Secrets, shame and forgiveness in celebrity culture and literature

Jacqueline Swift

Edith Cowan University

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Secrets, Shame and Forgiveness
in Celebrity Culture and Literature

by

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Bachelor of Letters (Hons), Deakin
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Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy (Writing)
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Abstract

This thesis comprises a novel written for a general readership and an accompanying essay, both of which explore secrets and lies, shame and guilt, and confession and forgiveness in relation to celebrity culture and literature.

The novel, ‘Ophelia’, explores the notion that, beneath the surface of many lives, there may be thoughts and events people are ashamed of and wish to keep hidden. The revelation of secrets can have both expected and unexpected consequences. The novel focuses on the experiences of a woman who creates different identities and lives vastly different lifestyles at different times. When exposed, she must confront her shame and loss and ask others for forgiveness. The novel depicts the effects of her concealment on a small group of characters whose identities and relationships are challenged by her revelations. It questions the role of ‘truth’ in relationships and why people lie, including to those they claim to love, and it asks whether love can exist alongside lies, and to what extent it is possible to know another person. In addition, it examines different modes of celebrity, the role of the media in exposing celebrity scandals, and audience expectation and ambivalence in response to public confession.

The essay discusses the genesis and development of ‘Ophelia’ together with critical literature relevant to its key themes—keeping secrets and telling lies; shame, confession and forgiveness; and celebrity culture, including the relationship of celebrity and fan and the role and impact of the media, especially during a scandal. The essay refers to contemporary and historical examples of celebrity scandal, fabrication and confession, including the stories of two stars from the ‘golden age’ of Hollywood.

I propose that characters in novels are not forgiven as readily as celebrities, and that cultural and sexual transgression by a female character often results in her isolation, death or both. Three novels were chosen as case studies: Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, William Styron’s *Sophie’s Choice* and Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*. Each has a female protagonist who is or becomes a mother and who
carries a burden of secrets and shame. The novels, set in different countries, published in different eras and representing different cultural contexts and expectations, nevertheless share an interest in shame as a potent form of control.

My review of selected literature and celebrity culture suggests that the act of confession is essential to an individual’s concept of self. Confession is fraught as ‘truth’ is hard to speak and to hear. Differences between guilt and shame affect the ability to confess and the likelihood of forgiveness. Guilt arises from a person’s acts, whereas shame concerns who a person is or considers themselves to be, which makes both confession and forgiveness more complex propositions. An important aspect of confession is that it links to the confessor’s desire to find or regain a place in society, although that society might also be revealed as prejudiced, superficial, paradoxical, intolerant or unjust. Novels depicting experiences of guilt and shame can serve to illuminate and interrogate identity formation together with specific cultural beliefs and practices.
The declaration page
is not included in this version of the thesis
Acknowledgements

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Ophelia
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Critical essay: Secrets, Shame and Forgiveness in Celebrity Culture and Literature
Introduction


The novel ‘Ophelia’, like most others, has a complex genesis, emerging from past and present musical influences, life experiences and research conducted specifically to assist its production. For example, I am a reader, a writer and a fan. I am part of the Australian Countdown generation, which grew up on a weekly diet of Molly Meldrum and mimed studio music and saw the advent of the music clip, tracing its development into a new artistic genre. I was devoted to Queen and, on the strength of ‘Bohemian Rhapsody’, bought their back catalogue. In the 1970s battle between Sherbet and Skyhooks, I was firmly in the Skyhooks camp, finding Darryl Braithwaite and his band too ‘sweet’. Ironically, given how little I liked Sherbet, it was Darryl Braithwaite’s enduring presence on the Australian rock and roll scene that caused me to wonder what happens to rock and rollers once their star has faded.

I was also intrigued by the number of secrets that were revealed by celebrities, including Freddie Mercury’s admission, just before his death in 1991, that he had AIDS, and that Elton John’s brief marriage was revealed as a sham designed to shift attention away from his rumoured homosexuality. In 1995, Hugh Grant was embroiled in a sex scandal with a prostitute, Divine Brown. Robert Downey Jr was arrested several times between 1996 and 2001 for drug-related offences, even serving time in jail. Both actors suffered from the exposure of their secrets and the subsequent humiliation of their confessions but went on to improved success at the box office. Both men sinned, confessed, apologised, and were emphatically forgiven. According to Ben Child (2014) in The Guardian, Downey Jr was the highest earning actor in Hollywood. William Langley (2014), in The Telegraph, noted that Hugh Grant remained ‘Britain’s most bankable actor’.

As a reader, I became explicitly drawn to liars in 1985 when reading Peter Carey’s Illywhacker, the story of a 139-year-old liar and chancer. Over time I became aware that much of what I was reading, either by choice or because of my work as an English teacher, was about characters who keep secrets and tell lies. It seemed to me from reading novels such as Great Expectations by Charles Dickens and Atonement by Ian McEwan, and plays such as Macbeth by William Shakespeare and Radiance by Louis Nowra, that secrets and lies are often depicted in literature and that
frequently the revelation of the secret results in trauma for the characters, and sometimes death, but very rarely, if ever, a happy outcome.

Even events that seem incidental or peripheral might influence fiction. A funny but true incident that occurred when I lived in Darwin also plays a part in this project. In the 1990s, a television newsreader was a popular local celebrity whose main claim to fame before coming to Darwin was that he had been a swimmer who competed at the 1968 Mexico Olympics. During the lead-up to the 2000 Sydney Olympics many former Olympians came to Darwin: one suggested that the newsreader was not being truthful and an investigation exposed him as a fraud. He left the city in shame. In isolated Darwin, he could be whoever he wanted, but even Darwin was not far enough away from the rest of the world for him to keep his secret.

Several questions came to underpin this thesis:

- What might be the fate of an ordinary girl from Tasmania who becomes a rock star – like the one I, and no doubt many others, dreamed of being while watching Countdown? What if she descended into the ‘dark side’ of celebrity excess and lost her moral compass?
- Might it be possible to construct a new identity in an isolated city and thereby keep a shameful past at bay?
- Secrets and confessions appear to be an integral part of the literary landscape: how might I create a work of fiction that explores both in relation to celebrity? If they confess and seem genuinely sorry, it seems celebrities are forgiven. In literary depictions of confession, forgiveness appears less likely and may have tragic consequences. What fate might be appropriate for my protagonist?

This thesis, comprising a novel and essay, addresses such questions.

According to Kevin Brophy, fiction is on a quest to ‘speak of the personal, the inconsequential, the embarrassing, the normally hidden – to break the rules of any code constraining any discourse ... to give order and confusion a voice’ (1998, p. 4). ‘Ophelia’ speaks of the personal and the hidden through its exploration of secrets and lies, confession and forgiveness. Like Brophy, I consider the novel is an important means by which literate cultures learn about and re-imagine themselves. I proposed to write a novel that would explore the notion that, beneath the surface of many lives, there may be thoughts and events people are ashamed of and wish to keep hidden. I wished to investigate how the revelation of secrets can have both expected and unexpected consequences. I wished also to interrogate the different experiences of
literary characters and real-world celebrities in relation to confession and forgiveness. Many authors speak of writing as a process of discovery wherein they find out what they think by reading what they write: subscribing to this, I wished to be guided by key questions but also to adopt a practice-led methodology, in that the creative task would drive the critical explorations which would fold back onto the creative enterprise. I would, as Margaret Atwood describes it, enter the darkness of writing ‘with luck to illuminate it, and to bring something back out into the light’ (2002, p. xxiv).

‘Ophelia’ poses questions about the role of ‘truth’ in relationships, and asks why people lie, including to those they claim to love. It asks whether love can exist alongside lies, and to what extent it is possible to know another person. The novel depicts what happens to a small group of characters when one long-held secret is revealed, challenging their identities and relationships.

This introduction discusses the thesis methodology, indicating that several types of research were used to produce the novel. Furthermore, research for this essay enabled production of the novel by providing a wealth of historical, geographic and cultural detail to draw on, while theoretical research has also underpinned a key aim of the thesis, which is to contribute to literary and scholarly discourses on Western celebrity and the role of expanded media and technology since the 1980s. In this chapter, I also briefly discuss some rhetorical aspects of ‘Ophelia’, including structure, setting and the challenge of authenticity.

Camilla Nelson proposes that ‘the central attraction of the exegetical component of the research degree [is] ... to situate that work within a culture, and elaborate the potential knowledges, or interventions in knowledge, to which the work gives rise’ (Nelson, 2008). My interest in celebrity, secrets, and exposure is shared by novelists such as Iain Banks (1987) in Espedair Street, Nick Hornby (2009) in Juliet Naked, and Monica Ali (2010) in Untold Story. Espedair Street and Juliet Naked deal with rock and rollers who hide from the limelight for many years and whose true identities are suddenly revealed causing complications for them and their loved ones. Untold Story is a ‘what-if’ scenario allegedly about Princess Diana, speculating about how a well-known figure might disappear and the consequences of that action. Reading these novels informed my depiction of similar events, such as the revelation of the true identity of the protagonist, how the celebrity had hidden away, and the reason for his/her wanting to hide.
However, ‘Ophelia’ was also inspired by my reading of three novels that explore a female character in relation to secrets, shame, confession and forgiveness: *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy (2002), *Sophie’s Choice* by William Styron (2000) and *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy (1997). I discuss these three works and their connection to ‘Ophelia’ in chapter three.

‘Ophelia’s’ contribution to fiction relates partly to its setting, for it is, in large measure, set in Darwin in the early twenty-first century, a place not often depicted in Australian fiction and remote from obvious centres of culture and celebrity such as London, New York, and Sydney; a place that, arguably, figures in the Australian imagination mostly as a site bombed during the Second World War and devastated by Cyclone Tracey in 1974, but which might be more accurately or helpfully envisioned as a dynamic space of personal and social re-invention and cultural and ethnic diversity. In addition, by its exploration of a character’s disconnecting (almost entirely) from a previous (famous) life, the novel suggests the possibility of living a ‘lie’, of fabricating an identity and, by so doing, depicts gender and ‘the self’ as substantially constructible, that is, identity as performance. The protagonist of the novel, Jen Lightfoot, feels most alive when on stage in London as JJ Darkness, having left her Tasmanian heritage and familial ties behind, along with the name on her birth certificate, Jennifer Harkness. The self proves fluid and only later does Jen’s ‘dark’ self come into conflict with her ‘light’ and subsequent performance as wife/mother/gallery owner/friend/respected member of the Darwin community. By means of shifting the protagonist’s identities, the novel is able to illuminate both ordinary and celebrated identities to suggest that, when secrets are exposed and forgiveness sought, celebrities might be granted forgiveness that is withheld in ‘real life’ and markedly absent in some novels. Jen remains alone and unforgiven by other characters – former loved ones – in the novel’s the final scene, although, to avoid too dark an ending, I allowed a small shaft of light to expose her once more. It shines on her retreating figure while she is watched by a husband who must continue to choose whether or not to forgive her. In confession, considerable power rests with the listener, the one who can grant or withhold forgiveness, the one who can set the terms for atonement, like penance, should they choose to.

This study embraces several disparate areas, as is often the case for novelists. As for Tess Brady, I found that ‘I needed to acquire a working rather than specialist knowledge, not in one area but in a range of areas and disciplines’ (Brady, 2000).
This is a key challenge for creative arts candidates, for one must explore a range of information and theories in relation to developing a work of fiction.

My proposal was to mine personal experience of place (London and Darwin), of musical era (the 1980s), and of marriage and motherhood. While I needed to review pertinent literature, as for a ‘traditional’ thesis, I also kept a scrapbook of articles on secrets, celebrity, and rock and roll from local (UK) newspapers and magazines, which then informed the writing of the novel. I searched for and read novels that seemed relevant for their subject matter, while also analysing many others for their style and technique. During this process some themes emerged as more significant than others, in particular the complexities of shame and guilt, and the influence of celebrity culture on learning and behaviour in contemporary Western democracies.

Consequently, this essay focusses on key developments in celebrity culture, especially in relation to celebrity scandals and celebrity rehabilitation in response to scandal, and on three influential novels that explore shame, motherhood and the desire for forgiveness.

The process of creating the novel and the critical essay can be figured as a spiraling helix: entwined, the two parts of the study, novel and essay, move up and around each other, sometimes touching, overlapping, sometimes apart, but always moving onwards, even if agonisingly slowly at times. Both parts of the study occasionally stalled and had to be restarted as I moved from one to the other. This moving among creative, theoretical and expository modes enriched the creative writing process and deepened my understanding of the imbrication of practice and theory. This convoluted forward motion, described by Hazel Smith as the ‘iterative cyclic web’, moved the project towards tentative answers to the catalyst questions. I have, as Smith describes it, worked in a ‘productive schizophrenic’ (2011) mode, using traditional and creative arts research methods to inform my analysis of drafts of ‘Ophelia’, which resulted in extensive rewriting and revision, while the emerging creative work consistently sparked further research. It seems possible to see early drafts as experiments in style and content; I experimented with different versions until the variables appeared to come together satisfactorily. As Smith and Dean (2011) observe, ‘the creator must choose between the alternative results created by the iteration, focusing on some and leaving others behind … in a practice phase the choice might be aesthetic, technical or ideological or somewhat random’ (p. 19).
In an interview with Candida Baker for her *Yacker* series of interviews with Australian writers, Peter Carey describes his writing method for *Illywhacker* as ‘a bit like cantilevering, where I go about forty pages, lose confidence and scurry back, then do another sixty and go back again. I keep on going back to make my base more secure’ (1986, pp. 54-77). This describes my method in relation to producing, revising and editing text, and it also makes sense in terms of the movement between the creative component of the study and scholarly and other types of research that occur at different sites. Thus I wrote sections of the novel, focusing on character, plot, dialogue and scene, and then took breaks to read articles on celebrity or theories of shame, histories of rock and roll, or theories of creative writing, or reviews and literary criticism about novels I was reading, and so forth, before returning to revise the novel and produce new material. For example, feedback indicated that my characterisation of Jen, especially as an ex-rock and roll princess, was not convincing. Hence I read about women in rock and roll, specifically Jo Wood (2013) and Marianne Faithfull (2008) to make her characterisation more authentic. After reading theories on shame I revised sections to inform Jen’s behaviour with regard to how people behave in the wake of shameful experiences, as noted by Probyn (2005) and Goldberg (1991). Carey’s points about researching a novel concur with my experience of writing ‘Ophelia’, in that specific research moments can be difficult to specify.

I did a lot of research along the way, but much of what *feels* research is actually made up and vice versa. I suppose I did a lot of reading around the sorts of things I was interested in … A lot of the stuff about aeroplanes and cars for instance are family stories I grew up with and I just needed to bone up on the odd technical detail. There’s probably less research than there seemed in one way, but in another every book I chose to read during that time has something to do with *Illywhacker*. (pp. 54-77)

Carey’s description of research accords with Milech and Schilo’s ‘Research-Question Model’, which ‘acknowledges that research is always entailed in creative production’ and that in ‘defined circumstances, creative production *is* research’ (2004, p. 7). Milech and Schilo contend that the advantages of the Research-Question Model, which implies a ‘quest for knowledge through creative problem solving’ (p. 8), is that
it explains to students what research is and importantly it allows them to define their topic, which one presumes is their passion, as a research question. This allows them ‘to investigate how that topic/question has been variously addressed by artists, producers and theorists’ (p. 7). The advantage of this method is that it frees students ‘to research a single question in two languages’ (p. 8). The model also allows for research to be seen as ‘formed and informed by a nexus between doing, making, writing and reflecting’ (p. 9). Greg Nash (2011) supports this idea in ‘The creative writing kaleidoscope’, which explores ways in which the objective (exegesis) and subjective (creative outcomes) influence each other, suggesting that ‘this process should be in constant flux between objective and subjective to achieve the optimal outcome’. Perhaps it is too much to separate the two forms within creative degrees into simple terms such as ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’, given that the nature of the exegesis is that it too is part of a tentative searching for answers, even with its emphasis on research and theoretical explorations of ideas. Nevertheless, Nash’s ideas link to Smith’s iterative cyclic web and also complement Milech and Schilo’s model. What resonates most is Nash’s purpose in completing his doctoral degree in writing, that he ‘wanted to reach that wider audience where [his] themes and discourses, presented as fiction, but informed by academic research, could have an impact on a potentially much larger readership than would not otherwise be exposed to those ideas’.

