



**LUND UNIVERSITY**  
Humanities and Theology

**Judging a Book by its Cover:**  
**The Manifestation of the Bodily in Contemporary**  
**Autobiography**

Anna Korepanova

LIVR07

Master's thesis in LCM: English  
Literature

Spring term 2013

Centre for Languages and Literature

Lund University

Supervisor: Birgitta Berglund

## Abstract

Since book covers have become the focus of critical attention only in few recent years, there is a small number of studies published that examine the interaction between the text and the book cover. This interaction seems to be especially significant in the case of autobiographies as there are at least two ways for the author to present himself: as the narrator of the text and as the subject visualised on the book cover. This study is based on my preliminary research, which shows that the author's body as a link between the text of autobiography and the photo image on the book cover has never been discussed before.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the expressions of the bodily in autobiography through the lens of intermediality. This study explores four autobiographical texts featuring their authors' photographic images on the book covers: *Dancing Naked in the Mind Field* (1998) by Kary Mullis, *Mosaic: The Pieces of My Life So Far* (2007) by Amy Grant, *The Fry Chronicles* (2011) by Stephen Fry, and *How to be a Woman* (2012) by Caitlin Moran. I examine both the visual images on the book covers and the verbal texts by applying the theory of the performative. I argue that self-presentation of the bodily in the autobiography is two-fold because the trustworthiness of the photographic image of the author on the cover in conjunction with the autobiographical text reinforces the audience's illusion of getting the unconditional autobiographical 'truth'.

## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction   | 3  |
| Theory and Methods   | 6  |
| Analysis of <i>Mosaic: Pieces of My Life So Far</i> by Amy Grant                   | 15 |
| Analysis of <i>Dancing Naked in the Mind Field</i> by Kary Mullis                  | 24 |
| Analysis of <i>The Fry Chronicles</i> by Stephen Fry                               | 34 |
| Analysis of <i>How to Be a Woman</i> by Caitlin Moran                              | 43 |
| Concluding Remarks   | 53 |
| Figure 1: Book cover view of <i>Mosaic: Pieces of My Life So Far</i> by Amy Grant  | 56 |
| Figure 2: Book cover view of <i>Dancing Naked in the Mind Field</i> by Kary Mullis | 57 |
| Figure 3: Book cover view of <i>The Fry Chronicles</i> by Stephen Fry              | 58 |
| Figure 4: Book cover view of <i>How to Be a Woman</i> by Caitlin Moran             | 59 |
| Works Cited  | 60 |

"Possessing bodies is precisely what persons do indeed do, or rather what they actually are."

Paul Ricoeur (cited in Eakin, 1)

"In the twenty-first century, people as never before live by means of performance."

Richard Schechner (28)

## **Introduction**

We live in the age of visibility. Therefore, it is not enough to study a literary text alone as the image on its book cover is also implicated in how the text is perceived by the potential reader. First, the visual image on the cover gives a signal to potential readers what to expect of the text inside the book. Second, the reader might have his/her expectations confirmed or weakened when coming back to the image on the cover in the process of reading the text. Thus, the image is included in the Hermeneutic circle of the reading process of the verbal text. Finally, at the end of the reading process the image might help the readers to structure and interpret the message from the text they have read. Ultimately, both the visual image on the cover and the text of the book contribute to the production of meaning.

This cooperation between the text and the cover is particularly interesting in the case of biographies and autobiographies, because the person whose image is on the cover is often the subject of the text. Contemporary autobiographies are almost always accompanied by a photographic image of the author on the cover of the book. General public opinion about the medium of photography is that it can serve as a mirror of the real. Indeed, the semiotic nature of photographs as iconic signs assists them in providing strong resemblance with the photographed person. According to semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce, the iconic sign is a mode in which the signifier is perceived as resembling the signified (Chandler 27). In addition to being iconic signs photographs are also indexical signs, a mode in which the signifier is causally connected to the signified (Chandler 27). An example of causal connection is coexistence of the camera and the photographed subject "in the same place at some time" (Sturken and Cartwright 32). Undeniably, the semiotic nature of photographs as indexical signs awards them "a particular sense of authenticity in relation to other signs" (Sturken and Cartwright 33). Verbal text consists mostly of symbolic signs. The symbolic sign is purely conventional, that is to say, the relationship between the signifier and the signified must be learnt. Therefore the connection between the signifier and the signified is not obvious or evident (Chandler 27). That is why the use of the photographic image on the cover of an

autobiography can strengthen the evidence of the author's existence and appearance compared to the use of the verbal text alone.

The photographic image of the author on the cover of an autobiography is especially significant if the autobiographical text focuses on the author's body. Focus on the body can take many forms and includes, among others, age and sex. The verbal expression of the author's body in the text can be anchored in the visual expression of his/her physical body on the book cover. Moreover, a current photograph of the author on the cover ties the time of the autobiography's diegesis with the time of its publication, and consequently with our current (new millennium) socio-historical situation.

This study explores four autobiographies featuring the authors' up-to-date photographic images on the covers that were chosen because their bodies are presented verbally in the text and visually in the image: *Dancing Naked in the Mind Field* (1998) by Kary Mullis, *Mosaic: The Pieces of My Life So Far* (2007) by Amy Grant, *The Fry Chronicles* (2011) by Stephen Fry, and *How to be a Woman* (2012) by Caitlin Moran. The Moran and Fry books exist in several versions with different covers. My analysis is only relevant for the newest publications at the time of this research. All four books are unified by the English language they are written in and their publishing dates, within 15 years of the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There are two male and two female authors, so both sexes are equally represented. The hardback versions of Mullis's and Grant's books and paperback versions of Fry's and Moran's books are analysed. It is necessary to analyse book covers featuring the authors' up-to-date photographic images, as the medium of photography is able to show a high level of resemblance with the authors' current embodied images. The autobiographies that show a cover photograph of a young author but are narrated from a mature perspective (see for instance Patty Smith *Just Kids* (2010), Mary Quant *My Autobiography* (2012), Vidal Sassoon *Vidal: The Autobiography* (2011)) are not brought into this study.

Although other actors are involved in the production of the texts and the cover images, the focus of this study is the authors' part in self-presentations of the bodily. This self-presentation is performed with the help of two media – text and photography. In order to highlight body discourse and the social practices around it, I chose authors whose occupations usually demand the exposure of their bodies to an audience. All of them are people highly visible to the public through the media: television, internet, and live performances. In contrast to these public performances, their autobiographies might give insight into many kinds of private matters, including bodily issues such as weight, health and sexual life. This study is

based on the preliminary research, which shows that the author's body as a link between the text of autobiography and the photograph image on the book cover has never been discussed before.

I argue that in the four autobiographies the process of self-presentation of the bodily is two-fold because both the photograph image on the cover and the verbal text play a part in the production of meaning. First, the aspects of the bodily in the text and in the photographic image are in cooperation with each other. Second, the photograph and the text can create similar degrees of intimacy with the autobiography's audience. Third, the establishment of intimacy with the audience using the help of two media simultaneously enhances the effect of the autobiographical 'truth'. This 'truth' distinguishes autobiography as a genre, because as Philippe Lejeune explains, "an autobiographical text aims at telling the truth" (2). To sum up, this study investigates the autobiographer's verbal and visual body expressions as teamwork.

## Theory and Methods

The book cover is often a composition of both verbal elements, such as the author's name and the title, and visual elements, such as a photographic image or a drawing. All these elements can be united by the concept of paratext, which was first suggested by Gerard Genette in *Palimpsests* in 1982. Paratexts are all the "productions" that surround and "extend" a literary text (Genette 1). In an influential survey from 1987 *Paratexts: Thresholds to Interpretation*, Genette acknowledges that the "the paratextual value" may be assigned both to verbal and to non-verbal types of manifestation (7). However, in *Paratexts* he studies *only* the paratexts "of a textual, or at least verbal, kind" (7). Therefore Genette's proposition that "the paratextual element is always subordinate to 'its' text" may be valid for the analysis of the subordination between the verbal text and its verbal paratext (12). My main focus, however, lies in the visual type of paratextual expression, such as the "iconic" (illustrations), "material" (for example, typographical choices), or "purely factual" (the age or sex of the author), which Genette excludes from his analysis (7). Importantly, my main argument differs from Genette's in that there is no clear subordination between the literary text and its visual paratext. On the contrary, they seem to mutually reinforce each other.

The most relevant visual paratext for this study is the image of the author on the book cover. This visual image gives the book cover "the power to create stronger emotional and immediate cues" than a piece of text can create in the same amount of time (Rodrigues and Dimitrova 50). As a potential buyer in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is generally overwhelmed by large amounts of verbal and visual information, he/she often has little time to evaluate anything else but the surface of a book. The immediacy of visuality saves time. Thus, the appearance of the book is decisive and most books are initially judged by their covers. Nevertheless, according to Howard Rambsy's article from 2009, there is almost no literary scholarship that treats book covers: "we have produced relatively little about the significance of the (book) surface" (71). Meanwhile, the book cover presents a graphic narrative that is "arguably more central to the reception" of the book than has been previously acknowledged (Rambsy 71).

Several critical works that have explored autobiographies' verbal texts conjointly with their authors' photographic images appeared in the 1990s, such as Timothy Dow Adams's "Introduction: Life Writing and Light Writing; Autobiography and Photography" (1994) and Linda Rugg's *Picturing Ourselves: Photography and Autobiography* (1997). Their influential intermedial analyses have shown that the medium of

photography and the genre of autobiography have several remarkable metaphysical similarities, such as self as a subject of the artistic production and the reader's illusion of receiving the unconditional truth. These works sparked interest among literary critics to study the intermedial collaboration between the text and its visual paratext further. As Hazel Ngoshi noticed in his study from 2012, "studies focusing on the inclusion of visual/photographic images in autobiographical narratives have recently gained currency" (55). According to Arne Melberg, this intermedial cooperation leads to the fact that "all possible boundaries between literature and history and image are exceeded in order to stylize a self-portrait – or perhaps we should call it *a performance* of the self. The self being created in an aesthetical event" (186). Performance of the self is an important concept in the analysis, which will be discussed later.

Adams reasons that despite the fact that the trustworthiness of photography has been heavily questioned by "sophisticated theorists", the medium of photography possesses the ability to create an irrational trust in the general audience (5). He observes that "apparently no amount of appealing logic about the obvious distortions of photographs can quite sway viewers from the popular idea that there is something especially authentic or accurate about a photographic likeness" (5), and that even the recent emergence of computer manipulated photography seems to have done little to "shake the belief in a direct, physical link between photographs and their subjects" (9). Several critics discuss this quality of photography as 'magical' (see for instance Eakin, Rugg, Sturken and Cartwright). Quite similarly, the genre of autobiography is surrounded by the myth of telling the unconventional 'truth' to the reading audience. In *Reading Autobiography: Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson highlight the problem of telling the 'truth' in autobiographies:

Sometimes people read autobiographical narratives as historical documents, a source of evidence for the analysis of historical movements or events or persons ... life narrative cannot be reduced to or understood only as historical record ... they (authors) offer subjective "truth" rather than "fact". (10)

I argue that once the autobiographical text is placed in combination with the author's photographic image, the verbal text adopts photographic connotations of authenticity and can along with the photograph serve as 'a certificate of presence' of the author (Barthes in Adams, 3). Moreover, the general audience's illusion of getting the unconditional truth from the autobiographical text is reinforced by the trustworthiness of the photographic image on the book's cover.



My comparison of the autobiographical texts and the photographic images is based on the assumption that both media share some level of the author's participation in the self-portrayal process. When publishing an autobiography the author presents a version of his or her own life story to the audience. It is true that in order to serve publishing purposes both the photography and the text may suffer a good deal of editing and cropping, which is out of the author's hands. Nevertheless, this editing does not alter the question of authorship: the author of the autobiography is the co-creator of his/her own verbal self-portrait. As according to Lejeune's 'contract/pact' with the reading audience, an autobiographical text aims to tell the truth (2). Given this goal, I suggest that the photo image on the cover falls under the 'pact' conditions of the text ('I commit myself to telling the truth verbally as well as visually'). Like the creation of the verbal text, the author, along with the photographer, is at least a co-creator of his/her visual portrait. Besides, the photo cannot be merely the publisher's choice because in the process of a photo shoot, the author is on some level aware of the signals (like body language and facial expressions) his/her visual image sends off to the audience.

The first method of analysis, the visual analysis, assists me in conscious interpretation of these and other signals that the visual image on the book cover projects to the viewers. The conscious interpretation of images, as opposed to an automatic one, wants to realize their signification and ideological implications. As Sturken and Cartwright observe in *Practices of Looking*, "we use many tools to interpret images and create meanings with them, and we often use these tools of looking automatically, without giving them much thought" (26). The method derives from the model offered by Lulu Rodriguez and Daniela V Dimitrova in their article "The Levels of Visual Framing". Since this model of visual analysis is developed for the purposes of identifying and analysing *any* type of visual media content or an audience's perception of that content, it is applicable to analyse the content of the autobiographies' book covers and possible perception of that content by the audience.

In order to discuss visual systems it is necessary to introduce the term *gestalt*. Gestalt is a German word for "form". In this study, gestalt is the overall look of the book cover presented to its viewers. The edges of the tangible object, the book, create a frame for all the printed visual and verbal elements on the cover. These printed elements constitute the whole - the book cover. The elements within the gestalt of the book cover are mutually influential within their frame. Due to their nearness, the characteristics of one element can be applied to another: this is the gestalt law of proximity. As Roberto L.Solso highlights in *Cognition and the Visual Arts*, the meaning of the whole is not the mere sum of its elements,

but it is where the quest for meaning starts (98). Thus, in order to discover the meaning of the whole book cover gestalt frame, first it is necessary to discover the meanings of its elements and then those of their interrelations. This is the process and the goal of Rodriguez and Dimitrova's four step model.

Rodriguez and Dimitrova's model includes four steps: first, analysing visuals as denotative systems, second, as stylistic-semiotic systems, third, as connotative systems and, fourth, analysing visuals as ideological representations. This model is a system of investigation, which allows for a close look at the details and the whole in their interdependence. It is noteworthy that the primary visual assessment takes place before the verbal text is read, as at the first meeting with a book. Therefore my visual analyses of the book covers are presented first and the verbal analyses of the texts second. In order to avoid any kind of reader's assumptions about the analysed celebrity figures, there are no background information given prior to the step-by-step analyses of the images and the texts.

The first step in the increasingly complicated hierarchal system of analysing visual images is to look at the denotative level. At this level the viewer gets acquainted with the elements of the book cover gestalt: photographed subject, setting, title, supporting text. The analysis of these elements is constrained to their basic description. There are no assumptions about their meaning made at this stage. Rodriguez and Dimitrova mark that here what the images "mean to both audience members and the communicator, however, is relatively untouched" (53). In other words, it is the first meeting with the book, the first look at the book cover.

The second level takes into account the stylistic pictorial conventions and technical transformations involved in representation. These include how they gain social meanings (54). In my analysis, all four photo shoots reveal themselves as artistically staged performances because all of them are inside studio photo shoots with the apparent presence of artifice, such as studio light, posing for the camera, gaze and make-up. The viewer gazes at the photographed subjects and all four photographed subjects of the analysis gaze directly into the camera. This two-directional gaze supports Sturken and Cartwright's observation that "to gaze is to enter into *relational* activity of looking" (94). The viewer's attention is captured by the photographed person's gaze into the camera, which establishes contact, direct connection and a relationship between the two. The gaze is important for the discussion of the establishment of intimacy between the viewing parts.

