity and selfhood frequently asked by these theorists. The current state of the theory of autobiography is can be traced back to the philosopher Paul Ricœur’s concept of “narrative identity”, which he introduced in the 1980s, demanding that it is “lived experience” rather than some innate “essential quality” that really “‘defines’ a person” (Löschnigg 261). The more useful view on the narrative identity comes from the autobiography scholar Paul John Eakin, whose thoughts on it are recounted below:

If this picture of narrative identity I have sketched is correct, autobiography is not merely something we read in a book; rather as a discourse of identity, delivered bit by bit in the stories we tell about ourselves day in and day out, autobiography structures our living. (Eakin 122).

Because of this equation of autobiography with other kinds of “discourses of identity”, Eakin’s theory of autobiography is always spilling over the page and into the real world. In fact, as the next quotation exemplifies, his approach seems to *deny* the existence of a border between narrative and other kinds of identity discourses, while simultaneously claiming that *imagining* that border into existence forms the very basis for a stable sense of self.

We tend to instinctively think of autobiography as a narrative container or envelope of some kind in which we express our sense of identity, as though identity and narrative were somehow separable [...]. Our sense of having selves distinct from our stories is, nevertheless, hugely productive, serving our need for a stable sense of continuous identity stretching over time. (Eakin 129).

Combining Ricœur's and Eakin's narrative identities, we come to the contemporary view of autobiography in postclassical narratology, as it is presented by Martin Löschnigg. According to this view, autobiography is not thought of as *a product*, "a retrospective rendering of an already formed self", but instead as *a process*, "an experiential site", where an identity is constructed and experience re-lived rather than merely described or interpreted (Löschnigg 259). Looking at life writing in this way turns it into a kind of bridge between literary and real selves and identities. In Alber and Fludernik's words, it is this "curious status of autobiography" that forces inquiries into it to the very "borderline of fictionality" (20) – and sometimes over. Unlike classical narratology, based on Saussurean theories that excluded "the referent" (meaning in this case the world around the texts) from the conversation of "signifier vs. signified" (ibid. 11), I aim to be postclassical also in the sense of embracing this borderline, and including discussion not just of the texts, but also of the world that produced them.

To an extent, every discussion of genre I instigate in the third chapter falls within the consequences of that embrace, although it has the most immediate effect on the fourth chapter, *Good Intentions: Mapping Ideology onto Recovery*. The very real meaning these narratives have on the people who write them become clear in Suzette Henke's term "scriptotherapy", which connects practices of life writing to the therapeutic goals of psychoanalysis, for example (xviii). Connecting to Ricœur's and Eakin's narrative identities, the practice of writing about recovery becomes a constitutive part of that recovery. Using another one of Ricœur's concepts, to "emplot the self" (qtd. in Illouz 172) in a new way means, in effect, to constitute a completely new self, which in the case of addiction narratives means one that is no longer dependent. The world surrounding the self is part of that emplotment, because as Eva Illouz states, "integrating the various events of one's life within an overall narrative framework" rests on "broader, collective narratives, values, and scripts" (172-73). "Personal narratives may also embed a collective dimension" (ibid. 173), she continues, but I would go further than that, and claim that not only *may* personal narratives embed a collective dimension, they *must* in fact do so.

This is why I turn to ideology, to make sense of those broader, collective narratives, and their effect on the individual life narratives that I examine. Using Antonio Gramsci's definition of ideology, I present it as "the necessary superstructure of a particular structure" (qtd. in Barrett 303-04), rather than as the more common, much narrower meaning of "the set of beliefs characteristic of [... an] individual" (Stevenson) that it is often conflated with. As such, the concept of ideology will help me examine the question of why these narratives represent the distance between addiction and recovery in the ways that they do. I recognise both neoliberalist and masculinist ideologies as the "necessary superstructures" producing the "particular structures" of Cathryn Kemp's *Coming Clean* and Lucy Rocca's *Glass Half Full*, before turning to psychoanalysis as the key ideological machine in *The Outrun* that neoliberalism and masculinism in the form of postfeminism in turn rest upon.

Any critique of neoliberalism almost inevitably leads to Michel Foucault, and I, too, begin with the concept of the "*homo oeconomicus*" he introduced in *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-79*. This *homo oeconomicus*, according to Foucault, is "an entrepreneur of himself", and as such, acts as "for himself his own capital", "for himself his own producer", "for himself the source of [his] earnings" (*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 226, original emphasis). Foundational as Foucault's work may be, in order to account for the contemporary state of neoliberalism, one must recognise how it has developed since Foucault first described it in the late 1970s. He recognised already then how a project was being undertaken for "extending the economic model of supply and demand and of investment-costs-profit so as to make it a model of social relations and of existence itself" (ibid. 242). I found a more contemporary perspective in Ulrich Bröckling's work. Bröckling gives the phenomenon Foucault described the name "economic imperialism", before describing it as the colonisation of "areas formerly not counted among the economic" (48). He claims that neoliberal forces have only "continued to grow" since Foucault's 1970s lectures – and that, in fact, the entrepreneurial self is *only* able to become "a prevalent form of subjectification" in societies pervaded by market logics, where "the market acts as a privileged site of social integration" (ibid. 43-44). It is this pervasiveness of the "call to see ourselves as entrepreneurs of our own lives" (ibid. viii) that I take as a starting point in chapter four.

It is, however, not *only* neoliberalism that structures how these narratives represent the distance from addiction to recovery. I have chosen three works by three

female authors partly because, for reasons I will discuss later, the memoir seems to be an essentially *feminine* mode of writing the self, but also because in the field of addiction narratives, it is women's writing that has dominated the field for the past decades. This, I believe, is to do with the confessional roots of the genre, and the fact that men's addictions seem both more common and more socially accepted than women's, so they simply have less to confess about the matter. Women's drinking, as the title of American journalist Gabrielle Glaser's 2014 book proves, is still *Her Best-Kept Secret*. Especially mothers' drug and alcohol use seems as strong a taboo as ever – a conclusion that is inescapable when reading the mother-of-two Rocca's *Glass Half Full*, in which she tries to walk a narrow line between presenting her past drinking as *reprehensible enough* to ground the thorough self-transformation that is at the basis of her book, without representing it as *so reprehensible* as to risk appearing a “Bad, Drunk Mum” and become repelling to her readers. Her fears are both gender- and class-based, as the “disgusting” figure of the “chav mum” shows, often collated with the sketch character Vicky Pollard from the show *Little Britain*, which Imogen Tyler analyses in her 2008 article “Chav Mum Chav Scum: Class Disgust in Contemporary Britain”. The fact that a corresponding figure of the “Bad Dad” does not even exist tells a great deal about the mass of unequal gender expectations that befall on women and men when they become parents – or develop addictions.

The ideology underlying (or perhaps overlying, to continue in Gramsci's metaphor of “superstructure”) that figure is masculinism, which could be defined as a system that values male attributes and characteristics, as well as men as individuals, more so than it does women. This gender hierarchy is not commonly discussed as an ideology, although it certainly fits every aspect of Gramsci's definition. Its most common pronunciation in women's life writing, is, perhaps unsurprisingly, not outright sexism or misogyny, but a more innocent version, postfeminism, which connects an essentially anti-feminist agenda with neoliberalist discourses of individuality to produce a message of personal liberation and emancipation in the individual's *choice* to embrace “traditional” (and thereby masculinist) gender roles.

The third and final ideological juncture comes in the form of psychoanalysis. If masculinism is only rarely discussed as ideology, psychoanalysis is surely even less so, but encouraged by Slavoj Žižek's pronunciation of it as “the key ideological machine” (*In Defence of Lost Causes*, 52), I discuss it under the topic nonetheless. It

is, as I will come to show, at the core of the entrepreneurial self's most defining characteristic; its potential for constant self-transformation. As Bröckling puts it, one is "only ever an entrepreneur *à venir*, only ever in a state of becoming one, never of being one" (viii). This transformation is both contradictory to and based on Sigmund Freud's work, because, although the basis of Freudian psychoanalysis is that "the I is not master of its own house" (Bröckling 9), and thus cannot hope to transform or even comprehend the itself in any meaningful way, yet, transforming that house is nonetheless the primary task psychoanalysis as a therapeutic practice takes up (Illouz 35-36). Both Žižek and Illouz agree that it is through the "family narrative" that psychoanalysis has come to structure the "contemporary narrative of selfhoods" most (Illouz 39-40, see also Žižek 52), so I take it as the starting point to my analysis into the psychoanalytic recovery in *The Outrun*.

I begin by recognising and defining masculinism and neoliberalism in the first part to the fourth chapter, *Masculinist and Neoliberal Recoveries in Coming Clean*, and then proceed to combine them in the following part, *The "Ideal Disciplinary Subject" in Glass Half Full*. The third and final part of the fourth chapter, *Achieving Health through Self-Analysis in The Outrun*, focuses on the much subtler way that neoliberalism grounds Liptrot's psychoanalytic recovery – and, in a way, every narrative about recovery.

3. The Road to Health: Narrating Distance from Addiction to Recovery

3.1. Distancing the Past in *Glass Half Full*

In this chapter, I will examine Lucy Rocca's *Glass Half Full: A Positive Journey to Living Alcohol Free* from the point of view of distance. I will first situate the book in context by looking at questions of genre, focusing especially on notions of self-help, life writing, and the blog form as a kind of digital epistolary. I will then proceed to analysing how distance is constructed between Rocca's past addicted and present sober experience using this generic context as reference. My final point will expand the concept of distance from a purely text-level phenomenon to one that also encompasses distances that occur at a meta-textual level; between the text and its message or the author and narrator, producing different levels of irony and sincerity in *Glass Half Full*.

Unlike the two other texts examined in this paper, *Glass Half Full* is not a memoir, although it does certainly fit into the wider concept of autobiographical life writing, defined in the introduction as writing that takes the author's own life as its subject – but, crucially, it lacks the “self-reflexivity” and consciousness of its own “status as an aesthetic object” that Smith and Watson take to be the basic characteristics of the contemporary memoir (4). As this play of concepts already demonstrates, assigning any work of life writing to a single genre, be it memoir, autobiography or something else, is rather difficult. It helps to think of genre in the context of Jacques Derrida's seminal essay “Law of Genre”, according to which “every text participates in one or several genres”, but this participation “never amounts to belonging” (65). This makes it possible for *Glass Half Full* to participate both in the wide and contested intersection of genres that comprise autobiographical life writing – and, at the same time, in the completely different and vastly under-defined genre of self-help.

Terms like *self-help literature*, *self-help culture* and *self-help movement* are thrown around rather liberally, but critical definitions are still hard to come by. Heidi Marie Rimke characterises self-help by its *purpose* “to alter, reform or transform the self, or some intrinsic aspect of it” (62). She refers to it primarily as a “non-fiction genre”, but also as “an *activity*” that “aids in the production, organization, dissemination and implementation of particular liberal modes of truth about the social world” (Rimke 62, my emphasis). Especially the final addition shows that

although there is no denying that self-help is a popular genre, it can perhaps be better understood in terms of what Foucault calls “discursive practices” (*Archaeology of Knowledge*, 49), which term emphasises the productive aspect of self-help more. This productivity is what Foucault means when he says that these practices “systematically form the objects of which they speak” (ibid.). Eva Illouz’s term of choice, “culture of self-help”, reflects this productivity better than the simple notion of genre is able to. For Illouz, the culture of self-help is just one example of the widening realm of “therapeutic discourse”, characterised by its healing “vocation” (7, 173). Drawing together Rimke’s and Illouz’s ideas, I would set a working definition of self-help literature as writing that encourages one to “alter, reform or transform the self” into a version of that self that is coded more “healthy”.

Even a cursory look at *Glass Half Full* will immediately reveal its self-help purpose. On the front cover, under the title and subtitle, are the words “health”, “dependence”, “alcoholism”, “problem”, “life”, and “family” repeated in the shape of a wine glass, suggesting a problem that affects every part of the addicted person’s life, from their physical health to their social lives. The back cover then presents *Glass Half Full* as the solution to that problem by promising a transformation. Lucy Rocca’s life is given as an example of this transformation, described metaphorically as a “journey”, which also implies distance covered between the old self and the new. The reader is addressed indirectly, using words that emphasise the relevance of Rocca’s story to anyone seeking to transform themselves, without limiting the possible readership too much: “As the founder of Soberistas.com, Lucy’s blog also provides *motivational and inspirational support* for those seeking an alcohol-free life.” (Rocca back cover, my emphasis). The buzzwords “motivational and inspirational support” rest on Illouz’s “therapeutic discourse”, a combination of “commercial self-help books” and actual therapeutic practices, like support groups for example (12), forming a kind of imagined support group out of Rocca and her potential readers, all working towards a shared goal of transforming the self.

The blurb’s vague reference to “Lucy’s blog” serves to further complicate the already rather complicated issue of genre and *Glass Half Full*. The connection between Rocca’s book and this blog is far from random or insignificant; instead, I will come to show how the blog form is actually constitutive to the kind of distance that accumulates between Rocca and her past, addicted experience. In order to do that, I will leave the paratexts for a while and move into the main body of Rocca’s text. The first chapter, serving as an introduction to both the writer and the writing,

refers to the book in terms of a blog that Rocca has just started writing: “In writing this blog, I want to work through my feelings and help myself find where I want to be – who knows, it may just help others too. This, then, is my journey.” (Rocca 2). The metaphor of distance continues in both “where I want to be” and “journey”, which represent her future self-transformation as an almost physical distance to be covered, as if who she is now and who she hopes to become were two different people, miles apart from each other. The final remark of “it may just help others too” is a modest, but direct link between her writing and the imagined support group of her readers.

Self-help typically combines three authoritative positions into one; it teaches the individual to rely only on herself, but at the same time to rely “exclusively on an expert other” (Rimke 62). Crucially, it preaches the individual’s transformation into an expert of herself, in “some aspect” of her selfhood (ibid.) – hence the term “*self-help*”. But, contradicting directly what Rimke envisioned as typical for self-help narratives almost twenty years ago (her article was published in the year 2000), *Glass Half Full* does not base that transformation on “an expert other” at any point. Instead, relying solely on her own experience, Rocca herself transforms into that expert in the course of her story. In this way, *Glass Half Full* walks a fine line between life writing and self-help, offering a mid-way solution of both – helping oneself and others through writing one’s own life. The act of writing itself becomes the healing practice, a form of public “scriptotherapy”, using Henke’s term again. The kind of selfhood constructed through this position, and the ideological ramifications of that selfhood, are examined in depth in the next chapter. I will here focus on Rocca’s transformation using the concept of distance to analyse her “journey from hopelessly devoted wine fiend” (back cover) to the self-pronounced expert of recovery from addiction.

The first point to be made is that the back-cover blurb stretches the truth to its limits, given that Rocca’s journey in *Glass Half Full* does *not* begin with its writer a “devoted wine fiend” – but more than two years after she stopped drinking. The first chapter begins with an introduction: “Here’s where I’m at: sixteen months ago I had my last drink.” (Rocca 1). If we think of distance as purely temporal in nature, then *Glass Half Full* places the greatest distance between the addicted past and the sober, writing present. This temporal distance is far from arbitrary, given that the crux of the transformation from addiction to recovery is the first day not using; it is the turning point, the day zero from which sober days are counted, the anniversary of

which is the basis of the Alcoholics Anonymous tradition to reward sober members their revered sobriety chips. The temporal distance to addiction measured from that point becomes a part of the recovering addict’s identity, as Rocca shows by pronouncing her “chips” in the opening line. The importance of that distance is further underlined by announcing it in months, even after the twelve-month mark, like the first few years of a child’s development from a new-born to a toddler.