‘Ophelia’ is written as a work of general fiction, perhaps best suited to the growing area of women’s fiction given its female protagonist and exploration of motherhood and relationships. In situating ‘Ophelia’ as general/women’s fiction it can be characterised as a work that is intended to be eloquent and accessible, character and plot driven, pacey and relevant to current social concerns, rather than emphasising innovations in structure or language.

After growing up in conservative Hobart, Jen Harkness spends nearly six years in an exciting and amoral world where anything goes – 1980s London. At the end of that time she commits an act considered taboo and morally questionable by giving away her baby to be raised by a woman with a drug addiction and mental health problems. Jen returns to Australia, makes a new life as a gallery owner in remote Darwin, marries and creates a family. She appears to accept a conservative lifestyle by becoming a parent and a patron of the arts. Despite what may be seen as
attempts to make amends, she is never free from the past and continues, in secret, to access and invest income derived from her record sales.

Several modes of fame and celebrity are explored in the novel: Jen, in her former life as rock and roll star, JJ Darkness; Jules, who still lives in the public eye, though not as famous as he once was; Molly, as the faded, somewhat resentful, has-been; Rupert, the up-and-coming star. The media is ever-present, in several forms, because of the inquiry into the murder of the journalist, Toni Amoretti, who discovers and promotes Ophelia, and her former lover Dave Collins, who epitomises the journalist pursuing a story to its bitter end, regardless of the consequences. There are references to the change in media coverage, from traditional reporting by journalists in print, in the hey-day of Ophelia, to Rupert’s use of the internet to share his music, and online fans sharing information about celebrities through fan clubs and chat-rooms.

As Jen is a character that is also a celebrity, parts of the novel presented some challenges: how much forgiveness is possible? Her grilling by Michael Parkinson is humiliating, which seems appropriate as characters need to suffer and cannot be easily forgiven. However, there is a suggestion that when she appears on The Oprah Winfrey Show, Jen, the celebrity, finds forgiveness, even if this is only implied, not experienced, giving it less credence than her appearance on Parkinson. But, reflecting the idea that celebrities seem to be forgiven but characters are not, Jen, the wife and mother, does not find forgiveness in her life with Harry, even though it is suggested that may be possible with time.

The novel uses the third person, omniscient point of view. This type of narration allows flexibility, so that although Jen is the central character, other characters’ thoughts and motivations can also be depicted. This was especially useful in the opening chapters where I wished to convey other characters’ views of Jen, and to create a sense of mystery and intrigue about her. I experimented with this approach after re-reading F Scott Fitzgerald’s novel The Great Gatsby, where readers learn about Jay Gatsby from a variety of characters before meeting him. By positioning Jen from the outside, as the object of others’ views and opinions, I could suggest that in some ways she, even in her new life, is a construction of others’ needs and desires. This will not, of course, become evident until later in the novel when her former celebrity is revealed. The device allows me to suggest that we might have ideas about some people we know that are informed by our own needs, desires and prejudices.
Certainly people form opinions about and feelings towards celebrities without meeting and knowing them, but this might be an extreme version of commonplace tendencies. I decided to depict Jen in several situations before the reader became privy to her thoughts, which is again to replicate everyday circumstances where we cannot know anothers’ experiences and thoughts, apart from what they choose to reveal to us, and such revelations may be limited and subject to misinterpretation.

Clearly, Jen is no paragon, but if readers are to sympathise with her situation once her life starts to unravel, as intended, then I needed to employ strategies that would enable them to identify with her, to deem her fallible, even foolish, but not intolerably selfish or evil. In early drafts she simply presented as cold. Thus, in later drafts, scenes showing her interactions with family and friends were developed to highlight her ordinary, caring personality and love for her family. She is often depicted preparing food or doing things for others, taking on traditional female roles – cook, nurturer, patron, trusted friend, loving mother, faithful wife. This emphasis on the ordinary nature of her existence in Darwin will later contrast dramatically with her secret and scandalous past.

Once her status as an former rock and roll princess is revealed, further challenges arise in terms of eliciting and retaining the readers’ sympathy; to some extent the novel requires them to suspend judgment in a way that the novel’s characters cannot possibly be expected to do. Thus I read more closely about females within the music industry, including Jo Wood’s autobiography, *It’s Only Rock ’n’ Roll*, which is about her life with Ronnie Wood, guitarist with The Rolling Stones. Although not a performer, she had been a model and enjoyed some fame before her relationship with Wood. Her observations were insightful, confirming the highly sexist nature of the industry, the egos of performers, and the disparity between their lives and the lives of most of their fans (Wood, 2013). Marianne Faithfull, once Mick Jagger’s girlfriend and a former lover of Keith Richards, influenced Jen’s characterisation as rock and roll chanteuse. Faithfull’s autobiography, *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*, depicts the struggles of fame, especially when one is young, beautiful, and attracted to drugs and sexual experimentation. Her comments on the ego of a performer are not unexpected: ‘everyone is a bit of an egomaniac in this biz … you’re bound to be. Otherwise you wouldn’t be doing this insane stuff in front of thousands of people’ (Faithfull, 2008, p. 192). Both works offer the perspective of mothers in this milieu, suggesting motherhood was not easy to manage. Both Faithfull
and Wood gave their eldest child to their parents for extended periods so that they could continue to live the rock and roll life.

The core of ‘Ophelia’ did not change a great deal during the six drafts, but finding the best way to tell the story became a significant challenge. This was due in part to the impact of the accompanying critical reading, but also, to an extent, to my preference for a structure that is not strictly chronological.

The structure of ‘Ophelia’ is intended to reflect Jen’s state of mind and situation during the events of the novel, hence the four parts of the novel. To find solutions to the challenge of structure I examined several novels that deploy a non-linear structure, including The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy (1997), which has a recursive structure melding past and present; A Visit from the Goon Squad by Jennifer Egan (2011), which has a series of stories with connecting characters at different times; and The Night Circus by Erin Morgenstern (2011), which provides two stories, from different characters, that are clearly linked but take some time to merge as one story. In the end, I found that Patrick Gale’s Notes on an Exhibition (2008) was best able to suggest a suitable shape for ‘Ophelia’. Gale’s novel examines many similar ideas – a famous person (in Gale’s novel) an artist with a secret past who also had a child who had grown up without knowing his true parentage. The novel’s structure, which is non-linear and non-sequential, gave me the courage to finalise the shape of Part Three of ‘Ophelia’, which shifts around in time and point of view, while still moving the story forward, allowing other characters’ points of view concerning Jen and her past to become clear. The danger is that readers may tire of the back-story but I determined that it provides the reader with necessary details and differentiates Jen’s past in London from the life she carefully forged in Darwin but which she risks losing. The time shifts reflect her confusion; physically removed from Darwin and back in London after two decades away, she feels the pull of memory as well as the tensions of the present, as she negotiates the media, the expectations of loyal fans, the needs of the son she gave away, the fears and desires of a past lover, and the venom of critics in person and online. This structure assists with characterisation, depicting her as a rock star, as she was in her youth and in the present, and it also provides a space to develop other key figures, such as Molly and Rupert, all of which helps to suggest that one may be capable of authentically producing more than one identity; Jen in London, past or present, is the same person the reader meets in Parts One and Two but she is also more than that person; the parts
of the novel expand the character rather than suggesting that she has become ‘other’ to her self or that the self she was in Darwin was inauthentic. The different parts of Jen’s life as JJ Darkness are intended to show her as complex and confused, as a naïve and increasingly reckless rock and roll princess, insecure and young, drifting in the wake of her mother’s death. It seemed important to depict her back-story in order to enhance the reader’s understanding of Jen’s actions and motives for giving away her son Rupert, and then later for keeping secrets from her husband Harry and her closest friends.

Like many famous people, Jen assumes a new name. It is accidental but never corrected. Her given name, Jen, or Jennifer, is common to signify her initial, and later re-claimed, ordinariness. JJ Darkness is a more striking moniker and Darkness can be seen as emblematic of her ‘blindness’ or lack of insight as a celebrity, as well as the exoticisation and sexualisation of female singers. Julian Flashman turns the light onto Jen along with the appropriately named Piers Dangerfield, and it is Julian’s talent and ostentation that she finds irresistible. The name Flashman has a literary heritage, appearing as a character in the novel *Tom Brown’s School Days* (1857) and as the eponymous hero of a series of books known as *The Flashman Papers* by George MacDonald Fraser. Flashman is a dubious hero – dashingly handsome in the tradition of romance fiction, but also a self-centred cad, an insatiable and irredeemable womaniser who is selfish to boot and seems to be a hero more by accident than design.

*Harry*, on the other hand, is an ordinary name. However, his family name *Lightfoot*, as Jen points out, is just as unusual as *Flashman*, which is fitting; aligning the two men in this way hints that Harry is not as blameless as he likes to think. In the early days of Australian settlement there were two bushrangers in NSW who went by the names of Thunderbolt and Lightfoot, who were eventually caught and hanged for their crimes. Jen chooses to take Harry’s name when she marries him, obliterating JJ Darkness and her father’s name, Harkness. Of course, Harry is no bushranger but he is, prior to Jen’s exposure, the spouse who has erred, betraying Jen’s trust by his affair with another woman. He also had a reputation as a ladies’ man in Darwin before Jen arrives in town, and is beloved of his female patients.

Naming the characters seemed to me an important step in suggesting their characters as well as Jen’s ties with the past she ostensibly seeks to evade; she does,
after all, name her daughters Ondine and Pearl, and her gallery is named after the band she made famous, Ophelia, as observed by Ondine’s friend, Cate, in the novel.

‘Ophelia’ is set in Darwin and London, two places I have lived and therefore know firsthand. I live currently in London, having left Darwin thirteen years ago, and called on friends still living there to verify some details, such as the names of cafés and events.

I drew extensively on newspaper articles published in the UK for inspiration and verification; for example, characterisation of the band’s bodyguard, Stefan Senjushenko, who becomes one of the super-rich Russian oligarchs who buy prime real estate in London, was inspired by news reports on the subject. It also seemed appropriate, as my thesis is about the relationship between celebrities and the media, to draw on articles and reports both online and in print about the celebrities I was examining for the study.

Living in London throughout the period of writing the novel gave me daily access to celebrity news. I collected articles in a scrap-book, including stories about...
Paul McCartney’s divorce from Heather Mills; cases about English footballers seeking super-injunctions to keep their secrets out of the media; Catherine Zeta-Jones’ ‘confession’ that she had bi-polar disorder; special concerts for the super-rich, where the likes of Rod Stewart performed; Tiger Woods’ infidelity and Lance Armstrong’s use of performance enhancing drugs. Such stories appeared in broadsheets, tabloids and glossy magazines, as well as via Twitter and in Facebook feeds. Celebrity stories, perhaps especially those involving their misdemeanors, help to sell magazines and newspapers.

Darwin is a multi-cultural city with people from Greece, China, and South East Asia, as well as Anglo-Celtic Australians and Aboriginals. The autobiographical stories in Under the Mango Tree, commissioned by the Northern Territory Writers’ Centre and collected by Peg Havnen, exemplify the rich mix of cultures and experiences: ‘My Grandfather was Filipino… My Grandmother was … Filipino, Malayan and Torres Strait Islander. My mother was born on Thursday Island. Her father was half-white, half-Maccasar’ (Havnen, 2001, p. 75).

Setting a novel in the Northern Territory, especially one that involves a woman who has given away her child, called for some acknowledgement of the Stolen Generations. From approximately 1909, various state governments of Australia decided that Aboriginal children of mixed race relationships could be gathered up and taken to settlements to be assimilated. The ‘Bringing Them Home’ Report (1997) records that ‘between one in three and one in ten Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities’ from 1910 to 1970’ (cited in Whitlock, 2001, p. 2). This practice has been seen as a form of genocide, ‘a systemic state policy of assimilation, designed to make the Aboriginal peoples “disappear”’ (Whitlock, 2001, p. 6).

Under the Mango Tree recounts many stories from the Stolen Generations, showing the fear of being taken – ‘my mother was always very frightened that they would come and take me away’ (Havnen, 2001, p. 7) – along with the sadness of the separation: ‘I still get upset to think about it … I thought it was going to be like a holiday … I never thought I wouldn’t see her again for all those years’ (p. 15). The stories in the collection are recounted in simple, direct prose with little self-pity. They are powerful and tell of great resilience and hence demonstrate the contradictory nature of Darwin.
My knowledge of the world of rock and roll stems from reading *Rock Australia Magazine* (RAM) and *Rolling Stone* and watching television shows such as *Countdown* and *Rock Arena* as a teenager. As part of my research I have listened repeatedly to music from the 1970s and 1980s to immerse myself in the feelings and musical style of the era. I watched old music clips and concerts on YouTube and television to observe matters such as clothing and costumes, hairstyles, audience behaviour, and performance techniques. I watched live concerts by Queen (Live at Wembley, 1986), the tribute concert to Freddie Mercury (1992), performances from the 1985 Live Aid concert and live concerts by Led Zeppelin (Earls Court, 1975, Live at Knebworth, 1979), as well as specific songs, such as ‘Stairway to Heaven’ and ‘Immigrant Song’. I also watched female performers such as Blondie and Bananarama, a band that influenced the idea of three female singers.

My knowledge was necessarily boosted by reading biographies of, and autobiographies by, musicians successful during the period from 1979 to 1985. I needed to have an inside, warts-and-all understanding of the rock and roll scene in order to make credible the character JJ Darkness and the world of the band, Ophelia, even if that world ended up mainly operating as back story. Generally, I chose to read texts about influential, high-earning, famous bands: Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, The Rolling Stones and Queen. Bob Geldof’s 1988 autobiography, *Is That It?*, was an important text in the genesis of the novel. I remain a big fan of Geldof, both of his music and charity work. Ideas for ‘Ophelia’ originated around Live Aid (1985) and being involved in the Band Aid single. Geldof’s autobiography was written not long after those historic events and is quite detailed. As I wanted my character, Jules Flashman, central to the Live Aid concert, it was necessary to read more around the event, so I read Midge Ure’s 2005 autobiography *If I Was ... The Autobiography*, as he co-wrote ‘Do They Know It’s Christmas?’ but was often overlooked in discussions about both record and concert. This fed into the idea of Jules being a ‘shadowy guy’ yet involved in it all.

Sadly, Geldof has remained in the celebrity spotlight for less admirable reasons, notably the deaths of his ex-wife Paula Yates in 2000, also a celebrity in her own right, and his daughter, Peaches, in 2014, both from heroin overdoses. His celebrity life is relevant to my study in terms of his being a rock and roller who maintains a high profile, although no longer as a musician. Interestingly, in terms of my novel, Paula Yates grew up believing her father was someone else and when the
secret was exposed it was played out in the media causing considerable shame and distress. Yates famously left Geldof for Australian rock star Michael Hutchence, who died under mysterious circumstances in 1997. Geldof’s life influenced many aspects of ‘Ophelia’.