Rodriguez and Dimitrova classify the third level of visual analysis as analysis on the connotative level. At this level they discuss the use of symbols and visual metaphors in the visual field. A visual metaphor is the visual image of a concrete object. The object is a representation of an abstract concept, idea or association (57). It is important for the analysis to discuss the connotative meanings attached to such objects as costumes, make-up and hair-styles, the dominant colours and the supporting text. The connotative meanings of the body language and the physiognomy, or facial expressions, of the authors are also discussed at this level of analysis, because "much can be expressed, whether deliberately or not, through the body's behaviour" (Warr 13).

Although Rodriguez and Dimitrova do not include the textual part of the gestalt in the third stage of visual analysis, it is important to analyse these elements from the typographical perspective. The meaning that emerges from the typographical analysis is mostly connotative, based on the meanings and values that the viewers commonly associate with different styles of typing and writing. Theo van Leeuwen in his article "Towards a semiotics of typography" highlights the significance of contemporary font varieties in creating the overall meaning of the gestalt message. He emphasizes that the typography can express "attitudes towards what is being represented", and more than that, it can "'interpret', or, you might say, 'perform' texts" (143).

The forth and the last level of visual analysis is the analysis of the ideological level. To analyse visual images at the ideological level is to draw together the previous levels of the image analysis into a coherent interpretation, which provides the 'why' behind the representations being analysed (Rodriguez and Dimitrova 57). However, in the section of their article "Visual Analysis Applied", Rodriguez and Dimitrova present some elements of the ideological analysis already on the three previous levels. For my analysis, their system is rearranged by bringing all the elements of the ideological analysis into this last stage.

This analysis is challenging because, according to Sturken and Cartwright, is it difficult to evaluate the established meanings as ideological. Sturken and Cartwright observe that "Most of the time, our dominant ideologies just look to us like common sense" (69). So in order to facilitate a critical discussion of the 'common sense' ideology of the contemporary autobiographical texts and images, a second method of analysis is employed. This method allows me to see the subtle, hidden, and suggested ideological meanings in the overall 'naturally' neutral systems of visual signs (Sturken and Cartwright 69) as well as of the verbal texts.

The second method of the analysis is studying the autobiography's cover and text from the perspective of performance. As it has been mentioned earlier, Melberg observed that the intermedial combination of the text and image allows the author to create a *performance of the self*. Besides, the stylistic-semiotic analysis of the book cover gestalts shows that all four of the analysed cover gestalts are staged performances. This is why both the text and the image can be studied as performance. In *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, Richard Schechner suggests that in fact any event, such as daily behaviour, professions, arts and language, can be studied 'as' performance because all events have a *performative* quality. Schechner explains what he means by using the construction 'as' performance. He marks 'as' by quotation marks to say that the object of study will be regarded 'in terms of' and 'interrogated by' a particular discipline of study (42). The discipline of study is performance and any object, work, or event can be studied from the perspective of performance, just as they can be studied from the perspective of other disciplines of study, such as law, literature or physics. The underlying notion is that any action that is framed, presented, highlighted, or displayed *is a performance* (Schechner, 2). Decisively for the study, the author's actions are framed, presented, highlighted and displayed both by the autobiography's cover gestalt and by the verbal text. Therefore, the cover and the text are the author's performances.

As Schechner observes, any performance has a performative quality (42). The concept of the performative was first explored by linguistic philosopher J.L. Austin who, in *How to Do Things with Words*, coined the word 'performative' to describe utterances such as 'I apologize', or 'I bet you ten dollars it will rain tomorrow'. As Austin notes, in these cases "to say something is to do something" (5). Thus, pacts, promises, bets, curses, contracts, and judgements do not just describe or represent actions; they *are* actions in themselves. The performative quality of such utterances is opposed to the quality of constative utterances such as 'I walk down the street'. Austin was the first who noticed this important quality of speech and his theory of the performative has expanded exponentially. His original linguistic idea has been picked up, developed and transformed by a plenitude of theorists including John R. Searle, Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler. Each theorist has looked at the concept of the performative from a different angle, sometimes from one which only remotely reminds of Austin's original idea. The theorists began to apply the theory to all areas of personal and social life.

The theory of the performative will frame the study of the intermedial cooperation between the verbal and the visual components of an autobiography. Specifically, Schechner's modification of it gains my special attention. Schechner gives the theory of the performative a new interpretation by adapting and including it in performance studies. In my work, "the theory of the performative" refers to Schechner's modification of the theory. Schechner observes that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, *performativity* and its sister term *performative* have acquired a wide range of meanings and "often they are used loosely to indicate that is 'like a performance' without actually being a performance in the formal sense" (123). Schechner argues that the borderline between performative, performativity and performance is very thin (9). Following Schechner's model, *the performative and performativity* are used interchangeably in this study. Still, performative/performativity is theory; it includes concepts and ideas, moods and feelings. Meanwhile, performance is practice. Clearly, both theory and practice serve as useful tools for the study.

This study is interested in what autobiographers *do* in the practical activity of doing it – during the acts of verbal and visual performing (Schechner, 1). That is why it is important to distinguish between four theoretical categories which the term 'to perform' can be understood in relation to: 'being', 'doing', 'showing doing', and finally 'explaining 'showing doing''. 'Being' is existence itself, sometimes called the "ultimate reality". 'Doing' is habitual action. Meanwhile, 'showing doing' consciously points to, underlines and displays 'doing'. This attention elevates the habitual doing to the level of performance. 'Explaining 'showing doing' is performance studies. It is an attempt to understand and analyse the world of performance and the world as performance (Schechner 28). In this sense my analysis is situated within the forth category, performance studies.

These four categories are applied in the analysis as follows: any person's life consists of 'being' and 'doing'. If a person decides to write an autobiography, it is an act of 'doing'. The process of writing is both 'doing' and 'showing doing'. The result of writing an autobiography belongs to the category of 'showing doing' because it displays and points to 'doing'. Thus, writing an autobiography is performing. Sometimes, the author analyses his/her own work as performance already within the frame of the autobiography. The autobiographers whose profession demands that they reflect upon the issues of performance regularly in everyday life might reflect upon their autobiographical process as performance already in the process of creating the autobiography. These reflections and comprehensions belong to the

category of 'explaining 'showing doing'. Finally, being in the position of critical audience, I pick up on these elements and construct my 'explaining of the author's 'showing doing'".

The same line of understanding in what it means 'to perform' applies to the creation of a visual image on the book cover of an autobiography. The decision to participate in a portrait photo shoot for a book cover is an act of 'doing'. The actual photo shoot is 'showing doing': it is an act of performing which points to and displays 'being' and 'doing' of the author's body. The design elements of the book cover, such as the title, choice of font, composition, shades and colours, add another element of 'showing doing' to the photographic image. Finally, the critical eye of the audience and the critics perform an act of 'explaining 'showing doing" or performance study.

The verbal and the visual parts of the autobiography can be studied both as separate performances and as a unified performance. The ultimate goal of this study is to find out what kind of effect the performances produce, how they relate to the audience, and how they interact with the audience and with each other. Both the verbal and visual parts of printed autobiography performances are united by the performing subject, the author. The author indirectly interacts with the reading and viewing audiences of the book. It is the audience who cognitively forms the combined impression of both performances. Thus, the author and the audience are the main unifying means of the visual and verbal parts of the autobiographical performance. It is important to mention the cultural, social and historical context of the autobiographical parts as a unifying device as well. Importantly for the study, the unifying means of the verbal and the visual performances unavoidably bring the results of 'explaining 'showing doing" from both parts of the performance study into an interdependent relationship.

In addition to the fact that the theory of the performative provides the tools to analyse the media of text and image from the perspective of performance, it is valuable for the study for one more reason. The contemporary theory of the performative has embodied behaviour in its main focus. Embodied behaviour consists of 'being', 'doing', 'showing doing' and 'explaining 'showing doing". Schechner describes the major changes of embodied behaviour that people of the twenty-first century have to deal with as the "explosion of multiple literacies":

People are increasingly 'body literate', 'aurally literate', 'visually literate', and so on ... People ... learn to read each other's body languages and moods across cultures ... Operating on many levels and directions simultaneously demands multiple literacies. These multiple literacies are 'performatives' – encounters in

the realm of doing, of pursuing a throughline of action. A shift is occurring, transforming writing, speaking, and even ordinary living into performance. (4)

According to Schechner, body literacy is performative. That is why studying the author's body on several levels, its visual and verbal manifestations, is a project for the theory of the performative. Schechner's theory of the performative is mostly helpful in studying the bodily across the media because both the verbal and visual parts of autobiography performance are expressions of the author's embodied behaviour.

The expressions of the bodily on the cover and in the text are the two components of this analysis. The book covers of contemporary autobiographies often do not align readers with how the autobiographer views the world. Instead, they focus on how the autobiographer *looks*. This is the case for all four autobiographies that have been chosen for the analysis. It does not seem to be a coincidence that the covers of the books present the appearances of the authors. Meanwhile, the book covers give "vital first impressions" (Rambsy 78) about the authors' bodies visually, the texts of the autobiographies explore the question of the authors' bodies verbally. The author's body as an intermedial link between the text of autobiography and the photographic image on the cover has ever been discussed before.

Before the age of intermediality, in traditional autobiographical texts, the author's body has not been talked about at all. In his work *How Our Lives Become Stories*, Paul John Eakin cites Shirley Neuman who speaks of the "near-effacement of bodies in autobiography" as a form of "cultural repression". Eakin highlights the problem of avoiding the body as an essential factor "contributing to the production of conceptual selves" in traditional texts (35). Nevertheless, Eakin argues that the situation has changed and "there is widespread evidence in biography and autobiography today that living as bodies figures centrally for both men and women in their sense of themselves as selves" (37). Thus, the investigation of embodiment in autobiographies is a new and promising area of research. 'Living as bodies' in the twenty-first century is a main theme of my analysis of the autobiographies. The analysis starts with *Mosaic: Pieces of My Life So Far* by Amy Grant.

### ***Mosaic: Pieces of My Life So Far* by Amy Grant**

The first level of the visual analysis of *Mosaic: Pieces of My Life So Far* by Amy Grant is the analysis of the denotative meanings. The photographic image portrays figure of a woman sitting on the floor and leaning against a wall. The title and the photographic image are connected by the gestalt law of proximity, thus the viewer recognises the photographed person as Amy Grant. She is smiling and is holding her head with the right hand; she is wearing a long dress and is barefoot. Her hair is long and curly. The make-up is light and natural. All the text is placed above the image of the body.

The second level of the visual analysis is the stylistic-semiotic level. The modality of the image is high because the image looks lifelike. Generally, a high modality of an image may assist in creating intimacy between the viewer and the photographed subject because the scale of the viewer's 'true - imaginary' associations moves towards 'true'. However, the fact that the photographed subject is distanced from the viewer can reduce the effect of intimacy. Bell explains that the photographic social distance is connected to the distance people hold between each other in a real act of communication (Rodriguez and Dimitrova 55). Depending on the level of desirable intimacy, people get closer to or further away from the subject they communicate with. The same psychological understanding of social distance can be assigned to the distance between the photographed subject and the viewer. Thus, the distance between the photographed subject and the viewer can be intimate, close personal, far personal, close social, far social or public (Rodriguez and Dimitrova 55).

The analysed photographic image is a full body shot, creating 'close social distance' between the viewer and the photographed subject. It is a kind of distance that is stationed between 'intimate' (like in the case of a close shot) and 'far social' distance. In the analysed photographic image, the distance is not 'far social' because the space around the subject is not filled with any meaning-charged objects, which could take a part of the viewers' attention away from the subject. Thus, the effect of intimacy can be reduced because the full shot signifies a social relationship between the viewers and the subject rather than intimacy.

In addition to the fact that the photographed subject is distanced from the viewer, the pictorial conventions of the image do not appear to show any sign of domination or power over the viewer. According to Archer's technique of calculating the percentage of the amount of space of the page, the photographed subject's body is presented more prominently than the face. That may lead to perceiving the subject "as having more non-intellectual qualities such as attractiveness or emotion" than intellectual qualities such as



intelligence or ambition (Rodriguez and Dimitrova 55). Rodriguez and Dimitrova apply Goffman's theory of judging a photographed subject's behaviour. According to this theory, the photographed subject's head canting, that is tilting the head sideways while looking up, signifies powerlessness and submission. It places the viewer in a position of superiority with respect to the photographed subject (56). Importantly, the photographed subject's smile seems to signify that she gladly and meekly accepts her position. Thus, the signs of head canting combined with the open smile may be interpreted as the photographed subject's unassuming and humble nature.

The deployment of a dominant camera angle – she sits, we stand – places the photographed subject in the position of inferiority. In addition, the photographed subject's body image is decentred in the frame of the page. In *Reading Images*, Gunther Kress emphasises that the object in the centre of the visual image always has a stronger significance than the rest of it. The visual centre is at the centre of attention literally because the eyes of the viewer initially concentrate on the centre of the image. And it is the core of cognitive attention because the viewer expects to find the most meaningful object in the centre of the (196). Grant's body is neither in the visual nor in the perceptual centre of attention. Moreover, the body posture radiates bashfulness and compliance because the body is bent and it takes support from the wall and the floor. Besides, the head takes support from the hand. Moreover, since all the text is placed above the body within the gestalt frame, the body seems to be bent under its massiveness. As a result, the stylistic-semiotic level of analysis reveals that, taken all together, the photographed subject's head canting, the deployment of an up (dominant) camera angle, the decentralised and submissive bodily position, and the placement of all text above the body, and the subject's smile can contribute to the photographed subject's overall perception as submissive, meek and humble.

The third level of the visual analysis is the analysis of connotative meanings. The colour palette of the image contains different shades of green and brown. The lavishness of the colour green in the gestalt frame attracts the viewers' attention to its possible connotative interpretations. Green is traditionally charged with the meanings of melancholy and hope. Also, in Christianity, green is generally used to represent the triumph of life over death. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the romantic style of the outfit, make-up and hairstyle emphasize their feminine connotations.

The connotative analysis of the supporting text on the book cover shows that all three lines are typed in different fonts, and they are united only by the fact that they are all written in brown. The first line *Mosaic* promotes associations of handwriting with an old-

fashioned fountain pen, and the line's roundness can come to signify "'smooth', 'soft', 'natural', 'organic', 'maternal' (van Leeuwen 149). By using the laws of gestalt composition, the viewer attaches these qualities to the photographed subject which is put next to the text. The slope of this 'handwritten' line is also juxtaposed to the second line in an upright font: these fonts have connotations of the opposite kind (van Leeuwen 149). All three lines have a different degree of sloping. Different degrees of sloping presented together within the same gestalt frame bring up the connotations of personal and impersonal, formal and informal at the same time (van Leeuwen 148). Connectedness is another element of analysis. All three lines have different degrees of connectedness. Taken all together, connected and disconnected, smooth and harsh, upright and tilted – all variations produce the heteroglossia of connotative meanings.

The last level of the visual analysis is the analysis of ideological meanings. The ideological frame is defined by the "why" behind the presented signs. One of the ideological interpretations of this gestalt can be linked to the realm of religion. For those in the viewing audience who recognize Grant as a Gospel singer, this knowledge can serve as a starting point. The overwhelming presence of green, symbolising in Christianity triumph of life over death, reveals the basic attitude of the image as a religious urging. Grant is barefoot and seemingly make-up less. This naturalises her look, making it look humble. The humbleness is strongly associated with Christian values. Grant's body is positioned underneath three lines in different fonts with semiotically divergent meanings, which could be interpreted as three artistic voices of Grant herself, but also, in the frame of Christian connotations, as a visualisation of the three voices of The Holy Trinity.