By comparison, *Coming Clean* covers Kemp’s “journey” from health to addiction, and then back through the stages of rehab and recovery to health once more. *The Outrun* has a more complex temporal structure, which will be examined further on, but it too begins with addiction and ends with Liptrot close to two years sober – that is, four months before Rocca would even begin her story. Imagining the day zero as the zero on an x-axis, left to which lies addiction, and to the right, recovery, creates a visual representation of the temporal distances each of the three books covers, presented below in figure 1.

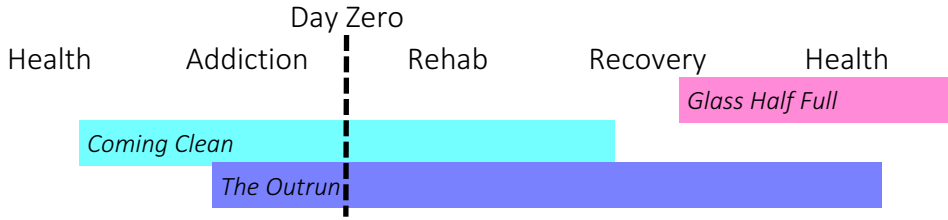


Figure 1

A closer look at the distance *Glass Half Full* places between narration and addiction requires examining it from another aspect of temporality; linearity. As I already mentioned above, *Glass Half Full* refers to itself as a blog and apparently comprises of texts that Rocca published online some time ago. This makes it a “blook”, a neologism used for books that are based on an earlier blog (Pedersen 81). I say apparently, because these original texts can no longer be found, having perhaps been removed to give way to the global peer-support emporium, Soberistas.com, that Rocca later went on to found. The other option would of course be that there is no original text, that Rocca knowingly created her story in a kind of *faux* blog form, but, as I have already mentioned, *Glass Half Full* seems rather unaware of its own aesthetic purpose, so this is unlikely. Instead, let us presume that it is a blook. In this case, the blogosphere origins of *Glass Half Full* are still very much apparent in its structure: It is set in short, two to three page chapters, with running dates and the main theme of each “post” set forth in a title. Although there is certain mundane

continuity in the topics of which Rocca writes, there is no formal plot; the events flow along in seeming randomness, rather than comprising a thematic whole. For example, Rocca occasionally refers to earlier “posts”, setting the title of the referred piece in bold, as if a hyperlink to another text – “I wrote in an earlier post (**Robert the Geranium Plant**) that in my view you don’t grow as a person when you regularly get wasted” (Rocca 35, original emphasis) – and keeps checking back to keep the reader informed of her fitness and self-transformational progress, but the main weight is on introspection and self-surveillance meant to detect both the ways she has improved since stopping drinking, and to find out any areas that still need “fixing”.

In this way, *Glass Half Full* resembles a diary, or perhaps a letter, considering how it addresses not just the writing individual as its audience, but also the unknown online readership. Linda Anderson goes as far as to call blogs “online diaries”, remarking briefly on the “complicated dialectic between the personal and the public” produced in them (123-24) before moving on to a completely different topic. This is a true-ringing, but also a paradoxical description that ought to be examined a little more in depth than Anderson’s concise style allows. A diary, of course, is a constant effort of recording ephemeral experience in a private form, typically a paper notebook, stored away safely for later browsing. Both of these qualities differ from those of the online platform, which is public by its very definition, comprising of data hosted on a network of computers. For these reasons, I would be more comfortable settling the blog form somewhere between a digital, one-sided epistolary, a letter addressed to everyone and yet no one in particular, and a decidedly *public* version of the “online diary” Anderson called it. Furthermore, unlike the words scratched on the pages of a notebook, online contents itself is ephemeral, as the disappearance of the proto-blog where Rocca first wrote demonstrates; it is subject to constant revisions and deletions, technical failures and expiring licences.

The purpose of a blog, then, is to write, publish, and archive, all in the click of a mouse, before moving on to the next topic, and then the next one after that. Readers come and go as they please, some reading each update faithfully, others only staying to read one post. From the writer’s perspective, the linearity and immediacy of the medium mean that going back and editing previously published blog posts might even feel like a violation to the form itself, kind of like fabricating diary entries. Rocca’s texts seem to have gone through minimal editing between their (supposed)

initial publication online and in print. The exact extent to which they have changed does not even really matter, because they purposefully maintain the illusion of temporal linearity, created by the dates running in the headlines. They are a web**log** – as the form was known before the abbreviation “blog” replaced and all but effaced “weblog” in the late 1990s (Anderson 123) – a term dating back to a ship’s logbook; a chronological record of the events during a journey.

All this comes down to plot, defined as the sequence of events covered in a story, and how and why *Glass Half Full*’s plot does not go anywhere near the addicted experience, but chooses to maintain a safe distance between the narrating event and the addicted past. Continuing on the logbook comparison, a structure like this does not leave the narrative any option than to coincide in terms of story and plot as each day’s entry is written, the page turned, and with it, another day and another entry begun. Given that *Glass Half Full* is not *really* a logbook, meant as a reliable record of events in the order they came to pass, this linearity actually serves to mask the authorial influence of selecting and organising events that is at the basis of every representation, and certainly at the centre of every piece of life writing. That does not mean that there is no selection in *Glass Half Full*, or in blogs in general, and brings us to the question of why: Why does *Glass Half Full* only start at “16 months” sober, why does it only move forward from there, growing that distance when it might as well be catching it up, why is it always frantically moving forward instead of retracing the past? Its premise is especially striking, given that the dramas of addicted life and the uphill battle for recovery are the typical stuff of addiction narratives (Borst 158-159), whereas Rocca’s recovery from addiction is all but complete from the very beginning of *Glass Half Full*. What, then, is Rocca’s story really *about*, if not recovery?

To answer that question, I will need to look at the cases where *Glass Half Full* does overcome the distance between past and present, and how this temporal distance aids in the creation of experiential distance between Rocca’s past and present selves. As I mentioned above, due to the combination of a timeline starting at more than two years sober and a blog form that only allows linear movement forward towards the future, Rocca’s addicted past is never given priority in the narrative. In the cases that the past is called forth, it only serves to establish the preferability of Rocca’s present self over her past. This effect is created by superimposing a frame created by the sober, present self onto every instance of narrating past experience:

Drinking has landed me in no end of trouble over the course of the last two decades, from initiating belligerent arguments to making unwise choices in boyfriends to engaging in regrettable episodes of public dancing and wild, unfettered flirting with people I most definitely should not have flirted with. (Rocca 1).

This sequence is still from the first page of the first chapter, beginning with the previously quoted “[h]ere’s where I’m at”. In that sentence, the deictic expression, “here”, roots the narrating act in the here and now of the present moment. Correspondingly, the section above also marks the shift from present to past with an expression of time, “over the course of the last two decades”. Despite having established a distance between the past and the present in such a clear way, the rest of the sequence goes on to negate that distance, effectively mixing the two temporal levels. Past behaviours, “making [...] choices”, “dancing” and “flirting”, are told as if focalised by the present narrator, apparent in the qualifying adjective attached to each noun; “unwise choices” and “regrettable [...] dancing”. Passing a rather harsh judgement on her (past) self in this way requires having first established a safe distance between the past and the present selves. Rather than the unifying act drafted in most theories of life narrative, demonstrated in Eakin’s “stable sense of continuous identity stretching over time”, quoted already in the introduction, the narrative in *Glass Half Full* serves to do the exact opposite; to set apart the present from the past self, and thus create two distinct sets of identities.

As the narrative progresses, this distancing function goes even further, effectively splitting Rocca’s self in two. This is apparent in the changes of pronouns in a paragraph towards the end of *Glass Half Full*, in which she returns to the moment before her day zero, the lowest point of her addiction, to the events that led her to decide to stop drinking. In AA discourse, this is referred to as the “rock bottom” experience:

I was a grown woman, a mother, so inebriated that *she* had been taken to hospital in an ambulance where *she* proceeded to lie unconscious for hours on end, before finally coming to and facing the truth; alcohol controlled *me* and *I* had to escape its grasp before it killed *me*. (Rocca 206, my emphasis).

The personal pronouns, which I set in italics for emphasis, show the distance that has accumulated between her present and past selves in full action. In the beginning, she refers to herself in the first person, but as soon as she starts describing her addicted, past behaviour, the first-person pronoun “I” changes to the third person “she”. Whether intentional or, as is more likely, accidental (but nonetheless revealing, in a Freudian sense), this pronoun shift shows how Rocca, the narrator, does not even

consider herself the same person as the “mother, so inebriated”, laying passed out on the hospital bed. Instead, it was “she” – the Other, the drunk, the bad mother who is another person entirely from the one speaking now. The shift back to the first-person pronoun comes after the semicolon, once the passed-out creature has awakened and through transformation into the present narrator, been forever dispelled by her. Because of the distance between the past and present selves, it is possible for the present, superior self to constantly undermine the past. Acknowledging that some of the past self survived the transformation, or that the present self might be fallible, too, does not fit into the “motivating and inspiring support” Rocca aims to offer. Because of this, entire lives can be just wiped out: “Whatever life you think is yours amidst an alcohol-fuelled existence will be nothing more than a hazy recollection of falseness in sobriety.” (Rocca 29). It is worth recalling that the subtitle to Rocca’s book is *A Positive Journey to Living Alcohol Free* – and that “positive” is not only the antonym of “negative”, but also of “ambiguous”.

Because of the demand to always remain positive, motivating and inspiring, documenting recovery realistically, with its ups and downs, even possible relapses, would not be possible for Rocca. But, as I already mentioned, this is not a problem, since *Glass Half Full* is not really about Rocca’s recovery from addiction. Instead, the distance Rocca accumulates between the addicted past and the sober present serves another transformation; that of turning Rocca herself into an expert of addiction and recovery. Interestingly, this connects it back to the book form. As Sarah Pedersen points out, a book is a popular way of monetising a blog, and some writers even start a blog in the hopes of becoming a published author (80). For them, the blog serves as more than just as a platform for practicing writing and creating “a unique voice”, but also works to brand the writer, adding “credibility” and allowing her to “be viewed as a subject matter expert” (ibid. 81). This “subject matter expert” corresponds exactly to Rimke’s “expert other”, which I earlier diagnosed as missing in *Glass Half Full*. Connecting the dots between the two experts now, we can see how *Glass Half Full* brings together self-help, life writing and blog discourses to create in Rocca the “expert other” that it was otherwise lacking. But, in order for Rocca to become that “expert other”, she must first transcend past, personal experience, and turn it into the universal knowledge of the “subject matter expert” – in other words, she needs to distance herself from it. As we have seen, this experiential distance cannot be created instantaneously, but takes the persistence and

repetition of the constant act of writing the self, thus allowing the self to slowly and arduously write itself *into* a credible expert.

Making at this late state of digitalisation the claim that “the internet leads to a *democratization of knowledge*” (Möbner and Kitcher 1, original emphasis), one risks appearing not only a little passé, but actually naïve. As Möbner and Kitcher rightfully point out, the actual effects the internet has on the production of knowledge have little to do with the advancement of democratic values, since “the mechanisms giving access to these new claims of knowledge – the search engines, the social networks, the internet platforms – continue to sustain an authoritative framework” (20). *Glass Half Full* serves to prove that it is not only the role of experts that has changed, but the epistemology of knowledge itself. By substituting *experience* with *expertise*, and then reproducing that message until the sheer volume of the repetitions echoing around online creates the basis for Rocca’s credence as an *expert*, *Glass Half Full* demonstrates in action the complex way in which “new claims of knowledge” come to be validated. Credibility online thus seems to be less about what is being said by the person posing as an expert, and more about gathering enough followers for that person to *appear* credible – not to *become* but to “be *viewed* as a subject matter expert”, like one of Pedersen’s research subjects so aptly put it in the quote above. Round and round that process goes, until enough noise has been created for the for traditional media to accept the self-made expert’s status, and reward it with a b(l)ook deal. From there on, it is plain sailing, because, as the proverb goes, whoever “wrote the book” on a topic, is officially the expert, no matter how limited their knowledge originally might have been.

The final point I will discuss before moving on to the next chapter is also to do with the book form of *Glass Half Full*, but requires thinking of distance in entirely different terms – namely, as ironic detachment. A certain ironic stance pervades all of *Glass Half Full*, but remains mostly very subtle. The irony is already visible in Rocca’s introduction, where she discussed the “no end of trouble” drinking had landed her in. There, the negative, qualifying adjectives, “belligerent”, “unwise”, and “regrettable” start slowly giving way to a more light-hearted, even humorous tone towards the end of the quoted sequence, turning “episodes of public dancing” and “wild, unfettered flirting with people I most definitely shouldn’t have flirted with” into something not completely unlike bragging, although it is difficult to place this effect exactly.

To pin it down, I will look at another chapter, “The Steam Mop – I Highly Recommend Buying One”, which plays with ironic detachment in a more obvious way. In it, Rocca recounts in a light-hearted way her obsession with cleaning. The humorous effect comes from the combination of exaggerated enthusiasm over something most people find particularly mundane and uninspiring – a mop. Mixing hyperbole, exclamation points, and bracketed interruptions, she mimics commercial language familiar from shopping channel advertisements: “I witnessed the ease with which my new cleaning device cut through that dirt, as if assisted by the most powerful of bleaches (which it wasn’t, it just does it with steam – amazing!)” (Rocca 72). According to Pedersen’s study, the blog form often mixes the personal with the commercial, using advertising in both overt and covert forms to create income for the writer – although the latest trends show that advertising might compromise the way readers perceive blogs’ authenticity – their “editorial integrity”, as Pedersen puts it (77-78). The block origins of *Glass Half Full* make for a natural environment for commercial language. It is easy to imagine the original blog post accompanied by links to online retailers’ sites, where the mop can be bought with a single click – or next to carefully staged photos, in which the brand logo is *just so* visible against the gleaming floor.

On the other hand, perhaps to protect herself from the “backlash” on authenticity Pedersen predicts (*ibid.*), Rocca also sees the need to distance herself from the text’s message using irony. Ironic distance is most apparent in the way Rocca pokes fun at herself, creating a kind of double-voice using intermittent, bracketed phrases: “Earlier that day, I even (this is how sad I am, and how obsessed with cleaning) deliberately, and somewhat joyfully, left the dog’s muddy footprints [...] on the floorboards [...]” (Rocca 72). According to Rosalind Gill, irony is often used as a way of distancing oneself from expressing sentiments that are viewed *too* sincere, “at a time when being passionate about anything or appearing to care too much seems to be ‘uncool’” (159). Enjoying cleaning would certainly count as “uncool”, but by establishing a safe, ironic distance between herself and her praise of cleaning products, Rocca is able to narrate it in a way that actually adds to her “coolness”, by manifesting a cool, detached attitude to herself. For if something is more seriously “uncool” than taking cleaning too seriously, it is certainly taking oneself too seriously. On the other hand, Jim McGuigan sees irony and pastiche as signs of a “postmodern aesthetic” – which, coincidentally, also produces the blurring of the lines between “editorial content and advertising” (*Cool Capitalism*, 91) that we are

discussing here. If something as innocuous as liking cleaning products a bit too much is able to harm the disaffected stance of McGuigan's "cool" capitalist (ibid.), we can only imagine what scrambling for profits using her readers' gullibility would do to Rocca's reputation. In this way, ironic distance serves to make her immune to criticism, producing a postmodern kind of authenticity that works exactly because it constantly undermines itself through irony.