![Figure 2: A selection of rock and roll literature](image)

An important writer of the 1970s and 1980s was Nick Kent, who wrote for the influential English music publication *New Musical Express* and contributed to *The Guardian, The Times* and *GQ*. His memoir, *Apathy for the Devil* (2010), and his collection of articles, *The Dark Stuff* (2007), provide insight into the lifestyles and creative approaches of many famous musicians. Kent’s work was interesting to calibrate against the biographies and autobiographies I was reading. His comments about Led Zeppelin’s violent and outrageous behaviour support stories in *Hammer of the Gods*, an unauthorised biography of the band written by Stephen Davis (2008). Noteworthy is the invitation by the band’s notorious manager, Peter Grant, to join the band on their tour plane in the USA after an unpleasant incident: “they’re very sorry … you’re still our ally” (Kent, 2010, p. 256). I used Led Zeppelin’s excessive behaviour to influence the creation of the band Ophelia. Peter Grant’s nature, being
both charismatic and frightening, influenced ideas about Jules and how he should be as manager of the band, able to get things done where others had failed. Kent’s behaviour and intimate relationships with musicians influences the creation of the fictional journalist Toni Amoretti.

An important part of research for the novel was the dynamic of an extremely successful rock band. In particular, I investigated the gap between what a fan sees on stage and what happens behind the scenes. Crucially, I needed to determine the genesis and dynamics of various bands, and for how songwriting partnerships generally work. Keith Richards’ autobiography, Life (2010), conveys the intensity of the rock and roll existence, how songs come into being, the impact of drugs and gruelling touring schedules, and love–hate relationships that seem part and parcel of relationships within many bands.

Chapter One, Readings, further surveys influential literature, but with a focus on critical and theoretical works exploring lies and secrets, shame and guilt, and confession and forgiveness.

Chapter Two, Stars, discusses secret keeping and revelation in celebrity culture, exploring what makes celebrity confessions compelling for many. How genuine are stars in their pursuit of forgiveness once their secrets are exposed? Is their primary motivation reclaiming their status, or do they speak with an authentic voice, as Peter Brooks (2000) claims is necessary for effective confession? I consider two stories from Hollywood, and focus on high profile celebrity confessions by Ellen de Generes, Tiger Woods and Lance Armstrong. In my discussion of celebrities and secrets I focused on two female stars (Merle Oberon and de Generes) but as there was considerable publicity and media discussion surrounding both Armstrong and Woods, who were caught in career changing scandals, during my study it seemed opportune to consider their situations. I also consider the impact of television talk shows like The Oprah Winfrey Show on confession as a cultural practice.

Chapter Three, Stories, argues that secrets and confession are an integral part of the literary landscape and suggests they may produce for readers some therapeutic benefit. This chapter refers to three novels with a female protagonist: Hardy’s Tess of the D’Urbervilles, Styron’s Sophie’s Choice and Roy’s The God of Small Things; each is set in a different country with different social, cultural and historical contexts.
Chapter One: Reading

Lies, secrets, guilt, shame and confession seem to be bound up in what it is to be human and, in today’s world, seem to be articulated through celebrity culture as well as through literature. This chapter provides an overview of some of the theoretical works that have influenced this project.

Secrets and Lies

Keeping secrets is about power, as secrets have power to change things, sometimes for the better, but also for the worse. Dorothy Rowe and David Livingstone Smith, who have published separate works entitled Why We Lie, believe that people keep secrets for good reasons, so that other people are not hurt, so that people can protect themselves and others. But a secret might also imply danger or pain, shame or guilt. Some things, it seems, should be hidden and, to keep that thing hidden, people create stories and lies.

Lies belong to literature, celebrity culture and real life. For Rowe (2010), telling lies is normal; it is a way of helping people to reconcile who they are. A lie can be defined as ‘words or actions intended to deceive other people or ourselves’ (p. 188). A small lie to protect others seems acceptable but big lies concerning who one is or is not, or about what one has or has not done, may cause lives and relationships to unravel. Champion golfer Tiger Woods was not the good guy and faithful husband his fans thought he was. His sexual infidelity caused his wife to leave him and several sponsors abandoned him. His golf suffered too. Seven-times Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong was finally exposed in June 2012, after years of investigation, as one of the biggest sports cheats of all time. Armstrong hid behind his charity and his ‘good guy’ persona. Livingstone Smith’s assertion that ‘when our desires conflict with the established order, we pursue them secretly, deceptively, and … often self-deceptively’ (2004, p. 166) helps to explain the behaviour of both men. Livingstone Smith proposes that self-deception lies at the core of our humanity (p. 3), and he points out that Sigmund Freud ‘placed self-deception (‘defence’ or ‘repression’) at the heart of his conception of human nature’ (p. 112). Ironically, self-deception enables people to lie sincerely, ‘to lie without knowing that [they] are lying’ (p. 76).

Perhaps the unpalatable truth about lies is that people tell them despite believing that they should be truthful. Livingstone Smith (2004) claims that choices
about what to reveal and what to hide are ‘based on an unconscious assessment of what is most likely to be advantageous in the politics of social life’ (p. 102). In all aspects of life – friendship, love, politics – people value honesty and truth. In other words, people want to trust the people in their lives and they believe that truth matters. But Rowe (2010) claims that ‘truth can cease to be important when the sense of being a person is at stake’ (p. 126). So people are able to turn a blind eye to the affairs of a spouse or a friend’s betrayal in order to maintain a valued identity as wife or husband or friend.

For many, telling lies is a matter of what you think you can get away with (Rowe, 2010, pp. 188-189). When people lie through silence, through refusing to comment on matters or in the service of a higher good or a principle, they can deceive themselves that they are not lying (p. 189). Even though ‘truth-telling works most of the time’ (Leslie, 2011, p. 38), telling the truth is not always simple or possible. People prefer not to be called liars and even when the ‘consequences of our lying can be such that it would have been better to tell the truth in the first place’ (p. 106), people still lie.

James W Pennebaker (1990) contends that ‘living a lie is living a life of inhibition’ (p. 127) and is a matter of regret. He postulates compassionate reasons to lie: ‘Ideally we should be able to express all our most intimate thoughts to someone. But we can’t … because what we say might deeply hurt their feelings or make us look bad in their eyes’ (p. 110). Ian Leslie (2011) notes the ‘powerful momentum of deceit … once a lie is told, it often requires another’ (p. 40). He regards it as important that children learn the self-destructive nature of lying sooner rather than later because if ‘a child is still lying habitually after the age of seven she (or he) will probably continue to do so for years to come’ (p. 40), supporting the belief that telling lies is wrong. The question of why people lie is more vexatious. Victoria Talwar suggests that children of divorcing parents ‘often resort to manipulative lying to assert some control over a situation in the face of which they would otherwise feel helpless’ (cited in Leslie, 2011, p. 40). The problem is exacerbated by the mixed messages children receive about lying. Children are usually exhorted to tell the truth, that lying is bad. But children note ‘that when they lie in certain circumstances, their parents applaud them for it, and adapt their behaviour accordingly’ (p. 46). Teenagers have complex attitudes to lying, which seem to hold for the majority of people. They don’t like to think of themselves as liars but admit to lying ‘for reasons of straight forward self-
interest – to avoid punishment, and to maintain a carefully managed image for … their parents’ (p. 47) as well as lying to avoid upsetting others. This seems to be the way people proceed through life. The truth is preferable, but lies are sometimes necessary in order to live with yourself and others.

Rowe supports these points, suggesting that people’s greatest need is to have relationships with others, and, because people fear being abandoned and rejected, they lie. But people are even more fearful that they will be overwhelmed by chaos (like the children of divorcing parents in Talwar’s study), and so lie to have control of their lives and of others (2010, p. 46). Rowe’s theory supports Pennebaker’s assertion that telling lies is about relationships with others. Rowe goes further in her belief that ‘the fear of being annihilated as a person is far worse than the fear of death’ (p. 50). It seems that this fear is the connection to secrets and why secrets are terrible to keep and devastating to reveal. Peter Brooks (2000) argues that the revelation or confession of a secret is about ‘the discovery of the most hidden truths about selfhood’ (p. 9). Lies, fear and shame align as we see that ‘fear itself can be a threat to the sense of being a person, especially when … [it is] revealed that you are not the person you thought you were’ (p. 55). The feeling of fear about being exposed to, and rejected by, those you love is strong, as the gap between the two versions of self is too much to risk sharing with others. However, Pennebaker (1990) proposes that the more people ‘openly talk about an issue, the less they obsess about it’ (p. 126). This assumes the secret-keeper is fully in control of the burdensome material yet this may not be so. Carl Goldberg (1991) observes that sometimes ‘conscious realisation of the secret is sensed to be so humiliating that they won’t allow themselves to discover how pervasively their uneasiness pervades their lives’ (p. 153). Yet the keeper of a secret ‘intuitively knows that unless his secret is revealed and understood by someone caring and wise, his life will be lived out in constriction and despair’ (pp. 168-169). A liar such as Jen Lightfoot in ‘Ophelia’ is, by this view, faced with the conflict of ridding herself of the burden of a secret and the need to keep it (p. 169). The liar who respects the truth and wishes to be loved is lost in a hopeless conundrum: can one tell the truth, rid oneself of the burden of a secret, yet remain loved?

**Shame and Guilt**

By the time I had finished a couple of drafts of the novel, my exploration of shame overtook my interest in why people tell lies, though certainly the two areas remain
connected throughout the study. Nussbaum (2004) argues that shame comes from the realization that one is weak and inadequate in some way where one expects oneself to be adequate (p. 183). Shame refers to the whole self, she points out, rather than resulting from a specific act of the self, about which one feels guilt. Shame is related to self worth, and Nussbaum says it is because one expects to have worth that a person will recoil from, or strive to cover, evidence of imperfection or lack of worth (p. 184). Our legal systems are based on guilt, on the idea that there is a separation between the person and the person’s act. Thus, Nussbaum claims, a person can be punished for their act, without their dignity as a person being compromised (p. 233), which seems to allow for rehabilitation and then reintegration into society once punishment has been meted out.

Various critics (Goldberg, 1991; Schneider, 1992; Nussbaum, 2004; Probyn, 2005) draw attention to the fact that the ability to feel shame indicates we are good people who know right from wrong and how to behave appropriately in society. Carl Schneider (1992) writes that shame ‘functions as a guide to a more authentic form of self-realization’ (p. xxi), as it limits the self and ‘bears witness to the self’s involvement with others’ (p. xxi). Shame, used appropriately and carefully, modifies individuals to conform to expected societal norms, which John Braithwaite found with restorative justice within Maori communities. Braithwaite argues that shaming an offender within a close community is an effective form of control as ‘individuals care deeply about what their family and friends think about them’ (cited in Probyn, 2005, p. 88). Braithwaite echoes Rowe’s theory that the desire to belong is an important factor in shaping behaviour. He considers an example of good shaming to be ‘feminism’s power to make men respect new laws about sexual harassment and rape’ (p. 93). However, shaming to conform to society’s norms would not work with many communities. Shaming certain groups within society is also a dangerous path to tread. Braithwaite is clear that shaming already damaged individuals may be lethal (p. 92). His claims about the positive outcomes of shaming are reliant upon ‘a conception of individuals and society in which respect and interdependence are integrated’ (p. 92). Unfortunately, his utopian views about shaming might be countered by the unlawful shaming of minority communities, which all too often demonstrates that ‘shame leads to self destructive behaviour’ (Goldberg, 1991, p. 18).

Goldberg claims that some people are more prone to shame than others. He believes that the root cause of shame can be laid at the door of early life and the
degree to which families and societies nourish primitive shame, subtly or explicitly shaping behaviour and attitudes, especially in relation to areas such as sexuality, risk-taking and attitudes to others. Here shame links with the role of mothering in Western societies. As Schneider points out, ‘the manifestations of shame – averting the eye, covering the face, blushing, hanging one’s head (1992, p. 30) are different to fear, and most theorists agree that ‘shame and blushing are meant to conceal, to cover that which is vulnerable to a perceived threat’ (p. 32).

Probyn (2005) asserts that an individual’s habitus will determine what is experienced as shame (p. 55) in the same way as childhood shapes what people feel as shame. Marcel Mauss highlights that the body is at once physiological, psychological and social: ‘As it hits us physiologically, shame triggers reactions in individual psyches and at a broader social level’ (cited in Probyn, 2005, p. 60). Nussbaum (2004) asserts that ‘shame causes hiding: it is also a way in which people hide aspects of their humanity from themselves’ (p. 296).

To hide aspects of herself, Jen from ‘Ophelia’ moves away from the scene of her shame. In leaving London and settling in remote Darwin she is able to hide from the world and, to an extent, from herself. By living in a new place, she is free of associations such as sites and people that would remind her of her shameful acts, her promiscuity and, most importantly, of relinquishing her son.

Shame is a two-edged sword. To fear shame and act to avoid it, thereby remaining valued by society, is not such a terrible thing; shame implies care about others. If, as Probyn (2005) suggests, people ‘use shame to re-evaluate how [they] are positioned in relation to the past and to rethink how [they] live in proximity to others’ (p. xiv), then shame potentially acts to enhance people’s lives and society. People seek to escape shame because it makes them feel bad, and in the modern world people feel entitled to feel good, but should feeling good be at others’ expense? Probyn claims that shame and fear are often connected. Her point that ‘shame, left unspoken, solidifies into a layer of intensity that never seems to go away’ (p. 47) supports Goldberg’s assertion that a ‘shameful experience is regarded as impossible to communicate and share effectively with another … leaving us isolated and frightened’ (1991, p. 94): this seems to connect to Rowe’s theory that people tell lies when they fear that telling the truth could result in their being abandoned.

Guilt is different from shame. Probyn (2005) claims it is ‘triggered in response to specific acts and can be smoothed away by an act of reparation’ (p. 45). She
considers guilt a temporary feeling, easily absolved. Shame, on the other hand, has many more ‘shades of difference’ and it has the power to revisit the person long after the experience of guilt has passed (p. 46). But feeling shame and choosing to behave in certain ways is not the same as fearing the processes and consequences of shaming. Probyn notes Tompkins’ view that shame is paired with humiliation and when ‘shame is white hot it also seems to mingle with fear and terror’ (p. 47). The experience of being shamed is to be feared and, given that a potent mix of shame, humiliation and fear might drive people to keep secrets and tell lies, it is unsurprising that novelists explore shame in fiction and journalists ‘expose the truth’ in the media. Thus, a novelist might also depict the shame and shaming of celebrities, for the higher the character’s status, the greater the reputation and the greater the stakes, the further the fall.

Figure 3: References and notes

Confession
Confession links more directly to guilt than to shame and, as Peter Brooks (2000) reminds us, seems to be a basic human drive: people wish to unburden their souls, to cleanse their sins and, in the case of criminal proceedings, mitigate their sentences (p.
A person’s desire to confess implies both guilt and the need to be rid of it, so they can live with themselves and with others. In *Troubling Confessions*, Brooks argues that modern secular confession is ‘fundamental to morality because it constitutes a verbal act of self-recognition as wrong-doer and hence provides the basis of rehabilitation’ (p. 2). He traces confession, as we know it, to the church of the thirteenth century that ‘both reflects and instigates the emergence of the modern sense of selfhood and the individual’s responsibility for his or her actions’ (p. 5).

Interestingly, Brooks contends that ‘our social and cultural attitudes towards confession suffer from uncertainties and ambivalences’ (p. 3). This is seen in reactions to confessions in the private lives of ordinary citizens and in staged celebrity confessions designed to clean the slate and start anew.