The visual analysis shows that the book cover gestalt is a staged performance. The next step is to analyse the verbal text from the perspective of performance, to analyse its methods of body expressions and, finally, to compare the results of the verbal and the visual analyses. Performative is a quality of performance. The pact of telling the truth to the autobiographical audience can be an example of performative because the uttering of the pact sentences does not simply describe or represent action; rather, it *is* an action of staying true to the law of the genre. In Grant's text, the closest by implication to the pact is the following statement:

Stories circulate through a big family like the messages in the children's game Operator, repeated again and again until they evolve into something very different from how they started. It's not always appropriate to ask the questions necessary to separate the truth from the embellishments. The exaggerated details

and funny stories become part of the person and the story, every bit as important as the truth. (97)

The author's general opinion on telling the stories without separating the truth from the added extras, and, consequently, creating a new story every time it is told, is further reflected in her style of autobiographical writing. Clear heteroglossia of Grant's autobiographical text is created, first, by including multiple stories about family and friends (a sign of leaning towards the genre of memoir) and, second, by including multiple lyrics of Grant's songs where each song has its own narrating voice. Thus, in her autobiography, Grant has many voices of herself presented simultaneously. They present different sides of Grant, but they are not inconsistent.

Grant is a master of words; she is a celebrated poet and song writer whose albums are quintuple platinum. She works with words: she knows their power. Grant's way of searching for the strength to face her own aging process led her to the realisation that it is all a matter of what you say and how you say it:

We have a way of branding each other, of branding ourselves. 'He's dependable' or 'She's flaky.' I brand myself every morning when I wake up and look in the mirror. You're puffy...not puffy... Getting older... I see grey hairs. You know the drill. In a culture that worships youth and beauty, the process of aging, even gracefully, is not the feel-good experience everyone is looking for. I've decided it's time to start reminding myself of some other words that are true ... I spoke in a nearly morning whisper to my forty-six-year-old reflection: 'You are made in the image of God. You are the salt of the earth. You are like starlight shining out in the darkness. You are the light of the world.' What is it about these words that is so mysterious and powerful? I am just repeating what has already been said. What is already true. (16)

Thus, she discovers comfort and boosted self-esteem after changing her self-evaluating utterances' character from constative to performative. As a devoted Christian she relies completely on the performative power of the words from the Bible.

However, Grant does not feel the satisfaction of being connected with the spiritual powers until she recognises that her way lies not only in the use of the language, but also in the use of the body:

This uncluttered, uninterrupted moment with my bare feet on the grass made me feel closer to the connectedness I longed for. *Maybe I should pray. Maybe out loud.* But when I opened my mouth, the words seemed outside the moment. My voice too thin. The actual sounds inadequate and out of place. If this had been male-female communication, words would have stopped and touch would begin. How natural. But how does the created connect with the Creator? I welcomed my gratitude, pictured my loved ones, and then began moving my arms, my

hands, my feet in communication... I saw my sisters' faces. And then I bent down, reaching and then stood, stretching up, and I rocked my arms and body and pictured all of us rocking each other's babies... And then I was marching and seeing my father, and dancing a jig... And then I moved in gratitude for my mother, kneeling, and bending, and rising... and then for my children and Vince, and I moved and twirled and danced, and balanced, and stood and spun until I was panting and my heart was aching... And I felt connected. (112-113)

The description of this fantastic experience highlights Schechner's idea of language as a secondary and embodied behaviour as a primary category. Basically, the body comes first and language comes second. And sometimes, especially, with the lack of the human audience and the presence of the divine, the body speaks clearer and truer than language can.

Being barefoot helps Grant to achieve her spiritual realization. Moreover, her greatest moments of work achievement and getting an award and ceremonial momentous moments of her life are marked by the choice of being barefoot: "First performance on the Grammy Awards, the song 'Angels' ... I got cold feet about my high heels, and the last minute, I pulled off my shoes and went barefoot" (203) and "Vince and I were married standing on the hillside by the cabins. I was barefoot" (208). Grant finds her way of being "connected" by taking her shoes off and staying barefoot. She emphasises in her text on several occasions that being barefoot *means* for her being connected. Consequently, after the text has been read, the visual image of her bare feet on the book cover *signifies* connectedness with the audience. It becomes a visual metaphor for connectedness in the aftermath of reading the book. Furthermore, it also equalises the meaningfulness of the event – the book – with the moments of the greatest personal importance for the author.

If we analyse the text 'as' performance, then, according to Schechner, the text would have one (or several) out of seven functions of a performance: to entertain, to create beauty, to mark or change identity, to mark or foster community, to heal, to teach, to persuade or convince, to deal with the divine and the demonic (46). He also notes that any performance in addition to artistic qualities has ritualizing qualities: "all performances are ... to some degree ... efficacious" (87). The autobiography of a celebrity, both its visual and verbal components, primarily attempts to entertain the audience, to give pleasure. But it is also a ritual because it is created in order to mark the period of life by means of verbalisation and visualisation. As any other ritual, it can serve as a life milestone. The other functions can be emphasised more or less.

Grant's text in many instances deals with the divine and the demonic. Another particular example is the author's description of her supernatural experiences in the state of praying:

Then my hands moved ... I was more than a little surprised ... The next time my hands moved, they took my arms with them, gently bumping the person to the right ... I was full of amazement and wonder. I even tried tugging my arm down a little bit. They popped back up. Three more times my hands moved, until they were completely stretched out over my head, my body taking the X position of the jumping jack. I was starting to smile and I felt I could laugh out loud if I let myself ... *Either the whole world is about to get healed, or I'm about to fly across the auditorium like a bird.* (128-9)

Grant's conclusion is that this kind of spiritual epiphany is achieved because she decides to focus on her body and trust it to do what it feels like doing at the given moment. In fact, this kind of through-the body-to-the spirit experience is described several times in this book (see for instance chapters "Moonlight Conversation" and "Deer"). In the progress of her life, Grant gradually realises that letting her body take control over the voice of reason can give her the most splendid spiritual and emotional enlightening. Finally, by means of verbalising her individual experience the text 'as' performance helps Grant "to deal with the divine" for herself; at the same time, verbalised performance also helps the reading audience to understand the author's experience and relate to the problematic of dealing with the divine.

In her autobiography, Grant does not present any exceptionally intimate details of her embodied life experience. Besides physical depression, her focus lies mainly in the spiritual part of her journey. However, the issue of aging can be called the leitmotif of the body-related discourse of her book. She talks about the process of aging and its noble acceptance in her poems, for example, in "On Aging": "I will embrace this moment. / Forgive my past mistakes. And remember that just showing up is / sometimes all it takes. / I'll seek that kind of beauty/ that time cannot erase, / Wisdom and experience resting on my face" (161). Grant is 47 years old at the moment of writing her autobiography. For a highly visible person, the individual problem of aging becomes also a matter of public interest. Being famous, Grant faces the additional pressure of the contemporary social conventions about staying visually young: "In a culture that worships youth and beauty, the process of aging, even gracefully, is not the feel-good experience everyone is looking for" (16). She decides to go against the mainstream and the social conventions, which prescribe keeping the visibility of youth. Grant's autobiography presents this decision verbally in the text and visually on the cover.

The production of youth and beauty conventions in the given society can serve as an example of how Butler's version of the theory of the performative works in practice. For Butler, performativity is the case of huge and obligatory repetition of behaviour that produces historical and social realities. That is why Butler's theory can serve as a tool for understanding the social processes around visibility of aging in the matters of the clash between the individual and the social norms. Grant declares in her song "Shovel in Hand" that "'Forever young' is a big fat lie / For the one who lives and for the one who dies" (92). With this utterance she confronts not only the social norms of worshipping youth and beauty in contemporary society, but also another iconic pop-culture utterance "forever young", which has become a personal motto for multiple fans of Alphaville and Bob Dylan's song. By doing this, Grant may put herself into a vulnerable position of standing alone in the crowd. Butler's understanding of performativity goes hand in hand with one of the functions of performance according to Schechner "to mark or change identity" (46).

An autobiographical text looked at 'as' performance marks and frames the identity of the author and influences the reader's perception of the autobiographical 'truth' because through reaching the emotional intimacy with the author the performance creates trust. Any performance creates imagined 'as if' time-space "where reactions can be actual while the actions that elicit these reactions are fictional" (Schechner 124). That means that even if a performance itself is imaginary, its effect on the emotional status of its audience is real, and this is central. For the person who gains the status of celebrity and thus gains the trust of millions of people, it becomes easier to influence the process of rethinking the social norms, for better or worse.

There are certain types of performances that are more established in their conventional forms than others. According to Schechner, something can be called 'is' performance when historical and social context, convention, usage, and tradition say it is a performance. This could be, for example, a ritual, a song or a theatre performance (38). That is why if the professional part or other conventional performances of the autobiographer's life are described this can be called 'is' performance, whereas performing in everyday life, performing gender roles, as well as performing the writing of the autobiographical text and performing the photo shoot are 'as' performances. However, the difference between two types of performances is not essential; they are merely structural.

Grant does not distinguish between her life and her art – between her 'as' and 'is' performances:

If I do not have a unique stage persona that differs from me who shows up at the grocery store, it's because I've never felt any demarcation between life and art, faith and day-to-day living. Consequently, my family, my friends, and my work have always been entwined. (198)

She interweaves her autobiographical text with the lyrics of her songs throughout the entire book. The prose stories that Grant wants to share with the autobiographical audience are inspired by the same events as her song lyrics: the performative utterances share a common ground, but they are expressed differently, in different genres, and they can be performed under different circumstances. Nevertheless, placed next to each other on the spread of the page, Grant's prose and lyrics are the same: the verbalised experience of the same individual of some certain event.

The conclusions to the analyses of the book cover and the text of the autobiography 'as' performance are the following: There are certain traits of cooperation between the visual and the verbal performative parts of the book. The methods of manifestation of the author's body in the visual and in the verbal parts of the book are often alike. The analysis shows that both performances create similar distance (literal and metaphorical) between the performer and the audience, 'close social' distance. From the perspective of performance studies, keeping distance is an element of so-called underplaying. The incidences of overplaying and underplaying make it possible to determine if there is any play taking place. Grant's miscellaneous style of writing is also an act of underplaying; it can also prevent the establishment of intimacy. Similarly, the photographic image's distance between the subject and the viewing audience turns the 'reveal – conceal' scale more towards 'conceal' thus reducing the possibility of establishing of intimacy between the 'viewing' parts.

In her autobiography, Grant's main focus seems to lay in the realm of 'dealing with the divine' in her life. This would be the case both for the visual and the verbal parts of the book: both sides of her autobiographical portrait can be interpreted as materializations of the Christian values in Grant's life. The overall perception of Grant's visual image as humble, submissive and, at the same time, filled with hope and faith is confirmed by the verbal text. It complements the verbal description of Grant's spiritual journey as a devoted Christian.

There are numerous occasions when Grant says in the text that she seeks connectedness. The author's body displays itself in the text mainly as an irreplaceable tool or

a portal to help achieve the most splendid spiritual enlightenment and connectedness. Correspondingly, the photographic image on the book cover is an attempt to persuade the audience that the photographed subject is experiencing emotional pleasure of connectedness with the viewing audience at the moment of looking at the image. This effect is achieved by means of placing the signifier of connectedness – bare feet – in the field of vision and the signifiers of non-concealing and openness – gaze, natural make-up, loosened hair and open smile. The connected letters of the 'handwriting' font symbolise connectedness as well. Moreover, Grant seeks connectedness between life and art. For her, there is no borderline between the two: she blurs the borders between performance and life. Consequently, she composes her autobiographical book from the life stories of herself and her family, but also from the lyrics of her songs and photographic images from the past. The title *Mosaic: Pieces of My Life So Far* reflects this pastiche approach.

Finally, the verbal and the visual parts of the text complete each other, just like pieces of a mosaic do. Any autobiographical text looked at 'as' performance marks and frames the identity of the author. As an effect, it has the potential to influence the reader's emotions and, consequently, the construction of the autobiographical 'truth'.



### ***Dancing Naked in the Mind Field* by Kary Mullis**

The photographic image of Kary Mullis portrays a figure of a man in a swimsuit with a naked upper body, holding a surf board. The viewer can see the surf board in its full length. The colourful background is the photo image of the ocean at dusk. In the foreground there is the yellow label, which reveals his name and "Winner of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry". The label also features a schematic drawing of human DNA. On the very bottom of the page, there is Arthur C. Clarke's reviewing comment of the book: "One of the most mind-stretching and inspirational books I've read for a long time. It is also very funny, and I hope that – before it gets banned – myriads of copies infiltrate all the legislations, colleges, and high schools of the United States". On the very top, there is the title, *Dancing Naked in the Mind Field*. The salient themes emerging from the image anchor themselves in the supporting text: nakedness, mind, movement, chemistry, the Nobel prize, fun, provocation.

The second stage of the visual analysis is the stylistic-semiotic analysis of the book cover gestalt. The first element of the gestalt is an artistic photograph which is staged as a beach scene. One can see that the photography of the man is staged; it means that it has not been taken spontaneously, because the presence of the studio light is obvious. The studio light falls on the photographed subject from the direction that is opposite to the position of the natural sunlight in the background. Finally, the posing of the subject towards the camera, the gaze into the camera and the artificial light tell us that the performance here is staged.

The creation of intimacy between the photographed subject and the audience is challenging because the photographed subject is visualised in a full shot. It keeps what psychologists call a psychological distance between itself and the viewing audience, thus the relationship created between them is not intimate, but more distant; it is social. Bell calls this type of distance between the subject and the viewer "far social distance" because the viewer sees the whole figure of the subject and its surroundings (Rodriguez and Dimitrova 55). The distance is not "close social" because the space around the subject is filled with some meaning-charged objects, which take part of the viewers' attention away from the subject.

The second criterion is the modality of the visual image. The modality rank is medium because the design elements look a lot like 'reality'. It is not high because a modification of the photographic image in the form of using different sources of light takes place. Finally, the third criterion in Bell's system of pictorial stylistic elements is "subject behaviours": these are actions and poses with the help of which the photographed subject

interacts with the viewing audience. This interaction is one of the basics of the performance (Schechner 30). The photographed subject's face seems to express self-assuredness. His body angle and the way he holds the surf board suggest the ease and confidence of an experienced surfer. These are the possible signals the audience might get when viewing this photographic image.

The photographed subject's body is perceived more prominently than the face: it takes a bigger percentage of the page space than the face does. This, according to Archer's face-ism index, leads the viewer to perceiving the subject "as having more non-intellectual qualities" than intelligence or ambition (Rodriguez and Dimitrova 55). The prominence of the body over the face in the image invites the viewer to a sharper perception of Mullis's emotions and attractiveness. Yet, the label in the foreground presents his intellectual achievements of the highest rank, which creates the effect of duality of intellect versus emotions around the overall perception of this gestalt.