Sincerity and ironic distance also work in another, more subtle way in *Glass Half Full*, combining to mask an egotistic desire to communicate the kinds of details about her life that are meant to inspire admiration or even envy in the reader – all the while without Rocca losing her cool or being caught boasting. Here, meta-textual distance occurs between Rocca, the author, and Rocca, the narrator. While Rocca, the narrator, is overtly asking the reader to join in her laughter at herself, Rocca, the author, is also covertly inviting the reader's envy. In the following paragraph, still from the same "Steam Mop" chapter, she describes herself admiring her own handiwork:

There was a time when all my spare cash went on bottles of wine and I only felt excitement if unlimited booze and a full packet of twenty fags formed the basis of my evening's entertainment. Not so these days – now that I'm a responsible adult, it's all about spending my disposable income on an electric steam mop (you should buy one if you haven't already; they are truly a wonderful invention), and finding thrills in the shininess of my wooden kitchen floor. (Rocca 73).

The distance between the addicted past and sober present manifests in terms of class and gender markers. Rocca's drunken past is cast as unfeminine, coarse and lower-class – in a word, "chav", the notoriously "ubiquitous term of abuse for white working-class subjects" (Tyler 17). These meanings are present in the connotations to "fags" and "booze", and contrasted to the safely middle-class femininity of a "teetotal" mother, homemaker, and wife. The present Rocca is surrounded by her shiny hardwood floor, a sure symbol for both wealth and taste. The image painted here, with Rocca reclining peacefully, a cup of "herbal tea" (73) in her hand, the shiny, wooden floor stretching behind her, is like from any lifestyle blog, designed as an escapist daydream away from the daily drudgery of housework, not as the repetition of it. The "inspiring support" her book's back-cover blurb promised is here delivered also in terms of a possible class jump, from a working-class to a middle-class identity. The role of consumption is not arbitrary in this transformation, far from it, as Jessica Ringrose and Valerie Walkerdine argue; rather, consumption has

since the 1980s become one of the key methods of identity construction, freeing especially working-class subjects to “produce an identity in a lifestyle” through acts of selective consumption (230). Crucially, the image Rocca paints itself already constructs the reader’s possible rejection to that “inspired” position. By keeping a safe, ironic distance to her message, Rocca already accounted also for rejection.

In this chapter, I have focused on how Lucy Rocca’s *Glass Half Full: A Positive Journey to Living Alcohol-Free* uses distance between the past and present selves to create from Rocca herself the “expert other” that her book would otherwise be lacking, based on the definition of self-help narratives I developed by combining Heidi Marie Rimke’s and Eva Illouz’s theories. I introduced two notions of distance; temporal and experiential distance allows Rocca to transcend her past experience and construct herself as the “expert other”, while the more meta-textual kind, manifesting here as ironic distance, allows her to detach herself partially from her message where it has the risk of being perceived as “uncool”, and write possible criticism into that message itself, thus remaining immune. In the fourth chapter *Good Intentions: Mapping Ideology onto Recovery*, I will focus on what the distance produces from the point of view of ideology, taking both neoliberalism and postfeminism as tools to make sense of the transformation I presented here. But first, I will examine what kinds of distances the two other narratives present.

3.2. Overcoming Distance in *The Outrun*

As the previous chapter demonstrated, distance can manifest in different ways in different addiction narratives. Rocca’s *Glass Half Full* rested on a growing temporal and experiential distance between the narrating self and her past, addicted experience. Because of this distance, addiction could only be represented within tightly framed snapshots, which even then were superimposed by the sober narrator’s focalisation. I argued how this was because Rocca’s story is not really *about* recovery, but about how Rocca turned *experience* into *expertise*, and thus overcame the lack of an “expert other” that it as a self-help narrative would otherwise have had. In this chapter, I will turn to Amy Liptrot’s *The Outrun*, examining how the changing distance between the narrator and her experience affects the representation of addiction and recovery in a narrative that differs wildly from *Glass Half Full* in terms of both style and purpose.

As in the previous chapter, I will begin with a genre definition, before turning to the actual topic. I will then look at how distance is created and manipulated through a

non-linear plot, focusing on the overall structure of the narrative and the resulting representation of addiction and recovery. The image that rises is, perhaps surprisingly, not waxing but waning experiential distance between the narrator and her experience, despite the growing temporal distance. This development is very much unlike the two experiential worlds that drift further and further apart from each other as the narrative progresses in *Glass Half Full*. Prompted by the results, I will conclude with a brief examination of a specific text-level phenomenon in which the narrator's past, addicted experience intrudes the present reality; dreams and flashbacks.

In the previous chapter, I brought up parts of Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's definition of the contemporary memoir in order to prove that *Glass Half Full* is *not* a memoir, although it did fit into the wider field of autobiographical life writing. At first glance, assigning genre to *The Outrun* seems to be a much simpler affair. As I already mentioned in the introduction, the British and American editions of *The Outrun* differ in the way they attribute genre to the book, but both explicitly use the term "memoir" to describe the contents. The British edition emphasises the literary and aesthetic functions of *The Outrun*, which is described as "blending searing memoir with sublime nature writing", while the American W. W. Norton edition anchors the text more tightly to Liptrot's persona by placing a photo of her on the front cover and adding a qualifying subtitle, *A Memoir*, to the title.

If assigning genre appears easy in the case of *The Outrun*, defining that genre is doubly as difficult. Leaning again on Derrida's "Law of Genre", the borders of a genre are always drawn through acts of "inclusion and exclusion" (65), and the memoir is no exception. The most obvious dividing line lies between the memoir and autobiography, which is sometimes presented as memoir's more distinguished and serious counterpart, and at other times its synonym (see e.g. Smith and Watson 274-75). Even this is of limited help, given how "notoriously" difficult defining autobiography is considered to be (Schwalm 1). But, since there is not much else to go by, I will rest on that distinction. According to this view, while both terms describe a form of first-person life narrative, the memoir differs from autobiography in terms of its scope, normally limited to an interconnected or thematic series of events, as opposed to autobiographies' attempt to depict a life in "its entirety" (see e.g. Smith and Watson 274-75). A further distinction lies in their focus; the memoir is described through its focus on the external, social world, which is compared to the more introspective goals of autobiography (ibid.). Comparative definitions like this

seem to always at least imply an intrinsic value judgement, leaving memoir the less “worthy” of the two. Some definitions attempt to overcome these negative value judgements, and focus instead on emphasising the form’s positive qualities, like its inherently dynamic nature. For instance, Nancy K. Miller calls the memoir “fashionably postmodern, since it hesitates to define the boundaries between private and public, subject and object” (2). Many, including Smith and Watson, consider the term “memoir” to be too malleable for critical use, and choose the less contested “autobiography”, instead (see 4). I opt for another solution. Clearly, the two terms “memoir” and “autobiography” have a range of different connotations despite the odd synonymous use. So, instead of opting to either use the more neutral “autobiography” or insist on a settled definition of “memoir” – both of which would in effect ignore the reasons underlying the debate – I will begin with this open definition and return later to discuss its implications.

Like the previous chapter, also this one will examine two different kinds of distance. I will continue using the concept of experiential distance to describe the distance between the narrator and her experience, although to better match the formal characteristics of *The Outrun*, will now refer to it as spatiotemporal, rather than as merely temporal, as I did with *Glass Half Full*. Like with *Glass Half Full*, I will also examine another kind of distance that takes place at a meta-textual, rather than textual level. In the previous chapter, this meant ironic distance, taking place between the author and the narrator or the narrator and the text. In this chapter, I will use the term aesthetic distance to describe a more overall kind of self-reflexivity, required for organising events into a formal plot. By focusing on aesthetic distance, I hope to politicise the narrative form of *The Outrun*, to strip it of its *naturalness* in a similar way that the previous chapter highlighted the way that the book form affects the representation of addiction and recovery in *Glass Half Full*.

Out of the three books examined in this paper, and certainly when comparing to *Glass Half Full*, the aesthetic distance between the events and their representation is the greatest in *The Outrun*. I will next look at how the non-linear plot in *The Outrun* can be examined in terms of aesthetic distance. As I already mentioned in the context of figure 1 in the previous chapter, trying to represent *The Outrun*’s non-linear plot as the consecutive phases of addiction, rehab, recovery, and health is rather misleading. Instead, its plot can be better understood as circular. The first chapter begins by establishing a present moment for the narrating act, labelled “now” in figure 2 below, which is then used as a starting point for narrating the past through

memories. The memories are presented more or less chronologically, starting from the most distant past, taking place ten years before, and moving closer and closer to the present moment from there, until the circle closes and the original “now” – the present moment of the narrating act – is reached once again. From there onwards, the narrative moves linearly towards the future. The circular form of figure 2, in which the two “nows” are both present, represents the narrative form of *The Outrun* better than the previous chapter’s more linear figure 1:

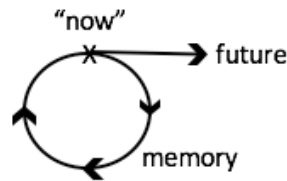


Figure 2

Outside of this temporal (dis-)continuity lies the prologue, describing the day Liptrot was born, and functioning as a dual introduction to Orkney, “a group of islands at the north of Scotland, sea-scoured and wind-battered, between the North Sea and the Atlantic” (Liptrot xiii), and the themes of separation and return, represented as essential features of island life. The prologue takes a kind of bird’s-eye view to the events, using phrases like “[s]een from above” (ibid. xiv) that imply a higher vantage point for the narrator. Its tone resembles a disembodied, omniscient narrator, gliding over the scene like a camera taking a panoramic shot, stopping only momentarily to mention Liptrot’s role in the events described:

Under whirring helicopter blades, a young woman holds her newborn baby as she is pushed in a wheelchair along the runway of the island airport to meet a man in a straitjacket being pushed in a wheelchair from the other direction. (Liptrot xiii).

By describing events that Liptrot herself would be unable to remember at all, let alone from a bird’s-eye view, the prologue manifests the greatest distance between the narrator and experience – or, alternately, between the narrator and the real-life author.

The shift in tone from the prologue to the first two chapters, “The Outrun” and “Tremors”, is noticeable. They describe in first-person, present-tense sentences Liptrot’s first day back in Orkney after a decade spent in London, and serve to establish a present moment, and ground the narration to it:

On my first day back, I shelter beside an old freezer, down by some stinging nettles, and watch the weather approach over the sea. The waves crashing do not sound very different from the traffic in London. (Liptrot 1).

Orkney and London, which is described as “an island within the rest of the UK, defined and separate” (ibid. 148), will come to symbolise the polar opposites of her experience, one south, the other north, one urban, the other rural, one home to addicted, the other to recovering life. The spatial and temporal distances between the addicted and recovering experiences overlap: Liptrot’s time in Orkney is told in the present tense, while her life in London is only available in memories, narrated in the past tense.

The distance between past addicted and present sober experience is similar to that in *Glass Half Full*, although both the extent to which past experience is present and the way it is represented differ wildly between the two works. Unlike in *Glass Half Full*, which, as discussed above, tends to represent things in terms of either/or to maintain its *positive* stance, everything in *The Outrun* is a little ambiguous and in-between, starting from Liptrot herself; a woman born in Orkney to two English parents. As such, her identity is formed of layers of categories, some overlapping, others mutually exclusive; Orcadian, Scottish, and English. Rather than attach herself to a single point of identity, she maintains a distance between herself and the identifying labels she negotiates based on her audience:

When I was in the south it was easiest for me to say that I was “Scottish” or “come from Orkney” but that was not what I would say to an Orcadian. Although I was born in Orkney and lived there until I was eighteen, I don’t have an Orcadian accent and my family is from England. (Liptrot 18).

This is far from a straightforward introduction. Instead, Liptrot takes a step back and performs a kind of meta-introduction, an introduction to how she normally introduces herself. In fact, *The Outrun* plays with fluctuating proximity and distance throughout the narrative, from the concrete departures and arrivals from island to island, to the distance in turns accumulating and then dissipating between the memories and experiences of the narrator in a more metaphorical sense. I will first focus on the plot from an overall perspective, looking at how the distance changes between the memories of addiction and the present moment of narration, which I above termed the “now”, and what that distance does to the representation of addiction and recovery.

Like *Glass Half Full*, also *The Outrun* prioritises the recovering present over the addicted past, although the two do so with differing results. As already discussed in

the previous chapter, *Glass Half Full* represents past experience as secondary to the present narrator's qualifying and framing actions. Eventually, the distance accumulating between past and present experience leads to the creation of two separate identities, which was necessary for Rocca to construct an "expert other" out of herself. The direction is quite the opposite in *The Outrun*. In it, the initial distance between the narrating event and past experience is the greatest, but as the story progresses, the two experiential worlds slowly become one, represented by the closing circle in figure 2.

Unlike *Glass Half Full*, *The Outrun* narrates the past as if it were happening now, with minimal intrusion from the present narrator. Although Liptrot's London years are technically told in the past tense, the past is *recreated* rather than just *remembered*. The first temporal shift comes in the third chapter, "Flotta", which begins with the present tense narration familiar from the first two chapters. The natural world is used to bridge the distance between past and present. "Flotta" begins with a present-tense description of the weather conditions, before it moves on to narrating memories in the past tense: "A decade ago, in a September equinox wind, I came home for a few months – a graduate unable to find a job in the city." (Liptrot 15). This "decade ago" marks the shift from the present moment to the past. From there, the following chapters go on to describe that decade, starting from Liptrot's move to London after graduation, and finishing, some 60 pages later, where the story had first started, with Liptrot newly sober back in Orkney. Despite this seeming temporal complexity – which is a common property of autobiographical texts according to Martin Löschnigg (265) – *The Outrun's* plot is not nearly as complicated to follow as it is to explain. Löschnigg attributes this quality to the narrative form, which organises the different temporal levels in a way that makes them entirely comprehensible to the reader (*ibid.*).

Because of the circular plot, the reader already knows where the story is heading; back to Orkney, covering beside the old freezer and stinging nettles that Liptrot described in the first chapter. In fact, the reader knows more than Liptrot did at the time of the events – that her future will see her plunging deep into addiction, and fighting her way back to recovery – but like her, the reader does not yet know how, or when, or what would happen before that. Löschnigg calls this the threefold temporal structure of life-writing, comprised of "the autobiographer's past and present, and also that which is now the past, but what from an earlier point of view was the future" (264). Unlike the strictly moderated memories of *Glass Half Full*,

The Outrun balances representing the past as if it was happening now with only very subtle foregrounding and anticipation, keeping the illusion of an unknowable future intact. Also, compared to Rocca's short, memory snapshots, the sequence describing Liptrot's London years is rather long. Together, these create an effect that Löschnigg calls "a 'present period' in the past", in which the narrative moves forward as if the events described were happening now, while at the same time retaining a "super-ordinate vantage-point in the autobiographer's present" (265).

Despite the temporal distance between the narrated events and the narrating moment, the past is described with such intensity of sensory experience that is almost overcomes that distance, at least momentarily:

I was wasted but I wanted more. I wanted to rub the city onto my skin; I wanted to inhale the streets. I was walking faster, in worn-down boots, than the buses were travelling. The drugs I'd swallowed earlier made my breath fast and my cheeks tingle. Biting my mouth, I wanted to eat it all. (Liptrot 28).

Here, the intensity of past experience is represented in the language of the present narrator, whose repeated "I wanted" phrases keep accelerating, until they match the everything-at-once cacophony of Liptrot's past. The decade that has passed between her experience and its narration almost vanishes, as she describes the combination of alcohol, drugs and nicotine hitting her bloodstream: "I could feel it entering, breathing deeply so the bubbles of oxygen processed the alcohol more quickly, sucking the smoke and holding my breath, squeezing each moment." (Ibid.) The effect created is a kind of slow-motion sensory reverie, a transcendent moment that turns time itself into something graspable, allowing her to "squeez[e] each moment", as if it lay on the palm of her hand.

