On Shimmers: Where Glamour and Performance Meet

TONYA RAE CHRYSTIAN

This writing explores glamour as a phenomenon of performance, arguing that through performance glamour becomes an epistemological impulse that creates both knowledge and remains of femininities, among other forms of identity and expression. Beginning with thorough definitions that integrate glamour and performance, this writing explores new theoretical and philosophical models that incorporate the realms of experience and eroticism in which an analysis of glamour may be approached, highlighting some of the polemics and dangers along the way. Departing from a traditional material-cultural analysis of glamour, which relegates it largely either to patterns of consumption in the twentieth century or to the Hollywoodian sphere of influence, this article extends the temporality and influence of glamour indefinitely, taking glamour seriously an embodied practice deeply associated with the diverse forms and expressions of the feminine using Amanda Gorman's Esteé Lauder campaign image as a closing example.

Keywords: glamour, performance, femininities, interdisciplinarity, repertoire, analytical models

"But to be real BB, I feel most glamorous when I'm lying naked on my velvet couch surrounded by my three cats. Cats are the most glamorous motherfuckers on the planet. They know their worth and radiate it. That's what glamour is."

— Mistress Velvet[1] for *Bitch*, issue 84, fall 2019

1. THE MAP

What is this shimmering, translucent, glossy thing called glamour? What is this mysteriously effortless magic that some people can wield over our desires and perception of reality? Is it some*thing*, some*one*, or something else? For Elizabeth Taylor glamour meant you had to "pour yourself a drink, put on some lipstick and pull yourself together" (Bender); for Marilyn Monroe "[…] beauty and femininity are ageless and can't be contrived, and glamour—although the manufacturers won't like this—

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cannot be manufactured. Not real glamour, it's based on femininity" (Allen 37); and for Maya Angelou glamour is "saying I want to be as beautiful as I can be, to myself first, and to anybody else who has enough sense to see me" (Moscatello). In the candour and ferocity of her 1956 *Glamour Book*, Lilly Daché argues that "glamour is not any one thing, nor even an external thing. It begins in the mind and it is made up of many things. It is the smile on the Mona Lisa. It is the look in the eyes of Garbo and the sound of the voice of Dietrich. It is what makes life worth living" (Daché 11–2). If the definition of glamour continues to be elusive, what happens when we bring glamour into contact with the broader social phenomenon of performance?

This article has a few purposes. **The most important is a theoretical exploration that shifts our understanding of glamour from a material paradigm, into a new paradigm of performance.** This writing is not a traditional, close-ended analysis; rather it develops a new theoretical position that interweaves glamour with performance, celebrity, femininity, and mass culture. It seeks to provoke and re-invigorate studies of glamour in a new direction, one that might serve as a new foundation for studies of glamour built, at least in part, on an older, existing one. In return, it is my hope that this paradigm shift permits for more diverse (re)explorations of glamour as an impulse of embodied culture and bodily-knowledge, rather than one of material or consumer culture. I develop, here, a broader definition of glamour that aims to expand upon its provocative nature rather than restricting it. As this initial process of definition unfolds, I bring forward several arguments about glamour (as performance) and its urgent implications for the humanities, ending with a brief analysis of Amanda Gorman's announcement that she signed to Estée Lauder as a brand ambassador. This closing analysis is not the focus of the paper, but simply a small example of my theoretical exploration in application as I work transgressively and in reverse—ending with a provocative question to be carried forward, rather than beginning with one that comes to a close by the paper's end.

I begin with my own definition of glamour rooted in performance studies, with the support of Judith Brown, Joseph Roach, Rebecca Schneider, and Stephen Gundle who all, in their own unique voices, recognize glamour to be a magical phenomenon closely related to the performing body and the theatre. Footnoted in this section are a definition of eroticism by George Batailles and a Kabbalistic definition of femininity[2] by Moshe Idel, both of which I find cogent to an expansive concept of glamour. However, these definitions can be interchanged or further expanded by other researchers or performers, hence their appearance in the footnotes; I wish to leave this invitation open for now, not only because limiting the scope of an expansive definition can be tricky, but also to allow room for new growth, creativity, and provocation, especially as regards femininities.

The next section, clarifies my definition of performance as it interrelates with glamour for those who may be new to performance studies, or for those who are looking for alternative ways to interrelate glamour with performance theory. Richard Schechner, Rebecca Schneider, Diana Taylor, and Ericka Fischer-Lichte are crucial to my structural development in this section, but again I welcome both creative and philosophical heterogeneity wherever glamour and performance collide. I am merely developing a theoretical base that shifts our understanding of glamour from a material phenomenon to a performatic one. Schechner offers a useful understanding of all the phenomena, including glamour, that can comprise this mimetic or restorative thing called "performance." From there, I posit that glamour is a type of embodied knowledge that can function as a historical record, challenging both the logic of the archive and the material cultural approach that has dominated glamour studies. I am particularly adamant that reconfiguring glamour into a performatic impulse *increases* its status from entertainment, consumerism, and cultural "fluff," to a phenomenon profoundly relevant to history, sociology, and cultural studies with the power to record many kinds of embodied knowledge. As this section draws to a close, I bring my earlier definition of glamour into direct alignment with my definition of performance, arguing that both are temporally complex phenomena that rely on spectatorship and produce desire.