In *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye. The New Version*, Rudolf Arnheim distinguishes between two main tendencies in pictorial conventions of composition which determine two opposite perceptions of visual images. The gestalt "law of prägnanz" marks each tendency of composition. The first tendency is called levelling, it is characterised by such devices, as unification, enhancement of symmetry, reduction of structural features and elimination of obliqueness (67). Levelling also involves a reduction of perceptual tension. Symmetrical, harmonious compositional shapes of classical art exemplify this pattern of composition. The second tendency is called sharpening. In its characteristics, it is opposite to levelling: it challenges the perceptual tension of the viewer. The typical asymmetry of abstract art is an example to this pattern of composition.

The analysed book cover gestalt exposes more tendencies to sharpening than levelling because it enhances differences and stresses obliqueness; for instance, the figure of the man is decentred. Additionally, the surf board is shown in its full length, and it gains significance by being positioned in the visual centre. Besides, the board's proportions are large for the overall size of the image. Hence, the overall visual pattern of the book cover is unusual, asymmetrical and complex. According to the law of prägnanz, asymmetry increases the perceptual tension of the viewer.

The third stage of the visual analysis, according to the system developed by Rodriguez and Dimitrova, is the analysis of the image on the connotative level. The photo

shoot presents an unconventional dress code and appearance for a traditional autobiography cover. The surf board and half-open swim suit seem to provide the connotations of boldness, living for joy and indulging the body. The free-style dress code comes to be even more uncommon for the person who is being presented in the supporting text as the Winner of the Nobel Prize; a status which might be more commonly associated with a formal dress style. The juxtaposition of the connotative associations around different levels of formality in outfits suggests a provocative character of the book as a whole.

The composition of the image also creates a group of sexually related connotations. Arnheim highlights the necessity to be attentive to both the element of the conscious and the unconscious in the visual image:

The human mind receives, shapes, and interprets its image of the outer world with all its conscious and unconscious powers, and the realm of the unconscious could never enter our experience without the reflection of the perceivable things. There is no way of presenting the one without the other. (461)

The black colour of the swimming pants together with the black colour of the surf board's centre line, on the one hand, create a visual contrast with the whiteness of the body and the white edge of the board, on the other. The black line of the board is aligned with the waist line of the pants, thus by the laws of gestalt combining these two black-coloured images into one and creating a new contour around them. The result is that the thick line visually starts in the lower body of the photographed subject, points to the centre of the image, crosses it and continues an upward movement. The lower body of the photographed subject moves in the same direction. Thus, the connotations of this black line as a massive continuation of the body are enhanced by the combination with the movement of the line and body towards the same direction. This visual image raises phallic associations. Sexually-related associations are supported by the presence of the nude upper body in the field of vision. Besides, the schematic image of human DNA brings up connotations of the reproductive function, which is the result of good erectile function for men. The DNA image is also in the black circle, which relates it to the colour of the phallic structure. Taken all together, these visual elements serve as a provocative statement and as a means of attracting the audience's attention.

The second main part of the book cover gestalt is its text component. Along with the photographic image the ambiguity of the text points to the provocative character of the book. Clarke's review on the bottom of the book cover triggers the attention of a potential reader by presenting the book as daring and potentially dangerous for young minds. The title

*Dancing Naked in the Mind Field* is provocative as well. First, why would anybody dance naked at all? It is too revealing, daring and unreasonable. Second, why would anybody dance in somewhere that sounds like 'a mine field'? It is too dangerous. In that kind of place one should move slowly and carefully. Third, on the second look, it is not the *mine* field but the homonymous *mind* field. And again, why and how would anybody dance naked in the mind field? The title creates a tension of unanswered questions, eccentric ways of dancing and the pun in the reader's mind. Generally, using puns relates to a certain audience as it requires a certain intellect. By giving this title to his autobiography, Mullis asserts his non-conformist and individualistic way of thinking and writing.

The fourth and final stage of the visual analysis is that of the ideological level. Mullis is known first and foremost as the winner of The Nobel Prize in Chemistry. This knowledge as a starting point leads to an association of him with the world of science and it becomes clear that the main intellectual prize of humanity presented on the book cover as the achievement of the author signifies his enormous intellectual talent and his outstanding mind. The ideological analysis also touches upon such big issues as gender, race, nation, religion and some others. Mullis is presented on this book cover as an alpha male: the symbols of masculinity are in abundance.

There is a potentially strong appeal to the young audience both by means of the text and the photo imagery. The review may provoke an interest in the young audience: possible banning of the book is opposed to the main value of surfers – freedom. Thus rebellion and freedom as the values of young people visualised in the book cover gestalt might attract young viewers as the target audience. Due to the discrepancy between the dress code presented and that which might be expected of the renowned scientist, Mullis is presented as a provocateur, non-conformist and an individualist. Clarke's critical comment "I hope that – before it gets banned – myriads of copies infiltrate all the legislations, colleges, and high schools of the United States" also highlights the book's non-conformist style and ideas. The title anchors the visual nudity in the word *naked*, the intellect reference in the word *mind*, and the visual movement in the word *dancing* and, finally, its totality of visual imagery reflects and unites all individualist and provocative symbols of the book cover gestalt.

The next step is the verbal analysis of Mullis's autobiography 'as' performance. The autobiographical pact is the main performative utterance binding the author to tell the truth to the audience. The utterance closest to the autobiographical pact by implication is

Mullis's assertion early in the text that he generally tells the truth: "Having a fairly poor memory for certain details, I had discovered early in life that the truth is much easier to tell than anything else. It saves a lot of confusion ... But don't you love my simplicity?" (55). Even though the logic of the argument is persuasive—it can indeed save the speaker confusion to have only one version of events—the claim of telling only the truth at all times would be interpreted as an exaggeration. The author 'as' performer exposes that he plays here because he overplays. Being a clever orator, he knows that telling the pure truth is not possible at all times. Besides, the word *simplicity* gains an almost ironical meaning here, as in this context it actually means something opposite, that is the high level of sophistication of the author's thought as a performer and rhetorician. The easiness of telling the truth probably also relates to Mullis's background in the sciences where it is believed that there is such a thing as a provable truth, whereas in the humanities it is believed that the truth is always invented through constant fictional endeavours.

Mullis emphasises that he can exercise his agency as a public speaker and writer without restrictions: "Because of the Nobel Prize I am a free agent. I don't owe anything specifically to anybody. I think it makes me a good educator and a good witness" (56). In his autobiography, he offers the reader his services as an impartial consultant on many controversial social questions; he assures the reader that his opinion cannot be biased due to his financial independence. Similarly, he claims that the fact of becoming a visually recognisable celebrity does not affect his freedom: "I had become aware that people recognised me. I decided I wouldn't let that bother me" (59). When Mullis talks about the outcome of the newspapers which featured his photo, he ironically calculates their amount in terms of paper provided for the hygiene purposes in birdcages. Ultimately, the performative utterance "I am a free agent" also works as a smaller pact of the author with the audience, a promise not to be affected by fame.

It is necessary to explain here the difference between two basic kinds of a performance 'make belief' and 'make believe' performance. The performances of everyday life, 'make belief' performances, such as professional roles, gender and race by shaping one's identity create the very social reality they enact. In 'make-believe' actions, such as playing a role on a stage or in a film, on the other hand, the distinction between what is real and what is fiction? is kept clear (Schechner, 28). In order to operate professionally in the public sphere, public figures need to be "media savvy" (Schechner, 40). In other words, to be a highly visible public figure one must master the art of performance. The most believable performer plays in

such a way that he/she limits the amount of the acts of 'underplaying' and 'overplaying' to a minimum.

Mullis tells us that he is infinitely curious about how the human body works and, therefore, he chose biochemistry to be his occupation for life: "The choice was going to be between the study of my body in great detail or the study of everything else. Either I would become a biochemist or an astrophysicist. I lingered over both, but my body won out" (196). The body is both a matter of scientific and very personal interest for Mullis. It is the justification to experience all possible sensations. His curiosity in what the body can do is at times illegal:

Neilands said that it was probably ok that I admitted loving surfing and women, but he thought the committee might frown on the fact that I admitted using LSD. Surfing, women *and* LSD might be too much, he told me. They might decide to wait until I settled down in twenty or thirty years ... We both knew I wouldn't shut up. (18)

This conversation takes place before Mullis is awarded The Nobel Prize in Chemistry. Mullis tells us that he whole-heartedly appreciates the open-mindedness of the Swedish Nobel Prize Committee on the topic of his drug use. It is important to note the unconventional sense of the expression 'drug use' in the context of this autobiography; there are several aspects to clarify here. First, Mullis experiments with LSD on his own body for scientific reasons. Second, as a scientist he testifies that certain drugs such as marijuana are actually forbidden by law not because they are dangerous for the health as it is claimed, but because their bad reputation is in the interest of the tobacco industry and of the supporting this industry politicians who promote a correspondent smoke product. Third, he is unconventionally open in admitting the presence of drugs in his life. Generally, already the fact of speaking out about drugs might ruin the image and the career of a celebrity. However, Mullis is not afraid to claim that the responsible use of certain drugs for the sake of moving science forward is a good thing.

Mullis calls for more general attention to the human body. Even more, he calls to something that I would call a Scientific Renaissance, when *Homo sapiens* return into the scientific focus:

When did we as a culture decide that extremely little things were fundamental? I think it was this century and the advent of nuclear bombs. At the same time, we decided that the very big things were also very important. Medium-sized things like us were relegated to the not-so-important closet. How did that come about? ... We are here culturally somewhat alone today ... Very bright people should be directed into things that matter to them and to us – and that can be

solved – rather than wasting them in fields that are very romantic but have very little relation to our lives and no relationship to the great referee of all things – our senses. (71-74)

Here, the main purpose of Mullis's text is to attract the attention of the reading audience and change its perspective back into the *egocentric* in the best meaning of this word: that is learning about the world by starting with oneself. One of the seven functions of the performance is to teach. Mullis's performance supported by scientifically proven data persuades the audience to pay more attention (time, funds), for example, to the research of the so far incurable diabetes and to pay less attention to the paranoid theories of approaching apocalypses. Grounding his argument in the chemistry of the human body, his area of expertise, Mullis demolishes social paranoia, for instance, dieting: "Some people eat too much; some people eat too little. Nothing else about diet really matters. Check out the reality of things and it will make you feel better. Logically established facts allow you to sleep better at night, which is essential" (159).

The celebration of the human body is a leitmotiv of Mullis's autobiography: "I was having fun in the club, losing myself in the pleasures of the flesh" (59). Throughout the book, Mullis provides numerous examples of this life-lasting love of his body: "nothing is more fun or interesting to me than human bodies. I am one. I want my eyes to keep focusing, my heart to keep beating, and that thrilling sexual function my body engages in to keep working night after night" (197). This carnal celebration has an almost ritual character at times. The rituality of the event, defining it as a mile stone in the course of life, once again reminds us of the performance:

There is a 10,000<sup>th</sup> day in your life ... I wasn't about to go into the lab that day. I went to a nude beach near Santa Cruz. I put my blanket down on about 10 billion grains of sand and let a thousand waves wash over my toes while I watched eleven naked women play in the surf. (138)

Hence, the body for Mullis is the source and the target of pleasure. The body can be called the centre of Mullis' universe, his alpha and omega.

Apart from the entertaining and teaching functions discussed above, 'dealing with the divine' is also a function of Mullis's performance (Schechner 46). Mullis utilises the opportunity to deal with the divine in his life by writing his autobiography. His torment as a scientist, who has always put the scientific logical explanation above all, is between the feeling of the existence of the soul and the incapacity to provide a scientific explanation to it:

Am I a machine? Are my future states all plotted for me by physical laws? ... is there something that I can do called 'exercising my will' that is outside of time and space, where everything otherwise has to behave according to equations? .. does it (freedom) mean that there is a ghostlike phenomenon associated with my body right now that can move things but cannot be moved? (191)

The turning point in the life of the scientist takes place after his meeting with supernatural forces that, Mullis tells us, could not take origin on Earth:

That night I recognised that whatever I had been experiencing and referring to as my life was only one aspect of something that was really me. That 'me' was what people who were religious meant when they said 'soul.' It was nothing like the ghostly things I had imagined before whenever I thought about souls. Kary Banks Mullis was a ghostly thing compared to Kary. Kary was forever. (87)

Even if he cannot give a rational explanation to the paranormal experience, like his own teleportation, he is still turned into a believer. Writing an autobiography is an act of 'showing doing' or performing (Schechner 28). Thus, telling (performing) his extraordinary experience to the reading audience in the chapter "Intervention on the Astral Plane" is his way of coming to terms with scientifically unexplainable things.

Mullis changes the planned format of his book from a biography, initially intended to be written by David Fisher, to an autobiography: "I began to rewrite my book when I realized that you can't have somebody else buy your clothes for you unless you are either totally relaxed about what you wear or don't have your own taste. The same applies to a book about dancing naked anywhere" (212). Here, Mullis metaphorically compares the first person narration with the particular dress code. By doing this, he seems to encourage the reading audience to apply the formulas of a staged performance to his book, that is, first of all, the importance of seeing and reading the code given with the message. The biographical text is mostly constative by its character. The autobiographical text can be constative as well, but its performative part – the code, strengthened by the autobiographical pact – usually prevails. Moreover, the question of choice between first and third person narration is decisive in performance studies because to treat any object as performance means to investigate "how it interacts with other objects or beings, and how it relates to other objects or beings" (Schechner 30). Therefore, for creating the desired effect in the reading audience, it is substantial *who* is in the relationship with this audience – the autobiographical self or somebody else.

Mullis is well aware of the power of the performative: "So what you say is much less important than how you say it" (47). He lays the guideline for understanding his text in



terms of performance for the critics to come. He says openly that he knows how to stage his performance; he is a good orator: "I also know how to speak to an audience" (56). Finally, for the critics who look at the autobiographical text from the perspective of 'explaining 'showing doing," the considerable amount of information provides the author's own self-reflection on this matter.

The visual-verbal analysis starts with Mullis's own opinion about his visual image on the autobiography's book cover. Very unusually, the author reflects on his book cover image in the text of the book. He describes the appearance of one newspaper photographic image, which is similar to the analysed book cover image, to the wide audience: "Winning the Nobel Prize for PCR put me and my surfboard on the front page of nearly every newspaper in the world" (44). After reading these lines, it becomes clear that the surf board image for the autobiography's cover is not an impulsive choice. Mullis has used this kind of staged performance before for newspaper photo shoots. This fact has several implications for the study. First, finding out from the text that surfing is a matter of high personal importance for Mullis, the reader gradually connects the verbal and the visual image of the author into one consistent cognitive image. Second, Mullis consciously repeats the staging of the surf board photo shoot, thus highlighting the ambiguity and provocativeness of the mixed dress codes and social statuses. Third, the consciously repeated performance is an example of restored behaviour, something that is repeated at least once. That is exactly what poststructuralists call a 'performative' (Schechner 167). Restored behaviour is a basis for creating social identity: by repeating similar photo shoots, Mullis creates his social identity as a scientist who still knows how to have fun.

Conclusively, the visual phallic connotations on the book cover are confirmed by the vast amount of sexual references in the text. The motifs of provocation, non-conformism and individualism which emerge from an acquaintance with the visual image of the book cover are also substantiated in the verbal text. Ultimately, this signifies Mullis's wish to stay forever young and functional. According to Schechner, projects within performance studies often act on or act against settled hierarchies of ideas, organization, and people (4). Mullis's rebellious work is certainly one of those projects.