Classical narratology based its handling of autobiography mostly on Genette's theory of homodiegesis, which would in effect emphasise the separate roles of the self as character and the self as narrator, known also as the experiencing and narrating selves (Löschnigg 257). But the sequence quoted above is an excellent example of the way in which postclassical narratology, with its emphasis on the "continuity of experience" rather than formal separation of narrator and experiencer (ibid. 258), reflects the textual reality better. In scenes like this one, the temporal levels and experiential worlds of the past and present selves collide, creating what Löschnigg calls the "experiential site" of autobiography, where experience is re-lived rather than merely described – thus making it impossible to separate narrator from experiencer (259).

Eventually, the circle is closed and *The Outrun* returns to the present moment. Just like the departure from the island of Orkney to London coincided with the departure from the present to the past tense, also the return is grounded in both time and place. After finishing a rehabilitation programme and stumbling along her first few sober months in London, Liptrot decides to move back to Orkney, at first temporarily. The present tense catches the reader unaware, as a train trip north from London interrupts the constant past tense of the previous chapters:

The sky gets bigger as the train travels further north. The temperature changes in inverse correlation, and for each leg of the journey – London, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Orkney – I put on another layer of clothing. (Liptrot 83).

Present tense verbs are accompanied by the progression of cities and the accumulation of clothing, both suggesting immediacy between the experience and narration, almost as if Liptrot was writing in the moving train.

After changing from the train to a ferry, she finally arrives at Orkney and settles down in her father's old caravan on the farm where she grew up. In a magnificently downplayed way, the circle is then completed, and Liptrot ends up next to the nettles and freezer again: "I'm thinking about everything that has happened when I sit down by the freezer, then decide to go for a walk up to the Outrun." (87) This scene is a prime example of what David Herman calls "spatiotemporal links between regions of experience and objects contained in those regions" (qtd. in Löschnigg 265), which act as signposts, making it easier for readers to decipher the complexity of several, interacting temporal levels in autobiography (ibid.). Furthermore, remembering how the freezer marked the beginning of her story in the very first sentence of the first chapter, the sentence "I'm thinking about everything that has happened" comes to represent everything told since. This produces almost a kind of *mise en abyme*¹, a story submerged within another story, in which the recollections that were told in the sixty-or-so pages before compress into a couple of minutes of introspection on a windy field. The fact that the memoir is named after that field, the Outrun, emphasises the meaningfulness of this moment, while ending exactly where she

¹ The literary device of *mise en abyme* consists of embedding a smaller story within the frame of a larger narrative in a way that mirrors the larger structure. It suggests the possibility of endless submerged stories, thus creating a feeling of vertigo in the reader. (Cohn, "Metalepsis and Mise en Abyme", 109).

started brings up the meaning of the verb “to outrun” – the past will catch up with her, no matter how much she tries to outrun it.

The circular plot has implications that go beyond the aesthetic function of the autobiographical text. Returning to the concept of aesthetic distance, complex structures like this make it clear that the raw material might be one’s own life, but someone still has to select and organise the events, and that who gets to do that, as well as the narrative form in which that process results, carries meaning. In terms of memoirs, the political question of right to represent is wrapped up in a paradox. On the one hand, the memoir is often thought of as emancipatory, a platform through which new, previously unvoiced worlds of experience are regularly brought into the realm of literary expression (see e.g. Smith and Watson 127) – women’s addiction memoirs being a good example of such previously unvoiced experiences. But on the other hand, memoirs are also commonly reduced to entertainment in the public eye, to little more than a set of “scandalous and titillating” (ibid. 4) stories served to a voyeuristic audience. The “memoir boom”, as Watson and Smith refer to it (127), is by many been seen as literary exhibitionism, harshly criticised along other popular (but scorned) cultural phenomena, like reality TV for example, as yet another expression of contemporary culture’s endless obsession with “personality and self-exposure” (Anderson 114).

The way to reconcile these two differing ideas of the memoir’s significance is to recognise the gendered history of the autobiography debate, to realise how “the genre of autobiography has been implicitly bound up with gender”, in the way Linda Anderson does, for example (3). Returning to the definition I offered in the beginning of this chapter – in which the memoir was characterised through its relationship to the autobiography – and connecting it to gender shows autobiography as the more philosophical of the two, not merely one description of *a subject* but the construction of *the subject*, the universal “I”, which, in the light of history, has of course been masculine (see Anderson 3). The case of the contemporary memoir is made more complex because of the history of deconstructing that universal subject throughout postmodernism. However, all through the while the canonical male autobiographers were representing their selfhoods as fragmented and deconstructed, women and other minorities were still struggling to even write their selves in the first place (ibid. 83). It would be all too easy to dismiss the contemporary memoir’s attempt to construct rather than deconstruct a self in writing as anachronistic or quaint, but as Anderson points out, one must have a self before one can afford to

deconstruct it (83). In this context, the memoir is far from the entertaining-but-otherwise-irrelevant “Barbie of literary genres”, as the memoirist Susan Cheever has described it (qtd. in Smith and Watson 127). Instead, it is at the centre of the debate, an expression of the “*political* imperative for women to constitute themselves as subjects”, in a world that still so easily determines them “objects” (Anderson 85, original emphasis).

The question is not only of who gets to represent their experience but also of how it is represented. In *The Outrun*, the form of the plot itself starts to symbolise emancipation and growing independence. As figure 2 already suggested, its circular plot eventually gives way to a linear future, in which Liptrot is finally free to choose her path, no longer bound by her previous experience. But, overcoming addiction is only one part of that freedom, she tells us. Right before her return to Orkney, Liptrot describes the frustration of being newly sober, but still sitting alone in her Hackney bedsit: “I felt as if I had gotten myself ready for something but didn’t know what it was. I was fit, healthy, clean, and home alone again all weekend, too scared to go anywhere. If this was the future I didn’t want it.” (Liptrot 80). Her scepticism quickly gives way to more optimistic sentiments: “Coming out of rehab was not the end of the story but the beginning.” (Ibid.) True to her words, this exchange is set not in the end of *The Outrun*, but at roughly the one-third mark, the majority of the story still lying ahead. In this way, *The Outrun* represents physical recovery from addiction not as an end, a closure, but as a new beginning instead, this time one stretching to an unknown future full of possibility. In terms of the plot, completing the circle and moving on to a linear future becomes an ethical move towards a subject who is no longer dependent on anything – including past, addicted experience – quite literally, *independence*.

The lesson Liptrot learns in the course of the rest of the narrative is one of finding her place and settling her past with her present and future. This requires revisiting the addicted past, and recognising its role in the present, in order to be free from it in the future. Far from the distancing of past experience into some raw material for an “expert other” seen in Rocca’s *Glass Half Full*, Liptrot represents the past as becoming part of the present self, either momentarily, or permanently, through a greater understanding of oneself. This model of recovery is based on an essentially psychoanalytic understanding of the self, which will be the topic of chapter four, but for now, I will turn to look at the momentary intrusion of the addicted past into the sober present through dreams and flashbacks.

Apart from the decade long flashback during which Liptrot narrates her time in London, discussed above, the rest of *The Outrun*'s plot is also interspersed with memories, dreams and flashbacks that at least momentarily undo the distance between the present, narrating self and her past experience. Their role is the greatest in the beginning of Liptrot's recovery, before she has properly settled in her new life, or moved to Orkney:

I have drinking dreams. I'm so thirsty. Each night brings up flashes of locations I had forgotten: the floor of a train, somehow under a table of four strange men, not sure if I was being sick; a small town in Spain, late at night, knocking on random doors trying to find what I thought was a nightclub [...]. (Liptrot 91).

Like all dreams, these are rooted in reality, as she suggests by referring to locations she had "forgotten", turning the dreams into traces of memories, drunken adventures, half-remembered somewhere in the recesses of her mind. Their arrival is not a positive experience, as we can see from the regret she expresses when confronted with her past in this way: "I wish none of it had happened." (Ibid.). The drunken mistakes pop up in the present moment repeatedly, uninvited and unannounced, showing the hold of the past experience on the present self: "Half awake, I have a sensory flashback, as I often do when trying to sleep, of the night I was arrested when the car swerved and hit the grass verge." (Ibid.) The memoir becomes a way of reconciling these mistakes, and of freeing the self from their power. Writing the shameful memories down and publishing them is the opposite of how she was dealing with her shame during active addiction, when she described herself as shutting up in her room, "consciously drinking to ease the shame of what [she'd] done while drinking the night before" (Liptrot 55). Like in *Glass Half Full*, the memoir itself has become a healing device, a form of scriptotherapy, which is beginning to resemble the process of psychoanalysis, only the writing subject is herself her own analyst, attempting to make the unconscious conscious and thus release herself from its grip. After this emancipation, she can then move forward, not by distancing herself from the memories and creating out of herself some "expert other" was the case with *Glass Half Full*, but by integrating the memories, recognising their role in the constitution of her own self.

In this way, while both *Glass Half Full* and *The Outrun* play with changing distance between the addicted and sober experience, the effect that distance has is completely different in each of the books. The way *The Outrun* represents distance from addiction to recovery creates the grounds not for the positive, motivational and

inspirational self-help coach we saw in Rocca's book, but rather for a unified, psychological subject to emerge. Chapter four will focus on that recovery, while the third and final part to chapter three will examine distance in the last of the books examined in this paper; Cathryn Kemp's *Coming Clean: Diary of a Painkiller Addict*.

3.3. Simultaneous Narration and Paradoxical Distance in *Coming Clean*

So far, I have focused on the temporal and spatiotemporal distances separating the narrator and her past experience in *Glass Half Full* and *The Outrun*, and examined how that affects the representation of addiction and recovery in the two narratives. While focusing on these textual kinds of distance, I have also introduced a more abstract type of distance, which requires looking at the meta-textual relationships between the texts themselves and the world surrounding them. The first example was the ironic distance in *Glass Half Full*, which occurred either between the text and its message, or between the author and her narrator. The second example was aesthetic distance in *The Outrun*, which I defined as the distance required between the author and her experience for the organisation of events into a formal plot. In the end of the previous chapter, I briefly examined aesthetic distance from the point of view of genre, taking the way *The Outrun* opens from a circular plot into a linear future as an example of narrative emancipation, freeing the author from past experience, and connecting that to the emancipatory expectations for the genre of memoir.

In this last part, I will turn to the final narrative, Cathryn Kemp's *Coming Clean*, examining how the changing distance – or in this case, the lack thereof – between the narrator and her experience affects the representation of addiction and recovery there. As in the previous chapters, I will begin at the text level phenomena, looking at simultaneous narration as the cancelling of distance between experiencing and narrating that experience, before turning to the meta-textual question of the text's relationship to its genre. I will first place the concepts of simultaneous narration, first-person/present-tense narration, and the fictional present in theoretical contexts, beginning from the definition classical narratology offers and then updating that with a postclassical perspective so that it matches better the textual reality of the works.

In *The Distinction of Fiction*, Dorrit Cohn begins her chapter on simultaneous narration with the words: "Life tells us that we cannot tell it while we live it or live it while we tell it. Live now, tell later." (96). In other words, in order for something to be told, it has had to happen first – a simple enough maxim to follow, it would seem.

Yet the paradox of experiencing and *at the same time* narrating that experience is not at all uncommon in fiction, as the many examples Cohn herself takes demonstrate (ibid. 96-97) – or even non-fiction, evident from the fact that both *Coming Clean* and *The Outrun* rest at least partially on the first-person/present-tense mode. In fact, as I later come to argue, it seems that the contemporary memoir is especially keen on using simultaneous narration. This is a little surprising, considering that Cohn herself has termed the mode a “*fictional present*” (ibid. 106, my emphasis), and how non-fiction, life writing included, generally aims for more verisimilitude than fiction, not less. In Cohn’s opinion, all “self historians”, whether fictional or non-fictional, are bound by the “tensual logic” of experiencing first and narrating after – a character that she attributes to their shared roots in epistolary and confessional discourses (ibid. 98). Imagining real-life scenarios where the events of experience and narration overlap brings up Cohn’s examples of “contemporaneously written script, continuous tape-recording” and “nonstop oral diary” (ibid. 105). How is it, then, that both *The Outrun* and *Coming Clean* – neither of which is “fictional” – manage to experience and at the same time narrate that experience in a way that does not produce the paradoxes conjured by Cohn? Or, put another way, how can Cohn’s fictional present characterise the narrators of works of non-fiction?

Henrik Skov Nielsen provides the answer to these questions. Reviewing Cohn’s fictional present in the context of postclassical narratology, he suggests another approach, claiming that simultaneous narration produces *local* fictionality, inviting the “interpretative operations” of fiction to parts of the text, “without necessarily turning the *whole* narrative into a fictional text” (Nielsen 282, original emphasis). It should also be noted that Cohn’s examples are from the 1980s, and she refers to the fictional present as “formal innovation” (*The Distinction of Fiction*, 97) – but Nielsen’s article, published in 2010, frames the same phenomenon as “already” “conventionalized in first-person narration”, arguing that because simultaneous narration has become so common, it has become entirely familiar with and thus goes mostly unnoticed by readers (291).

Nielsen’s last point explains why there does not seem to be anything strange, novel, or formally inventive in the way the narratives examined here make use of simultaneous narration. The distance between narration and experience varies in the three books, but all make use of simultaneity to some extent. *Glass Half Full* has more natural, or verisimilar, take on the present tense, which means narrating experiences always in the past tense, while introspection typically occurs in the

present tense. The book format, with its connection to the online diary Anderson described in the first part of chapter three, makes this kind of reporting seem perfectly natural. I also already discussed the unobtrusive way in which *The Outrun* changes between the past and present tenses as it changes between the addicted and recovering experience, further coinciding changes in the temporal distance with Liptrot's physical movements between London and Orkney. Its present tense narration does bear resemblance to the fictional present I am about to analyse in terms of *Coming Clean*, but crucially lacks some of the more glaring "unnaturalness" of Kemp's voice. Most importantly, *Coming Clean* differs from *The Outrun* in that it anchors the *entire* narrative in the here and now of the present tense, under the guise of a diary format – this time a clearly artificial one, as I will come to show.

I will first examine how *Coming Clean* creates a fictionalising through the use of simultaneous narration. In the first example, Kemp is given a bath assisted by one of the counsellors at her private rehabilitation facility, because the combined effect of withdrawal and illness symptoms have left her too weak to stand, or even stay fully conscious. The borderline conscious status of the narrator connects to both Cohn's example – the "I doze and wake, drifting from one formless dream to another" -scene from J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (qtd. in Cohn, *The Distinction of Fiction*, 101) – and to Nielsen's, drawing from James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces*, another addiction memoir: "I fade in and out. The TV is narcotic. In and out. In. Out. In. Out." (Qtd. in Nielsen 291). In *Coming Clean*, Kemp describes a similarly intermittent consciousness: "I was on the floor and now I'm half-standing, shivering as I comply. Once everything is off, I realise I'm having a bath." (251) The bath proceeds with Kemp dozing on and off: "I'm still gazing at the bubbles when Helen takes hold of my hand which is on the edge of the tub and I hear her lovely voice. I don't catch everything, but I do remember how gentle and calm her voice is, quiet even." (Ibid.)

The uncertainty and vagueness of this description are in stark contrast to the long, verbatim quote she goes on to produce next:

'You've rewritten the rules, Cathryn,' is what I eventually hear after my thoughts about how soothing her voice is have finally trailed off. 'When we get heroin addicts in here, rolling about on the floor saying they took heroin twice or three times a day, I will tell them about you. I will tell them how much you were taking, and how you saw it through without the fuss, without the drama. We are so proud of you, darling.' (Kemp 252).