My third section, continues to expand my concept of glamour by identifying it with celebrity, mass culture, and femininities.[3] In this section, I move the concept of celebrity away from negative moralizing, or viewing it as a symptom of loss. Instead, drawing on Graeme Turner's foundational work, I explore how celebrity influences the (re)negotiation and (re)configuration of cultural values and meanings. As the section unfolds, I grapple with some of celebrity's contradictions and controversies. I further imbricate glamour with femininity, as glamour is one of the most influential cultural domains to which the feminine has had privileged access, despite a world that habitually denies power and influence to the feminine. Underlying this argument is the belief that the feminine glamorous has replaced the feminine divine, as explicated by Joseph Roach who combines celebrity, glamour, femininity, and divinity.

The next section looks at how glamour challenges meaning-based modes of analysis, restores a high-status to feminine embodied culture, and continues to contribute to feminist discourse. It also addresses the historical neglect of performance as a knowledge system. Finally, to bring the article to a close, I approach a small example based on an analysis of poet Amanda Gorman's glamorous publicity photo for the cosmetics brand Estée Lauder which appeared in *The New York Times*, concluding with the creative prompt and provocation for new research and analyses to come: *how does glamour disseminate the transcendent power of embodied femininities?* It is my hope that the journey of this writing will provoke new and creative ways to carry this

question forward into studies that examine the exciting and powerful interrelations of glamour, performance, and femininities, using new modes of analysis based on the performing body and the pervasiveness of embodied culture.

2. TOWARDS A PERFORMATIC DEFINITION OF GLAMOUR

Glamour is a modality of knowledge creation, storage, and transference through performance that is manifested *to be witnessed*. It belongs to a continuum of embodied codes and bodily acts that, in their encounter, enchant crowds and create desire. A heterogeneous phenomenon, glamour engages the ephemerality *and* materiality of seduction, eroticism, and excess, while remaining connected to its etymological roots of illusion, deception, and occult learning. Deeply disharmonious are glamour's agitating logics of nostalgia and futurism, disappearance and remains, citation and generation, stasis and revolt, artificiality and realness, subjugation and agency, and surface and depth, yet through it all is the conduit of the body and its entangled, choreographic relationships with the saturated world of things. The binaries that glamour engages result from hegemonic norms, either required for stability, or violated for transformation. As such, "glamour is morally and politically suspect, as all pleasures inevitably are" (Brown 13). As processual in its unfolding, reception, and transfer as it is product-oriented, glamour embraces a formal relationship between ceremony, theatre, and magic which are thresholds of experience and meaning, choreography and surface, and appearance and illusion. Thus, glamour becomes a saturated and contradictory phenomenon with its own unique forms of embodiment that may be accrued by individuals or assemblies. It may also appear in concentrated bursts or be spread diffusely across mass publics. However, it always pertains to the realm of performance, existing comfortably in a register that does not require a division between the real and the imaginary, the historical and the mythological, or the archive[4] and the repertoire.[5] Like all theatre, glamour is deeply related to the deep time of ritual—a radical departure from the dominant narratives which isolate glamour to a material phenomenon that largely unfolded through twentieth-century Modernism.

There are two important definitions of glamour, the first of which comes from the Webster's *Third New International Dictionary*:

> "**glamour**. 1. A magic spell: BEWITCHMENT 2. An elusive mysteriously exciting and often illusory attractiveness that stirs the imagination and appeals to a taste for the unconventional, the unexpected, the colourful, or the exotic: a strangely alluring

> atmosphere of romantic enchantment: a bewitching, intangible, irresistibly magnetic charm: personal charm and poise combined with unusual physical and sexual attractiveness" (1971; qtd. in Trent and Lawton 9).

The second comes from Stephen Gundle and Clino T. Castelli's introduction to their book *The Glamour System* (2006):

> "etymological dictionaries trace the origins of the word glamour to sources much older than movie stardom and Hollywood in the studio era. According to *The New Fowler's Modern English Usage* (1996), glamour was originally a Scottish word. Etymologically, it was an alteration of the word 'grammar' which retained the sense of the old 'gramarye' ('occult learning, magic, necromancy'). When it passed into standard English around the 1830s, it did so with the meaning of a 'delusive or alluring charm.' A century later, in the 1930s, it was applied to the charm or physical allure of a person, especially a woman. [...] The most exhaustive treatment of the term's Scottish origins is to be found in an 1879 *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language.* For the volume's author, glamer or glamour was 'the supposed influence of a charm on the eye, causing it to see objects differently from what they really are. Hence to cast glamer o'er one, to cause deception of sight" (Gundle and Castelli 3).[6]