Taken all together, the visual and verbal parts of Mullis's text interact with the reading audience in an unconventional way: his performance is bold, non-conformist and unusually revealing. It establishes some degree of intimacy with the audience. However, the

intimacy never reaches a high level because there is always the distance constructed of elements of overplaying, the miscellaneous form of writing, the medium level of visual modality and the author's individualistic attitude. Consequently, the book might be extremely attractive to some readers, and it might scare away the others. It is certain though that it would be difficult to find a reader who would stay indifferent to Mullis's performance and ideas.

### ***The Fry Chronicles* by Stephen Fry**

The photographic image of Stephen Fry portrays the figure of a standing man. The figure is centred, the body is shown only down to the thighs; it is symmetrically surrounded on all four sides by the supporting text. Fry's face has a neutral expression; it seems to be without any particular emotion. He stands straight and holds his arms down and his hands crossed. He is casually dressed: a suit, no tie, open collar. The background of the image is left white with no objects. The first salient themes emerge mostly from the supporting text which surrounds the portrait image: fun, wit, revelation, autobiography, and bestseller.

The second level of the visual analysis, the stylistic-semiotic analysis of pictorial conventions, allows for an interpretation of the social meanings of these conventions. Alike both previously examined book cover photographic images, the analysed photograph is marked by its apparent presence of artifice. However, there is no elaborate arrangement around the portrayed figure, and the background is blank. The neutrality of the background opens for a plenitude of possible interpretations. The social meaning of a 'personal relationship' between the viewer and the photographed person is signified by the choice of a medium shot. Since the overall visual pattern of the book cover is symmetrical and simple, it reveals more tendencies of levelling than of sharpening. That is why it also reduces the perceptual tension of the viewer.

The viewer's attention is captured by the photographed man's gaze into the camera, which immediately establishes contact. The camera angle places the viewer on the same level as the photographed person, which together with the direct gaze creates the effect of equality between the viewer and the photographed subject. There is also a strong sense of physical proximity here: the viewer is "face-to-face" with the subject. Nevertheless, if we apply the face-ism index, we will observe that the body is displayed more prominently than the face. Generally, this would invite for a perception of the portrayed person as "having more non-intellectual qualities such as attractiveness or emotion" rather than putting the emphasis on the intellectual side (Rodriguez and Dimitrova 55). However, the straight camera angle; the direct gaze, which brings the face into the focus; and the lack of any specifically charged gestures signify the intellectual and emotional qualities equally, allowing for a neutral emotional stance of the image.

The third level of the visual analysis is the analysis of connotative meanings. The photographic image of the author is only one of the elements constituting the book cover

gestalt. All the elements bear their own sets of connotations, and, due to the law of proximity, they conjointly share their connotations with each other. As for Fry's photographic image, it is appropriate to bring up Arnheim's observation that "the human body is not the easiest but the most difficult vehicle of visual expression" (452). This observation is especially true for certain body positions and facial expressions that are able to create a limited amount of connotative associations. That is why, for instance, a photo shoot for official documents is staged in such a way that the body is presented as connotatively neutral as possible. Fry's photographic image is not what is usually seen as a passport photographic image only because the camera uses a medium shot instead of a close shot. The effect of the connotative neutrality of the image is that it moves the viewer's focus from the connotative to the denotative and stylistic levels of the image, in other words, from the associations connected to the photographed body language to the confirmation of its identity and the stylistic neutrality of the pictorial devices.

The limited amount of connotations provided by the neutral body posture and facial expression brings the focus to the line of connotations provided by the text, font and colour. The law of proximity grants the connotative characteristics of the supporting text to the photographed person. Psychologist William James reasons that "although body and mind are different media – the one being material, the other not – they might still resemble each other in certain structural properties" (Arnheim 449). Hence, *fun*, *wit* and *revelation* become connotative properties of Fry's mind because these characteristics are visually put next to the photographed image of Fry's body within the gestalt frame. What is interesting here is the distribution of these qualities on the page. The emotional terms "Heartbreaking, a delight" are placed on the left side, while more intellectually related terms "Funny, witty and revealing" are placed on the right side of Fry's head. The symmetrical placement of the review comments and their balanced content distribution on the sides go hand in hand with the general tendency of the levelling of the gestalt. As an effect, the symmetry releases the viewers' perceptual tension.

One more gestalt element for the connotative analysis is the book's title *The Fry Chronicles*. It includes the author's last name, but strikes with the absence of his first name. By the gestalt law of constructing the whole out of the parts, the viewer might bring up the connotative associations with the author's first name independently. From the point of view of the performative studies, the unusual lack of the author's first name within the gestalt frame is

a case of underplaying: it releases the portion of playfulness in an otherwise formally rigid gestalt.

The reviews' font can bring up the associations with newspaper fonts. As newspaper articles are generally thought of as truthful, reading these lines in the appropriate font might release the viewer's perceptive tension. *An autobiography* is written in cursive, which is traditionally associated with handwriting; the connotations of the font thus support the connotations of the genre of autobiography, which is also traditionally associated with handwriting. The last name *Fry* has gigantic proportions compared to other elements of the gestalt, which could indicate the huge ego of its possessor. Since this word's size is overemphasised, the attention of the viewer is brought to its colour – blue. In Western culture, blue is often seen as a colour which is authoritative but without being threatening. Besides, many artists recognize the emotional power of blue. Thus, the blue colour of the title "crowns" the photographed subject head and brings up the associations with intellect and emotions at the same time. The blue colour prevails in the gestalt. Moreover, it unites the font colour and the colour of the reviewing newspaper names, on the one hand, and the eyes and shirt of the photographed subject, on the other.

The ideological analysis reveals a strong tendency of the gestalt to create an effect of equilibrium between the intellectual and the emotional side of the photographed person. This equilibrium is supported by the symmetrical composition of the image, the colour choice and the content of the supporting text. By the law of proximity, the photographed subject also adopts this equilibrium's qualities. The photographed subject is centred and keeps a very neutral facial and body expression; his face and body are equally in focus. All this supports the equalized 'intellect – emotion' status. Finally, the harmony and the symmetry of the composition help to release the viewers' perceptual tension. All together, the ideological analysis of the gestalt shows the inclination towards a stylistically neutral kind of performance, the so-called 'make believe' performance, where the borderline between what is performed and what is real is vague. It is difficult to determine if there is any play here at all because of the shortage of overplaying and underplaying.

Now let me turn to the verbal analysis of Fry's autobiography 'as' performance and compare its findings with those of the visual performance discussed earlier. The *Mail on Sunday* review calls *The Fry Chronicles* "revealing". What does the reading audience expect from a celebrity's autobiography which is labelled as *revealing* right on the book cover? Is it

merely about finding out peculiar life details like when reading tabloids? Or is it about the specific way of writing when the performative pact of telling the truth is reinforced by the actual doing of telling it? In his text, Fry uncovers the magic of autobiographical revelation similarly to an illusionist who is not just showing a trick but also explaining how the 'magic' mechanism behind his performance works: "All the true artists I know are uninterested in the opinion of the world and wholly unconcerned with self-explanation. Self-revelation, yes, and often, but never self-explanation" (1). Fry's performance creates the effect of strong intimacy with the reading audience for two main reasons. First, the life details described in his autobiographical text are usually not brought up to the public or even interpersonal discussion. Second, as Fry highlights in the quotation above, self-explanation is more than mere revelation. It signifies that the teller cares about the listener's opinion of the subject: Fry cares about the readers' opinion. Fry's autobiographical pact with the audience is rather explicit:

For the greatest part of the time I will smile and agree that I'm the luckiest devil alive ... Most of the time. But not when writing a book like this. Not when it is understood that I will attempt to be as honest with you as possible. About other people, as I have said, I may palter and pretend, but the business of autobiography is at least to strive for some element of self-revelation and candour. (224)

In the genre of autobiography, Fry seems to find this unique chance to explain himself, to share the turbulences of his life experience with the empathetic audience. He has expectations of the reading audience as well, because when two sides sign a pact, both of them play specific roles. When the autobiographer binds himself to tell the truth he/she likely expects some degree of empathy and tolerance from the readers in turn.

Writing an autobiography allows the author to have an honest sharing of his/her life story with the reading audience. Consequently, the established writer gets a unique chance to reinterpret or re-evaluate his connection and established agreements with the readers:

For I have to believe that all the feelings I have described are not unique to me but common to us all ... I'm surely describing nothing more than the fears, dreads and neuroses we all share? ... This is a problem many writers and comedians face: we possess the primary arrogance that persuades us that our insights, fixations and habits are for the most part shared characteristics that we ... are privileged ... to be spokesman for humanity ... we can never know whether any of our perceptions and sensations are the same as others.(276-280)

In other words, the constant awareness of performing as a *spokesman for humanity* might lead the performer toward a feeling of segregation with other human beings. This is a humble and

philosophical realisation of a person who is aware of his performance, who is careful and alert about it. The opposite case would be when an arrogant celebrity denies to himself/herself that he/she wears the mask. Consequently, that kind of performance can become 'make belief' performance that is when even the inner distinction between what is real and what's pretended disappears (Schechner 43).

As a narrator, Fry is at times self-contradicting. Nevertheless, he is at all times convincing. Contradictory opinions might present a challenge for the reader in the process of constructing the author's coherent image. However, this challenge is less difficult in comparison with the struggle of the bipolar author himself who is at the same time an offender, a victim and the judge of the float of opposing ideas and opinions, which are tearing him apart.

Nobody seems to expect me to be shy, or believes me when I say that I am. I cannot blame them. I seem to move with such ease through the world ... Never, at any point in my life, can I remember feeling that I was any part or assured, controlled or at ease. The longer I live the more clearly the truth stands out. People will rarely modify their preferred view of a person, no matter what the evidence might suggest. I am English. Tweedy. Pukka. Confident. Establishment. Self-assured. In charge. That is how people like to see me, but he truth never so at variance ... (the protests) will not alter my 'image' by one pixel. It is the same image I had before I was a known public figure ... Like many masks this smiling, placid one has become so tight a fit that I might be said to have rewritten the features of whatever true face once screamed behind it, were it not that it is just a mask and that the feelings underneath are as they always were. (276-277)

The desire to look self-assured, the inner understanding that it is not always true and the outer evaluation of his looks as a self-assured person do not allow Fry to come to terms with his visual image.

The answer to the question of how the author's body manifests itself in the autobiography is that it does so in the text's every instance. Already the very first sentence of the first chapter presents the focus of the book – the author's body:

To care about my body would be to suggest that I had a body worth caring about. Since my earliest years I felt nothing but shame for the useless casing of flesh I inhabit ... It had nothing to recommend it beyond its function as a fuel cell for my brain and a dumping ground for toxins that might reward me with rushing highs and reasons to be cheerful.(5)

Indeed, the author's body manifests itself in the text as the source of all the concerns in his life (194). Fry does care about it, at times too much, and this concern is the main reason for

his emotional instability. He tells the reader about his body's desperate need of indulging itself in overeating, extreme sugar consumption and limitless smoking. At the same time, Fry is desperate about the consequences of these doings. Hence, whatever he does he cannot achieve the state of satisfaction with his life:

...I spend much of my life imprisoned by a ruthless, unreasoning consciousness that tortures me and denies me happiness. How much is Conscience and how much is Cyclothymia, the particular flavour of bipolarity with which I have been diagnosed ... I cannot tell. (224)

Nevertheless, Fry is a fighter, even though he fights mostly with himself. After decades of tobacco and sugar addictions he quits them, despite describing them earlier as his second nature. He loses a significant amount of weight (23) and announces at some point: "I realised that I had changed" (58). These achievements objectively show the process of the author's maturing. Besides, the subjective judgmental attitude to the habits of his youth is the leitmotiv of the text: "I was ... fanatical about fame, addictive, superficial, gadget-obsessed and determinedly infantile" (290). For the analysis of the expressions of the bodily achievements of quitting the addictions are important, because the present-day photographic image of the author on the cover of his autobiography displays the outcome of the physical and psychological victory over his addictions.

Fry's autobiography contains plenty of the photographic images from his youth, the period of his life described in the book. Fry also discusses them in the text and reflects on his visual appearances: "I had spent the last quarter-century seeing myself on large and small screens and photographed in newspapers and had never been under any illusions concerning my physical appearance" (22). However, this lack of illusions does not help him to gain control over his facial features when photographed:

I'm lurking and smirking ... It is one of the nature's cruellest curses on me. No matter how soulful, sweet and unselfconscious I try to appear, my features always arrange themselves into an expression of utmost self-satisfaction, self-awareness and self-love. So unfair. (149)

Fry observes also that in his photographic images the pipe seems to be attached to his hand at all times. Fry ironically analyses the newspaper photo shoot and his own stabilised image as a pipe smoker: "what is interesting or at least revealing, about the nature of twenty-first-century-celebrity, is that it was only a few days after the publication of that interview that a letter arrived ... advising me that I had been elected that year's pipe smoker of the Year" (55).



Despite the large number of photographic illustrations from his past: family photographs, photographs depicting student and professional years, it is the present Fry—Fry at the moment of writing his *Chronicles*—which is depicted on the book cover. This photo shoot is the manifestation of the mature narrating voice of the text. It is significant that it is Fry's mature persona who is the face of the book. First, it verifies the present visual image of the author, thus anchoring the viewers' visual connotations with the celebrity Fry from the public sphere. Second, the photograph visualises the mature narrating voice of the text and, therefore, just as the verbal narrating voice, unites the described past with the visualised present. The book cover image presents the matured individual who after all succeeds in arranging his features into "unselfconscious expression". Paradoxically, Fry both strives to be seen in this way and, at the same time, resists it as the appearance can contradict his inner emotions:

Back then ... I did not seem to have it in me to project the vulnerability, fear, insecurity, doubt, inadequacy, puzzlement and inability to cope that I so very often felt ... Till the day I die people will always prefer to see me as strong, comfortable and English, like a good leather club chair.(407-408)

Fry invites the potential reader into the diegesis by the use of an up-to-date photographic image on the cover, thus emphasising the link between the described events from the past and the present moment visualised in his photographic image.

In this book, Stephen Fry in his fifties describes himself in his twenties. *Moab is My Washpot* is the autobiography of his childhood years. At the end of the *Chronicles* there is a promise of the next autobiographical part to come. Thus, taken as a whole, *The Fry Chronicles* is a link in the chain between the past and the present. What is more, within the book itself the past and the present are in a conversation, both verbally and visually. The verbal text describes the young Fry, but it is an older one who is the narrating voice.

Despite the narrator's bitterness about the torments and disappointments of aging, "in our fifties the physical deterioration which one would naturally expect has been far outstripped by disappointment, bitterness, despair, mental instability and failure" (243), his mature voice is nonetheless dominating over the young. Something that started as the young man's dreams – "I wanted to be famous, admitted, stared at, known, applauded and liked" (213) – ends up as a harsh conclusion of the mature narrator: "What a styleless arsehole I was, what a prodigal tit, what a flash fuckhead. I look back and see only waste, vanity, emptiness and puerile conceit. That I was happy offers me no compensation now" (363). Analogously, I

conclude that the decision to bring the mature visual image to the published book cover goes hand in hand with the author's inner position of superiority of his current insight into his life situation over the younger one.