Let us imagine her for a moment, laying in a bathtub, barely even conscious from the effects of the drugs leaving her body and from not eating for days, yet somehow, she manages to not only describe her experience in the present tense, but also quote, seemingly word for word, long stretches of another person's speech. How does she manage without getting the pages of whatever she is writing on wet? How can she remember exactly what was said when she cannot so much as stay conscious? These questions do not make much sense to the reader, who knows that the present tense is not meant to be taken literally. This the reader knows, because simultaneous narration has already been conventionalised by fictional first-person narratives, as Nielsen argued above; the reader then suspends her disbelief, probably without even realising doing so.

Compare this to the scenes of simultaneous narration analysed by Alison Case in her article on *Bridget Jones's Diary*, the chick lit urtext, in which the verisimilitude of the diary form is breached by sequences that seem to ditch "mimetic consistency" for comic effect, but are nonetheless accepted by the reader, perhaps "as a kind of direct feed from Bridget's consciousness", as Case suggests (178-79). The reason for the dupability of *Bridget's* readers is the same one allowing *Coming Clean* to get away with the incongruences of its first-person/present-tense narrator: that simultaneous narration has been conventionalised to the uses of first-person narratives in fiction and non-fiction alike. The simultaneity of experience and narration, despite its "unnaturalness" in Nielsen's terms, does not alarm or even confuse the readers of a memoir, who understand it as just another literary device, no less or more remarkable than claiming to remember and then reproduce exactly what people said or did years, perhaps decades ago (291).

Following Nielsen again, I claim that cancelling the distance between narration and experience through simultaneous narration has consequences to the way addiction and recovery are represented in *Coming Clean*. Most importantly, the fictionalising effect produced by simultaneous narration invites some of the "interpretative operations" that readers normally reserve for fiction, while still claiming the status and credo belonging to a work of non-fiction. Specifically, *Coming Clean* uses a form of simultaneous narration that has already been conventionalised, commodified even, by fictional first-person narrators in the genre of chick lit. This popular genre is (in)famous for using first-person narrative techniques originating in non-fiction, like the diary form and confessionality, for example, in order to make its stories seem more spontaneous and authentic (Ferriss

and Young 4), and to enhance “readers’ identification” (Benstock 256). Of course, abandoning the past tense in order to establish immediacy makes perfect sense, given Cohn’s prediction that using the past tense “inevitably reminds the reader that [events] are mediated by memory, presented when they are no longer literally present” (*Distinction of Fiction*, 107). It seems likely that Kemp uses simultaneous narration in *Coming Clean* for this same reason – to convey immediacy, thus encouraging an emotional reading that rests on feelings of mutual closeness between her readers and herself.

Furthermore, Benstock argues that the use of a “first-person confessional mode” forms an alliance between the genres of contemporary memoir and chick lit (256) – an alliance Cohn would probably refer to as “formal mimetics”, or one genre imitating another (*The Distinction of Fiction* 98), or Derrida simply as the law of genre, texts participating in genres they do not belong to (65). Returning to the alliance between *Coming Clean* and chick lit, it now appears that Kemp attains a fictional effect by using a narrative voice that was originally adapted from non-fiction for precisely the opposite purpose – to make the work seem *less* fictional, not more. Benstock’s alliance thus works both ways; stylistic influence flows from memoir to chick lit, and then back to the contemporary memoir, first serving to decrease and then to increase fictionality.

The purpose of the previous example was to demonstrate how cancelling the distance between narration and experience produces a fictionalising effect in *Coming Clean*. I will now turn to the more important question of what that fictional effect causes to the representation of addiction and recovery. The second example I take comes from the beginning of *Coming Clean*, before Kemp has been introduced to the opiate drug fentanyl, to which she later becomes addicted. This scene, too, rests on a borderline conscious state, but the effect produced here is much stranger than above. Instead of awkwardly producing long quotes of other people’s praise for her, the fictionalising effect of simultaneous narration here renders reality as a whole contingent. The scene takes place right after the NHS “Pain Team” has unsuccessfully experimented with treating Kemp’s pain with ketamine, an anaesthetic drug that causes hallucination, dissociation, and distortions of time and space as common side effects (Kuhn et al. 125-26). The dissociation is clear from the vague and metaphorical terms she uses to describe herself: “[...] something in me has cracked open. The frayed edges of my life have unravelled and stretched so far that they snap.” (Kemp 94).

The calm and assertive manner in which she then resolves to take her own life is a direct break from the vagueness: “The only logical thing to do now is find a way to die.” (Kemp 94). The scene itself is narrated like any other, with experience and narration coinciding in the present tense, the immediacy of that combination further underlined by deictic expressions like “here I am now” (ibid. 96). Neither is anything out of the ordinary suggested in the way she describes making her way to the window, communicated in unambiguous phrases, like “I lunge to grab the saline drip”, “I peer outside”, and “I laugh grimly” (ibid. 97), that give the scene the rhythm and pace of business as usual. The scene goes on for five or so pages, and ends with Kemp perched on the windowsill, ready to make a final jump:

For a moment I think, oh God, the gown might slip up when I fall, rendering me naked and dead at the same time and everyone will see me. [...] Then I realise I don’t care and I lean into the air, pulling my [saline drip] pole up with the strength of the determined. (Kemp 98).

From there, the following paragraph continues without a stop. The present tense still connects us to Kemp’s experience, implying continuity of time and place – a continuity, which is then broken off with a final, punctuated addition: “My eyes are closed, I am sucking the air into my body, hoping it is the last time and then, nothing.” (Ibid.)

As it turns out (rather obviously, I might add, given that we are in fact reading her memoir) she did not make the jump after all. The “nothing” of the previous sentence is posed *as if* it represented death – the ultimate lack of consciousness – when it in fact stands for an absence of memory, of recollections, as the paragraph straight after shows:

I don’t remember what happens next. Maybe there was a gentle hand on my arm, pulling me back. Maybe the pole got stuck in the window frame and stopped me from falling. I simply don’t remember. (Kemp 98).

At this point, the events are still narrated as real, despite the missing piece of information of how Kemp ended up from the windowsill back to her hospital bed, where she regained consciousness, next to her a nurse sitting on suicide watch. But looking back, she is no longer sure what happened: “I can’t grab hold of anything in my mind. Now I’m wondering if I really tried to get out of the window or not? Was it real or was it part of the fever of opiates, simply a desire so strong I made it real in my mind?” (Ibid. 99). Here, the truthful depiction of emotions is already gaining

subtle ground over the truthful depiction of events, demonstrated by the emphasis in “desire so strong I made it real”.

The truth is made more and more malleable as the chapter continues, and a psychiatrist enters the scene: “I tried to jump out of the window, didn’t I? I say. [...] ‘Did you?’ he says, then waits, patiently. ‘I wanted to,’ I say. ‘I really wanted to jump. [...]’” (Kemp 101). Yet another possible chain of events is then presented, this time by the psychiatrist, whose version is different from the initial window scene, but goes unchallenged by Kemp: “‘You told the nurse you wanted to die.’ ‘Yes,’ I say, more firmly this time. ‘I must have done, because I did want to.’ There’s no point me lying my way out of this.” (Ibid.) Whether the dramatic events really took place or not is made irrelevant, what matters is “the feeling of truth” (Borst 162). The point is that she “did want to” kill herself, whether or not that thought led to her perched on the windowsill or not. In this way, the events themselves are made secondary to the internal, emotional reality of the experiencing subject. What a cynical person, especially one acquainted with the scandal surrounding James Frey’s *A Million Little Pieces* (2003)², already mentioned in the context of Nielsen’s analysis above, might make of this is Kemp staging a fictional scene, perhaps one based on the hallucinatory effects of ketamine, in her non-fictional memoir purely for dramatic effect, and writing possible criticisms (from readers, the hospital staff, other patients, and so on) into the text itself, thus making her *experience* of what happened more relevant than the *reality* of what actually happened. And, as her account is the only one that is able to represent her experience, it also becomes the only “true” account of the events.

In this subchapter, I have aimed to show how cancelling the distance between the experiencing and narrating moments through simultaneous narration has in *Coming Clean* produced a representation of addiction and recovery that ultimately presents truth itself as contingent. The third chapter as a whole has attempted to point

² It so happens that *Coming Clean* has several things in common with *A Million Little Pieces*, most prominently that both are addiction memoirs written in the first-person/present-tense. Frey’s bestseller was first released as a memoir and taken up by the Oprah book club, before the website “A Million Little Lies” exposed some of its events as fabricated or at least grossly exaggerated, after which the book was re-released as an autobiographical novel. Borst’s article “Managing the Crisis: James Frey’s ‘A Million Little Pieces’ and the Addict-Subject Confession” is a good meta-discussion of the scandal, while Nielsen (276, 285-291) focuses on the narrative aspects of Frey’s text. Smith and Watson briefly mention it as an example of “a hoax narrative” (148, 254-255) – and by that word choice alone demonstrate how they have completely missed the point of the debate.

out the differences and similarities in the ways the three books examined in this paper create and manipulate distance between the narrator and her experience; the following, fourth chapter will turn to examining what to make of these differences by introducing the concept of ideology.

4. Good Intentions: Mapping Ideology onto Recovery

The previous chapter focused on what the changing distance between narration and experience caused to the representation of addiction and recovery in the three narratives examined in this paper. I will now turn to the question of what significance do these differences have, moving from the particulars of the texts to the wider sphere of cultural meaning around them. As already argued in the introduction, narratives of self rely on “broader, collective narratives, values, and scripts that imbue these personal stories with socially significant meanings” (Illouz 173). But what are these collective narratives and values and which socially significant meanings do they imbue on these narratives of the self? Answering these questions requires recognising the role ideology plays in creating meaning, even, or perhaps precisely, in what seems the least political, or conversely, most personal of texts – the life narrative.

The concept of ideology (much like the genres of memoir and autobiography earlier) is a notoriously difficult one to define. I take Antonio Gramsci’s view of ideology as the starting point to my analysis. Rather than the individual set of beliefs that the term nowadays often refers to, Gramsci envisioned “organic ideologies” as the “necessary superstructure of a particular structure”, creating the “terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle etc.” (qtd. in Barrett 303-04). Gramsci’s postulation connects with Louis Althusser’s later theory of interpellation, according to which it is ideology that hails subjects into being in the first place (171). Seen in this way, ideology becomes constructive; a thing that creates subjectivity, rather than one that merely adorns it. Furthermore, imagined like this, ideology is not only “*eternal*”, as Althusser describes it (160, original emphasis), but also omnipresent. Looking for ideology in popular memoirs and self-help narratives is thus far from a long shot – on the contrary, discerning “the hidden necessity in what appears a mere contingency” is exactly “the task of the critique of ideology”, as set out by Slavoj Žižek in his introduction to *Mapping Ideology* (“Spectre of Ideology”, 10), from which this chapter also borrowed its title.

This is why I now turn from the comparatively simple task of breaking the narrative structures apart to see what they are made of, to putting them back together in a way that reveals their relationship to the dominant ideologies of today. Thus, rephrasing the above in the context of the three addiction narratives I examine here,

if I am to take the concept of recovery literally – as an attempt to recover a self that was lost to addiction – then ideology dictates what *kind* of a self is recovered. I will begin with the *Postfeminist and Neoliberal Recoveries in Coming Clean*, which produces not one but two ideologically charged selves in its two editions; these being the postfeminist and the entrepreneurial. The second part, *The “Ideal Disciplinary Subject” in Glass Half Full*, will then combine the masculinist with the neoliberal ideology, and examine the kind of subjectivity that combination gives rise to in Rocca’s self-help narrative. Finally, the third and last part of the fourth chapter, *Achieving Health Through Self-Analysis in The Outrun*, will aim to show how the concept of ideology might also be useful in analysing the psychoanalytically based recovery in *The Outrun* – and how ultimately, that too depends on neoliberalism.

4.1. Postfeminist and Neoliberal Recoveries in *Coming Clean*

Coming Clean has a rather unusual publication history, responsible for the double recovery that I am about to analyse. As I mentioned in the introduction, it was first published in 2012 as *Painkiller Addict: From Wreckage to Redemption – My True Story*, before being re-released in 2017 as *Coming Clean: Diary of a Painkiller Addict*³. While the story itself seems to have remained largely the same, the second edition features a newly written introduction, in which Kemp is able to openly reflect and comment on the reception of her book’s first edition – this, in my experience, is quite unheard of in terms of popular fiction and even relatively uncommon in narrative non-fiction. By including commentary on the reception in the text itself, *Coming Clean* is able to bridge the kind of meta-textual gap that normally lies between the work and its reception, essentially turning the reception into a constitutive part of her story. To understand what is going on here, I must first look a little closer at the recovery represented in each edition. In order to see how the meaning of recovery changes from one edition to the next, I will read *Coming Clean* as a quest narrative, before zooming in on the postfeminist and neoliberal recoveries presented by the first and second editions, respectfully.

According to Arthur W. Frank, the quest narrative differs from other illness narratives in terms of the agency it affords the narrator over their own life (115).

³ Given that the majority of my references throughout this paper are to the 2017 edition, *Coming Clean*, I refer to that one using only the author’s name, while in the rare case when the first edition is the one referred, I add the clarification “*Painkiller Addict*” in the reference. Both works are naturally listed in the bibliography.

Unlike its counterparts, the chaos and restitution narrative, both of which render the ill person as the object of whatever happens to them, narrating illness as a quest means actively trying to make sense of the experience of illness, to make it *mean* something (ibid.). Not surprisingly, most published illness narratives fall into this category (ibid.), and the same can be said for addiction narratives (see e.g. Hurwitz et. al 486). Put in other, more quest-like words, narrating addiction as a quest turns it from an interruption into a tribulation, and its narrator from a victim into a heroine. The purposes of the quests vary, however – for example, the quest in the first edition of Kemp’s memoir, *Painkiller Addict*, rests primarily on a social purpose; to educate the public of the dangers of prescription painkiller use. The addiction narrative functions as a testimony, resting on the “moral responsibility” of the recovered to speak of their experience (Frank 138-139).⁴ This testimonial aspect is clear from the introduction to the first edition, which represents addiction as something that could happen to anyone – including the reader, and the indefinite “people” who keep asking Kemp “How does it feel?” – although whether that question refers to how addiction feels or how taking drugs feels is not entirely clear (Kemp, *Painkiller Addict*, 9). Her answer, “you are only ever one car accident, one operation, one case of back pain away from finding out” (ibid.), underlines the imminent danger posed by addiction to society. This kind of recovery is what Frank calls a “manifesto”, a sub-type of the quest narrative, in which the ill person has learned a suppressed truth and must answer to the “prophetic” call to action carried by this new knowledge (120). The unacknowledged truth Kemp has learned is that *not all* addicts are “[w]ild eyed, shaven headed, and [live] in a filthy squat” – some of them have money, “expensive boots” and ““normal”” middle-class lives (Kemp, *Painkiller Addict*, 9-10). However, limiting the purpose of her memoir to the socially motivated manifesto and testimonial narratives would be to majorly misrepresent it. Like any piece of life writing, Kemp’s memoir deals first and foremost with its writer’s own identity, her purpose on this earth, and the purpose of her experiences through illness, addiction, and recovery.

⁴ Rather interestingly, Frank traces testimonials’ popularity in all illness narratives back to its foundational role in the twelve-steps recovery programme promoted by Alcoholics Anonymous as the only way to recover from addiction, thus showing AA’s influence not only in addiction but all recovery discourses (Frank 138-139). The final step in the programme articulates this task in the organisation’s trademark language: “Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.” (“The Twelve Steps.”)