In these definitions, glamour is understood to be something that draws you in, a desirable force situated between embodied beauty, luxury, and witchery. These definitions imply that its magic alters perception, making *what is* into *more than* what is. As Gundle notes, "[...] glamour is often about excess. It is always *more* than average: more showy, more visible, more beautiful, more sexy, more rich" (Gundle 15; emphasis in original); and therefore "glamour might be understood as a magical remainder" (Brown 13). Gundle and Castelli's thorough historical and etymological research further confirms this rooted connection between glamour, femininities,[7] and the occult, defining glamour to be "the supposed influence of a charm upon the eye." Running throughout these definitions is the notion that glamour is an occult force that either infuses or emanates from certain desirable people or objects extending a magical promise of transformation to those who seek them out. Therefore, it is not easy to establish whether glamour is a term that carries too much meaning or too little, as Judith Brown explicates:

> "the difficulty of defining glamour, then, is explained here, in the space between subject and object, materiality and immateriality. Glamour is both wispy and capacious: it is difficult to catch a hold of, yet its effects pervade modern culture and writing. Glamour is *both* elusive *and* generative form with the magical ability to shape and reshape the objects before us, to make them better, more tantalizing, by pressing them into an inhuman dimension" (Brown 9; emphasis in original).

What is curiously absent from these definitions are the distinct ingredients of glamour's alchemical elixir, the required steps to cast its enticing spell—a page ripped from the *grimoire*. To compensate for this void, glamour is thus defined either by its effects (e.g., seduction, pleasure, allure, deception); or simply as mystery itself, detached from any fixed symbological, narratological, or structural activity. What is consistent, however, is that glamour emits an alluring, erotic[8] *something* that catches our eye, touching the edge of magic or mystery as we are drawn toward its source and transformed by its performance and its effects. Obsessed with the visual, yet running far deeper than the eye, glamour is the interplay of matter and repertoire, appearance and illusion. To encounter it is to experience the bending of substances from one form into others, to witness simultaneous truths and shimmering illusions. It can be understood, therefore, as a living, embodied [feminine] paradigm with a mass cultural influence on knowledge, sexuality, and liberty through its production of desire.

In his book *Glamour: A History* (2008), Gundle claims that "glamour is best seen as an alluring image that is closely related to consumption. It is an enticing and seductive vision that is designed to draw the eye of an audience. It consists of a retouched or perfected representation of someone or something whose purpose it is to dazzle and seduce whoever gazes on it" (5). While glamour certainly prioritizes the ocular, it is both a distortion and elevation of sight, a process of seeing and of being seen, both of which are experiences as titillating and illicit as they come. What is more, glamour has multi-sensorial, erotic dimensions that spread much farther than the ocular from whence they arrive. Glamour, like theatre and performance, requires the presence of a witness. Further identification between glamour and performance continues throughout Gundle's works, where he shows the divide between material and embodied culture to be more fiction than reality. He claims that "the element of pretend or make-believe is a crucial part of the illusion of glamour" (Gundle 4), "glamour is a weapon and a protective coating, a screen on which an exterior personality can be built to deceive, delight, and bewitch" (*ibid.*), and that "glamorous people belonged to the world of representation, where play acting and fakery were commonplace" (Gundle 10). Like performance, glamour will always have an uneasy relationship to the real. As Joseph Roach discusses in *It*[9]: "theatrical performances and

the social performances that resemble [the It effect] consist of struggle, the simultaneous experience of mutually exclusive possibilities—truth and illusion, presence and absence, face and mask" (Roach 9).

Even as a historian of material and consumer culture, Gundle recognizes the theatre to be one of glamour's most significant ancestors: "theatres were the site of a visual interplay between performers—who drew their status from their beauty, extravagance, and notoriety—privileged spectators in the boxes, and the mass of playgoers. Audiences looked to the theatre for imaginative stimulus and guides to modern patterns of conduct" (Gundle 10). Here again the visual dimension of glamour is highlighted, with the theatre positioned as a site/cite/sight of *visual* interplay. Audiences *look* to the stage for cues of all kinds, as theatres have always been where contact is made between those who wish to see and those who wish to be seen. Even the ancient Greek word for theatre, "theatron," means *the seeing place*. However, the theatre deals with much more than looks. It trades in experience, eroticism, narrative, meaning, and embodiment. It leaves both material and immaterial traces in the bodies of those it touches; for bodies, too, comprise the remains of performance. The glamorous are an extension of the theatre: they are performers who have accrued status through their particular expression of "beauty, extravagance, and notoriety," characteristics that bestow significant power on those who obtain the title of "glamorous." Hence, the insatiable desire for glamour often lurks in the shadows like a devouring monster. The glamorous are deeply theatrical creatures, enchanting crowds, casting spells over their sight, and appealing to all the sensory organs of the body. Contemporary phenomena that produce glamour, such as cinema, reality TV, and social media, all derive or borrow heavily from their theatrical predecessors. Even more important, theatres are meeting places for the privileged *and* the masses, making glamour a phenomenon influenced by both the top and the bottom, with no predictability as to how these transfers of influence will take place. As a result, their contact is spontaneous, unpredictable, and explosively unstable. Of course, this meeting of the privileged and the masses also means that glamour, paradoxically, has the capacity for both wondrous transformation *and* stifling normativity. However, as Roach reminds us: "in many obvious ways, theatre earns its clichéd reputation as the most ephemeral of the arts, but more reflective historians understand the uncanny staying power of certain magnetic personalities and types, even—or perhaps especially—when they seem to be playing a merely accessory role in the social dramas of changing times" (Roach 51).