Confession is a process that requires as much from the listener as from the speaker. It must be freely given to a trusted listener who has the power to forgive or absolve. Pennebaker is clear about the detrimental effects of inhibition, that is, of suppressing thoughts, feelings or communication about traumatic events. His studies demonstrate that holding back can be damaging to one’s health. Pennebaker (1990) found that ‘central to true self-disclosure is an overriding sense of trust’ in the listener (p. 110), that there is a feeling of respect between the client and therapist, that no matter what is said, the therapist will not judge. The interaction between therapist and client is protected by confidentiality and the professional nature of the relationship. This type of confession more closely resembles the religious confessional, in which the priest listens but does not judge. The prevalence of psychotherapy – Freud’s talking cure – seems to indicate that many prefer a trained, professional and dispassionate listener, not quite a stranger, but not someone intimate. The professional psychotherapist is a safe listener because people do not want to burden those they love with things they think their loved ones might not want to hear. Their fears of rejection become irrelevant with a therapist who is equipped and paid to listen. Perhaps if Jen had used a therapist she would have been able to deal with her fears and her shame and found a way to share her secrets with Harry before they destroyed her.

**Celebrity Culture**

To write ‘Ophelia’, I needed to develop an understanding of the ways celebrities have been depicted by the media since the 1970s and also how theorists explain the

The complex nature of celebrity became increasingly apparent, as did connections between celebrity, the economy and how the individual may be constructed in a capitalist, consumption-driven world.

Gamson (1994) notes that originally celebrity was linked to actions and status: the Roman ‘fame through action’, the Christian ‘fame of the spirit’ or the literary ‘fame of the wise’ that came originally to those with the power to control their audiences and their images. He explains that ‘early discourses firmly established fame as the province of the top layer of a natural hierarchy’ (p. 17). According to Holmes and Redmond (2010), defining celebrity can be problematic, as ‘the word is slippery and varied in its connotations’. Celebrity is associated with visibility: being seen, known and recognised. As Marshall (2010) points out, ‘Celebrities perform in their primary art form … as well as the extra-textual dimensions of interviews, advertisements/commercial endorsements, award nights and premieres’. Turner (2004) observes that contemporary celebrities emerge from sport or entertainment and are highly visible through the media; significantly, their private lives attract more attention than their professional lives (p. 6).

Ideas about celebrity and fame change over time and continue to evolve, but it is clear that celebrity is central to modern Western culture for many reasons. Holmes and Redmond (2010) believe that ‘celebrities are integral for understanding the contemporary moment’. However, this causes problems for many. Marshall (2010) claims that the sign of the celebrity is also ridiculed and derided as it represents the centre of false values, that ‘collectively, we disdain the public focus on celebrity at the same time as we continue to watch, discuss and participate and thereby ensure the maintenance of a celebrity industry’. For Turner (2010), ‘celebrity is also a cultural formation that has a social function … it also participates in the field of expectations that many, particularly the young, have of everyday life’. Perhaps Kotler, Rein and Stoller’s definition most resonates with a cynical view of celebrity: ‘celebrity is a name which once made by the news, now makes news by itself’ (cited in Holmes &
Redmond, 2010). In a more compassionate consideration of the centrality of celebrity culture, Rojek (2012) comments that ‘celebrity culture would not be ubiquitous unless it answered some need in the public’ (p. 97).

In *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*, Marshall (1997) speaks of celebrities as commodities, as operating at the centre of the economic world, and as created by the individual along with the fan and the media. Marshall argues that the power of the celebrity is to represent the active construction of identity. Celebrities are central to an elaborate discourse on individuality and personality that aims to uncover a hidden truth, that is, to find the ‘real’ person behind the public persona, which may explain media interest in celebrity confession and ‘outing’.

Gamson (1994) in *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America*, asserts that it is the advancement of modern technology, that is, mass circulation newspapers, television, the internet and film, that has made possible the modern celebrity. For Gamson, it is crucial that the audience be exposed to the truth behind the celebrity. By making the creation of commercial culture visible it is possible that an informed and oppositional stance can be created among those who live within it. Thus, searching for the ‘real’ person behind the image, revealing secrets, and interrogating narratives about the modern celebrity are central to Gamson.

In *Understanding Celebrity*, Turner (2004) suggests that, as society and the nature of community have changed over time, we have invested more in our relationships with celebrities. He considers that the media and audiences have a contradictory and ambivalent relationship with celebrity, such that celebrities can be seen as extraordinary or just like us; deserving of success or just lucky; objects of desire and emulation or of derision and contempt. Does this ambivalent attitude towards celebrity help people to be content with what they have, does it encourage them to strive to better themselves, to emulate their favourite star; does it foster envy and helplessness, or even make people feel inferior?

Rojek (2012), in *Fame Attack*, sees celebrity as a highly complex and somewhat dangerous aspect of modern society. Celebrity worship allows a sense of transcendence, which he claims people need, especially where organised religion has failed, but Rojek cautions that if people invest too much into celebrity worship they will have less room to develop as an independent person. He is concerned that celebrity has an ‘immense power for codifying personality and standardizing social
control’ (p. 185), and cautions that it may be a serious error to view celebrity culture as something trivial that will simply go away. Significantly, he sees fame as being accompanied by contamination.

As part of my project, it was necessary to consider the importance of the television talk-show, as exemplified by The Oprah Winfrey Show (US), which ran from 1986 to 2011, Parkinson (UK) which had two extensive seasons, from 1971 to 1982 and 1998 to 2007, and Andrew Denton’s Enough Rope (Australia) which ran from 2003 to 2008.

Marshall (1997) notes that Hugh Grant managed his rise and fall (due to a sex scandal) through talk-show contrition that allowed a return to general acceptance, with his reputation only fleetingly tarnished (p. 4). As Heather Nunn and Anita Biressi (2010) see it, ‘a contract seems to be negotiated in which “authentic” or “truthful” personal disclosure is traded for continuation of the relationship between the celebrity and his/her followers’ (p. 51). If the contract is fulfilled, the audience will once more feel close to the celebrity, who has been revealed to be fallible; the audience now feels better about their own weaknesses because if celebrities can be forgiven for their mistakes and failings, then surely ordinary people can be too.
Chapter Two: The Stars

It seems that many novels and aspects of celebrity culture are concerned with identity and how people live their lives. Jen Lightfoot is exposed as a celebrity with a dark secret after living for twenty years as an ordinary citizen in Darwin. Due to the mass media and instant communication, she is no longer able to hide. This chapter discusses celebrities, secrets, scandals, the television confessional and forgiveness, including the experiences of two stars from the golden days of Hollywood, one embroiled in a career-ending scandal and the other who kept secrets to become a star and to maintain her status as a celebrity after her acting career was over.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century three significant developments gathered momentum in different parts of the world: capitalism, psychoanalysis in Europe, and Hollywood and the star system in the US. All three systems focused on the individual in preference to the group. Capitalism is ‘an economic system based on the private ownership of industry’, and the term first came into use in 1854 (Collins, 2013). In Marxist terms the celebrity sign articulates the individual as a commodity (Marshall, 1997, p. xi) and the impact of celebrities on society since the early years of Hollywood is related to their commodification and the public’s role as consumer.

From the development of psychology in the late 19th century into a science, due to increased concerns for measurement and the use of controlled laboratory methods (Sargent & Stafford, 1965, p. 2) came sub-schools of the discipline and new approaches to studying human behaviour, including psychoanalysis, founded by Sigmund Freud. Despite not verifying his findings through scientific experimentation, Freudian psychoanalysis provided ‘fruitful and provocative theories of motivation, of personal development and of abnormal behaviour’ (p. 4). Marshall (1997) argues that Freud’s theories and practices influence much of celebrity culture.

Early Hollywood was a highly structured place, where all aspects of the industry, including the ‘stars’, were strictly managed: ‘Hollywood controlled not only the stars’ films but their promotion, the pin-ups and glamour portraits, press releases and to a large extent the fan clubs’ (Dyer, 2004, p. 4). It is noteworthy that the first Hollywood films from the silent era were made without identifying the actors and it was only audience demand that made the General Film Company release names and biographical details to the fans (Kurzman et al., 2007, p. 353). At this early stage in the evolution of celebrity culture the power of the fan is clear: fans could make
demands of the studios and be listened to. What is also clear is the impact of visual images which Rojek (cited in Kurzman et al., 2007, p. 352) claims made fame instant and pervasive in a way that print could not manage. The evolution of modern technology goes hand-in-hand with the growth of the star system and prevalence of celebrities.

The control exerted by the Hollywood studio system over the image and persona of its stars is relevant to how celebrity scandal has been managed over time. The gap between the image and the reality was often wide, especially in the case of homosexual stars, such as Rock Hudson and Montgomery Clift, and those with dubious backgrounds, such as Merle Oberon. For a leading man whose image was based on his heterosexuality and machismo, the revelation of the truth for Hudson and others would have meant the end of their careers, and even though, as Reni Celeste (2005) asserts, ‘disaster was a critical component of modern stardom from the beginning, and suicide, and accidental death intrinsic parts of celebrity’ (p. 7), some revelations were a step too far, and would result in a loss of box office success and therefore earnings. It was of the utmost importance that images were cultivated and preserved. Celeste says the ‘media, as mediator, must walk the fine line between exposure and concealment to generate and maintain fascination and fandom’ (p. 6). Shame and secrets were thus part of Hollywood from the earliest days.

Two stories from the golden days of Hollywood exemplify the importance and centrality of the correct image and the need to protect that image for the star and others connected to the star, including fans, family and friends.

Celeste (2005) reminds us that just as in ‘Classical and Renaissance tragedy, the hero had to be high so that he could make a great fall’ (p. 9) so it was for the stars of Hollywood. Fatty Arbuckle’s story is perhaps the first example of tragedy in the world of celebrity. In the 1920s he became ‘Hollywood’s first one-million-dollar star’ (Sheerin, 2011). He was famous for his own comedic genius as well as for being the man who discovered Buster Keaton and mentored Charlie Chaplin. Arbuckle was also credited with discovering Bob Hope in 1927 while he was banished from Hollywood. He was the first fat man to become a star, setting the benchmark for fat funny men to follow, such as John Belushi and John Candy; he made a show of his body, refusing to allow it to be shown as floundering (Petersen, 2012). But the death of a starlet, Virginia Rappe, who had been partying with Arbuckle and his friends, finished his career. Rumours surrounding the events quickly circulated in the media, damaging his
status as Hollywood royalty: reports said he had ‘crushed her under his weight … he had attempted to have sex with her and, finding himself impotent, raped her with a broken Coke bottle, thus rupturing her bladder’ (2012). The fact that Arbuckle was acquitted after three trials made little difference to the Hollywood studio machine or to the public. He was blacklisted by Hollywood and spat upon in the street. As Anne Helen Petersen (2012) puts it, Arbuckle ‘became the symbol for Hollywood excess – physical, monetary – *writ large*. A footnote to this tale is that Warner Brothers offered Fatty Arbuckle a film contract in 1933, several years after the scandal but he died the same day of a heart attack (Sheerin, 2011).

The Hollywood actress Merle Oberon’s story is also worth mentioning, not just because of the Tasmanian connection, but because the truth was not allowed to get in the way of a well-crafted story that was perpetuated beyond her death, with the full truth only revealed several years later. As for JJ Darkness in ‘Ophelia’, lies and secrets were integral to Oberon’s celebrity existence.

Like many others, I grew up believing Oberon came from Tasmania. I believed she had lived in or around Fingal, which is near my mother’s birthplace. According to John Charles (2010), ‘the exotic and glamorous Merle Oberon ranked among the most striking performers during the early years of sound cinema in Britain’ and, after she moved to the USA, she was nominated for a 1936 Academy Award for her role in the film *The Dark Angel*. She was not the greatest actress, but ‘could be very effective in the right part and consistently dazzled the eye as one of Golden Age Hollywood’s great beauties’ (Charles, 2010). Merle Oberon was a star and it is not surprising that she was claimed enthusiastically by the people of Tasmania, even when the facts showed her origins to be manufactured to suit the expectations of the Hollywood machine and the audiences of the day. Oberon was a victim of racism. According to Maree Delofski (2006), her Tasmanian provenance was concocted by British film producer Alexander Korda because ‘the racism of the period meant that Korda’s studio regarded her mixed-race background as a major obstacle to her becoming a star’ (p. 5). The ruse was credible because Tasmania in the 1930s was obscure enough, white enough, and far enough away from Hollywood, and it had a *bona fide* film star in Errol Flynn. Between 2000 and 2002 Delofski researched, wrote and directed a television documentary about Merle Oberon called *The Trouble with Merle*; she went on to write an article about the making of the documentary that explores ‘competing stories and claims made by different groups for Oberon’s
ethnicity and nationality’ (p. 1). While the article focusses on the making of the film, it also provokes questions about how people create stories to suit themselves, why celebrities might lie and how the public might respond to revelations of the truth. It seems that Merle Oberon’s story, which I seem always to have known, may have influenced the creation of Jen Lightfoot.

Tasmanian writer Cassandra Pybus notes Tasmanians’ feelings of isolation and suggests that their fascination with Oberon signifies a desire for connection to the rest of the world. While acknowledging the power of stories, she noted that “Tasmanians tell stories to prove that we have not slipped off the edge of the world” (cited in Delofski, 2006, p. 5). It is worth remembering that Tasmania is often left off the map of Australia and that in a country that was settled as a penal institution, Tasmania was the home of the worst gaols in the settlement, Port Arthur and Sarah Island, and it had a shameful record with Aboriginal peoples. Tasmania’s reputation was not, on the whole, worth having and so the connection with the glamour of Hollywood through Errol Flynn and Merle Oberon was not going to be readily relinquished. And it was not, either by Oberon herself or the people interviewed for Delofski’s film.

In a fascinating twist, Oberon was invited, at the age of 67, to attend the 1978 Sammy Awards in Melbourne and she was subsequently invited to Tasmania as her birthplace to attend a reception in her honour. But given Oberon knew she was not from Tasmania, why did she attend? The registrar of births, deaths and marriages had already discovered that Oberon had not been born in Tasmania, yet the ceremony still went ahead. When interviewing people twenty years after this event, Delofski found that many still clung to their belief in Oberon’s Tasmanian provenance. Instead of accepting the evidence, other stories were offered; Delofski explains that ‘where the studio had promoted her as the progeny of an upper-class white colonial family, many Tasmanians believed she was the illegitimate daughter of a poor Australian–Chinese chambermaid from the remote northeast of the island’ (p. 5), which accords with my mother’s version of the myth. As Delofski observes, it is ironic that in these stories Oberon is returned to the ‘circumstances the studio had presumably attempted to disguise – poverty, mixed race and illegitimacy’ (p. 11). One wonders what was going through the minds of those at the Hobart Town Hall reception, with the truth of Oberon’s birthplace known by all, especially Oberon. Was she being kind to the deluded locals, who, living so far from the rest of the world, did not know that hers
was a story made up to cover a range of sins in order for her to become a Hollywood star?

Claire Ellicott’s story in the *Mail Online* (January, 2014) reveals that the truth about Merle Oberon was exceedingly unpleasant and she would not have wanted it widely known that ‘the woman she knew as her sister was really her mother’ (Ellicott, 2014). This fact was verified through a project between the British Library and an ancestry website that published records from the time of the British Raj in India, where, in 1911, Oberon was born to Constance, the twelve-year-old daughter of her father’s mixed race girlfriend. It seems Oberon knew about this as she later refused to meet her brother to discuss the matter, having long ‘claimed all early records of her birth were destroyed in a fire’ (2014). It was a convenient lie that covered up her mixed-race heritage as well as the more disturbing lie about her mother’s identity and her own illegitimacy. Oberon, like other stars such as Jack Nicholson and Eric Clapton, and Rupert from ‘Ophelia’, grew up believing their mother was someone else.