For Kemp, finding purpose means re-framing her recovery as salvation, although that salvation undergoes an almost complete transformation from one edition to the other. I will first examine the parts of her recovery that the two editions have in common, before looking at how the differing introductions to each edition change how that same narrative will be interpreted. My claim is that the way it is framed in *Painkiller Addict: From Wreckage to Redemption – My True Story* supports reading Kemp’s recovery as postfeminist. Postfeminism is, as Rosalind Gill argues, a much used but little defined term, that can rather contradictorily refer to either “an epistemological or political position in the wake of feminism’s encounter with ‘difference’”, “an historical shift within feminism” or “a backlash against feminism” (148). Thus, rather than trying to treat it as a uniform *theory*, Gill suggests that a more useful perspective on postfeminism; treating it as “a *sensibility* that characterizes increasing numbers of films, television shows, advertisements and other media products”, and, crucially in terms of this research paper, “chick lit” (*ibid.*, my emphasis). I will discuss the characteristics of this postfeminist sensibility, and the essentially masculinist ideology it is based on, as I come to different aspects of the recovery presented in *Coming Clean*. I will first present Kemp’s story in a way that pays special attention to the gendered aspects of her life, before, during, and after illness, addiction, and recovery, and then move on to identify and analyse the postfeminist and entrepreneurial selves that these recoveries create.

Although I have before mentioned that the overall temporal structure of *Coming Clean* sticks to the linearity of the diary form, it does in fact begin in a decidedly non-linear way. Kemp’s story opens with an introductory chapter that, like the prologue in *The Outrun*, is situated outside the temporal (dis-)continuity of its actual story. After the introduction, *Coming Clean* begins *in medias res* with the first chapter, “Drug Addict”, jumping straight into the deep end of Kemp’s addiction, before the second chapter, “More Painful Than Childbirth”, backtracks to the time before addiction, when she was first diagnosed with pancreatitis. “More Painful Than Childbirth” offers a glimpse of Kemp’s life as it was before illness and addiction forced her priorities to new order. It introduces the reader to Kemp just after she has quit her job as a travel journalist and photographer, and moved out of London, “hoping [she] will finally meet someone special and start a family”, a target she deems “impossible” while pursuing professional ambitions. Her life as a single career woman in her thirties is portrayed as “a cliché” – a little pathetic, a little

ridiculous – an image familiar from countless chick lit novels and movies from *Bridget Jones's Diary* onwards:

I drink a little too much – especially after I quit smoking on my thirtieth birthday – I own far too many pairs of shoes and my fridge is constantly a bare, pitiful-looking place which usually contains something like a week-old pot of hummus, some celery sticks, a pot of chocolate mousse and two bottles of Petit Chablis. (Kemp 8-9).

This light, self-ironic tone is long gone by the time Kemp discovers that the back pain, which she thought might be an early sign of a badly-timed but still very desired pregnancy, turns out to be the very opposite of that; a life-threatening chronic illness that in one sentence destroys her hopes of not just *now*, but *ever* becoming a mother. This is also where her soul-searching turns into a spiritual quest: “I have a sense that I am meant to go deeper into this. To absorb some lesson, some spiritual journey of self-discovery.” (Kemp 55). And indeed, self-discovery follows – one that turns her illness and resulting childlessness from a misfortune into a direct consequence of her lifestyle. She then sets out to re-frame her old life in terms that reflect “the newness of [her] culpability” (ibid. 56) in developing the illness. Her crime? Pursuing a career instead of a family:

I see someone who chased hard after money and success, who ran full tilt at adventure and experience as a way of avoiding the relationships in her life. I see a woman whose personal life was littered with failed relationships, who reached out for love in cold, dark places, and who was abandoned, rejected and sometimes abused. (Kemp 56).

To be clear, Kemp's falling ill has nothing to do with her lifestyle, nor does she claim it does. The “culpability” she refers to here is far more abstract, having to do only with her specifically *feminine* failures, which are based on an essentialist notion of feminine and masculine characteristics. Her falling ill is represented as a consequence, actually a punishment for failing to form intimate relationships. Instead of prioritising romantic love, she focused her energy on pursuing men's goals, “chas[ing] hard after money and success”, and abandoned the sphere of home for the masculine pursuits of “adventure and experience”. Her entire previous life as a travel journalist, the modern equivalent of the explorer, becomes a crime against femininity, which then turns illness from a spur of bad luck into an example of poetic justice, making it a rightful punishment for the hubris she expressed by daring to try take on the world as a woman.

Illness and addiction are simultaneously the punishment and the cure for this hubris. The curing punishment they jointly deliver comes in three different formats; physical, causing her pain and suffering, practical, curtailing her movement, and symbolic, limiting her ambition so that it better reflects her circumstances. Once Kemp has been “initiated through agony to atonement” (Frank 119) – a process Eva Illouz calls “triumphant suffering” (see e.g. 152) – she is ready to reflect on the purpose of her new life. This contemplation takes place in the epilogue, which, like the main text, is identical in the two editions. Based on publication chronology, the first mention of salvation comes within the epilogue to the first edition, although, as I explain below, in terms of narrative chronology, this is upturned by the fact that salvation is actually what jump-starts the whole story in the introduction to the second edition. Returning to the first edition, which, as we remember, carries the word “redemption” in its (admittedly complex) subtitle, represents Kemp’s recovery as exactly that, a redemption, a salvation. This is obvious from the way Kemp ponders in the epilogue that she has been “saved for something, for some good reason” (Kemp 299). That “reason” is not to become a better person *per se*, but a better *woman*, the gendered aspects of her recovery underlined by the new, feminine role she now drafts herself:

I’m pretty sure I won’t be conquering the world or finding the cure for cancer now; instead I’m yearning for a quieter, domestic miracle. Keeping my own house, being a loving wife, being a better sister and daughter. These are epic enough for me to grasp. (Kemp 299).

The divide between an explorer and a scientist, a housemaker and a wife is set in such personal terms that it almost hides the overarching effect of ideology that shapes and constructs these comparisons. A closer look, however, reveals a postfeminist sensibility – what Gill called “a historical shift within feminism” above. In effect, second wave feminists’ fight for equal opportunities in the workplace is turned on its head, when postfeminism suddenly argues that choosing not to pursue a career, but instead to become a housewife, is actually the *ultimate* form of individual emancipation. Here, the masculinist ideology reveals itself as a yearning back to a time after the first wave feminists achieved suffrage (for giving up the vote would be a little extreme for even neo-traditional housewives), but before second wave feminism began addressing the more structural forms of inequality, reaching deeper into the gender roles that underlie an unequal society. Of course, as Vicki Coppock et al. quite rightfully point out in *The Illusions of Post-Feminism*, this is does not count

so much as *post-* than as *pre-*feminist (5) – or, given that in the twenty-first century to count as a pre-feminist would require a time-machine, *anti-*feminist would be the most accurate term. This contrariness to the very basics of feminism is what has led me to call “postfeminist sensibilities” in this paper an example of masculinist ideology. Taking another cue from feminist scholarship and insisting on reading the personal as political (see e.g. Gill 153) in Kemp’s text yields a different image of not just Kemp but women in general as better suited to housekeeping than “conquering the world” through science and exploration. To reflect this reading, the final sentence could be re-formulated as “These are epic enough for *her* to grasp”, meaning not just Kemp, but all women.

However, a comparison between the first and second editions will reveal how postfeminist recovery is replaced, or at least accompanied by another kind of ideological recovery, this time a neoliberal one. The recovery promoted in the second edition rests on a neoliberal ideology that promotes a specific kind of selfhood; the entrepreneurial self. The starting point for my analysis here is Michel Foucault’s *The Birth of Biopolitics*, where he first introduced a kind of selfhood that is typical (or perhaps symptomatic) of neoliberalism, the *homo oeconomicus*, an entrepreneur of himself, already discussed at more length in the second chapter. As we recall, Bröckling, building on Foucault, saw “the entrepreneurial self” not as “a discernible social type”, but rather as a “*call* to act as an entrepreneur of one’s own life” (vii, my emphasis). Bröckling’s definition connects of course directly to Althusser’s theory of interpellation, according to which individuals become subjects by answering the *call* of ideology (see Althusser 307; Bröckling 6).

Turning back to *Coming Clean* reveals that somewhere along the road from the first to the second edition, Kemp answered that call. Her recovery is re-cast in very different terms than the demure neo-traditional values of the postfeminist recovery analysed above – and this time, what emerges from the start is an individualistic journey. Unlike in the first edition, Kemp now speaks of her recovery in terms of destiny and fate right from the start: “I have been saved by the gods, the fates, those unseen forces that guide and shape our small lives. So I ask now, why is it that I survived when thousands don’t [...]” (1). While a kind of spiritual inventory is by no means unusual for addiction narratives, hers does take on a specifically neoliberal, one might even say egotistical, turn as she renegotiates the “domestic miracle” set forward in the “Epilogue” to the first edition:

I assumed I was saved to be a better daughter, sister and wife. That my miracle was on a domestic scale [...]. But those unseen forces had other ideas for me. After this memoir was first published in 2012, I was thrust onto a wider, global platform, being invited to speak at events, conferences, on television and radio, about how a pain patient transitions to full-blown addict. (Kemp 1-2).

Put in other words, the success brought by the very book we are reading becomes not just the purpose of her life, but her destiny, her fate, handed down by whichever celestial powers she consorts with. This is a good example of what Frank calls “automythology”, a sub-type of the quest narrative that fashions the author not as someone who simply survived, but was actually reborn from the ashes of their experience, like the mythical bird Phoenix (122). It is also a conjuring act of a meta-textual degree: By addressing events that happened after the publication of the first edition of her text in the introduction to the second edition, Kemp is able to produce a meta-textual entrepreneurial narrative that covers all the aspects of her book, its publication, and her subsequent fame, and turns them into a part of her story.

Specifically, the neoliberal recovery in *Coming Clean* turns Kemp’s experiences and her suffering into what Foucault termed “human capital”; resources that can be turned into profit. This idea was still relatively new at the time of his lectures in the late 1970s, but has since become so commonplace, perfectly captured in the ubiquitous term “human resources”, meaning simply a company’s employees, that analysing it seems almost quaint. For Foucault, seeing all aspects of human experience in terms of capital was the result of economic thinking expanding to organise areas previously thought outside its realm (*The Birth of Biopolitics*, 219) – of course, in the hegemonic neoliberalism we have since reached, claiming anything to be outside the reach of market logics is met with ridicule. Accordingly, the second edition of *Coming Clean* sets out a neoliberal recovery that takes suffering and turns it into something useful, in other words, profitable, and presents Kemp’s individual recovery as exemplary of this change.

The exact form of the human capital Kemp acquired through illness and addiction is the breadth of her experience – she is a “master of two worlds”, someone who has “traversed the experiential universe, suffered what few others have or would want to” (Frank 124). This gives her experience a quality of transcendence, especially discernible in the way she describes how she has been “to the other side of life, to the edge, even over it” (Kemp 300). In this way, contradictory images of success and humility are circulated until a picture emerges in which Kemp, once done suffering her punishment in the form of illness and addiction, and settled in her role as a

humble homemaker in the first edition, is finally rewarded with fame in the second edition. Blessed are the meek, for they shall speak at conferences around the earth.

Granted, writers since the dawn of day have used their own experience as the raw material of their works and thus their income, but neoliberal ideology seems to have hijacked the memoir for its own purposes. What is being sold is not just a book, but an entire selfhood, a way of being (or perhaps becoming) that the reader can buy into by buying the book. Of all the subgenres of life writing, the addiction memoir is particularly well suited for delivering this message. They are, for whatever else they may be, the commodified “tales of abasement and recovery” that Smith and Watson introduced them as (148).

But, it is not just any old recovery that is bought and sold in this way, but a neoliberal one, promoting images of an all-powerful, literally *independent*, entrepreneurial self. This meaning is clear from the common way recovery is described as *conquering* addiction, as if addiction was a foreign power trying to overtake the self. Nowhere is the self’s abasement more potent than in the figure of the heroin addict; the “junkie” who is both waste and wasted, the least productive member of society. Kemp knows this, although she uses that image in an ambivalent way, swinging like a pendulum between levelled identification – “I am a heroin addict” (245) – and comparisons that always leave *her* the more resolute one, because *hers* is the more potent drug at “100 more powerful than morphine” (i); not only “smack”, as heroin’s street-name goes, but “*the finest medicinal smack*” (263, my emphasis). The development from a dependent to an independent self is thus a sublimated journey of self-transformation. The addiction narrative serves as an exemplum of the self’s development from deepest possible dependence to the highest form of self-control. Recovery comes to mean not only answering the call and overcoming dependence once, but answering it again and again through writing the entrepreneurial self into being.

4.2. The “Ideal Disciplinary Subject” in *Glass Half Full*

In the previous part, I aimed to show how recovery can be read in terms of ideology, culminating in the postfeminist and neoliberal recoveries constructed by *Coming Clean*. Despite the way I introduced the postfeminism and neoliberalism there, separating them into two competing ideologies is actually a little misleading. I will here proceed to demonstrate how both postfeminism and neoliberalism are needed to make sense of the recovery in *Glass Half Full*; how they combine into an ideal self

that is both feminine and entrepreneurial. Besides McGuigan's and Bröckling's work, I base my analysis especially on Rosalind Gill's article examining how questions of gender and governmentality combine in the contemporary ideal self. A key idea is articulated in Bröckling's "entrepreneur *à venir*"; that an entrepreneurial self is never finished, never ready, but rather actually defined by its never-ending potential for transformation (see viii). Preferring the term "neoliberal self" to "entrepreneurial self" but speaking essentially of the same thing, Jim McGuigan points out instant transformations and inherent flexibility as the key qualities of that self ("The Neoliberal Self", 232). As such, like Bröckling, also McGuigan bases that self not on any static quality, but on the contrary on the very quality of being dynamic, on always becoming something else. Furthermore, according to Bröckling, the entrepreneurial self is only ever in the process of being made, as we are called to act as entrepreneurs of our own lives – and to answer that call *is* to shape the self (viii). q

I will examine how *Glass Half Full* represents neoliberal recovery as an endless process of fixing and tuning the self, as each round of self-innovation leads to the recognition of another, previously underdeveloped area of the self, and how that recovery at the same time rests on Gill's postfeminist sensibilities. Following the path Rocca herself takes in *Glass Half Full*, I begin with her bodily woes, before moving on to the more abstract realm of the mind. Rocca answers the call to act as an entrepreneur of her own life in a way that demands she controls her thoughts and emotions just like it demands she control her waistline. After introducing this cycle of self-improvement, I will combine the demands on body and mind into a feminine, entrepreneurial self that is especially well-suited to the needs of the self-help industry.

As already discussed in the third chapter, beginning the narrative *in ultimas res*, 16 months after Rocca quit drinking, makes it possible for *Glass Half Full* to take a cool, unaffected stance to addiction, representing it not as the internal battle of *Coming Clean* or *The Outrun*, but as just one of Rocca's many, many problems with herself. In the beginning, the crux of her dissatisfaction is with her body, which has not lived up to her expectations of recovery:

I was led to believe that one of the more pleasing side effects of saying sayonara to booze was that the pounds would drop off rapidly, leaving a newly sober person to reap the benefits of her impressive rejection of alcohol by way of a svelte, fat-free figure. (Rocca 3).