3. GLAMOUR AND PERFORMANCE

Thus far I have established that glamour is, in its essence, a type of performance derived from theatrical culture intertwined with an unnamed magic. I will also define performance as a foundational part of the new paradigm of glamour that I am developing here. I begin with Richard Schechner's central definition of performance as a "restored" or "twice-behaved" behaviour (Schechner 1985, 36), for it is both foundational and versatile, encompassing the full diversity of performance in its simplicity. In this context, "restored" refers to performance's citationality, or to the idea that any performative behaviour is not original behaviour, but a simulation of original behaviour. Glamour, in this sense, is citational with the potential for resurrection and restoration. Schechner further expands that "performance is an inclusive term. Theatre is only one node on a continuum that reaches from the ritualizations of animals (including humans) through performances in everyday life—greetings, displays of emotion, family scenes, professional roles, and so on—through to play, sports, theatre, dance, ceremonies, rites, and performances of great magnitude" (Schechner *xvii*). To this list, I further add glamorous events such as red-carpet arrivals, pageants, fashion photography, drag balls, selfies, award ceremonies, Instagram, concerts, music videos, fashion shows, and any other shimmering event of the sort.

Rebecca Schneider also argues that performance's citationality endures like records, documents, and archives, but in a different way.[10] She offers a cogent example through her analysis of a simple, (re)iterative act common to glamour, namely the pose:

> "A pose is a posture, a stance, struck in reiterative gesture often signifying precedent. In this way, a pose can be said to be reenactive, citational. Even if the precise original of a pose is unclear, or nonexistent, there is still a citational quality to posing due to the fact that a pose is arrested, even if momentarily, in what is otherwise experienced as a flow of time. The pose articulates an interval, and so [...] is given to multiple and simultaneous time(s). The freeze or lag in time that is the moment of arrested stillness defines a pose as a pose and might grant the pose a kind of staginess, or theatricality, as if (paradoxically perhaps) theatricality were the very stuff of an inanimate stillness" (Schneider 90).

Therefore, performance results in transformations that may be temporary (as in the theatre) or permanent (as in certain rituals, spells, or ceremonies). It serves as a modality of re-enchantment in which the things of the world are seen as heightened,

charmed, or auratic for an indeterminate period, comprised of multiple kinds of time.[11] However, performance does not reveal all; it can never produce what is fully real, true, or accurate. As Schneider notes, "'theatricality'—by which I mean to reference something theatrical, or something of (or reminiscent of) the theatre—is relative to mimesis, simulation, doubling, imitating, copying, even if not identical. Identicality is already undone in all of these words, as they are all words for the side-step operation by which one thing stands in for another, either as the same or as almost the same but not quite" (Schneider 18). None of this is to say that performance does not concern *presence*, only that it deals in (re)presentation, where the "real" may even (re)appear as more intensely "real"—more affective and present—than it did the first time. Performance thus becomes a process of slippage *and* recognition, a space where things are not what they seem, but not *not* what they seem (to borrow another term from Schneider). Therein, performance, like glamour, is not a pursuit or replication of "truth," but is an in-bodied paradigm that plays with illusions, thresholds,[12] and surrogacy, seeking contact and transference with the hope of transcendence.

As performances transfer from body to body, there are innumerable opportunities for errors, misinterpretations, mistranslations, misunderstandings—slippages of all kinds—creating a promiscuous drift similar to the interpretive errors found in written documents and archaeological remains. In other words, performance, whilst also deeply entertaining, is no more or less reliable as evidence than anything from the material realm. According to Diana Taylor, the only inequity between the archive and repertoire is the power that centuries of empire have bestowed on material records over embodied choreographies (Taylor 18). Therefore, glamour is as much a form of entertainment as it is an embodied historical record.