In ‘Ophelia’, Jen Lightfoot is also re-made to suit the public, although for less scurrilous reasons than Merle Oberon’s. It seems that Oberon lied in order to cover her shame about her birth and ancestry. These lies were created and perpetuated by Oberon and others who had vested interests in the myth created about her. Jen comes from Tasmania and accepts a name more suited to a rock and roll singer – JJ Darkness – and a new birthplace, France, because it sounds sexier than Tasmania. Jen is collusive, never correcting the mistake. By being re-made she has no past, no connections to her home and thus is freed from the risk of shaming her family through her new lifestyle.

As the 20th century wore on capitalism, psychoanalysis and celebrity grew and had a significant impact on Western society and individual behaviour. Dyer (2004) notes the importance of the individual and how celebrity culture supports the romantic notion that an individual has economic, political and social choices: ‘stars articulate … the notion of the individual but also at times … the doubts and anxieties attendant on it’ (p. 9).

Being a celebrity is being a product of the celebrity industry, a commodity, something that is manufactured and consumed, like any other product. Celebrities are both products and embodiments of capitalism (Dyer, 2007; Marshall, 1997; Cashmore
& Parker, 2003). But celebrity industries cannot simply fabricate celebrities to be bought and consumed, as it is the customer (the fan, the audience) who chooses their favourite celebrities and determines the success and longevity of their careers (Driessens, 2013, p. 547).

In the first edition of *Celebrity Studies*, Holmes and Redmond (2010) note the centrality of celebrity in contemporary society, that celebrity is a subject that cuts across disciplines and media boundaries, and that it is ‘recognized to be a global, international, yet also often culturally “local” phenomenon which produces modes of representation that can be felt as empowering, disingenuous and impossible to obtain’. Marshall’s point that ‘from an industrial as well as cultural vantage point, celebrities are integral for understanding the contemporary moment’ (cited in Holmes & Redmond, 2010) supports ideas about the impact of celebrity culture on some individuals and how they make sense of their lives in contemporary Western society.

Gale Stever (2010), an American professor of psychology, considers several developmental theories before concluding that ‘fans are simply people who have chosen relationships with celebrities in order to meet psychological needs. This would appear to be a natural byproduct of a society where much of the information we process about the world comes to us through mass media’ (p. 6). She posits that healthy fandom is characterised by the importance of the celebrity image, especially the face, connection to others through fanclubs, and a romantic but ‘safely distant para-social relationship’ (p. 2), as well as a view of celebrities as role models. Psychology has tended to focus on the darker side of people’s interest in celebrity, where ‘they tend to emphasise the pathological end of the spectrum’ (p. 1), examining stalking, obsession and erotomania. However, Stever’s paper suggests a more positive view of fandom, whereby a sympathetic connection to the celebrity might explain why forgiveness is offered to celebrities, and that people connect to celebrities on many levels, at different stages of their lives for different reasons. Rojek (2012) sees celebrity hero worship as part of narcissistic idealisation, where the hero is a model for society, often aligned with mythic constructs such as Achilles or King Arthur (pp. 104-105). He explains celebrity hero worship as an escape from humdrum existence, a way for ‘ordinary people to live out epic struggle through the heroic roles and humanitarian campaign of celebrities’ (p. 107).
Celebrities, whether in the golden days of Hollywood or now, would not exist without the media. If the celebrity is created by the media and, in some cases, unmade by the media, and if we accept Evans’ assertion that celebrities are the few known by the many, then ‘people can only become celebrities through the transmission of their image’ (cited in Driessen, 2013, p. 548), and thus the central importance of the media in the creation, manipulation, and perpetuation of celebrity culture must be accepted. Indeed, Driessen, concludes, along with many others, that the media is an essential building block of celebrity (p. 557).

Many celebrities have learnt to their detriment that ‘becoming visible means that the media will not only glorify acts but also magnify sins’ (Rein & Stoller, 1997, p. 3). Tiger Woods learnt to his dismay that he was not entitled to privacy as his affairs were revealed and his marriage broke down, even though he ‘made the kind of mistake that a huge percentage of ordinary men have already made’ (Dennis, 2010). There is little to connect Tiger Woods to ordinary men and he seemed to forget that in becoming a celebrity his private life would attract more attention. Celebrities walk a delicate line between their public personas and private lives, and in the presence of relentless media coverage it becomes harder than ever to maintain a divide.

The emergence of celebrity culture has had a profound impact on the way news and information have been reported over the last 120 years or so. Kathleen Feeley (2012) asserts that gossip and celebrity culture have ‘transformed journalistic practice and the nature of public life in the US’ (p. 467). A great deal of what is written about celebrity culture emerges from Hollywood, so Feeley’s discussion is based on American culture and history. She provides an insight into why and how reporting has changed in response to the emergence of celebrity and the media industry that both depends on it and supports it. Other writers have noted the importance of gossip, both in the spread and impact of celebrity culture and in its impact on ordinary people. Gluckman argues that gossip has ‘represented a form of social cohesion, a means by which group membership is enacted, reclaimed, and produces forms of exclusion’ (cited in Marshall, 2010). De Backer et al (2007) have identified how celebrity gossip can operate for younger people as a form of social learning; in other words, as a way to work out how they should dress, act and engage (pp. 345-346). This may help in understanding why celebrities tend to be forgiven, as gossip connects people to each other and ‘helps to produce social order in the populace through its representations of the problems and unhappiness of the rich and
famous, despite their wealth and the adulation they attract’ (Levin cited in Marshall, 2010). Such discussions could lead to harsh judgments about celebrities or they could engender sympathy, especially if it is a celebrity to whom one has an attachment.

In ‘Ophelia’, when Jen is exposed it leads to much discussion and gossip on websites, with comments that both condemn and forgive. However, it is clear that her fans are overwhelmingly pleased to have her back as they make her song number one and attend her sell-out concerts. Others react negatively to her, pushing shoving and shouting abuse at her after her appearance on Parkinson.

Figure 4: Scrapbook 2

Ponce de Leon (cited in Feeley, 2013, p. 470) charts the rise of “‘human interest journalism’ to refer to a new style of reporting that emerged in the late 1800s and presented public figures as flawed … accessible and appealing media subjects, especially through profiles and interviews.’ The impact of Hollywood on reporting in the USA is significant as new kinds of reporters and reporting emerged, notably the syndicated gossip columnist that found homes in newspapers across the country. The importance of Hollywood meant that by the mid 1940s the west coast industry had
over 400 hundred reporters, only second in size and scale to the number of journalists covering more important news in Washington, DC, the nation’s capital (Feeley, 2013, p. 471). But in the 1950s the studio star system collapsed in the wake of the 1948 Paramount decision, a landmark anti-trust case. Competition from television, shifts in cultural and social norms, and changes in American legal practices, notably regarding definitions of defamation and privacy, meant that media publications such as *Confidential* (first published in 1952) were increasingly able to expose the private lives of public figures (Desjardins, cited in Feeley, 2012, p. 473). The growth of a range of media platforms meant there were now many ways to construct a star.

In the USA, the shift from ‘hard’ news to ‘soft’ gossip and personal interest stories heated up in the mid-1970s with the battle between the *Enquirer* and Rupert Murdoch’s *Star* for market share: this led to a shift away from crime and human interest stories towards celebrity culture, news and gossip. *People* magazine was introduced in March 1974 as a weekly focused on celebrity gossip and news (Feeley, 2013, p. 474). Celebrity gossip magazines that emerged in the 1980s reported or invented stories about celebrities’ more intimate moments, such as their struggles with weight, drugs and alcohol (Kutzman et al., 2007, p. 353).

The media is not an incidental player in the shaping of celebrities and its influence can be negative and damaging. In ‘Ophelia’, Jen is clearly aware of the impact of the press. The novel shows the power of the media through Jen’s interactions with the journalist Dave Collins and her appearance on *Parkinson*. Both experiences are damaging to her image and upsetting for her. Rob, Jen’s son, learns about his mother’s secret identity from a television news report.

The Leveson Inquiry into phone hacking in Britain examined the culture, practices and ethics of the press, ‘including phone hacking and other potentially illegal behaviour’ (BBC News, 2012). Through the course of the inquiry it was clear that the public should be more cautious about believing what they read, especially about celebrities, whose phones were proven to have been extensively hacked by many newspapers, including those owned by Rupert Murdoch. The findings of the inquiry support a more tempered approach to celebrities’ lives and those of their families. Leveson stated that ‘families of actors and footballers also have rights to privacy’ (O’Carroll, 2012) and that ‘newspapers have recklessly pursued sensational stories’ (2012), which resulted in damage to ordinary people as well as to celebrities.
such as actors Jude Law and Hugh Grant, who received compensation for the damages suffered through their phones being hacked.

In ‘Ophelia’, when Jen Lightfoot’s true identity as JJ Darkness is revealed, she, unlike Tiger Woods, is in no doubt that the media will pursue her and reveal the truth about the child she gave away. She does not compound her sins by lying further, as did Woods and Armstrong, but attempts to right wrongs with her family before the news media tell the story. She knows, given her experiences with the press when she was famous and the nature of her story, that she will not be able to avoid media scrutiny. She knows her family will be damaged and that she will be at the mercy of the press. She is angry and conflicted about being pulled back into the celebrity circus by her former lover, but savvy enough to know that she cannot escape attention. The one reporter she trusted is dead and Jen has to put herself in the hands of Ophelia’s PR management team and get through the ordeal of interviews, inspection and humiliation as best she can.

In my study, confession relates to telling lies and keeping secrets. It is a means to obtain forgiveness for a lie and rehabilitation into one’s family and society. Telling the truth is not always wise or desirable and is possibly made more difficult by working in an industry in which manipulation of image and persona is routine. It seems natural that celebrities tell lies, but the consequences when celebrities are exposed can be catastrophic for their careers, their families, and the vast machine that supports them, as in the case of Tiger Woods. Hence, the ‘disgraced hero must plead sincerely for public forgiveness and understanding before taking his [sic] rightful place back on the pedestal of fame’ (Rojek, 2012, p. 113).

Public confessions are about the connection between celebrities and their audiences and the need to maintain the relationships. But it seems audiences should be more skeptical about the reason for, and the nature of, the celebrity confession. The press reaction to the confessions of Woods and Armstrong was predominantly cynical, perhaps rightfully so. Their confessions were portrayed as contrived attempts to minimise damage to their image and income, not primarily about their relationship with their fans. Rojek (2012) asserts that the ‘formatted, operatic nature of public celebrity apology may be driven by an authentic need for forgiveness but leaves many doubting if the plea is truly heartfelt’ (p. 112). However, Rojek (2012) also notes the conflict between star worship on the one hand and puritanical disapproval on the
other, and considers ‘extreme and unhealthy’ the media’s urge to expose stars as fakes where there is excessive focus on their vulnerabilities (p. 182). In the desire to expose Woods and Armstrong, their positive attributes were ignored. Woods’ golfing ability seemed to no longer matter and Armstrong’s considerable good works in supporting cancer patients and research through his Livestrong foundation were discounted.

While Jen is no longer a celebrity when her secret is exposed, there are many who will suffer from the revelation of the truth about Rupert’s birth. She is aware of the damage to others, hence her efforts to confess to those closest to her, notably Harry and Rupert. Her secret exposes the darkness at the heart of Ophelia and so it is important that she finds some way, with the help of both Jules and Jeremy, to minimise the damage when the truth is revealed. Thus she agrees to interviews and public performances in an attempt to offset the damage to herself and consequently to others.

To expose one’s guilt on television seems to be the ultimate act of self flagellation but the confessing celebrity has already been caught out, their guilt is not contested; they come for rehabilitation, accepting that their actions have hurt others. In ‘Ophelia’, Jen feels the full force of this situation when she appears on Parkinson, where she admits her guilt and acknowledges that she has hurt others; however, she is not offered forgiveness. Instead, the experience adds to her feelings of shame, reinforcing why she abandoned her famous life so many years ago.

My research indicated that Jen needed to appear on talk shows as she resumed her persona of JJ Darkness, that it would be something a celebrity in her extraordinary position – ‘back from the dead’ with a shattering secret to explain – would do, hence the requests Jeremy receives from Oprah Winfrey’s people and other media agencies. However, for Jen to be forgiven by fans and the media would limit credibility for the novel. Nor is Parkinson traditionally a talk show for confessions. His reputation as a host is mixed but generally he is seen as being ‘renowned for being very straight: an upstanding kind of bloke’ (Cavendish, 2010), who is, ‘by common consent, one of television’s greatest interviewers’ (Fenton, 2013). Jen’s reluctance to engage in such events is reinforced by her experience and reminds her that she no longer wants to be a part of this world. For her to be welcomed back by her fans, Jules, Jeremy, Stefan and the media would be too much to expect, especially given the nature of the scandal – a rich, healthy woman relinquishing her child. Jen needs to suffer at the hands of
other characters and the media. The press is not always kind to celebrities, as Rojek points out, and this needs to be part of her experience, for the sake of authenticity.

Parkinson and Winfrey came out of retirement for special celebrity interviews. In the televised interview between Michael Parkinson and Ian Thorpe, ‘no questions were off limits’ (Kilby & Croffey, 2014). This seems to contrast with the interview of Lance Armstrong by Oprah Winfrey. While Armstrong was confessing to being a drug cheat, Thorpe was confessing to being a homosexual, seemingly vastly different reasons for confessional interviews. But both men were sporting heroes, the best in their fields, and both had repeatedly and deliberately lied to the public. Armstrong had for years denied using drugs to enhance his sporting achievements and Thorpe had for years ‘vehemently denied rumours of his homosexuality’ (Khomami, 2014). Both men chose respected and experienced interviewers. Winfrey is better known for celebrity confessions than is Parkinson but Parkinson’s shows are exclusively about celebrities not ordinary people, as are Winfrey’s. Kilby and Croffey (2014) assert that ‘Parkinson is renowned for not being afraid to ask the tough and sometimes uncomfortable questions’. Winfrey has the opposite reputation, being known to ‘soft peddle’ on the famous, as with Armstrong: ‘Time after time, Winfrey would raise a key issue then fail to press him on it’, according to Fotheringham (2013), who suggests that Armstrong was in control, and ‘with blatant ease … dodged the questions’.

Given the mostly critical response to Armstrong’s interview one wonders why he engaged in the process if he were not going to follow the ‘rules of engagement’ for confession. Thorpe’s confession seemed to result in either neutral or positive reactions, ‘a collective yawn’ or endorsement with ‘several prominent gay athletes [who] offered support on Twitter’ (Whiteside, 2014). Perhaps Thorpe’s more authentic conversation with Parkinson led to a more forgiving response than Armstrong’s contrived efforts with Winfrey.

Audiences are encouraged to forgive celebrities through an appeal to the connection between us and them emanating from the same cause: people are fallible. King (2008) points out that a celebrity will ‘seek public understanding or even forgiveness by claiming that they are really just as ordinary and flawed as the next person’. In his confession, Tiger Woods said: ‘I am not without faults and I am far short of perfect’ (Dorman & Elliot, 2009). Lance Armstrong claimed to be as flawed as others in professional cycling when accused of cheating, not any worse (Burkeman,
The suggestion that these celebrities are like the rest of us is debatable. Both Woods and Armstrong attempted a connection to ordinary people, so their transgressions could be better understood and forgiven. The fact that both knew they needed to confess to maintain some credibility and standing in the public eye speaks to the centrality of confession in modern culture. Rojek (2012) contends that celebrity public confessions highlight narcissistic traits that are widespread in the community and therefore frequently generate a compassionate response. In their quest for understanding, ‘celebrities walk the same line as many ordinary people in “bus class”’ (p. 113).