Recovery from addiction should come with benefits, specifically a thin body, an outward symbol of the inner state and control of the self. She dismisses her “impressive” victory over alcohol, and in the entrepreneurial spirit of the neoliberal ideology focuses her gaze on a new battle arising instead, this time with fat. The weapons of that battle are numeric, its victories counted in pounds and calories: “Today I broke my own rule and weighed myself five days ahead of my planned weigh-in day. I am one pound less than I was yesterday when I also broke my once-a-week-weigh-in rule, stepping on the scales six days too soon.” (Rocca 13). The ironic and knowing way in which Rocca describes her repeated failure to stick to the “once-a-week-weigh-in rule” connects her battle cry with that of countless women in fiction and non-fiction alike, bearing an almost uncanny resemblance especially to the narrative voice in Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary*. But, as Rosalind Gill points out, even though women around the world step on the scale with the same ideal images of the feminine body revolving in their heads, neoliberalism, articulated in a “narrative of free choice and autonomy” demands that this work is undertaken for the utmost individual reasons – that it is done only for the self (154). In that voice then lies the nexus of postfeminism and neoliberalism – what Gill calls “the messy suturing of traditional and neoliberal discourses” – which combine to produce a version of individualism that de-politicises and reprivatizes issues that earlier feminists only recently fought to even be able to fight over (153-54).

The knowingness and irony do not make this self-surveillance any less real – or corporeal – as it penetrates every aspect of Rocca’s life, from the weekly-but-actually-daily weigh-ins to having breakfast and dressing herself in the morning:

This morning, as I dressed in the only pair of trousers I own that fit comfortably (elasticated waist, stretch denim fabric that squeezes the flesh a little, magically giving the appearance of slimmer legs) and a baggy top that doesn’t cling to the spare tyre around my middle, my beautiful and slim thirteen-year-old daughter wafted into the bedroom. (Rocca 13).

The ceaseless focus she has on the ways in which her body fails her expectations produces a Panopticon effect, “the idea of transparency, of a gaze focusing on each individual” to the effect that they begin to survey themselves (see Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 255-256). For Rocca, her internalised self-scrutiny leaves every centimetre of her body the target of ceaseless self-surveillance.

The chapter then proceeds to an even more alarming image, when Rocca begins a comparison between her own body and her teenage daughter’s, without paying any notice to the impossibility of her goal – of a thirty-six-year-old, mother of two to

achieve the physical characteristics of a thirteen-year-old, adolescent, quite possibly pre-pubescent girl. Yet, again, the language of neoliberalism allows presenting this as only a question of individual preferences, an innocent wish to look “stylish and young” like the girl – the fact that this image also happens to reflect the contemporary ideal (if completely unrealistic) feminine body is rendered purely coincidental. Susan Bordo refers to this as “the tyranny of slenderness” – identifying it, crucially, as a “post-feminist phenomenon” (141). Rocca accepts the slender tyranny of an adolescent girl’s body as her own goal, and continues to plan “a low-fat day; bananas, yoghurt, no bread, skip the lattes and cakes” (14), before moving on to the next post, and the next area of her selfhood to be tackled.

In this way, postfeminist and neoliberal ideologies combine in *Glass Half Full*, where they essentially create the very insecurity they then present themselves as the answer for. This is what Illouz calls the “extraordinary paradox” of therapeutic culture, which, despite its primary healing purpose, must generate a narrative structure in which the self is constructed through suffering and victimhood (173). This results in “inherently circular” (ibid.) modes of narrating the self. In *Glass Half Full* this circularity is manifested as the lack of a formal plot, which is disguised through the book form as “naturally” occurring chronology. As one post follows another, it is the development of the self that becomes the running theme, with Rocca always returning to some inherent way in which her self was so far lacking and improvable.

Eventually, this development leads to neoliberal ideology colonising ever larger parts of herself, as the call to act as an entrepreneur of her own life points out always new areas of improvement. Ringrose and Walkerdine argue that the increasingly popular “makeover theme” addresses especially the working-class woman’s body and psyche (237), and likewise, from her waistline to her emotions, from drinking to her attitude in life, Rocca must have everything strictly under control in order to be satisfied:

I began to think about willpower and positive mental attitude – how I managed to successfully transform myself from binge-drinking, manic depressive, bipolar-esque boozier, to calm, happy, level-headed person [...]. I didn’t switch from one person to the other by accident, or with no effort. I did it by altering my state of mind. (Rocca 46).

Here, the medicalised way in which Rocca describes her previous shortcomings, captured especially in self-description or rather self-diagnosis of “manic depressive, bipolar-esque” – as though the two were common adjectives and not in fact medical

diagnoses – shows how therapeutic discourses of the self are based on an expansion of medical discourses (see Illouz 171), just like neoliberal discourses of the self are based on an expansion of economic discourses. The therapeutic and the entrepreneurial combine to an omnipotent self, capable of instant transformations over whichever illnesses life throws its way – but the downside of that omnipotence is that any failure, addiction and illness included, becomes always and only the individual's fault. This is clear from the way Rocca continues the above quoted section, from a chapter called “Out with the Negative; in with the Happy”: “Only you can determine whether you tackle things positively or negatively – taking the former option makes life a million times easier and more enjoyable!” (127) The personal message of choosing positivity becomes an imperative for everyone to do so. Institutional inequalities of power in terms of gender, race, class or disability cease to exist, when all that is required for overcoming any difficulty is a sufficient amount of “positive mental attitude”. Incidentally, the criticism to this is delivered by Cathryn Kemp's *Coming Clean*: “Positive Mental Attitude, Dad says each time he sits with me, as I puke up the morphine into a vomit bowl. I don't blame him for not understanding. [...] Even so, it grates after a while.” (43) The chronically ill Kemp, although accepting her own “culpability” in the development of her illness on a metaphorical level, cannot join in Rocca's claim that *every* problem can be solved by “altering [one's] state of mind”.

According to Illouz, self-help discourses commonly rely on a combination of science and spirituality, articulated through terminology that is based on both psychology and New Age teachings, which repurpose world religions, like Zen Buddhism, for example (191). Because of the mix of psychology and spirituality, the subject in self-help discourses is encouraged to achieve not only health, but also a higher purpose. Combined with the individualism of neoliberal ideology, the spiritual goal of attaining purpose turns into an individualistic quest for happiness in *Glass Half Full*. Towards the end of her narrative, Rocca turns to increasingly metaphysical questions, returning repeatedly to the question of the purpose of life, while also becoming slightly obsessed with the concept of mortality, which she calls her “own ultimate demise”, revealing the individualist tenet underlying these contemplations (204). Especially revealing of the power of neoliberalism to turn everything back to the individual is how Rocca quotes the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, proclaiming that ““The purpose of our lives is to be happy. – Dalai Lama.”” (200). If this seems a far stretch from the very basics of the Buddhist spiritual leader's teachings, it is

because it is – the quote appears to have been separated from its context in a rather violent way. A speech called “Compassion and the Individual” does actually start with the sentence Rocca quotes, but continues in the following way: “From my own limited experience I have found that the greatest degree of inner tranquillity comes from the development of love and compassion. The more we care for the happiness of others, the greater is our own sense of well-being.” (Gyatso, my emphasis) How the Lama’s teachings reflect neoliberalism is a question that would require (and indeed deserves) far more research than has so far been conducted, but what is clear is how neoliberalist ideology produces a version of that philosophy that contains neither reference nor responsibility to anyone but the solipsistic self. Slavoj Žižek briefly brings up the very same Lama quotation, and what he makes of it is that the “combination of cognitive science and Buddhism” has created a new kind of morality, “*biomorality* – the true counterpart to today’s biopolitics”, which turns happiness from one possible pursuit to an ethical imperative, “*the supreme duty*” of the of the neoliberal individual (*In Defence of Lost Causes*, 51-52, original emphasis).

In this chapter, I have attempted to show how the postfeminist and the neoliberal meet in Lucy Rocca’s *Glass Half Full* to produce a recovery that is first and foremost ideological. In order achieve the kind of recovery *Glass Half Full* represents, the recovering subject must answer the call to act as an entrepreneur of her own life, not just once, but continuously, over and over again, as more and more of the self is rendered somehow defect. Likewise, femininity is represented as always contingent, requiring continuous self-surveillance and a strict bodily discipline that must nevertheless appear voluntary and conducted only for the self, according to the rules of the neoliberal discourse of individualism. The requirements are not only skin-deep, though, as the entrepreneurial self takes on the individual’s emotional and psychological lives as the measures of success. Through a combination of spiritual and scientific discourses, the pursuit of happiness is transformed from a right to an ethical imperative of the entrepreneurial self.

This combination of postfeminism and neoliberalism is far from accidental, nor is it unique to Rocca’s *Glass Half Full*, or even self-help discourses. In fact, as if directly responding to Illouz’s claim that therapeutic discourses are “androgynous” and “gender-blind” (196), Gill argues that the demands made by the therapeutic discourse are in fact far from evenly distributed among genders, but instead call upon women more than on men to “work on and transform the self” (156). For her, “the

ideal disciplinary subject of neoliberalism is feminine” (ibid.). And looking at the qualities attached to that mode of subjectivity – “flexibility, adaptability, and making over the self” – these connect immediately to the essentialist notions of what it is to be *feminine* (see Ringrose and Walkerdine 241). Furthermore, this “neo-liberal femininity” is, as Ringrose and Walkerdine argue, rooted in not only gender but also class through a discourse of transformation, in which it is especially the “abject” creature of the working-class woman and mother who needs to be refined and transformed into a more acceptable version of bourgeois femininity (233). Far from a voluntary, individual pursuit, Rocca’s transformation from the “binge-drinking, manic-depressive, bipolar-esque boozier” quoted above, to the safely middle-class, ideal-weight, half-marathon-running, self-sacrificing mother and wife, actually reveals itself as one demanded from her, should she want to avoid complete abjection.

4.3. Achieving Health Through Self-Analysis in *The Outrun*

Ending a chapter on ideology with psychoanalysis may not at first seem plausible. However, considering how I defined ideology in Gramscian terms, not as any set of beliefs, but as a “superstructure” that provides the basis on which “men acquire consciousness of their position”, it becomes a more likely culprit. Psychoanalysis, of course, is first and foremost a therapeutic practice, developed by Sigmund Freud in the early twentieth century, but its core ideas have gained a much wider cultural meaning, having since created an entire “cultural matrix” of significance (Illouz 27, 35). Psychoanalytical discourse is based on the “family narrative”, which takes the nuclear family as “the point of origin of the self, the site within which and from which the story of the self can begin” (ibid. 39). The pervasiveness of the family narrative throughout culture, philosophy, sociology, and the arts, all through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries cannot be overstated – this is what Žižek refers to when calling it “a fundamental ideological operation” (*In Defence of Lost Causes*, 60).

Freud’s theory of the unconscious laid the foundation of our view of humans as psychological beings, guided by mostly “unconscious wishful impulses”, some of which can through the analytical process be made conscious and, crucially, *changed* (Flax 47-49, 53). Put another way, Freud “created a new language to describe, discuss, and *manage the psyche*” (Illouz 35, my emphasis). It is this ability to change and manage the psyche that is at the very core of the entrepreneurial self, which

Bröckling above described through its state of always “becoming”, never “being” (viii). Furthermore, as Jessica Ringrose and Valerie Walkerdine argue, “psychology” (although the same naturally goes for psychoanalysis, on which much of modern psychology is based, see Illouz 35) provides “the discourse that props up the fiction of the individual, autonomous subject of choice” (229). As such, psychoanalysis fits exactly to the “necessary superstructure of a particular structure” Gramsci envisioned as ideology – an idea that is confirmed by Žižek calling it not just an ideology, but in fact “the key ideological machine” (*In Defence of Lost Causes*, 52), albeit he does so in his usual, almost humorous manner. Moreover, psychoanalysis, especially in the form of the family narrative it introduced, is the most important organising principle in “contemporary narratives of selfhood and identity” in the West, including, although not limited to, the autobiographical discourse (Illouz 155).

Making sense of how recovery is represented in *The Outrun* requires recognising the role family narrative plays in Liptrot’s journey to health. The family theme is introduced already in the prologue, where she draws links between her birth and her bipolar father’s illness: “As I arrive into this island world, my father is taken out of it. My birth, three weeks early, has brought on a manic episode.” (Liptrot xiv). A full articulation of the theme comes in the second chapter, “Tremors”, named after the word Orcadians use for the “vibrations” they sometimes experience on their island home. Liptrot uses the tremors as a metaphor for the family narrative, describing them as “absorbed into the land and passed on through the generations” (Liptrot 13). This context is also where addiction is first introduced, connecting it directly to the family narrative: “Ripples were set off the day I was born, and although I moved far away, the seizures I began to experience as my drinking escalated felt as if the tremors had caught up with me too.” (Ibid. 13-14). The tremors are almost too fitting a metaphor for the family narrative. Their mysterious, subterranean origins underline the hidden role Freud attributed to the unconscious in determining our behaviour, and the way they intrude Liptrot’s life even though she has moved “far away” from them emphasises the inescapable nature of the family narrative.

The purpose of psychoanalysis is to free the subject from her past, to release her from its “power”, as the psychoanalyst and cultural critic Jane Flax argues (70). Uncovering past trauma seems to be a key tenet also in contemporary memoirs – for example, Mary Karr’s hit memoirs from 1995 and 2009, respectively, *The Liars’ Club* and *Lit: A Memoir*, revolve around the writer’s childhood trauma and later addiction. In fact, the connection between a traumatic childhood and an adulthood of

addiction seems to be so strong in the public imagination, that even the lack of trauma seems worth mentioning, perhaps to absolve the parents of any suspected mistreatment: “Despite growing up with manic depression, I was always loved, I wasn’t abused and didn’t feel traumatised.” (Liptrot 212).

Despite explicitly denying the role of early trauma in the development of her addiction, understanding and recognising the dynamics of her family narrative is a key feature of Liptrot’s recovery. The first important realisation is related to her father’s illness, which has been the topic of passing remarks since being first mentioned in the prologue, but now becomes the main issue: “Something occurs to me that I’ve never thought of before: perhaps my drinking was in part an attempt to attain the manic states I’d experienced through my father.” (Liptrot 213). The language she uses reflects the Freudian idea that much of our psyche is unconscious; it suddenly “occurs” to her that she has been doing something without even realising it. The second realisation comes in the form of a confession, this time about her relationship with her mother. Like her father’s illness, her mother’s conversion to evangelism has been mentioned previously, commenting how “her faith kept the family going for a long time, but later, it was part of what broke it up” (ibid. 21). Towards the end of *The Outrun*, Liptrot’s tone changes. What was previously discussed only in terms of “her faith”, meaning her mother’s, turns slightly more personal, as she mentions her own belief for the first time: “I did believe once.” (Ibid. 224). The emphasis is on the “did”, which, after many times stressing her own “aversion to religion” (ibid.), creates a kind of inverted version of the catholic confession, where it is belief that requires confessing, not the lack of it.

The Freudian family narrative, or “family romance”, as it is often called, is based on a “triangular” relationship between the child, the mother, and the father (Illouz 40). It became popularised in the form of the “Oedipus complex” (ibid.), borrowing its name from the Greek myth, in which trying to avoid a prophesy leads Oedipus to actually fulfilling it, by killing his father and marrying his own mother. Psychoanalysis uses the Oedipal narrative as a metaphor for the child’s ambivalent relationships to her parents; these relationships being characterised in equal amounts by heterosexual notions of love and the implicit competition between genders that ensues (ibid.). The gendered story of the family romance is presented in the context of Liptrot’s first departure from Orkney. During her brief employment as a cleaner on a ship close to home, she is struck by the fact that “[e]very cleaner was female and every room that we cleaned was occupied by a man” (Liptrot 21). Her resistance

to traditional gender roles is represented as a key reason she left Orkney in the first place, but manifesting a postfeminist sensibility, she is no longer sure if emancipation has in her case brought happiness: “Would it be easier if I’d married someone I’d gone to school with and stayed off the internet, if there had been less of a gap between my aspirations and reality?” (Ibid.) She continues, in the same breath, “I thought about my mum. Maybe she had wanted more too.” (Ibid.) In psychoanalytic terms, Liptrot’s is exactly the Oedipal narrative; by leaving Orkney and her mother’s example behind and moving to London to try to attain her father’s mental state she constitutes a gender reversal of the myth, a version in which it is the mother who is metaphorically killed off, and the father who is married.