To illuminate this, consider the relationship between Cleopatra VII and the actresses Sarah Bernhardt, Theda Bara, and Elizabeth Taylor who have (re)presented[13] her. Can we really say there is no trace or knowledge of Cleopatra in the long genealogies of her (re)performance? Did such a queen, known for her glamorous acts, really leave no trace in the flesh? Both Rebecca Schneider and Diana Taylor would argue that the relationship between (re)performances of Cleopatra and Cleopatra herself is one of evidence, equally as mis/translatable or fragmented as any papyri or stela which bears her name or image. Can a long-dead queen in some manner be resurrected in the flesh, in a repertoire of glamour performed by pop divas? What role does glamour play in preserving her? Or Marilyn Monroe: if embodied (re)iterations of her image, clothing, public appearances, songs, choreographies, persona, scent, and wardrobe continue to be (re)performed in our society now as much as when she was alive, can we really say she is dead *and gone*? What constitutes the remains of Marilyn Monroe when "Marilyn Monroe" is a performatic layering of dissonant characters and

contiguous persona, cut through with (technological) mediation and Madness? Is "Marilyn Monroe" even a body? Or is she a glamour? Is glamour an in-bodied (re)animation of a feminine divine lost to the ravages of the hetero-patriarchal Abrahamic world? These are the types of questions glamour can speak to when understood as a phenomenon of performance as I have formulated it here. Of course, there are as many approaches to a definition of performance as there are types of performances, such as those by Edward Said, Joseph Roach, and Saidiya Hartman that draw parallels between performance and the traumatized body, or those by feminist psycho-linguists like Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Bracha Ettinger that locate the maternal body as the source of language and creative impulse, or those by Indigenous performers like Monique Mojica (Guna/Rappahannock) that connect performance to ceremony, land, and creation.

The definition of performance I have offered supports an expansive conceptualization of glamour, but the invitation always stands to further this paradigm shift by weaving glamour with alternative performance theories to suit other creative provocations. Performance, for our current purposes, can be understood as a broader type of social behaviour derivative of the theatre, but transpiring beyond its walls.

4. GLAMOUR AND CELEBRITY

The last significant phenomenon I wish to bring into the fold of this new paradigm is that of celebrity, a major growth industry in the humanities that shares much critical territory with glamour, as both pertain to mass culture: "where celebrity news might have been more or less confined to a specific range of print and television outlets, it is now a category of content that can be found right across the media spectrum" (Turner 11). Another decision I am making is to pull glamour into the realm of *feminine* celebrity by calling foul on the prevailing wholesale dismissal of glamorous feminine beings and their fan bases as somehow excluded from the realm of knowledge production (a charge that suspiciously rests on gender, sexuality, and identification with mass culture).

Instead, I argue feminine celebrities have come to replace feminine divinities. This position becomes particularly salient if we consider the ways in which femininities have systematically been denied easy access to the world of so-called "high culture" and "high art," alongside a failure to recognize feminine performances as a means of knowledge production and transference. However, I do not unanimously liberate glamorous feminine celebrities from the recesses of power, elitism, or normativity either, but rather I take seriously the significant influence glamour, celebrity, and femininities have over crowds, myth, and embodied culture. I assert that

glamour, as a phenomenon of mass culture, is largely coded as feminine. This is so because: 1) femininities are the most frequent subjects of glamour; 2) glamour is reliant on the (re)presentation and transformation of femininities to generate desire; 3) glamour is closely tied to the sexual agency and, paradoxically, the sexualization of femininities; 4) the materials which comprise glamour are either for feminine performance (gowns, lipstick, diamonds, perfumes, high heels, etc.), coded-female (digital avatars, cars, and other luxury vehicles are given female names and voices, or referred to as "she"), or require the presence of femininities in order to complete the appearance of glamour (James Bond girls, Miss Universe pageants, etc.); 5) glamour is the medium through which fans connect to and (re)perform feminine stars over distance and time, even if these connections are largely imagined, also driving feminine patterns of consumption; and 6) glamour has, at times, been one of the few mediums through which femininities can communicate with mass publics, participate in cultural creation, and enact performances of agency, desirability, and sexuality. Rarely is glamour achieved without the presence, participation, contribution, transformation, or objectification of femininities.[14] The choice to centre femininities reflects the observation that glamour is typically relegated to the engorged sphere of the feminine for "glamour is often presented as a quality mainly attaching to women" (Gundle 3) and "'glamour' as a term implying a form of sophisticated feminine allure has a history which is interwoven with changing constructions of femininity, consumerism, popular culture, fashion, and celebrity" (Dyhouse 2). This makes glamour an irrevocable part of mass culture in which femininities occupy both the position of subject and object. Joseph Roach further confirms glamour's bias towards femininities, arguing "the countenance, the effortless look of public intimacy well known in actresses and models, but also common among high-visibility professionals of other kinds, is but one part, albeit an important one, of the multifaceted genius of It" (3). Therefore, in this new paradigm I am casting glamour as a phenomenon that (re)performs feminine celebrity on a mass cultural scale.

One of the most-cited aphorisms on the concept of celebrity is that of Daniel Boorstin, who argues "the celebrity is a person who is well-known for their well-knownness" (Boorstin 58)—a damning account of celebrity as deeply inauthentic culture. Boorstin's critique is stinging, but celebrity can be understood in less morally-loaded terms that avoid an elitist distaste for mass culture that convinces critics of their cultural superiority. Celebrity is not symptomatic of inauthenticity or affective lack. Rather "the modern phenomenon of celebrity reflects an ontological shift in popular culture. This constitutes a change in the way cultural meanings are generated as the celebrity becomes a key site of media attention and personal aspiration, as well as one of the key places where cultural meanings are negotiated and organised"

(Turner 3). It is to this latter conceptualization of celebrity that this new paradigm of glamour ascribes.