It seems that celebrities can be models of how to accept human flaws and manage sins and transgressions. Winfrey’s chat show set the bar for how people made and remade their lives and, even though it no longer runs, her media empire still spreads the same message of redemption. King (2008) asserts that the ‘process is designed to be a demonstration of competence and success, or – in the event of a failure, of exemplary survival ... But … it is not the reputation of the private self of the celebrity that is at issue but the reproduction or refurbishment of a prestigious and marketable self-image or persona’. A successful television confession means the celebrity maintains, or even deepens, his or her following and the audience feels a greater affinity, an increased closeness, due to this perceived increase in intimacy.

Celebrities such as Hugh Grant on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno (1995) and a plethora of celebrities on The Oprah Winfrey Show, including Marion Jones (sports cheat), Mike Tyson (disgraced boxing champion), James Frey (literary fraud), Robert Downey Jr (drugs) and Ellen de Generes (homosexuality), have exposed their sins on television, come clean, found forgiveness and returned to their pre-fall celebrity status. According to Barmak (2009), ‘at her best, Oprah is not an interviewer … she’s a best friend with a camera,’ a woman who welcomes them all ‘into her healing circle’. Commenting on her show with Whitney Houston in 2009, Winfrey said it was the best interview she had ever done, ‘because it was an anti-interview – not a probing hard-hitting quest for answers, just a conversation’ (Barmak, 2009). Parkinson makes a similar point in The Independent newspaper: ‘Interviewing is about listening’, noting that his was a ‘conversational talk show’ (Adam, 2008).

What is essential in terms of traditional confession is that Winfrey subscribes to honesty and authenticity. According to Taylor (2010), Oprah reflects a Foucauldian approach to confession in that she offers a ‘salvation oriented’ relationship where ‘the
subordinate individual must submit to certain externally generated truths’ (p. 174). Following Oprah’s lead, the audience accepts that it could easily be they who have transgressed, they who need to tell all and be offered an acceptable way to re-start their lives. Winfrey’s strength and influence is because she can broker the rehabilitation of fallen stars, which is what Armstrong hoped for in his interview.

A celebrity’s secret is already known before he/she appears on a chat show. One might assert that Ellen de Generes, an American comedienne who had her own sit-com, Ellen (1994-1998), did not sin but was transgressive in her lifestyle. Still, she followed the agreed rules of public confession and was rehabilitated, even though it took some time. De Generes’ public ‘coming out’ was significant to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities and her current status and visibility in the USA as a gay woman is significant, as she is ‘beloved to a wide-ranging community of viewers, as a lesbian’ (Reed, 2006, p. 33). De Generes’ disclosure had a liberating impact, and influenced the way gay women are perceived, as it was the most ‘public and well-publicized coming out’ (p. 29). Taylor (2010), drawing on Foucault, suggests that ‘a relationship where access to the truth is linked to the sacrifice of self characterizes modern Western subjectivity’ (p. 177), so it could be said that De Generes was willing to suffer for her adherence to the truth about herself. In the wake of coming out, she lost her television show and struggled to recover her pre-confession eminence. However, by refusing to be determined by prevailing relations of power, she appears to have embraced the view that ‘we are not doomed to uncritically reproduce the prevailing norms and values of our society’ (p. 179). In ‘Ophelia’ Jen adopts a non-normative life and forgiveness, if it comes, will only come with time and by continuing to be the person she believes herself to be, which is to say not a bad, heartless or selfish person but a caring one.

Tiger Woods did not choose the traditional confession route after he was exposed as a serial adulterer. He is not alone in being embroiled in such a scandal; other sports stars facing such allegations include David Beckham, Ashley Cole and Wayne Rooney, and adultery caused Australian Football League star Wayne Carey similar reputational damage in 2002. The condemnation of Woods’ confession in the media can be linked to the expectations of celebrity confession as promulgated by Winfrey, who intervened and questioned her subjects. Woods seemed to misunderstand the expectations of his sponsors, fans and the media, and he was dropped in the months after the scandal by Gillette, Gatorade, AT & T and Accenture.
But not all sponsors were critical: “Tiger and his family have Nike’s full support” (Dorman & Elliott, 2009). Perhaps this gap in reaction can be explained by the co-dependency of celebrity and capitalism referred to earlier. Rojek (2012) indicates that, in Tiger Woods’ case, there was a gap between the public’s expectations of his character and his behaviour, resulting in ‘friction and tension’ (p. 85), especially as his status as the first billionaire of sport was built as much on his ‘good guy’ image as his skills: sponsors wanted to be associated with a skilled athlete who was also seen as decent and wholesome.

By trying to stage-manage their apologies, both Woods and Armstrong missed the essence of confession and forgiveness: speaking their sin, being authentic, and accepting wrong-doing. The belief that ‘personal sins should not require press releases and problems within a family shouldn’t have to mean public confession’ (Dorman & Elliott, 2009) shows that Woods (perhaps deliberately) misunderstands his role in society, that he is not a private citizen. The idea of betrayed trust is considered by Dennis Coates (2010), who asserts that the damage is simple, a loss of trust: ‘Trust is what you earn when you consistently act with integrity’. This point was missed by both Woods and Armstrong in their inauthentic confessions. As Hamilton (2013) says, ‘If you can look someone in the eye and say, “I was wrong: I’m sorry,” you don’t belittle yourself’.

Time seems to be an essential element of celebrity forgiveness. Fatty Arbuckle was offered a new contract after several years away from the limelight. Ellen de Generes’ coming out nearly killed her career and it took from her confession in 1997 until 2003 to work her way back to her own show on daytime television. It has taken several more years for The Ellen de Generes Show to become ‘a ratings winner [that] has turned the once spurned comedienne into a beloved mainstream star’ (Fralic, 2010). Her success, as host of the Oscar awards ceremony in 2014 and as a result of the selfie that ‘broke the internet’ and which was ‘retweeted by more than 2.5 million people, creating a new record for the microblogging site’ (Wallop, 2014), has come after much hard work. Forgiveness has not been easily or quickly achieved by Ellen de Generes.

There have been murmurings in the media about Tiger Woods and Lance Armstrong being fully forgiven. Eighteen months after the scandal broke, Armstrong’s own foundation, Livestrong, that originally threw him out in the wake of
the doping scandal, has asked for him to return and it seems his work for cancer patients continues to make a difference. In his extensive article in *Esquire* magazine, John Richardson (2014) portrays Armstrong as more humble and more genuine in his apologies about how he treated others. Despite being stripped of his Tour de France titles, it is noteworthy that no-one else has been awarded them instead. This would seem to indicate a wider issue about doping, that Armstrong ‘wasn’t an evil genius who invented evil’ (2014) and that, as he claimed at the time, he was not the only one doping.

As early as April 2011, an article appeared in *Esquire* magazine saying that Tiger Woods would be redeemed, that his fall from grace was not unique in America and was about ‘the strange hypocritical Puritanism that is infecting our sports religion’ (Marche, 2011). Stephen Marche asserted that, as Woods returned to golf, all would be forgiven and, in fact, he would be better loved: ‘transfigured into a nearly perfect icon of irresistible sympathy: the supernatural specimen made human by sin who rises again’ (2011).

John Richardson’s (2014) point that ‘few of us get through life without one taste of failure or disgrace’ seems to contribute to an understanding why celebrities are forgiven. Yet, it is clear that celebrities are not always readily or easily forgiven, as is the case with Arbuckle, de Generes, Armstrong and Wood. Forgiveness seems to depend on a range of factors: the nature of the scandal, how the story is reported in the media, the connection between the celebrity and the fans, the celebrity’s genuine contrition and desire for forgiveness and, it seems, a willingness on the part of the celebrity to work through the bad times, allowing the scandal to fade and then returning to affection and eminence, as exemplified by Robert Downey Jr, Hugh Grant and Ellen de Generes.

‘Ophelia’ was significantly influenced by my research into celebrity. The novel shows various elements of celebrity life, including the relationship between the media, fans and the star, and what happens to celebrities when secrets are revealed. It reflects the literature about how a celebrity manages a scandal and attempts to retain his/her status and fan-base. The novel allows for limited forgiveness for Jen through her fans but denies her full forgiveness in the media, with an article by journalist Dave Collins being unsympathetic to Jen, and her performance on *Parkinson* adding to her shame. She completes the agreed television confession with Oprah Winfrey, thus allowing for full celebrity forgiveness sometime in the future. This seems to
reflect more accurately how celebrities are forgiven – after their genuine attempts to make amends, and given enough time.
Chapter Three: Stories

While celebrity culture needs to be approached cautiously as a model for forgiveness and how to behave, it seems that literature may, in fact, offer better guidance for those looking for ways to find forgiveness. It could be argued that one does not read simply to learn how to live, but also to find reflections of lived experiences. Just as living in a celebrity-saturated society can impact on how individuals behave, so reading literature can contribute to understandings of what it is to be human. Recent studies (Mar, Oatley & Peterson, 2009; Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Comer Kidd & Castro, 2013) show that people who read fiction are better equipped for social relationships, and that ‘fiction influences empathy of the reader … under the condition of low or high emotional transportation into the story’ (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013). Thus, it is possible that reading fiction can help people find answers to some of the puzzles of life, such as why people continue to lie, despite their awareness of the consequences, and how people can find forgiveness.

This chapter discusses issues of gender and identity, suggesting that literary works represent women and motherhood in ways that reflect and help to shape cultural and social expectations of both. I extend my discussion of shame and confession to consider their treatment in three tragic literary novels whose explorations inspired my doctoral investigation, and also in ‘Ophelia’, which was written for a general readership.

From reading fiction, two main ideas emerged: firstly, the relevance of the historical-social-cultural context in determining shame and access to forgiveness and, secondly, the loss that ensues when a character confesses to an act that is considered immoral, even when there are extenuating circumstances.

These points seem especially relevant in the case of Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* and William Styron’s *Sophie’s Choice*. The female protagonist of each novel is wronged by men and their society yet they carry the shame for events largely outside their control: rape in Tess’s case and, in Sophie’s, being forced to give up her children. When Tess confesses the rape to the man she loves, Angel, he rejects her. Sophie finally, after much dissembling, tells her young friend Stingo, the novel’s narrator, what happened to her and then commits suicide. Both women had little say in what happened to them, yet feel abiding shame and guilt.
In Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*, the revelation of a taboo relationship between Ammu and Velutha, members of different castes, results in several deaths and banishment, culminating in the consummation of an incestuous relationship.

People come to know themselves by various means, including through their relationships with family and others in society, and by reading and engaging with characters.

Brooks (2000) discusses the central place of the confessional story in Western literature, finding it a particular type of self-expression that is meant to ‘bear a special witness to the truth of the individual personality’ (p. 18). It seems that in fiction, autobiographies, and celebrity culture, speaking truthfully is seen as the way to know oneself. But Brooks cautions against accepting that confessions reliably produce the truth. Why does one confess? Is it to tell the truth or to be forgiven? Or perhaps it is to seduce and mislead? In fiction, the reader can luxuriate in a character’s resistance to confession, for ‘the more there is to be ashamed of … the more satisfying the scene, and especially, the more satisfying and eloquent the belated revelation’ (p. 20). Perhaps witnessing others’ confessions prepares us to produce our own.

A number of conditions must be met for a satisfactory conclusion to confession: two of the most important are appropriate language and a suitable listener. The language must be correct, such that the sufferer/sinner can speak of the deed and find a way to redemption, to wit, it is possible to ‘escape feelings of suffering from guilt by submitting to confession and exculpation’ (Goldberg, 1991, p. 53). For Brooks (2000), confession is the way to ‘contrition and to absolution, which permits a reintegration into the community of the faithful’ (p. 46). But confession is a tricky and slippery thing. Brooks notes Rousseau’s warning that ‘confession is never direct, simple, straight forward’ (p. 51). A skilled and appropriate listener is central to a sound and worthy confession: ‘Despite his own sense of guilt, a confessor commands a power over a listener because he controls the material’ (Foster, 2011, p. 14), which is true of life and fiction. Pennebaker (1990) cautions that there are many potential areas of danger for the inexperienced listener: self-disclosure will change the nature of friendship, and the expectations of the listener can affect the content of the disclosure (pp. 116-117). Brooks (2000) proposes that ‘everything we have observed in confessions, “real” or “fictional” … tends to suggest that confessions rarely are
products of a free and rational will ... They are motivated by inextricable layers of shame, guilt, disgrace, contempt, self-loathing, propitiation, and expiation’ (p. 63).

Why, then, do people confess if it does not produce the truth or result in feeling better? Why put yourself through these feelings if you are not guaranteed forgiveness?

In her exploration of the place of confession and forgiveness in Western literature, Elke D’Hoker (2006) argues that aspects of modern fiction draw on ‘the confessional impulse to question problems of selfhood, truth and deception’ (p. 2). She considers the role of the narrator and reader in bequeathing forgiveness but leaves open ideas about what a reader might learn or take from reading such stories.

D’Hoker cites JM Coetzee’s observation that ‘the confessant remains caught up in a vicious circle of confession, doubt and new confession’. This cycle is evident in Sophie’s endless conversations with Stingo; in Tess’s attempts to tell Angel about Alec and her dead baby, Sorrow; and in Jen’s unsuccessful explanations to Harry. Interestingly Coetzee suggests that ‘a form of self-acceptance might indicate a possible way out of the confessional labyrinth’ (cited in D’Hoker, 2006, p. 4).

However, he rejects the authority of the reader to end confession; instead, he finds that ‘authority resides … with the self … it is not the task of the confessant to yield to authority but to confess with authority’ (p. 6). The reader’s judgment can only come after the ‘narrator has authoritatively ended the confession’ (p. 6). In relation to Ian McEwan’s novel Atonement, D’Holker acknowledges the problem of secular confession in achieving atonement ‘when there is no higher authority entitled to offer forgiveness’ (p. 8). D’Holker suggests that if forgiveness is not possible, ‘even if the truth of the self simply cannot be reached in confession, what matters is the attempt, the performative process of confessing which generates and reveals a true story’ (p. 8). Perhaps the central idea to take from D’Holker is that the attempt to reveal the truth is what matters, not that forgiveness is achieved. Then the reader can make the relevant judgments and appropriate personal connections to the story.

While shame is something people actively seem to avoid as it causes significant distress, there is some research that suggests that feelings of shame can be positive for society, spurring great achievements by making people aware of the conditions needed for self-improvement (Goldberg, 1991, p. xvi). For Probyn (2005), shame is a bridge between the self and society (p. 31). For Schneider (1992), shame ‘is not “just
a feeling” but reflects an order of things … sustains our personal and social ordering of the world’ (p. 20). For Goldberg (1991), though, debilitating shame indicates a lost sense of self, ‘the feeling that the self is crumbling away’ (p. 51). This can be restricting, so that a person discredits himself or herself and experiences ‘social isolation’ (p. 51). For Tompkins, shame appears to be ‘felt as an inner torment, a sickness of the soul’ (cited in Probyn, 2005, p. 14). It is no wonder that Goldberg (1991) describes shame as ‘the most complex and least understood emotion that the human race has yet evolved’ (p. 44). Nussbaum (2004) suggests that if a liar feels shame then there is truth, for shame ‘is not inherently self-deceptive … it often tells the truth’ (p. 206). But, many works of fiction show that to reveal a secret rarely brings either forgiveness to the character or reintegration to society; rather, it seems to result in shame and often death.

Nussbaum (2004) points out that society selects some groups and individuals for shaming, marking them as ‘abnormal’ and demanding they blush at what and who they are (p. 174). Jews, homosexuals, women, Aboriginals in Australia and paravans in India, amongst others, have been marked as ‘other’, thereby becoming acceptable targets for shaming. Shaming can come from wanting to be a part of a particular society, from trying to appear ‘normal’ (p. 173). Goldberg (1991) focuses on gender differences relating to shame and guilt, pointing out that expectations about being male or female in Western culture link to shaming along gender lines. Male cultural identity ‘emphasizes achievement, competition, power and dominance’ (p. 78). Inability to meet these expectations causes shame, depression and despair for men, and for women unable or unwilling to conform to male expectations it leads to sex-oriented shaming (p. 78).