In the text, Fry discusses his homosexuality:

The gay identity, if I can be excused for so squirm worthy a phrase, drew attention to the physical in those days more than I think it does now ... Firstly nobody seemed to be remotely attracted to me, and secondly I wasn't even interested anyway in all tis heavy dance-floor heaving and casual erotic encountering. (225)

This physical side of the gay identity is a visible side of the gender performance according to Butler's explanation of performativity. Butler was among those critics who noticed the power of performativity in the construction of social categories of gender: "gender reality is performative, which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed" (528). To perform successfully situates a person safely within a given social world and to refuse to perform one's given gender is to rebel against what is seen as "nature" (524). According to Butler, what is considered to be 'natural' in contemporary Western societies is heterosexuality, which enforces a patriarchal, phallogocentric social order. Fry does not accept the conventional performative attributes of a gay life style; he does not want to wear the mask marking him as one of the performers. He denies the gay dress code as well as promiscuity. As a result, he is not accepted by the gay community and turns into "confirmed celibate" (318).

Since an early age, Fry is in a constant torment of an endless self-evaluation of his body and reflects upon his being painfully evaluated by others: "Did I hate my own face and body with such a hot hate only because I thought others did?" (225). His body during the years of youth is described mostly as "the enemy" (212) and the "source of shame, insecurity and self-consciousness" (194) or as a "useful brain on top of a useless body". Nevertheless, Fry realises that he was "a victim of physical need" in denial (30). He summarises the conflict with himself in these sentences:

Problems with the physical self, you may have noticed by now, are central to my life story. The reckless feeding of my physical appetites on the one hand and the miserable dislike and fear of my physical appearance on the other have all been overseen by a pathological personal theology that has for the most of my life robbed me of any true ease. (222)

These lines abridge the expanded and escalated life-long struggle of the author. It is difficult for the reader to stay uninvolved when reading about these psychological torments. The text is extremely emotional, humane and revealing as the text's performativity creates the effect of immediate intimacy with the reader. Furthermore, the text is often controversial and self-contradicting. However, Fry's target audience are readers of approximately his own age as Fry often appeals to the reader who, like himself, has matured, has become more tolerant and less critical with age. He thus shares his turbulent intimate experiences and boiling emotions with the audience, expecting their empathy in return (58,170).

As a conclusion, there is a striking difference between the text and the book cover: the effect of the former produces a remarkable discrepancy to the effect of the latter. While the text is a volcano of raw emotions, the visual part of the book creates the effect of cooling and soothing down the eye; it releases a possible perceptual tension for the viewer. When the potential reader holds the book in his hands for the first time, the classical, harmonious, symmetrical construction of the book cover image, the lack of connotatively charged gestures and the seemingly neutral physiognomy create a set of expectations for the performance; the viewer is not provoked or challenged. The viewer is invited into the diegesis by the familiar visual appearance of the known celebrity who is "as strong, comfortable and English, like a good leather club chair" (408). However, the discrepancy plays a trick similar to the effect of a jack-in-the-box. The calmness and coldness of the book cover gestalt disappears when the verbal text, as jack-in-the-box, quite unexpectedly releases a boiling pot of emotions and insecurity. From looking at the calm surface of the Fry 'box', one cannot predict that the tensed spring would pop up with such a force. Therefore, the surprise effect is high.

## ***How to Be a Woman* by Caitlin Moran**

The final book for the analysis is *How to Be a Woman* by Caitlin Moran. The cover image shows the head and shoulders of a woman, with her face as the focal point. She has long, black hair with a streak of grey. Her make-up and outfit are casual. She stands and her elbows are bowed outward. She gazes directly at the viewer and lifts her eyebrows, flaunting her facial wrinkles. The background is green and shadowed. The text of the title *How to be a Woman* looks as though it had been handwritten. It is placed underneath the photographic image. The name Caitlin Moran is above the photographic image, and the reviews are above and also symmetrically on both sides of the photo image: "Funniest book of the year" (Evening Standard) and "The book EVERY woman should read" (Grazia). The salient themes that emerge at this point are *woman* and *fun*.

The second level of the analysis is the stylistic-semiotic analysis. Like in all the previously discussed visual book cover images, the analysed photographic image is a staged performance because it is an inside studio artistic photo shoot with artificial lightning and also because the photographed subject gazes into the camera. However, in the analysed photographic image there is no arrangement made around the portrayed figure. The background is left plain green and shadowed. Besides, neither excessive make up nor a sophisticated costume are presented. Thus, the focus lies on the photographed subject's body language and physiognomy.

According to Archer's face-ism index, the prominence of the face on the page should lead the viewer to the sharper perceptions of Moran's intelligence and ambition, rather than her attractiveness and emotions (Rodriguez and Dimitrova 55). Moreover, the light, which falls into the frame from the upper left corner, forms a light spot on the face, leaving the rest of the gestalt image in the shadow. The face is also framed from all the sides by the supporting text. Besides, being in the visual centre of the page, the face is the centre of the viewer's attention. All these pictorial conventions bring the emphasis to the face of the photographed subject.

The position of the camera, like in the case of Stephen Fry, is on the same level as the photographed subject. Consequently, this pictorial style provides neither dominating, nor subordinating implications of the visual proximity, but rather the equality of the positions of the viewer and the subject: the viewer is "face-to-face" with the subject. Considering that it is only the head and the shoulders that are in the field of the viewer's vision, the photographed

subject is located at the viewer's "close personal distance" (Bell in Rodriguez and Dimitrova 55). The social meaning of a 'personal relationship' between the viewer and the photographed person is also signified by the choice of a close shot. According to Berger, a close shot signifies intimacy with the viewer (Rodriguez and Dimitrova 55). Thus, the straight camera angle, the close shot and the direct gaze all suggest Moran's appeal to a 'close personal relationship' with the viewing audience.

The design of the book cover is presented as realistic; however, the contrasting lighting on the face and the rest of the space create an effect of the surreal because the photographed subject's face is too white and the hair is too black and slightly ghost like. Thus, due to the contrast lighting, the modality is rated as medium. As for the subject behaviour, Moran's body pose is active: straight back, long neck, elbows outward and the chin forward. The overall visual pattern of the book cover gestalt is balanced and symmetrical; there is only one subject and it is in the visual centre. Hence, the visual pattern reveals more tendencies to levelling than to sharpening. That is why it might reduce the perceptual tension of the viewer.

The third level of the visual analysis is the connotative analysis. Moran's active body pose demonstrates power and courage. The visual focus on the face allows for highlighting the facial features; the eyebrows are raised and the forehead wrinkles are flaunted. A hint of a smile builds wrinkles around the mouth. The grey lump of hair contrasts with the rest of the dark hair and the shadowed background. Thus, natural make-up, obvious wrinkles and grey hair might signalise to some viewers that the photographed subject does not care to hide the signs of age and some appearance imperfections. The photographed subject's look seems to signalise that that is what she 'really' looks like, and that is why, from the point of view of performance studies, it is a type of 'make-believe' performance (Schechner 28). The self-assured facial expression along with the active, daring body pose invites and challenges the viewer to face up to the message of the book, which will supposedly be the explanation of the expression *How to be a Woman* uttered in the title.

One element of the book cover gestalt is the photographed person, and another is the supporting text. The law of proximity connects the connotative characteristics of the text to the photographed person and vice versa. Hence, *fun, (every) woman, (writing) a book* from being the connotative properties of the book become the connotative properties of Moran herself because these characteristics are visually put next to the photographed image of

her body within the same gestalt frame. Simultaneously, the photographic image which is placed next to the supporting text gives it the photographic connotations of authenticity and reality.

According to van Leeuwen, different fonts imply different connotative meanings. In the analysed gestalt, all kinds of supporting text: the title, the reviews and the name of the author are in different fonts and different sizes. They are united only by the choice of similar light colours: silver and light green. The title *How to Be a Woman* is written in an arty cursive font, with some elements of calligraphic drawing, which brings to the fore associations with handwriting. The roundness of the title elements can come to signify "'smooth', 'soft', 'natural', 'organic', 'maternal'" (van Leeuwen 149). That is how the lexical meaning of the title *How to Be a Woman* is harmonically supported by the female connotations of the font. By using the laws of gestalt composition, the viewer attaches the female connotations of the font to the photographed subject, which is put next to the text.

The title as a whole, and especially the word *woman* in it, may draw the viewer's attention to the author's gender. In addition to that, by the gestalt law of constructing the whole out of the parts, the viewer might connect the apparently female name of the author Caitlin, the photographic image of a female and the review's comment that *every woman* should read this book to the gender-related connotation of the title. Taken all together, the 'womanness' of the gestalt can become overwhelming because the visual connotations are anchored in the verbal connotations. From the point of view of performance studies, the overwhelming of any concept is a case of overplaying. First, overplaying attracts the viewers' attention. Second, overplaying with the concept of *woman* opens it for resignification because overplaying points to the act of simulation and thus casts doubt on the concept's traditional meaning.

The title *How to Be a Woman* can be interpreted in several ways. For example, it can sound as an instruction 'how to be/become something' and what are you supposed to do in order to achieve your goal, for instance to become a proper woman. This authoritative 'help yourself' style is widely used by contemporary books and magazines. This instructive assumption might be supported by the imperative tone of the magazine review that *EVERY woman should read it* (Grazia). The second interpretation of the title might be that the word *how* relates to a concrete experience described, of how it is actually felt to be a woman in practice. The wittiness of the title is supported by review, which claims that it is the "funniest

book of the year" (Evening Standard). All in all, the title releases the portion of performative playfulness within the gestalt frame.

The tilted slope of the 'handwritten' title lines is juxtaposed to the upright font which is used for the author's name. Furthermore, the author's name is written in capital letters. The connotations of the author's name font are the opposite to the "'smooth' and 'soft'" connotations of the title, so the author's name connotes to the hard, bold and egocentric nature of its possessor. As it is observed before, reading the reviews' lines in the appropriate newspaper font might release the viewer's perceptive tension and reduce the suspiciousness of the message. Hence, the appropriate font allows for building trust in their message. Finally, all the fragments of supporting text are symmetrically placed on the page and do not conflict with each other.

The ideological analysis of the visual frame and the analysis of it 'as' performance reveal a strong tendency to put an emphasis on the intellect and wit of the photographed person. The multiple recurrence of the *womannes* concept is a case of overplaying; it shows the inclination towards the so-called 'make-belief' performance when the borderline between what is performed and what is real is kept clear. At the same time, the overall composition's symmetry and the fonts' foreseeable connotations can help to release the viewers' perceptual tension. The natural make-up, the visual imperfections and the obvious lack of glamour are cases of underplaying. Thus, the book cover performance reveals its own complexity despite the seemingly easy-going and neutral stylistics. All together, the ideological analysis of the gestalt of Moran's book cover shows a tendency to *play less* when it comes to the body photographic image or, in other words, the embodied behaviour of the author. The opposite tendency, to *play more*, is revealed when it comes to the performative art of writing that is the use of language in order to verbalise the instances of the embodied behaviour.

It is a rare case that an autobiographer discusses his/her book's published look already within the autobiography. Moran does it in a manner which emphasises her witty and eccentric character: "I was campaigning for the front cover to be my naked belly flopped out on the table, with 'This is what a REAL woman's stomach looks like' written underneath in angry, red capital letters" (310). Evidently, this idea is not fulfilled, possibly because it would be a case of clear overplaying, and, therefore, it would signal that the message of the book should not be taken seriously (Schechner 103).

Nevertheless, it is important for the analysis to be acquainted with what Moran means when she suggests the "naked belly" book cover design. The 'naked' truth about the author's body uttered verbally in the text would be anchored by the naked truth expressed visually on the cover. Thus, the consistency of the body references would be sustained. Besides, Moran points to the fonts' connotations by suggesting the use of "angry, red capital letters" on her front cover. Hence, she is clearly aware of the semiological interpretation of the colour red and of capitalisation as a means of expressing endangerment and thus capturing the immediate viewers' attention. The contrast between the suggested in the text book cover image and the analysed one can serve as a means of prevention of possible clichéd criticism towards Moran as an angry feminist who distastes aesthetics and promotes hatred. Truly, Moran seems to find a good balance between boldly honest and aesthetic presentations of the bodily.

Moran does not clearly utter a pact with her autobiographical audience. Nonetheless, through the whole book she accentuates the general importance of being honest with other people: "Simply being honest about who we really are is half the battle" (307) and "But as years went on, I realised that what I really want to be, all told, is a human. Just a productive, honest, courteously treated human. One of 'The Guys' "(309). However, when she describes the process of writing her teenage diary (a life narrative genre which is close to autobiography), there is no place for honesty: "I don't want my diary to pity me. As far as my diary will know, *I* had the philosophical upper hand here. This diary is for glory only" (7). This confession has two effects. First, it reveals to the audience of *How to Be a Woman* Moran's teenage relationship with the truth. The revelation is made from the standpoint of an adult narrator who 'knows better' by now, and can thus be honest now about being dishonest before. At the same time, the confession of being dishonest when writing another life narrative might provoke the reader's distrust of the current one.

Moran's general attitude towards autobiography seems to be obsessive. She tells the reader that at the age of thirteen she writes in her diary: "Books ... each one is the sum total of a life that can be inhaled in a single day. I read fast ... I particularly love autobiographies: I can eat a whole person by sun-down" (76). So, reading life narratives is Moran's favourite hobby. She is interested in a person's life progress, and she is interested in finding out to what degree the autobiographer is able to influence the life events, especially if the autobiographer is a woman. As Moran notes, women spent "millennia not being allowed



to *do* anything," and because of that they were inclined to become more "self-critical" in their life narratives as writing diaries was the only thing they could *do* (300).

Any life narrative for Moran is a reflection of the epoch in which it was written. That is why in her own autobiography, she feels the imperative necessity to remind the women of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that their time has brought them more opportunities to carry out their rights and freedoms than their ancestors could dream about: "in the 21<sup>st</sup> century ... We don't need to riot or go on hunger strike ... We just need to look it (patriarchy) in the eye, squarely, for a minute, and then start laughing at it" (14). Therefore, Moran is certain that it is the right time to live, to feel and to be free from the injustices of the old times; it is the time to *do* something. According to Moran, to *talk aloud* about women's problems related to the expressions of embodiment is the first step on this way.

Moran's idea of verbalisation of embodiment goes hand in hand with Schechner's idea that speech is a verbalisation of embodied behaviour and, therefore, performative as well. The importance of the verbalisation of body issues is highlighted in Moran's discussion of the obesity problem: "Because at the moment, I can't help but notice that in a society obsessed with fat – so eager in the appellation, so vocal in its disapproval – the only people who *aren't* talking about it are the only people whose business it really is" (118). Moran also seeks secure terminology for the various manifestations of embodied behaviour and body parts, which are traditionally not matters of discussion at all, in order to verbalise these issues and to be able to discuss their problematics (see for instance the chapter called "I Don't Know What to Call My Breasts").

In Moran's autobiographical text, the author's body is a leitmotif of the narrative: "We all fascinated by our bodies and those of others" (263). The body issues dictate the themes and the structure of the book as the names of the chapters speak for themselves: "I Start Bleeding!", "I become Furry!", "I Am Fat", "Abortion" and so on. Moran discusses the whole range of subjects that concern her personally as a female: their physical, emotional, psychological, and social aspects are interwoven and interdependent. Moran seems to claim that personal matters often deserve public discussion and that one has to talk about mundanely personal issues as if they were political. Her very open sharing of the personal body issues with the reading audience is not there for exhibitionist reasons; it is there to encourage women to think about their bodies in a more liberating way. It calls women to dare to talk about the

issues of concern and ultimately change the situations that keep them oppressed in the falsely important social constructions.