Celebrities are gathering sites of diverse publics across varying modalities of media. They contribute heavily to the formation of personal aspirations and sexualities, and are key drivers in the production of identity and expression through performance-based transference. Glamour requires audiences, popularity, and some semblance of celebrity that is broadly defined; yet not all celebrities are glamorous. What's more, the celebrity is a paradox of artifice and authenticity; but as we have already learned, these (supposedly) binary phenomena coexist easily within a paradigm of glamour as performance. Therefore, by way of a strong definition on which to base this new paradigm, celebrity,

> "is a genre of representation and a discursive effect; it is a commodity traded by promotions, publicity, and media industries that produce these representations and their effects; and it is a cultural formation that has a social function we can better understand. Increasingly, [...] it is implicated in debates about how identities are constructed in contemporary cultures, and about how the individual self is culturally defined" (Turner 6).

As with performance, celebrity implies certain polarities. It demands that we navigate its opposing ideological convictions and schools of thought. As such, "celebrity" is, for instance, both the product of embodied practices surrounding celebrities and the property of the celebrities themselves. It is created through feedback, dialogue, contact, and engagement between the public, the media, and the celebrity in question. This locates celebrity's complex affectual impact in a triangulation of performers, spectators, and media. Celebrity is not unique to the Modern era, much like the stance I have taken on glamour, as the desire to be famous can be traced back to the ancient world; "while celebrity is closely associated with the rise of technologies of mass communication, the desire for fame, to stand out from the social mass, is deeply embedded within human civilizations, and has been for thousands of years" (Barron 2). Consider again Cleopatra VII, who used repertoires of glamour (from the Donations of Alexandria, to the presentation of the Buchis Stela, to her non-extant treatises on cosmetics) to secure her claim to the throne, to akin herself to the divine, to disseminate her name and image throughout the Mediterranean world, and to seduce the most powerful men around her for the strength and benefit of both herself and Egypt. In fact, some of the extreme tactics employed by Cleopatra suggest an almost obsessive desire to disseminate her image,

much like the Kardashians. Although there has been some drift in how some pursue fame, the desire has been present in human civilizations since their inception.

To say that celebrity worship has replaced deity worship, particularly in the West, is old hat, but how we relate to this notion is subject to permutation. The worship of feminine celebrities resembles that of goddesses, saints, demons, and martyrs, with the added caveat that the once parasocial or psychic connections between fans and stars has, through social media, become a potential direct contact. I reject Boorstin's view that the blending of celebrity and divinity equates to a cultural loss of value, depth, or sophistication, so that glamour can be understood as a resilient feminine code with a powerful generative potential—a far cry from Boorstin's accusation of cultural corruption and moral failure. We are not just talking about celebrities; we are talking about surrogate deities; deities in a society that has actively destroyed sacred femininities and deprived their supplicants of feminine idols of worship. In their place, glamorous feminine celebrities have risen. This is not to reject the idea that celebrities are simply normal people. However, they become interpolated in immense repertoires of (re)presentation and discursive social practices, largely mediated through mass platforms like theatre, magazines, social media, cinema, and television. This new paradigm takes celebrities to be subjects (and sometimes objects) of desire rather than the source of damnable contempt. However, I also recognize that celebrities comprise a phenomenon of mass circulation requiring ongoing inquiry. They embody an increasingly productive social function and a new kind of power; they are the progeny of theatrical and embodied culture, and a complex condition of both proximity and divine distance, as Joseph Roach explicates:

> "In order to become enchanted in the first place, saints and martyrs must make themselves tangibly accessible to ordinary mortals even as they communicate with the divine. They must seem at once touchable and transcendent, like movie stars and cover girls, and like them and also for that reason, they very often appear in representation semi-nude. Their images circulate widely in the absence of their persons—a necessary condition of modern celebrity—but the very tension between their widespread visibility and their actual remoteness creates an unfulfilled need in the hearts of the public" (Roach 16–7).