Expectations about being an individual in Western society seem to conform almost exactly to expectations about male identity. No wonder shaming of others, especially women, becomes an accepted part of society, regardless of the era. Tess is shamed through her loss of virginity and her inability to keep Sorrow alive. Sophie’s shame comes from losing her children. Ammu’s shame is from her illicit love affair and failure to protect her children. Jen’s shame emanates from her promiscuity and her failure as a mother to her first born child. As she points out to Dave Collins, the journalist, men desert their children all the time and do not endure the intensity of criticism that she receives: “‘It seems to me that a man doing what I did doesn’t cause an uproar.’” But Collins pushes the point, countering that, “‘It is a rare woman who
does what you did.’

In considering why women, and female characters, seem to be more readily condemned than men for similar behavior, I turned to Nancy Chodorow’s *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1999), in which the centrality of the mother in sustaining and supporting a patriarchal economic society is made clear. Women as mothers are a fundamental organisational feature of capitalist society and the sex-gender system: ‘It is basic to the sexual division of labor and generates a psychology and ideology of male dominance as well as ideology about women’s capacities and natures’ (p. 208). Such divisions and ideologies are reinforced by psychoanalytical theories about the importance of the mother in the development of the child, so that it becomes easy to land the many ills of society at the feet of women, especially mothers.

*Figure 5: Fictional Influences*

Freud considered that women were unable to develop strong superegos, instead having weak moral natures, as demonstrated by Eve’s actions (Brown, 1972, p. 29). His view of women as failed men (Chodorow, 1999, p. ix) added to the negative view of women in laying the blame for many individual and societal ills at the door of mothering. Western society seems to subscribe to the Freudian belief in
the ‘importance of the mother in everyone’s psychological development, in their sense of self’ (p. 76). This inflation and idealisation of mothers is quite dangerous but goes a long way towards explaining the condemnation of female characters, as well as female celebrities. Chodorow cites several sources that support the centrality of the mother in the development of the infant, who ‘comes to define itself as a person through its relationship to her’ (p. 78).

Many of these ideas are reflected in the novels discussed in this chapter and relate to Jen’s condemnation. The media vilifies her for giving up her son. Her husband, on learning about her promiscuous past, no longer considers her a fit mother. Unmarried, promiscuous men tend to be admired, or envied; they are rarely condemned for their carnal ways. Tess, Sophie, Ammu and Jen are all condemned for their failures as mothers and their sexual natures.

_Tess of the D’Urbervilles_ by Thomas Hardy was first published in 1892. The story is set in Hardy’s fictional county of Wessex during the Long Depression of the 1870s, a time of world-wide recession when Britain is considered to have lost much of its industrial lead over Europe. It tells the story of Tess, who is young and beautiful and proud, but of humble origins. The novel begins with the revelation of a secret, that Tess’s father, poor John Durbyfield, is descended from once-noble stock. This sets him scheming to find a way back to that fortune, which results in Tess’s being sent to work for the rich D’Urbervilles in the hope that her noble blood will enable her to “claim kin, and ask for some assistance in our trouble” (Hardy, 2002, p. 30). Her beauty attracts Alec D’Urberville, who pursues her and then takes advantage of her, resulting in her pregnancy. She rejects his marriage proposal, as she doesn’t love him, and instead returns home, bringing shame to her family. Later, following the death of the baby and in an effort to re-start her life, Tess finds work in a dairy some distance from her home. Here she falls in love with Angel Clare. On their wedding night, emboldened by Angel’s confession of his dalliance with another, she confesses her secret past. Despite the fact that she was seduced, possibly raped, and that her child is dead, Angel rejects Tess. Left alone while he travels overseas, Tess falls back in with Alec, becoming his mistress. When Angel comes to his senses and returns, it is too late for Tess as she has given away her moral integrity by becoming Alec’s mistress. Tess kills Alec and goes on the run with Angel. But she cannot escape her destiny and must hang for murder.
In Sophie’s Choice, first published in 1979, by William Styron (2000), the protagonist, Sophie, survives World War Two, is repatriated to New York and, carrying much suffering, finds a new life with a charismatic lover, Nathan, who nurses her back to health. They live together in a bohemian boarding house above Stingo, a young writer from the American South. But Sophie is far from healed. Though not Jewish, she has lost her children in the war and survived Auschwitz. Her body bears the damage and shame of her experiences: the tattoo, false teeth, problems with diet and general health. She is consumed by guilt, reliving and trying to make sense of her experiences through her many conversations with Stingo. Her relationship with Nathan is traumatic, moving between devotion and abuse, both verbal and physical. Nathan, like Sophie, is not what he seems. When Sophie finally reveals her terrible secret, being forced by a young Nazi soldier to choose between her children, condemning one to death, and then losing both, she seems somehow free. But there is no escape for Sophie from her guilt at surviving the war, or her shame at being a failed mother, daughter and friend. She cannot forgive herself. Sophie and Nathan die in a suicide pact, leaving Stingo to tell their story as best he can.

In The God of Small Things by Arundati Roy (1997), the death of Sophie Mol is much more than a tragic accident. It reveals the cracked centre of Ammu’s life, the broken nature of her family and deep divisions within Indian society. Ammu’s secret affair with Velutha, a paravan (untouchable), causes shame and results in death, banishment, bankruptcy and the end of innocence for her twins, Estha and Rahel. The irony of Ammu’s relationship with Velutha is that it is the only loving relationship she ever has with a man. Her father abuses her and, fleeing his violence, she marries a man who ill-treats her. Leaving him to protect her children results in her shaming her family, which reluctantly takes her back (as is the case for Tess). Her mother and aunt find her affair with Velutha impossible to understand: they are entrapped by the social expectations of their gender and society.

Golam Gaus Al-Quaderi and Muhammad Saiful Islam (2011) discuss the status of Ammu in The God of Small Things, seeing her as a woman outside her society who ‘resists patriarchy and caste and bigotry in public and pays with her life’ (p. 67). Tess also stands outside her society and pays with her life. Chen Zhen notes the double standards that applied to men and women in 19th century England, suggesting Tess’s ‘tragic fate is closely connected with two men’s betrayal and mastery. The bourgeois hypocrisy and the male dominance incarnated in Angel and
Alec co-operate in driving Tess to destruction’ (p. 36). In Styron’s novel, a woman again suffers at the hands of men: Sophie is betrayed by a cruel father, married to a cruel husband, cheated by a vicious Nazi soldier and abused by her lover (Carstens, 2001).

While Jen notes in ‘Ophelia’ that ‘when mothers die or fail, worlds fall apart’, it is clear in this novel, as with the others, that the failure of fathers to care for and protect their daughters is a key factor determining the fates of daughters. It is implied in ‘Ophelia’ that Jen’s father has failed her mother and her, so that Jen leaves Tasmania and then, when misadventure befalls her in London, she feels unable to return home. Tess’s father effectively sells her off to the wealthy D’Urbervilles in a misguided pursuit of status and wealth, sending her into the arms of Alec. Ammu is beaten and unloved by her father, sending her into the arms of an odious husband. Sophie’s father is a Nazi sympathiser and she feels guilty about his actions, evident in her false presentations of him to Stingo (Fredricson, 2009, p. 6). Abandoning his family leaves them vulnerable to the Nazis. Tess, Sophie, Ammu and Jen are betrayed by men but they are not depicted as entirely helpless and without agency. And none of these characters is entirely blameless, despite Hardy’s efforts to keep the idea of Tess’s purity uppermost in the reader’s mind. When Angel first sees Tess, she is described as ‘so modest, so expressive … so soft in her thin white gown’ (Hardy, 2002, p. 12). Even after the birth of her child, Hardy describes her as ‘the dazzlingly fair dairymaid’ (p. 126), perhaps suggesting that Tess should not be judged by the events surrounding Sorrow’s birth and death, or that Angel should know better than to be seduced by beauty. But Tess, as Gribble (1999) points out, ‘has a distinctive voice as a desiring subject, as well as a subject of desire’ (p. 17). Gribble asks if ‘the text present[s] Tess as a spokeswoman for a distinctly female self-assertion or as a victim of a patriarchal society’ (p. 12). It could be said that Tess is both, that she is a female character who manages to occupy several positions at once, worthy of the reader’s sympathy as she struggles against injustice but provoking frustration too as she seems unable to act to help herself, reflecting the complex situations of many female characters.

Conflicting ideas about female sexuality can be applied to Sophie as well. Nathan and Stingo are both in love with her, and, while Nathan sleeps with her, Stingo proposes marriage. Fredricson (2009) claims that Sophie has a more relaxed attitude to sex than is common in women of the time (p. 7). Carstens (2001) suggests
that this seems to add to ‘her sexual and emotional subjugation by male characters’,
which helps to explain her feelings of guilt and shame, and why she tells so many lies
that, in turn, lead the reader to see her not simply as a victim but as both ‘victim and
accomplice’.

Ammu stands outside her society in transgressing the ‘Love Laws’ and is
more easily condemned than Velutha because of her gender: ‘when women seek to
transgress the rules that govern love and desire the penalty is death’ (Bose, 1998, p. 66). It is clear that Ammu is condemned throughout the novel with regards to her
attitude towards men, and especially once her relationship to Velutha is revealed. A
reader might feel sympathy for Ammu’s actions in preserving her safety and dignity
in leaving her violent father and husband, but Indian society does not sympathise with
Ammu’s actions. Despite her mother and aunt both being victims of patriarchy, they
have no sympathy for Ammu when she returns home. Even the police inspector feels
emboldened to humiliate Ammu as she has broken the Love Laws, and so he ‘tapped
her breasts with his baton … It was a premeditated gesture, calculated to humil
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and terrorise her’ (Roy, 1997, p. 260). Ammu’s status as outsider is confirmed by her
solitary death a few years after she is sent away from Kerala.

Jen lives outside the accepted rules of society when a rock and roll performer,
most especially in her drug-taking and unconventional sexual relationships with Jules
Flashman and Piers Dangerfield. It is her promiscuity that Harry Lightfoot finds
impossible to deal with when Jen’s past is revealed. This is despite his own affair with
his receptionist during their marriage. In his inability to listen to Jen or forgive her,
Harry is reminiscent of Angel who ostensibly loves Tess but fails to recognise the
damage done by his conventional ideas of female purity, double standards, and
wounded pride.

These female protagonists are all characterised as sexual, desiring, but as such
they arguably come to figure in a type of fiction ‘in which the heroines, usually
beautiful and clever, become the scapegoat of social rituals’ (Chen, p. 40). The
conflicted role of women in male-dominated societies, the Madonna/whore binary, is
partly what leads women to keep secrets, tell lies and feel shame. For Tess, the loss of
her virginity is a high price to pay in Victorian society and she knows her value is
debased. Yet, she does not pretend to be what she is not. Angel sees what he wants to
see and falls in love with Tess’s beauty and assumed innocence. In Fredricson’s
(2009) view, Sophie, damaged by circumstances, ‘seems to see sex as a means to an
end’ (p. 7), in fact, as a means of survival. Ammu only finds love with Velutha, an untouchable. Ammu knows that her actions may have damaging consequences yet she persists in her illicit relationship. The consummation of her desire is a matter of the most serious shame for her family.

Ammu and Velutha end up as outcasts due to their unwillingness to conform: ‘being treated as an outcast in her own family clearly defines her position in society’ (Al-Quaderi & Saiful Islam, 2011, p. 63). In the wake of her baby’s death, Tess knows she has to move on as it is evident she can never really be comfortable again in a place that had seen ‘the collapse of her family’s attempt to ‘claim kin’ … To escape the past and all that appertained thereto … she would have to get away’ (Hardy, 2002, p. 94). On her repatriation to New York after the Second World War, Sophie ends up in a bohemian boarding house in Flatbush, a Jewish neighbourhood, and ‘lives in sin’ with Nathan.

Crucially, Tess, Sophie, Ammu and Jen fail their children. Not only does Tess have an illegitimate child, Sorrow, but when the child dies she cannot fight the patriarchy of the church and her father; the child is denied a Christian burial and a decent place in the cemetery and is instead buried ‘in that shabby corner of God’s allotment where He lets the nettles grow’ (p. 92). Tragically, for Sophie, and what lies at the core of her trauma, is her belief that she is responsible for the deaths of her children, despite the fact that she had no control over the terrible situations she found herself in. On arrival at Auschwitz Sophie speaks, drawing attention to herself: ‘had she not answered in German he might have let the three of them pass through. But there was the cold fact of her terror, and the terror caused her to act unwisely’ (Styron, 2000, pp. 592-593). And so she finally tells Stingo that she was forced to choose between her children – “You may keep one of your children,” he repeated’ (p. 594), and so she lets her daughter go, only to have her son taken from her a few days later. Neither is seen again.

Ammu leaves her violent husband to protect her twins, Estha and Rahel, but finds on her return home that they are as unloved and unwanted as she: ‘Twin millstones and their mother’ (Roy, 1997, p. 225). It seems that part of the reason for Ammu’s attraction to Velutha relates to how much the twins adore him, so that she can ‘love by night the man her children loved by day’ (p. 202). Ironically, it is Ammu’s affair with Velutha, so full of love and tenderness, that destroys them all. Ammu’s affair makes orphans of her children, who are already unloved by their
family and society.

In ‘Ophelia’, Jen is manipulated by Jules, who uses her guilty feelings of complicity in the deaths of her friend, Rose, and lover, Piers, as well as her love for him, to encourage her to allow his other lover, Molly, to raise their child as her own. Jen is riddled with guilt and unable to contemplate the consequences of her own motherhood alongside the disappointment of the suicidal and desperate Molly.

*Sophie’s Choice* can be read as one long attempt at revelation and confession, since Stingo desires to know the truth about Sophie and what haunts her. In *The God of Small Things* one small confession from Velutha’s father to Mammachi sets in train shame, catastrophe and death. Ideas about the appropriate listener with sufficient authority are demonstrated in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* and *Sophie’s Choice*, in which Tess and Sophie respectively are left in invidious places in terms of acquiring forgiveness after their confessions. In *The God of Small Things*, it is clear that when Vellya Paapen tells Mammachi of the affair between Ammu and Velutha, his interest is only in confessing his knowledge of their sin, not in whether he, or anyone else, can be forgiven for such a thing. In fact, he knows that nobody can be forgiven for this sin.

Tess’s confession to Angel takes on the formal structure of religious Christian confession in that he is a trusted person who, given his learning and superior status, has the power to forgive. But Angel has objectified Tess just as Alec did. Thus, when she confesses to Angel he can, and does, reject her. Tess struggles to make Angel understand; she cannot find the right words to explain what happened to her, reinforcing the idea that it is not easy to confess shame.

In talking about her experiences, Sophie is trying to make sense of them. Stingo is an unsuitable listener on many levels, because he is young, naïve and also in love with Sophie, but he is also the only one capable of listening to Sophie. Nathan is neither capable nor suitable given his own issues and his romantic and sexual relationship with Sophie, whereas Stingo is a writer, an observer of life. In their conversations, which are effectively one-sided contrived confessions, given Stingo’s infrequent interruptions, Sophie is free to try out different versions of her story before coming to the right version through hearing the stories herself and testing Stingo’s reactions. But, for all his kindness, Stingo also uses Sophie for his own ends. Carstens (2001) accuses him of ‘explicitly using Sophie's story to work through his own guilty
affiliation with the American South’s history of slavery’, adding that he ‘patronizes her and appropriates her story for his therapy and for his art’.