One of the falsely important structures which highly influence the minds and bodies of all woman, and young women specially, is the world of fashion. Moran is concerned that the staging of performance in the world of haute couture intrudes into the staging of performances of social identity in ordinary life. She is certain that such large industries as the fashion industry have a negative impact on women's self-consciousness and self-esteem in terms of promoting an anorectic look, as well as extremely uncomfortable and expensive clothes and accessories (see the chapter called "I Get into Fashion"). Moran is convinced that, despite their glamorous look, torturing clothes cannot boost self-esteem and self-respect in people. She describes how her own experience of performing in a photo shoot for a fashion magazine resulted in only a few 'decent' frames:

That was just the frames, though: the one position it worked in. It took us 20 minutes, half an hour, an hour to find that one position the outfits look good in ... It was the ugliest I've ever felt ... I was reduced *entirely* down to the clothes on my back, and how my body looked in them. And in these styles, rather than the ones I've carefully collected as being 'helpful' to me, I was a total failure. (213)

Besides the problematics of 'make-believe' performance and its impact on the viewers, this passage highlights another problem, which is important for the study of the visual manifestation of the bodily, namely the myth that the medium of photography mimetically reflects reality. As Roland Barthes advocates in "Photographic Message", this myth of denotativity inevitably collides with the connotative level of a photographic image. In fact, in an artistic photography the connotative level of meanings prevails (Barthes 197). That is why it is important to remember that the photographed product of the fashion industry is not as comfortable to wear as it might look in the image, because the image is artistically staged for commercial purposes.

Moran continues the discussion of the photography medium in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by providing multiple examples of manipulation by different media the myth of photographic denotativity. Moreover, Moran highlights that society is dishonestly biased towards what is allowed for a woman and for a man in terms of appearances: "A 'sign of weakness' for a male celebrity is being found to be unfaithful, or unkind to an employee, or having crushed their car whilst stoned out of their tiny minds. A 'sign of weakness' for a woman, on the other hand, can be a single, unflattering picture" (262). The absurdity of criticising every bad

photographic image is appalling even more so as the hardest judges of an unlucky visual image of a woman are not men, but other women: "there can't be a magazine-consuming woman in the Western world who's not been called upon to speculate on the mental and emotional health of these women on the basis of a single bad photo of her" (264). Sturken and Cartwright subscribe to the theory that societies function by naturalising ideologies and that is why "most of the time, our dominant ideologies just look to us like common sense" (69). However, it is easy to agree with Moran on the point that taking a critical look at the media's "truth" is a healthy social practice.

The postmodern understanding of celebrity culture has brought major changes about in the understanding of identity, body and truth. The examples of changing and performing identity in pop icons like Madonna and Michael Jackson point to broader issues of identity and the postmodern body. As Sturken and Cartwright observe, "in postmodernism, the body is imagined to be easily transformed"; one can change one's gender and race as well as shape one's appearance through hormonal makeup, cosmetic surgery, and gym workouts. In postmodernism "appearances are actualities – neither more nor less so than what lies behind or beneath appearances" (Schechner 22). Appearances are crucially meaningful elements of social life, and "not simply the illusion put over the real, like makeup hiding a blemish" (Sturken and Cartwright 325). For the study of the bodily manifestations, this is essential because the relationship between the depth and the surface in postmodernity offers a way of seeing a celebrity's body not in terms of an antagonism between his/her 'more real' truth underneath the 'unreal' surface of appearances, but in terms of "convection" amid the two (Schechner 23).

Moran thoroughly discusses the problem of appearances in 21<sup>st</sup> century society. The postmodernist society blurs the borders between the 'real' person and the social roles he/she plays. As a result, it is more difficult to navigate in a society where nothing seems to be certain. Being a celebrity journalist, Moran lives and works within the realms of 'is' and 'as' performances that are fused and blurred. Moran is very critical on the subject of cosmetic surgery, and labels the contemporary obsession with cosmetic surgery as just another example of women's self-oppression:

At the very end of this arguing, women should be allowed to look how they damn well please. The patriarchy can get OFF my face and tits ... But women living in fear of aging, and pulling painful and expensive tricks to hide it from the world, does not say something amazing about us as human beings ... It

makes us look like cowards ... And that's the very, very last thing women are. (294-295)

Amy Grant has a similar opinion on cosmetic surgery. Being a devoted Christian, Grant believes that correcting a physical face leads neither to dignity in this life, nor to eternity in the afterlife. Moran is an atheist. She is certain that cosmetic surgery does not bring dignity in this life, and that this is the only life: "the real problem here is that we're all dying ... The more focused you are on your death, the more righteously you live your life" (289). She repeats, "We're all dying ... But only women have to pretend it isn't happening" (291). That is why Moran chose for herself the appearance determined by her age and lifestyle: " I want a face full of frown lines and weariness and cream-coloured teeth ... Women who've had the needle, or the knife, look like they're saying: '...I'm still as defenceless as the day I was born ... I have failed at my life.' "(293).

Gender is one of the main categories in Moran's focus. Moran highlights such extremely personal physical events of her own life as menstruation, abortion and giving birth through the feministic political discourse. She talks about the role of a woman in the 21<sup>st</sup> century society:

So whilst *How to be a Woman* is the storey of all times that I ... got being a woman wrong, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, merely recounting experience doesn't seem to be enough anymore. Yet, an old-fashioned feminist 'consciousness raising' still has enormous value. When the subject turns to abortion, cosmetic intervention, birth, motherhood, sex, love, work, misogyny, fear, or just how you feel in your own skin, women still won't often tell the truth to each other unless they are very, very drunk. (11)

According to Moran, the new millennium is the time to rethink the old rules of playing roles in the 'as' performance of gender. In order to stop explicit and implicit patriarchal oppression of women, women themselves have to realise the patterns of oppression, which are often acquired at a young age and regularly repeated as automatisms. Thus oppression becomes a norm. Women participate in their own oppression as long as they play along with the patriarchal ideology in performing their gender role without giving it a second thought.

It seems that Moran's message in *How to Be a Woman* is that in 'as' performances such as playing gender roles people should play *less*. She contrasts it to 'is' performances in which people should play *more*. Among traditional 'is' performances are arts. Moran clearly separates art and life in her own journalistic writing. For instance, to the suggestion to present the celebrities whom she interviews from so-called 'human angle' Moran

answers: "I don't want my celebrities to be more human. Art should be an arena to reinvent and supersede yourself" (266). Another 'is' performance is fashion: "So much of this stuff is just for tableaux – not real life, I finally realised ... Fashion is for standing still and being photographed. Clothes, on the other hand, are for our actual lives" (214). By putting art and life in dialectic opposition, Moran wishes to create a clear-cut separation between them, which is similar to what Austin assumed when he first wrote about performatives in the 1950s.

As a conclusion, Moran brings her body extraordinarily close to the audience, both through the text and through the visual image. She attributes a political importance to her own personal experience by the implication that all females share the same physicality and therefore similar concerns attached to it. Moran's desire for clarity and a clear-cut separation between art and life might mark a broad change of performative values and hence a possible turn of the epoch of postmodernism into post-postmodernism. This desire for clear borders between life and art is revealed in the tendency to *play less* when it comes to the embodied behaviour and playing gender roles and to *play more* when it comes to the art of writing as means of verbalisation of the instances of the embodied behaviour. Finally, by showing that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century women have to reevaluate their feeling of inequality with men, Moran inaugurates an important shift in thinking about female existence and identity which relies not upon discursive norms of patriarchy, but rather seeks an interpretation of how females' traditionally silent body problems can be verbalized for us all to be called humans across the genders.

## **Concluding remarks**

This study has explored four autobiographical texts featuring their authors' photographic images on the printed book covers. As soon as photography enters the narrative of an autobiography, it becomes implicated in articulations of embodiment. The reading of the photographic image informs the reading of the autobiographical text. In turn, the reading of the text is a search for the answers to the questions of embodiment's visuality, performance and spectatorship. Importantly, the book cover assists the text in the process of constructing the autobiographical 'truth'.

The self-presentation of the bodily in autobiography is two-fold because the photographic image of the author combined with the text constructs the autobiographical 'truth' together. When the autobiographical text is placed in combination with the author's photographic image, the verbal text agrees to photographic connotations of authenticity. Therefore, it can, along with the photography, serve as 'a certificate of presence' of the author. Moreover, the general audience's illusion of getting the unconditional truth from the autobiographical text is reinforced by the perceived trustworthiness of the photographic image on its cover. Had the book cover been different, the audience would perceive the autobiographical text differently.

In the analysed autobiographies, there are two ways for the authors to present themselves: as the narrator of the text and as the subject visualised on the book cover. An up-to-date photography is the materialisation of the mature narrating voice of the text. The significance of the fact that it is the mature persona who is the face on the book is substantial. First, due to its iconic nature, the photographic images verify the present visual appearances of the authors, thus anchoring the viewers' visual connotations with the celebrities from the public sphere. Second, since the cultural meaning of photographs is derived from their indexical meaning as a trace of the real, the up-to-date photographs tie the photographed subjects to our time. Thus, both the narrating voice and the subject on the photograph, which visualises this voice, signify a cause-result connection between the past and the present. The past presented verbally, the present presented visually are bounded in the consequent unity of one book, the intermedial features of which are to be decoded in the mind of the reader.

The analysis shows that both visual and verbal performances create similar distance (literal and metaphorical) and a similar level of intimacy between the performer and the audience. The ability of the author's performance to create trust in the audience apparently

steers the effect of intimacy. The effect of visual intimacy seems to be at its strongest first, when the psychological distance between the photographed subject and the viewer is shortened to the minimum, and the subject's face comes into focus by being placed in the visual centre. This is especially valid for a close shot that signifies intimacy of relationship between the viewer and the photographed subject by presenting the subject from close personal distance of the viewer (Moran). Second, common signs of body language and facial expressions are important ice-breakers, such as the direct gaze (all four authors), 'nothing-to-hide' proud body posture (Mullis), chin forward (Mullis, Moran) and an open smile (Grant). Third, most authors use also their specific body performance codes, the significance of which becomes clear in the aftermath of reading the text (Grant's bare feet). Forth, the high modality of the image can help to create intimacy as it might move the scale of viewers' 'true versus imaginary' associations towards true (Grant, Fry). The so-called make-believe visual performance, when the performance is stylistically neutral and 'life-like', is seemingly the most persuasive one in terms of creating the audience's trust (Fry).

The effect of verbal intimacy is in part created by the autobiographical 'pact', which is the promise of staying true to the reading audience. Verbal intimacy with the reader seems to be at its strongest when the author reveals the details of his/her private body life. These kinds of details may be, for instance, Fry's revelation of his homosexuality and of his mental misbalance, as well as Mullis's confessions of using drugs and of promiscuity and Moran's vivid descriptions of menstruation and abortion. However, these revelations are only one step towards gaining the audience's trust. As Fry clarifies, the second step can be the author's self-explanation, because it is rarer and bigger than mere self-revelation. Besides, the use of non-censored language and a good portion of humour (Moran, Fry, and Mullis) might bring the relaxing feeling of everydayness and informality to the author's admissions.

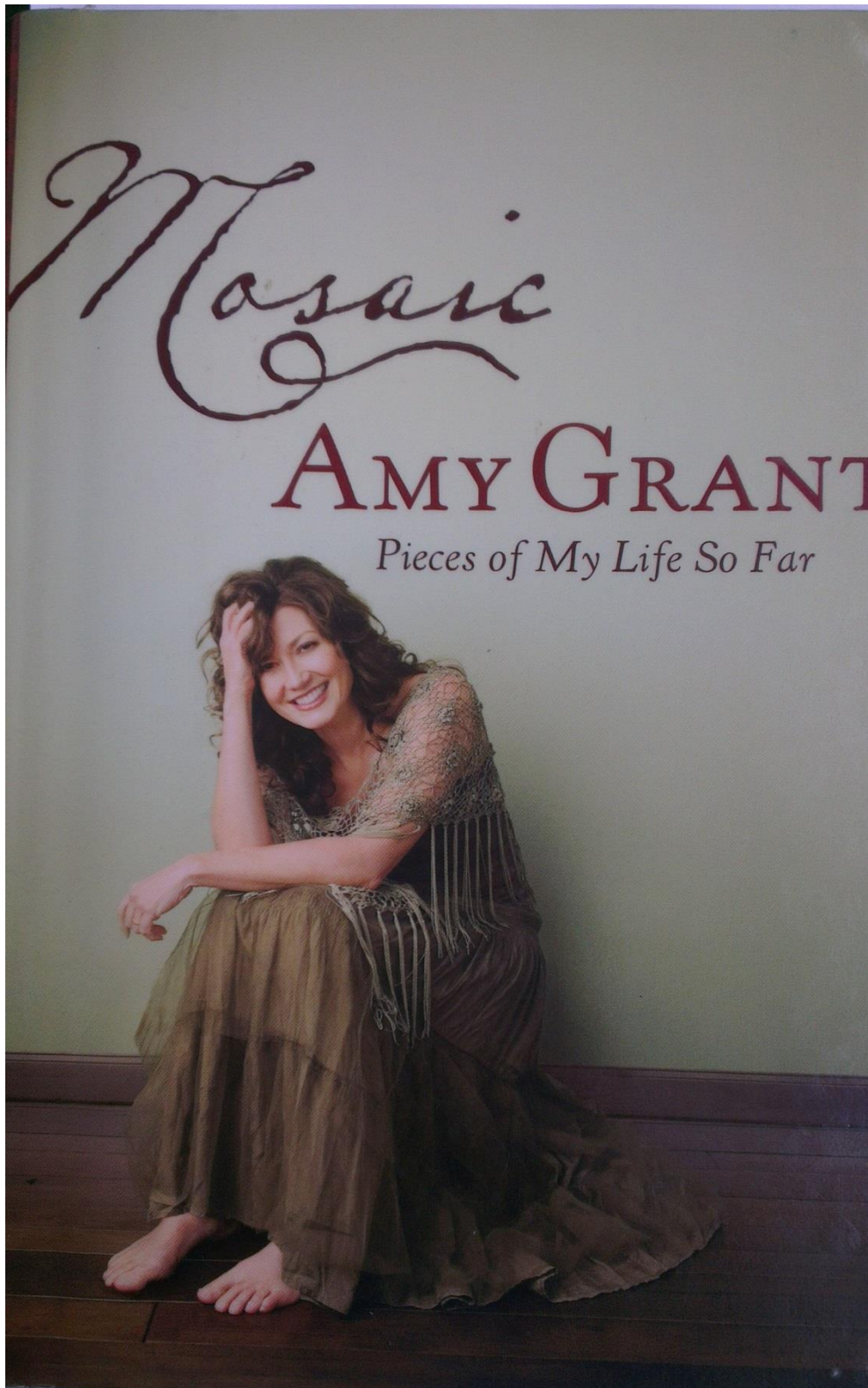
That a text can function 'as' performance allows me to compare it with another kind of 'as' performance, the photographic image on the book cover. Ideological analyses of both 'body performances' reveal strong similarities in the methods of expressions of the bodily. These similarities may include, for instance, Mullis's egocentrism, nonconformistm and sexual appeal expressed both verbally in the text and visually on the cover. Both verbal and visual sides of Grant's self-portrait can be interpreted as materialisations of Christian values in her life. Moran's self-assured and daring body pose is coherent with the courageous expressions of the body issues in the verbal part of the book. Even the discrepancy between the calm and balanced visual appearance of Fry's book cover and its tormented verbal inside

is seemingly a reflection of what Fry himself describes as the distressing discrepancy between his own body's composed appearances and very unstable emotional 'inside'.