The competitive nature of the family romance becomes clear when Liptrot describes the moment her alliances first shifted. Right after confessing her childhood belief, she comments on what it was that distanced her from her mother the mother’s faith in the first place: “When I was about fourteen, I started listening to things that other people, including my father, were saying.” (Liptrot 225). But, allying with her father meant distancing herself from her mother:

Later, I’d often – arrogantly, spitefully – compare Mum’s experience in church on a Sunday morning, arms aloft, singing, transported, to mine in a club on a Saturday night. ‘But,’ I’d say with a flourish, ‘at least I know I’m deluded.’ (Ibid.)

Here, the critical way in which she describes her previous resentment, expressed in the intercepting “arrogantly, spitefully”, shows that she has already reached a more conscious state of her family relations than the one she was in before, and is thus one step closer to freeing herself from their power.

This is where neoliberalism steps into the picture. Crucially, she does not reach these realisations, as Freud would have it, with the help of an analyst – but alone, by analysing her own behaviour. Right after it first *occurred* to her that her addiction might in fact be about mimicking her father’s bipolar mood swings, she reflects on how it was that she came to that new knowledge:

I stand up, alert, from my stone seat: I’ve made a breakthrough – stirred by the energy of the sea and the wind – in understanding my own behaviour. I didn’t find it in a therapist’s office, or by conscientiously working through [AA’s twelve-step] programme, or talking to [my sponsor] Dee, but outdoors, watching the waves. (Liptrot 214).

The list of therapist’s office, twelve-steps programme, and sponsor, is a direct rebuttal of the most popular treatment options available to addicts and alcoholics

today. They all rely on outside help, an “expert other”, but Liptrot does not credit her recovery to any of them, instead choosing to emphasise her being “outdoors, watching the waves”. However, the crediting the relationship she has with nature cannot mask the fact that in the end, it was *she alone* who came to these conclusions by herself, with herself.

Despite the way it is presented here, and also in many self-help narratives, psychoanalysis was initially the polar opposite of self-help. Illouz argues that because of its reliance on the analytic setting, which was (and to an extent still is) commonly available only to a very small, wealthy minority, the “Freudian outlook, at least initially, was incompatible with what would become the industry of self-help” (153-54). For Illouz, the “juxtaposition of psychology and self-help [...] is one illustration among many of the ways in which seemingly incompatible cultural frameworks can blend to produce a hybrid cultural system” (155). In her frequent market-criticism, Illouz hints at but never really arrives to the reason this hybrid became possible in the first place⁵ – what the ideology, the “necessary superstructure” that glues psychology and self-help together, is: neoliberalism. But looking at Liptrot’s recovery in *The Outrun* provides the bridge between psychoanalysis, self-help, and neoliberalism.

Liptrot’s revelations, which represent a more profound recovery than either of the two other narratives, rest on Freud’s insights of the role the unconscious family narrative plays in forming the self. Simultaneously, the way her recovery is represented as a solitary pursuit, with Liptrot revealing hidden aspects of her past while sitting alone on a rock watching the waves, represents the kind of recovery more familiar from *Glass Half Full*’s self-help narrative; a recovery in which the self has taken on the roles of both the analyst *and* the analysand. Like in *Glass Half Full*, the double role rests on the practice of life writing; but unlike with Rocca, who distanced herself from her past self in order to turn *experience* into *expertise* in the present, for Liptrot the practice of life writing allows her to settle the two selves, to integrate her past experience into her present self by narrating the one into the other, thus closing the distance that existed between them. In this metaphor, the autobiography becomes not only the “experimental site” described by Löschnigg,

⁵ She comes close in the chapter “From *Homo economicus* to *Homo communicans*”, stating that “in contemporary capitalist societies the economy is the main site of symbolic production and is a major source of metaphors and narratives to think about the social world”, but then turns to examine the workplace instead, which leaves her a little short of any real critique of neoliberal ideology (see Illouz 58-61).

but also a kind of “psychoanalytical site”, a solitary, literary version of the psychoanalytic setting, in which new conclusions about the self can be reached.

The grand narrative behind the psychoanalytic recovery is of course the one and the same I already recognised in the chapter *Overcoming Distance in The Outrun* – emancipation, in other words, liberation. In that context, emancipation was analysed as a narrative construct; the circular narrative of the past opening to a linear, unknowable future. Looking at that narrative structure now from the point of view of psychoanalysis, it is exactly psychoanalytic liberation that is structurally represented; freeing the subject from repeating her past, releasing her from the its power. Empowerment is, as Bröckling argues, one of the key strategies of neoliberalism, although its use of it does amount to something of a paradox: While empowerment in general *seems* to refer to re-distribution of power in society, in neoliberalism, it is crucially the individual who alone is responsible for their own empowerment – or in the opposite case, the individual who becomes “the author” of her “own failure” (127). Liptrot, like Rocca and Kemp, is the “self-empowering subject” (Bröckling 140), who must work constantly in order to gain power in her own life, to change herself in order to better become “empowered” in a market-equated society, where *freedom* means *freedom to*; whether it is to choose, to produce, to exchange, to change. The author herself proclaims that “[r]ecovery is making use of something once thought useless” (Liptrot 276), but one cannot but help wonder, if that is really so.

The fact that Liptrot, a farmers’ daughter and a writer – both typically politically left-leaning occupations – is hardly a poster girl for neoliberal values, and yet *even she* answers the call to become an entrepreneur of her life can be taken as a further proof the of the pervasiveness of neoliberal ideology, marking the omnipresence and inescapability of the call to act as an entrepreneurial self. Of course, looking at Liptrot from the entrepreneurial point of view yields a completely different image; a daughter of two entrepreneurs (for what else are farmers?) whose own writerly profession is nothing if not entrepreneurial. Who else would better turn their sufferings into “human capital” than the writer, taking her own experience as raw material and transforming it into a marketable book? Who else, indeed, would have better developed “individual distinctions, ‘unique selling points’, in order to stay competitive” (Bröckling ix) than the ex-addict from an obscure island writing her memoir? In light of these questions it seems that the “boom” of life writing in its

entirety rests on a call to act as entrepreneurs of our lives; that the ultimate form of answering that call is to write one's life.

5. Conclusions

In the beginning of this paper, I set out to examine how the changing distance between the narrator and her experience affects the representation of addiction and recovery in three contemporary British addiction narratives; Lucy Rocca's *Glass Half Full: A Positive Journey to Living Alcohol-Free*, Amy Liptrot's *The Outrun*, and Cathryn Kemp's *Coming Clean: Diary of a Painkiller Addict*. Using the transdisciplinary methods of postclassical narratology, I began with the narrative structures of each of the three narratives, examined in the three parts of the chapter *The Road to Health: Narrating Distance from Addiction to Recovery*. I then turned to the question of what these different representations mean, using the concept of ideology, which I defined in the fourth chapter, *Good Intentions: Mapping Ideology onto Recovery*, not as the set of beliefs held by an individual, but rather as a superstructure, overlying and constructing the different representations. I will here briefly sum up my findings not in the order that I first made them, but rather by creating a composite of the structural and the ideological aspects and presenting the combined findings of the third and fourth chapter as they relate to each of the three narratives.

I began my examination with *Glass Half Full*, which is a *blook*, a neologism meaning a book based on a blog. In the chapter *Distancing the Past in Glass Half Full*, I began with a definition of self-help literature as writing that encourages one to alter, reform or transform the self into a version that is coded "healthier". Rocca's narrative immediately revealed its self-help purpose by claiming to provide "motivational and inspirational support" in its back cover. I proceeded to examine how the three aspects of self-help discourse, the linear narrative structure of the blog form, and the starting point with Rocca 16 months sober and thus already almost entirely recovered, result in *accumulating distance* between the present narrator and her addicted past. Because of this combination of always rushing forward and rarely looking back, I claimed that *Glass Half Full* was not really *about* recovery, *per se*, but rather about how Rocca, by distancing her past, addicted self, manages to turn her past, personal *experience* into universal *expertise*, and through writing herself into an expert is able to overcome the lack of an "expert other" her self-help narrative would otherwise have. I demonstrated how its blog form is far from arbitrary, but actually complicit in this goal. Quoting research about how the purpose

of writing a blog is not necessarily to *become* but rather to be *viewed* as an expert, combined with insight on how new claims of knowledge are produced online, I showed how life writing in the blog context is not a single act, but rather the repetitive process of arduously writing oneself into an expert. Combining that now with the discoveries I made in the fourth chapter, *The “Ideal Disciplinary Subject”*, it becomes clear that the process of arduously writing herself into an expert is one based on neoliberal ideology. The selfhood typical, or perhaps symptomatic of neoliberal ideology is of course the entrepreneurial self, which can be best explained in the context of Althusser’s theory of interpellation – only in neoliberalism, the process of becoming a subject must be renewed, *ad infinitum*, as the call to act as an entrepreneur of one’s own life *is to shape that life*, and once the subject is finished with shaping one area, it must answer the call to transform some other aspect of itself. Accordingly, Rocca is engaged in an endless process of fixing and tuning herself, because each round of self-innovation – from overcoming addiction, to losing weight, to attaining a positive mental attitude, to finding a purpose in her life – leads to the recognition of another, yet underdeveloped area of that self. In this frantic rush of self-development, the distance between the “old” self and the “new” keeps constantly accumulating, as each updated version of the self is taken as the starting point that must be abandoned in the course of the next round of innovation.

But, textual distance between the narrating self and the narrated experience is not a prerequisite for becoming an entrepreneur of one’s own life, as we can assume by combining the results of the two chapters examining Cathryn Kemp’s *Coming Clean*. In *Simultaneous Narration and Paradoxical Distance*, I showed how cancelling the distance between narrator and experience can actually end up producing a completely opposite effect to that intended; producing a local fictionalising effect in an otherwise non-fictional text. This paradox rests on rotating stylistic influences between the genres of chick lit and contemporary memoir to the effect of increasing and then in turn decreasing immediacy. Re-examining the fourth chapter, *Postfeminist and Neoliberal Recoveries*, we can now see how Kemp has in fact taken the process of self-innovation Rocca achieved within her text, and produced a *meta-textual entrepreneurial narrative* that turns the distance between the two editions of her text into a constitutive part of her narrative of recovery. The first edition and her first recovery demonstrated postfeminist sensibilities that again aligned Rocca’s text with chick lit, presenting her as more or less willingly foregoing her previous professional ambitions in order embrace a life as a housewife – what she called her

“domestic miracle”. Yet, even this postfeminist recovery is based on the neoliberal discourse of autonomy and freedom to choose, as became obvious from a closer examination of that recovery. She was then rewarded with the success of the book she had first presented as a token of her modesty. In true entrepreneurial spirit, she turns the success of the first edition of her book into a part of her narrative of recovery as presented in the newly-written introduction to the second edition. Furthermore, if addiction is only a side-note in Rocca’s *Glass Half Full*, based, as it is, on the need to transform every aspect of the self, from attitude to waistline, Kemp’s *Coming Clean* demonstrates how the addiction narrative is especially well suited to narrating the entrepreneurial self. It represents Kemp’s fentanyl addiction as the ultimate abasement of the self, a kind of chemical slavery to a substance that is, as we are repeatedly told, many times stronger than heroin. But, from ultimate dependence rises an image of ultimate independence. By reading addiction narratives as sublimated journeys of both self-transformation and self-control, the entrepreneurial self suddenly becomes not only a logical, but in fact the only possible way of narrating that journey.

The final and most complex representation of distance came in the form of Amy Liptrot’s *The Outrun*, which manipulated the distance between the narrator and her experience in a highly self-aware way by interweaving it into Liptrot’s travels between Orkney, where she was born and returns to recover, and London, where she spent a decade developing her addiction. In the chapter *Overcoming Distance*, I examined how Liptrot narrates her journey as a circle that begins from the present moment, then immerses in a decade-long retrospective of her memories, before closing the circle by returning to the initial “now” and moving linearly towards the future once more. Combining the methods of postclassical narratology and psychoanalysis in a thoroughly transdisciplinary way, I proved how this turns autobiography not only into an “experiential site” where identities are created rather than merely described, but also into a kind of “psychoanalytic site” where examining one’s own experience through the distancing lens of life writing becomes a transformative process, during which new insights of the self can be made. I concluded the chapter *Achieving Health Through Self-Analysis* with the questions of who indeed would be a better example of the entrepreneurial self’s power to turn experience into “human capital” than the life writer, that does not in fact the very premise of the addiction narrative rest upon the entrepreneurial self’s desire to develop “unique selling points” in order to compete on the literary market.

It is to those questions that I now return. I began this paper with the claim that the aspects of producing a text are being rather unfairly emphasised in the current critical debate, taking as my example especially Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's way of discussing the genre first and foremost in market-related terms. I set out with the purpose of showing how the means of production are one aspect contributing to the "boom" of life writing, but that they often serve to mask the underlying political debate – the question of who has the right to represent their life in writing, whose narratives do we term worthwhile, whose lives and life stories are in turn made marginal. In this debate, the question of distance becomes essential once more; for regardless of the differences in representing the journey from addiction to recovery, all of these narratives are still based on the implicit assumption that not only the *right way*, but the *only way* to tell that story is to tell it from the already recovered individual's perspective.

Because of this premise, they perpetuate the idea that addiction, or, by extension any tribulation, is merely an intermediary state, one that can be overcome and actually turned to benefit the self, either symbolically, through becoming a "master of two worlds", or even materially, through turning that mastery into first human, and then actual capital by writing it into a bestselling book. Furthermore, given that the metaphor of *distance* always contains at least implicitly the metaphor of *direction*, it becomes clear that the only socially accepted way to narrate adversary experiences is to write oneself away from them; towards a more productive and a more normal state.

It now seems that these narratives rest on a construction of deviance, only to later turn into exultations of normality. Rocca trades her raves for a quiet life in the suburbia, Liptrot her all-nighters at empty warehouses for early morning swims, Kemp the restless life of a world-traveller for a cottage by the sea and a happily-ever-after. Whether one or the other is "better" is besides the question; what matters is the ubiquity of the return to conformity in a genre whose writers are thought to represent *anything but*. One is almost tempted to ask, where are the De Quinceys and the Bukowskis and the Hemingways of today's addiction narratives; where are the unrelenting eccentrics and warriors of deviance that plough on, despite it all? Is it that one never could find them in women's writing, that women as the "ideal disciplinary subjects" were never allowed such departures from the expectations of tradition, or is the case rather that one cannot find them anywhere anymore, that even artists of addiction have had to give in to the pressures of productivity, hang up their

syringes, put away their bottles, and take up jogging instead, in order to keep up with the increasing demands of their profession? Where are the narratives written without representing addiction as a thing to be overcome?

The tradition is to conclude with suggestions for further research. In this case, it would be easier to name the few topics that have been researched than the many that have not. However, especially from the second half of this paper it becomes clear that there is much work to be done for the critic of ideology in the nexus of life writing, neoliberalism, postfeminism, and psychoanalysis. There seems to be a thorough transformation going on in the ways that the self can be written that cuts through at least some of the aspects of class, gender, and genre. Rather than exclude conversation about representation from discussions of production methods, or vice versa, inquiries into the topic should keep an eye on both, lest they themselves become blind to the economic imperialism of neoliberalist ideology.

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