No-one can save Ammu and Velutha once Velutha’s father, Vellya Paapen, confesses his knowledge of the affair to Mammachi: ‘Then the Terror took hold of him and shook the words out of him. He told Mammachi what he had seen’ (Roy, 1997, p. 255). The revelation of their secret relationship takes a very short time but it conjures fear of the shame to come, ‘for generations to come, for ever, people would point at them at weddings and funerals. At baptisms and birthday parties. They’d nudge and whisper. It was all finished now’ (p. 258). This revelation is so horrific and shameful that it leads to Baby Kochamma lying to the police, ‘not for Ammu’s sake, but to contain the scandal and salvage the family reputation’ (p. 259). She then bullies Estha into lying and, as a consequence, Velutha is beaten to death by the police. Estha is blamed for Sophie Mol’s death, sent away never to speak again. Ammu is banished and dies young and far away from home. Rahel, left to her own devices, growing up without her mother or brother, becomes more like her mother, much to the consternation of Baby Kochamma. Rahel struggles at school, becomes wild and seems incapable of love, lost due to her family’s secrets and shame. Estha and Rahel, are never free of their own complicity in what happened: ‘In the years to come they would replay this scene in their heads. As children. As adults. Had they been deceived into doing that they did? Had they been tricked into condemnation?’ (p. 318). Vellya Paapen’s confession may be brief, but in telling Mammachi what he knew he was unleashing terror on all. Mammachi was anything but a trusted listener, as she was neither able nor willing to offer forgiveness to anyone.

In ‘Ophelia’, Jen’s decision to run away from her rock and roll life to live in remote northern Australia can only be, in keeping with literary tradition, a temporary solution. By the time Jen confesses to Harry, it is too late. She is steeped in lies and secrecy and her confession seems designed more to prevent further damage to her reputation than to save Rupert, her husband or their children from further harm. Jen’s failure as a mother condemns her in the media, but her celebrity status and her loyal fan base help to protect her. Even so, she rejects celebrity once more, makes an outcast of herself, and turns her back on her fans despite their forgiveness and acceptance. She returns to Australia in the hope that Harry will eventually forgive her. Jen’s struggle to find forgiveness and her decision to live modestly and wait until others are ready to give it is due to her shame, her understanding of wrongdoing, and
her need to atone.

Unlike Tess, Sophie and Ammu, Jen does not die. This is because it is hard to see Jen as a tragic heroine, as the others could be considered. It is also to avoid the literary trope of the beautiful, wronged female character needing to die at the end of the novel.

The inconclusive nature of the end of the novel allows the reader to choose what happens to Jen. Does she walk into the sea and never return, like the namesake of the novel? Will Harry eventually relent and take her back? Will some other eventuality occur? This speculation allows the reader to decide whether Jen deserves forgiveness and can return to her old life or build another. The open nature of the ending encourages the reader to consider the nature of secrets and lies and forgiveness and the connections of these ideas to people’s lives, including, perhaps, their own.
Conclusion: The final words

In Erin Morgenstern’s novel *The Night Circus*, Widget says this of secrets:

“Secrets have power ... that diminishes when they are shared, so they are best kept and kept well. Sharing secrets, real secrets, important ones, with even one other person will change them ... So it’s best to keep your secrets when you have them, for their own good, as well as yours.” (2012, pp. 216-217).

Keeping secrets may involve telling lies, and keeping secrets might imply something sinister, something shameful about us, our past, something that we did or something that happened to us, or was done to us by others, perhaps by virtue of our nationality, culture or religion. The shame that can accompany a revealed secret comes from the discord that results from the discrepancy between the person we thought we were and the person we are shown to be. Shame has many causes, including fear of exposure, in case the people we love and care about might reject and abandon us, leaving us alone.

Celebrity culture sits at the heart of contemporary Western society, with its emphasis on individuality and capitalism. Rojek (2012) sees celebrity as ‘necessary to provide us with a sense of transcendence, especially where organized religion is no longer particularly relevant’ (p. 185). Religion used to be the way people knew how to live alongside others in society, how to forgive, accept punishment and move on. However, while celebrity can be a force to enhance democracy and well-being, I believe, as Rojek does, that we also need to be aware of the dangers of celebrity as, ultimately, the machinery of celebrity culture, like that of organised religion, reveals its uses for power and social control (p. 185). Brooks (2000) agrees with Rojek, that Oprah Winfrey–style confessionals seem to trivialise and over-value victims’ stories, but he contends that our concept of selfhood would ‘collapse without the confessional discourse which ... indicates the uniqueness of the individual’ (p. 140). Taylor (2010) draws on Foucault’s work to warn against an easy acceptance of celebrity culture as the way to knowing who you are and how to behave in the world (pp. 180-181). People need to be careful about acceding to this authority when spending their money, choosing role models, and deciding whom to forgive.
Theorists explain that shame and guilt are not the same thing, and it seems from my reading that their differences point to possible explanations for why celebrities seem to be forgiven and literary characters are frequently not. Time also seems to be central to forgiveness, so that celebrities who are forgiven are not usually quickly forgiven. They seem to have to wait for some time before they can resume a successful career. The experiences of celebrities such as Robert Downey Jr and Ellen de Generes support this idea. My reading suggests that time to allow forgiveness is not usually possible or evident in novels.

Perhaps the most relevant aspect of confession is that it links to the desire to re-find a place in society, and Brooks observes that ‘the urge to confess wrong doing is… normal in all save hardened, professional criminals’ (Brooks, 2000, p. 23). Apparently, people can live with punishment; it is banishment that cannot be accepted – as Reik says, ‘“Punish me, but love me again!”’ (cited in Brooks, 2000, p. 46). It seems that this idea might propel celebrities who wish to maintain their career: they know they must suffer, but it is worth it to maintain their status, to keep their fans and their incomes.

In the novels discussed, the processes of confession and forgiveness are complicated and deeply embedded in power relations. None of the female protagonists is entirely innocent or without agency; in each case, her character and her decisions contribute to her unenviable destiny. Even so, readers are not encouraged to condemn them for their failure to conform to societal expectations and conventions because these, to varying degrees, are depicted as limited and debilitating for all concerned – men, women and children. There seems no escape from the original ‘sin’ or initial shaming event. Each novel’s protagonist moves away to start afresh but cannot. Her life is marked and it seems there is nothing she can do to erase the stain or make amends. Sophie sums it up: ‘Shame is a dirty feeling that is even more hard to take than guilt’ (Styron, 2000, p. 572). For Tess, Sophie, Ammu and Jen, their shame is more significant than their guilt and they cannot receive forgiveness for who they are.

Brooks (2000), Foster (1987), Iser (1988) and Atwood (2002) claim that the role of the reader is to find his or her own truth in a novel, to let it speak to his or her experiences. D’Holker (2006) claims that the attempt to reveal the truth is what matters, not that forgiveness is achieved; the reader can make the relevant judgments and appropriate personal connections to the story. Various experiments in reading
fiction (Mar, Oatley & Peterson, 2009; Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Comer Kidd & Castro, 2013) suggest that reading enhances one’s ability to empathise with others. From this perspective, readers can decide for themselves whether a character deserves forgiveness or not.

Jeanette Winterson (2011) notes that there are three types of big endings: ‘Revenge. Tragedy. Forgiveness … Forgiveness redeems the past. Forgiveness unblocks the future’ (p. 225). While the three novels considered in this study end in tragedy, it seems that people want stories of forgiveness, both in celebrity culture and in literature. The end of ‘Ophelia’ suggests that forgiveness is possible. But regardless of whether Harry forgives Jen or not, the reader is empowered to make a choice about forgiveness, based on their own experiences and empathy for the central character and her situation.

This thesis explores the notion that lies and secrets permeate all parts of life but especially celebrity culture and literature, and it questions why this might be so. I considered that celebrities may be more readily forgiven for their mistakes and for keeping secrets than are literary characters. I considered that it might be possible to learn how to recover from being caught out in a secret, such as being homosexual, or giving away your child, which can be a matter of shame in terms of complying with the dominant cultural expectations, or being caught in a guilty act, such as cheating on your wife, or being found to be a drugs cheat, which falls outside expectations about decent moral behaviour, from the manner in which celebrities and literary characters are offered forgiveness, or not, as the case may be. However, there are no simple answers to the speculations that drove this thesis. Several areas seem significant. The differences between shame and guilt, that guilt is an act of the person that can be forgiven, whereas shame is about the person and a person cannot be forgiven for who they are, seems highly relevant. Theories about what constitutes an acceptable confession indicate possibilities. The special relationship of fan with celebrity and reader with fiction points to possible answers. The prerogatives and relationship of capitalism and the changing forms of media provides further clues.

Given there are myriad ways to explore conundrums about who we are and how we live, about what we do to ourselves and others, about secrets kept and revealed, about guilt and atonement, shame and identity, loss and hope, and about the complicated relations of men and women, parents and children, celebrities and fans, why choose fiction as the primary vehicle? Perhaps because a novel allows for
tentative explorations and need not posit right or wrong or argue a position; fiction invites readers to bring to the text their own imaginings, interpretations and judgments. In ‘Ophelia’ and this essay I draw, in different ways, on diverse literary, biographical and theoretical literature, print and digital media, and my own and others’ observations and lived experiences to produce original research that contributes to vigorous and ongoing cultural conversations about who we are and how to behave in an increasingly celebritised society, where the media manipulates and constructs images and identity, and where people continue to read fiction to help make sense of their lives, and perhaps find answers to some of life’s imponderable questions.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Cover page for scrapbook – inspiration from the National Gallery
Appendix 2: Article from Scrapbook

For 19 years Celeste Tobias thought she was the daughter of actor Oliver, but then her mother dropped a bombshell that shook her to the core...
I thought the most difficult thing for me was losing the love in my life. I was new to London and had no friends, and life was tough. I missed my family, especially my father, who had passed away. I was alone and lonely, and I felt like I was struggling to find my place in this new city.

I decided to reach out to my mother and ask if she could visit me. She was hesitant at first, but after a few weeks of convincing her, she finally agreed. When she arrived, she brought me to a small restaurant where we talked and ate. It was the first time I had laughed in weeks. I realized that I needed to focus on the positive aspects of my life and that I wasn't alone.

Over the next few days, I started to feel better. I met some new friends, and we went to the park and enjoyed the sun. I started to notice the little things that make life worth living, like the way the leaves rustle in the wind or the smell of fresh flowers.

I decided to take a break from work and spend some time exploring the city. I visited some museums and galleries, and I even went to a concert. It was a chance to relax and enjoy myself.

When I got back to work, I felt renewed and motivated. I was able to focus on my job, and I even got a promotion. I realized that I didn't have to rely on my mother for everything. I could do it on my own.

I started to feel more confident and independent. I even began to enjoy my job again. I was able to balance my work and personal life, and I was no longer feeling overwhelmed.

I realized that I had to be strong and resilient. I had to be able to bounce back from setbacks, and I had to be able to find joy in the little things.

In the end, I learned that life is a journey, and I had to be willing to take risks and step out of my comfort zone. I had to be willing to be vulnerable and to open myself up to new experiences. I had to be willing to live my life to the fullest.
Appendix 3: Notes on the novel, August 2010

August 2010 - Notes: Structuring Re-writing

- rewrite chapter 1 (not too blurry)
- write typo for name here
- rewrite previous: final chapter about Dave, Collins, strong plot, take to open point of novel - bring him focus to the first focus
- rewrite final chapter to end in light or change: take off point of novel

- rewrite appendix, subtitle, with book devotion - as The Brothers - focus on Julia's story - thing about the power - setting: down time - focus on our past and our guts -承包 his lake is nearly to fall

- rewrite - Dave from each and () - give Dave more here - tightened whole
- no peak about the galaxy? family role. Boy up after this type of weapon
- the suddenly loss book - focus on the kids / JP especially - be a get team in a force
- still intended at moment, needs some copy back - but go better idea of her / she runs here - so what she's got to lose

- rewrite chapter - from Mary's pov, who has nothing in broad side view
- in town / she has / think about for - the kids - Libby included
- in conversation can no time with me - the angry - go projects. JP, John's thoughts on her faster - the man’s over etc. While subtle but underlying things
- or reading any they talk

Thought on this
- from the story better
- keep story in 1990 - all degrees to 1979-85 - this will be through character thinking from making - change. So then we can
- establish main character earlier - better. Everyone think to - main character - Jim, Nancy, like a pretty cold given in our moment
- plus second - Dave Collins & Sandra

Need to
- keep moving pov around - ensure the reader can be the one to
- put back into as central protagonist things
II  Rupert's reaction to the revelation of his mother needs more time—more truth. In his reaction, there was more of a shift in him before this point.

- Perhaps it's just his fear of losing trust in Rupert too.
- John must be forced to join Rupert too—tell the truth.
- Rupert will be shocked by the level of deception in his reaction.
- So, John (secretly), it will be difficult.

11. I'm now to "sleep". Many times of the truth—begin Rupert's show.

II. Unhappy revelation. More time for reaction & consideration—& reference to the past.

11. Meeting with John. John—again, I don't—can it now. Can't get the words.


John: "Are you sure?" I sent him. "He's there!"

John: "You promised!"

II. What was recherché of past & thoughts about love.

11. Receiving—\( V \) the quintessence of why I am.

11. Writing of events & reaction to the person. Concerning needs thinking through.

- What is the content of the story? How is it said? How is it done?
- What is the feeling? How is the word used? Who does he turn to?

11. Jeremy's story is the police—what is Jeremy really do we present a police?
- He is introduced & caught by police.
- He is arrested. He is caught by police
- What is the story? What is the person?
- What is the story he makes?
- What is the person? The person.
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Appendix 4: Notes on the exegesis, April 2011

Exegesis - Apr. 11 2011

Keeping secrets

Teaching lies,

Confessing the truth,

If all about identity - shape we are,

- who we really are

- what we're really close.

Discovering secrets from our past is confronting as it usually

Shakes/oblivious our belief/about - our self,

- our family

- the God/Prophet method.

Celebrity & Jensen's revelation of why they really are

What they have done

Similarly, Shakes us as our faith & then is Shaken so is

Our faith/belief in our ability & we've been shown to be

foolish/gullible, naive.

Revelation of secrets: Share for the liar / the reveal of truth

& share for us - the receiving of the truth - our

Share (broken) like embarrament/being dependent.

Forgiveness depends upon

Our relationship with the confessors

How much we have invested in their lives/deaths

How much or similarly we may have transgressed ourselves.

Disingenuous can react in

1. closure of the truth

2. rejection of the person

3. death or destruction of that person life/identity/etc...

4. come up.
We believe “the truth will set us free.”

But does it?

Now does shame only ever first—take of Aborigines/decant/venet/slick, mean, relative of deep shame for most of my growing up in a lousy black project. It’s Russia.

Said Morgan’s discovery that she was not Scottish but Aborigine—I issues for his nuclear family—who didn’t want to know

Truth in marriage—should you even tell the affair?

We will be 61, free of guilt but for it?

Truth in literature.

The confessions of Tessa/Sophie in Gondi Small Things/ Ape Magic.

Good to death—Tessa = death of imprisonment

Sophie = suicide

A ru — death to go, guts, death to go.

Ape says no future/Aborigine reminded 2 others

Confessions from shame or guilt.

Can they now free of guilt’s ability to accept their faults?

Is death or destruction or ostracism (of Self) the only solution for those choices?

Centrality’s kinship of those of head stones revealed in Hilt.

by Maribelle

Tessa

Sophie

Whoever

& I

20 Nov

From the Peace/Child (few)

mock Night of Troubled Pier (feb.)
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