Conclusively, the combined analysis of the performances shows that the emotional status of the audience can be influenced by establishing intimacy. Ultimately, intimacy created by the two media together seems to enhance both the effect of autobiographical 'truth' and the effect of photographic 'truth'. The text and the image mutually reinforce each other. Consequently, the issues of embodiment may gain more credibility when they are supported by the two media simultaneously.



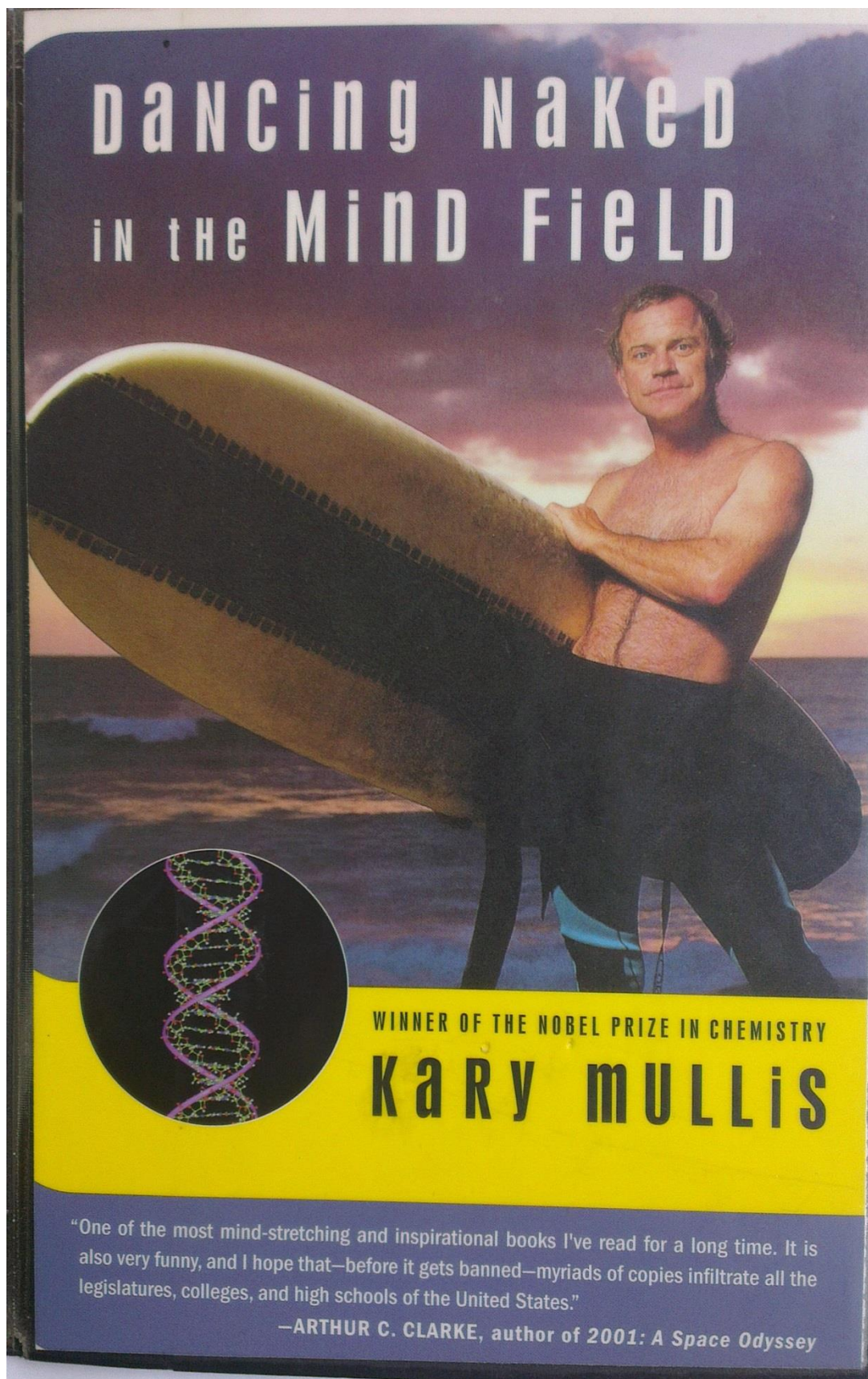
**Fig. 1: Book cover view of *Mosaic: Pieces of My Life So Far* by Amy Grant**



Cover design by Rex Bonomelli

Cover photographs by Deborah Feingold

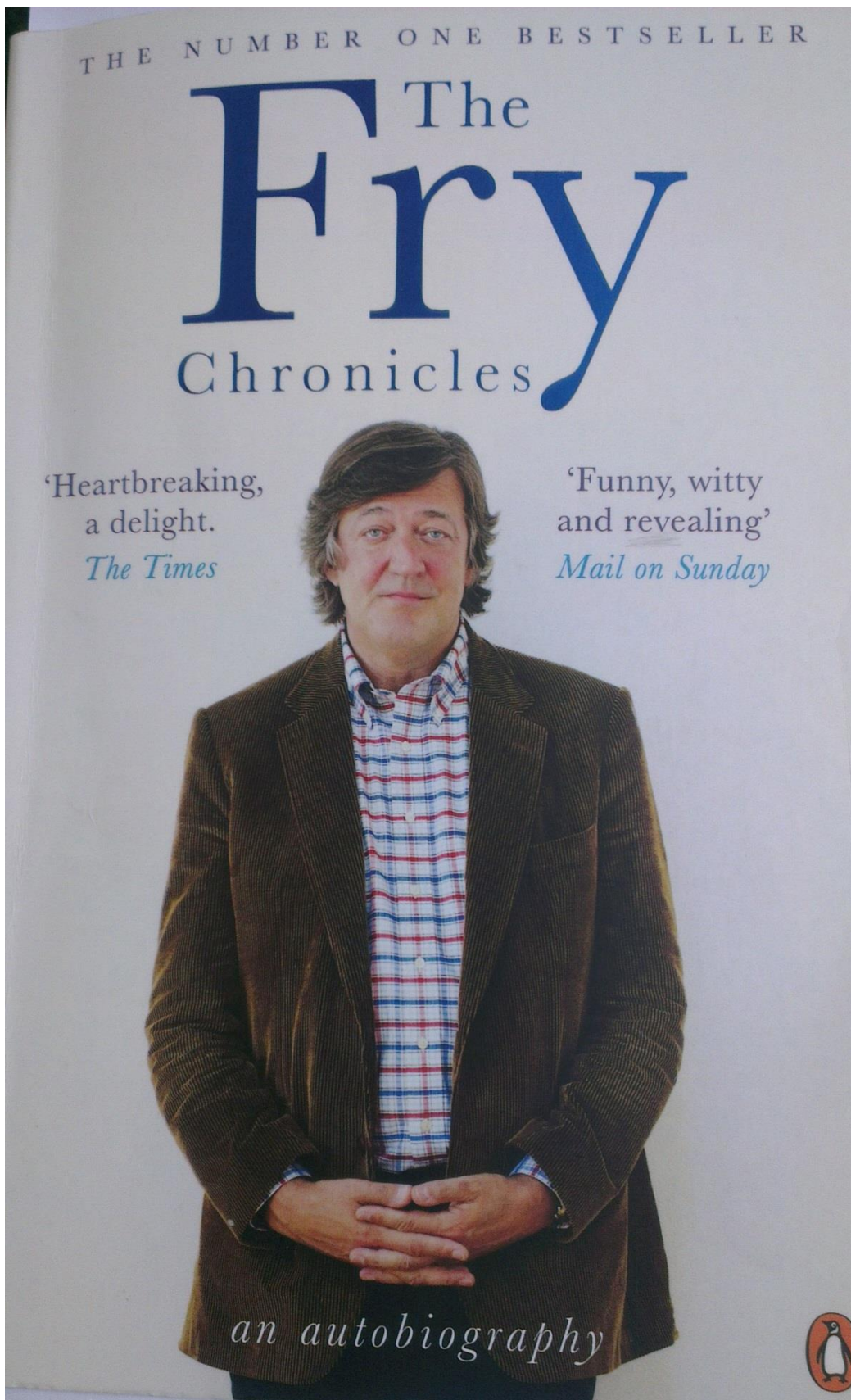
Fig. 2: Book cover view of *Dancing Naked in the Mind Field* by Kary Mullis



Cover design by Julie Duquet



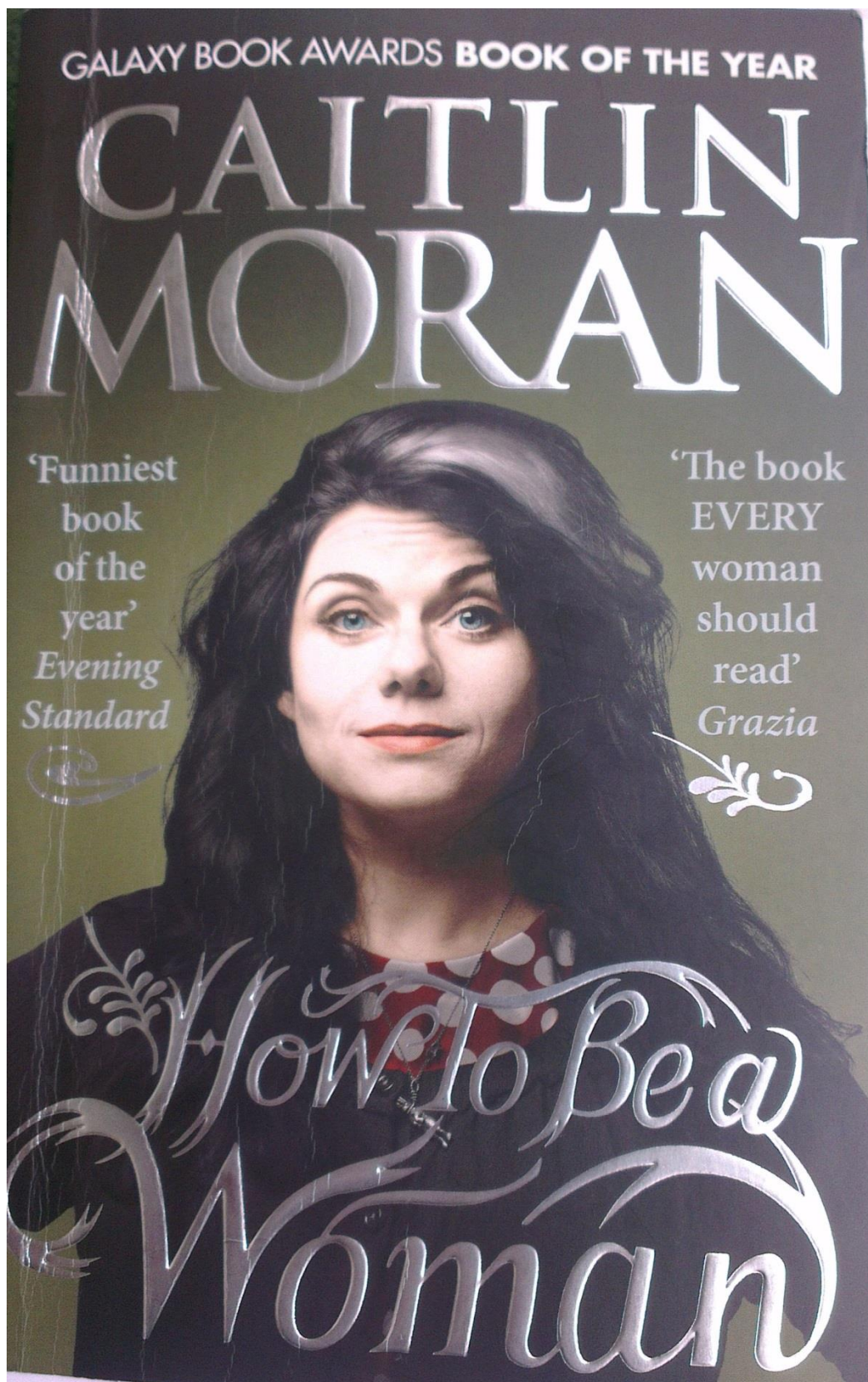
Fig. 3: Book cover view of *The Fry Chronicles* by Stephen Fry



Cover photograph by David Eustace



Fig. 4: Book cover view of *How to Be a Woman* by Caitlin Moran



Cover photograph by Chris Floyd

Cover designed by Two Associates

## Works cited

### Primary Sources

Fry, Stephen. 2010. *Fry's Chronicles*. London: Penguin Books, 2011. Print.

Grant, Amy. *Mosaic: Pieces of My life So Far*. New York: Doubleday/Flying Dolphin Press, 2007. Print.

Moran, Caitlin. 2011. *How to be a Woman*. Ebury Press, 2012. Print.

Mullis, Kary. *Dancing Naked in the Mind Field*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1998. Print.

### Secondary Sources

Adams, Timothy Dow. "Introduction: Life Writing and Light Writing; Autobiography and Photography." *Modern Fiction Studies* 40.3 (1994): 459-492. Web. 28 Jan. 2013.

Arnheim, Rudolf. *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye. The New Version*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1997. Print.

Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962. Print.

Barthes, Roland. "The Photographic Message." *A Barthes Reader*. Ed. Susan Sontag. Vintage, 1993. Print.

Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution." *Theatre Journal* 40. 4 (1988): 519-31. Web. 14 Jan. 2013.

Chandler, Daniel. *Semiotics for Beginners*. UWA, 1994. Web. 15 May, 2013  
<<http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/semiotic.html> [2013-05-15]>

Eakin, Paul John. *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999. Print.

G nette, Gerard. *Paratexts: Thresholds to Interpretation*. Cambridge University Press, 1997. Print.

- Kress, Gunther, and Theo van Leeuwen. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- Lejeune, Philippe. "The Autobiographical Pact." *On Autobiography*. Ed. Paul John Eakin. Trans. Katherine Leary. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989. Print.
- Leeuwen, Theo van. "Towards a Semiotics of Typography." *Information Design Journal + Document Design* 14.2 (2006): 139-155. Web. 12 Dec. 2012.
- Melberg, Arne. "Photos, Fiction and Literature." *Changing Borders: Contemporary Positions in Intermediality*. Ed. Jens Arvidson et al. Lund: Intermedia Studies Press, 2007. Print.
- Ngoshi, Hazel Tafadzwa. "When the Written and Visual Texts Collide: Photographic Images and Arts of Memory in Zimbabwean Autobiography." *Scrutiny2: Issues in English Studies in Southern Africa* 17.2 (2012): 55-66. Web. 19 Jan 2013.
- Rambsy, Howard II. "Re-presenting Black Boy: The Evolving Packaging History of Richard Wright's Autobiography." *Southern Quarterly* 46:2 (2009): 71-83. Web. 25 Jan. 2013.
- Rodriguez, Lulu, and Daniela V. Dimitrova. "The Levels of Visual Framing." *Journal of Visual Literacy* 30.1 (2011): 48-65. Web. 25 Jan. 2013.
- Rugg, Haverty Linda. *Picturing ourselves: Photography and Autobiography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. Print.
- Schechner, Robert. *Performance Studies: an Introduction*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. *Reading autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001. Print.
- Solso, Robert L.. *Cognition And the Visual Arts*. The MIT Press, 1996. Print.
- Sturken, Marita, and Lisa Cartwright. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford University Press, 2009. Print.
- Warr, Tracey and Amelia Jones. *The Artist's Body*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Phaidon Press Limited, 2012. Print.