5. URGENCY AND RETURN

Why glamour? Why now? Comprised of a unique interrelation of material and embodied forces in the locus of performance, glamour is "[a] point of convergence

between different contemporary reflections that try to go beyond a metaphysical epistemology and an exclusive meaning-based relationship to the world" (Gumbrecht 77). It agitates against porosity and abjection. Humanities scholars such Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Susan Sontag have long advocated for analytical modalities that go beyond endlessly nuanced forms of meaning. They aim to establish new methodologies of knowing, analyzing, and experiencing art that are based more on the senses and the erotic. "What is important now," writes Sontag, "is to recover our senses. We must learn to *see* more, to *hear* more, and to *feel* more. Our task is not to find the maximum amount of content in a work of art, much less to squeeze more content out of the work than is already there. Our task is to cut back content so that we can see the thing at all" (Sontag 14; emphasis in original). Glamour, read through an aesthetics of performance, provides such an opportunity since it rarely seeks fixed meaning or symbology. Instead, it aims toward experience, subversion, resurrection, sensuality, illusion, seduction, and transcendence—vectors that do not necessarily rely on meaning, but are not opposed to its appearance. Glamour is indifferent to the increasingly nuanced readings of its material codes that have accumulated over the last century. Instead, it invites modes of analysis that are not exclusively meaning-driven—a refreshing new direction for the study of art and culture, and an urgent reason to (re)consider glamour as a theoretical model.

Another important reason to (re)consider glamour's significance is its long-standing status as a mass-cultural, feminine-centered repertoire that has been largely neglected in academia save for a few historians of material culture, and Hollywood costume and cinema.[15] For a brief yet polarizing period, it also drew the attention of second-wave feminist theorists. In fact, glamour as an academic discipline has yet to recover from the onslaught of second-wave feminist anti-beauty arguments, which, in their extreme forms, relegated feminine beings to the location of cultural dupes, silent victims of a false consciousness, or to passive bodies made of cultural plastic. For example, theorists like Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Freidan, Germaine Greer, Naomi Wolf, Susan Faludi, Kim Chernin, or Susie Orbach promoted this problematic and silencing victim narrative throughout the twentieth century. With a book entitled *Beauty and Misogyny* written by Sheila Jeffreys as recently as 2015, glamour remains a provocative flash point of contention among feminists.

This division only augments the cultural stakes of glamour, and has done little to stop its global influence. Glamour's importance to feminine cultures should not be so easily dismissed. Carol Dyhouse provides a more nuanced and complex feminist view on glamour by arguing that

> "beauty practices, cosmetic interventions, choices about fashion and adornment are all made in a social—and historical—context.

> Postmodern understandings of identity as fluid rather than fixed, as constructed *at least in part through performance* rather than set in stone, encourage us to see style not simply in terms of the reflection of the self, but as part of the construction of identity, a continuing and creative process" (Dyhouse 203; emphasis added).

Glamour deserves to be taken seriously, by actively resisting accusations of passivity and frivolity, it is a productive and valuable medium of cultural, sexual, and knowledge production, particularly where femininities are concerned. Furthermore, as a repertoire of mass culture, it passes through the territories of anthropology, sociology, ethnography, media studies, philosophy, theatre studies, film studies, and cultural studies. In doing so, it challenges existing notions of knowledge and disciplinary boundaries along the way, making it a productive addition to a new school of scholarship that embraces deep time, deep media, and deep interdisciplinarity. To my knowledge this paradigm of glamour that I propose is the first to look at glamour as an erotic repertoire of remaining, rather than a history of material culture or a problematic feminist issue—further underscoring the urgency of this work.

Of the few scholarly books in existence dedicated to glamour, the majority are bound up in the paradigms of material culture or material feminist critiques. While these perspectives are valuable, my focus lies more on the genealogies of performance, bringing glamour closer to the realm of knowledge production with a profound social function and memory. Furthermore, much existing research on glamour focuses on what glamour *is*, more so than what it *does*. By exploring the performatic dimensions of glamour, I propose focusing on what glamour *does* in terms of embodied memory, history, and culture, rather than solely defining what it *is*. I do not wish to challenge scholars of material culture with a feminist historical revision; rather I wish to fill the gap left by the historical neglect and uneven recognition of performance as a means of knowing, transferring, and remaining—an argument earlier supported by Diana Taylor.

Admittedly, this paradigm shift in the study of glamour provocatively challenges our current understandings of this shimmering phenomenon. Prior to 1900, the word "glamour" was scarcely used, as it was closely related to witchery; but the early twentieth century "[...] saw the beginnings of the modern idea of glamour, in the opulence and display of the theatre and demi-monde, in Orientalism and the exotic, and in a conscious espousal of modernity and show of sexual sophistication" (Dyhouse 11–2). In less than a century, it evolved from a rarely used, niche term into a pervasive one that many struggle to define in a clear and coherent way. Therein, this particular period of dramatic transformation is the one that scholars of the subject most often choose to focus on. However, it represents only one chapter in glamour's history. Despite all the cultural shifts in expression wrought by the twentieth century,

most dictionaries consulted attest that glamour has never fully detached from its occult origins and transcendental potential. I have yet to encounter a work that openly and directly approaches glamour as performance, with perhaps Joseph Roach's *It* (2007) coming the closest, adding yet more urgency to (re)visit our understanding of glamour.

The paradigm shift in the study of glamour that I am proposing does not deny that glamour informs consumption, material historical analysis, feminist debates, or that it underwent radical transformations when it intersected with twentieth-century Modernism. Rather, it highlights that the potent immaterial, occult, and performatic aspects of glamorous repertoires remain underexplored, despite their prevalence and evident ability to transcend simple models of materiality. Judith Brown in her book *Glamour in Six Dimensions: Modernism and the Radiance of Form* (2009) captures this complexity in her example of smoking as a glamorous act featured in the quotation below, returning to the spirit of my original definition of glamour. Brown does not intentionally approach glamour with the language performance, but she very convincingly (and perhaps unconsciously) demonstrates its ability to engage immateriality and embodiment as seamlessly as it does the material world of commodities. She illustrates how glamour creates not only a bodily experience of suspension, solitude, and unproductivity, but also a bodily transfer (performance) of glamour which she likens to an aesthetic experience of fleetingness, beauty, and death even *within* the Modernist period. Thus, glamour neither began nor ceased to be performative as it passed through the twentieth century; it simply evolved:

> "And glamour? The cigarette [...] seems to stop time, to hold in suspense the unproductive moment, rendering it static for the duration of its burning ember. [...] Those two to three minutes are committed to nothing, *the* nothing that simultaneously opens up one perceptual dimension while shutting off another. The cigarette stops the onward press of time, throws off its switch, as long as it continues to burn. One steps out of the world and its demands, creating an artificial hush, at least in the solitary act of smoking. Here is glamour: an experience that moves one out of the material world of demands, responsibilities, and attention to productivity, and into another, more ethereally bound, fleeting, beautiful, and deadly. Glamour, like the act of smoking, thus transcends any simple structure of the commodity, rising into the realm of formal aesthetics, modern philosophies of space and time, the shifting lines of identity, and the dazzling effects of the surface" (Brown 4–5; emphasis in original).

6. NEW BEGINNINGS

To conclude, we have expanded the definition of glamour beyond its Modernist associations with consumer and material culture, redefining it as an atemporal, magical phenomenon closely related to the performing body and the theatre. By moving glamour away from materialities and towards performance, we can see how glamour challenges archival logic, logocentricity, and modes of analysis that are exclusively meaning-driven, both of which are urgent methodologies the humanities have long been craving. Performance is not hollow, meaningless, or fake, and neither is glamour. Performance records and transfers the history of the body, restoring power, influence, and most importantly, longevity to embodied culture that has its own ways of reverberating across time and space—and so too does glamour. Celebrity, mass culture, and femininities are also significant vectors to consider when applying glamour performatically: celebrity is not *de facto* a symptom of inauthenticity; mass-cultural phenomena are as worthy of inquiry as elite cultural phenomena; and femininities are a particular focus of glamour's appetite. All three should be given significant weight and consideration in any new study of embodiment and glamour.

In approaching this journey's end, I wish to leave us with one simple but powerful example of the connections between glamour, performance, mass culture, and femininities. A September 2, 2021, headline from *The New York Times* reads "The Poetic Justice of Amanda Gorman's Estée Lauder Contract," announcing the Black Feminist Poet Laureate's new three-year contract with the woman-founded and majority woman-run brand "which has a long history of female-focused philanthropy in both health and education and sales in 150 countries" (Friedman), knitting together the strings of racial and sexual justice, literacy, cosmetics, and glamour. In the article, Gorman states, "it's no secret that one of the ways I communicate with the world is through fashion and through beauty. When you grow up with a speech impediment one of the things you learn early on is that people will also relate to you through how you look" (Gorman in Friedman). This confirms that glamour, too, communicates on a level as important and effective as language. According to the article's writer, Vanessa Friedman, "Ms. Gorman joins a relatively short list of official Lauder Global Brand Ambassadors: only 32 in the almost 60 years since Phyllis Connors debuted in the role, of which only five have been Black" (Friedman). This demonstrates the opportunities for advancement, (re)storation, and agency that glamour can bring. As the article closes, Gorman challenges us to rethink "how we conceptualize beauty and conceptualize power. [...] Not just in terms of what is expected, but in terms of what is possible" (Gorman in Friedman), entangling glamour in a futurity as much as a historically pre-determined past, but always in relation to a question of power.

The article features a large photo of Ms. Gorman[16] returning the viewer's gaze, both acknowledging and implicating the spectator in a direct exchange. Her glamour invites the spectator to experience something sensual, something heightened, something stirring, made-up in a couture gown of electric purple tulle. Gorman's hands are raised: one extending to the body of the spectator, the other held near her own breast in an active gesture reminiscent of the ancient Yogic *mudras* of meditative transcendence. This pose indicates a cyclical engagement between *you* as a spectator and *me* as a performer, creating a bridge through her exposed arm over which we can travel back and forth through space. Moreover, these digital gestures were frequently employed in her historical recitation of her poem "The Hill we Climb" for President Biden's inauguration, connecting these two performances in a subtle yet powerful moment of glamorous resonance. Beyond Gorman is a seemingly endless blue sky and mountain range over which she commands as the dominant sole figure, perhaps of divine origin, in the silence both before and after speech. She presents a firmly balanced and grounded body, far from being dismissed as cultural plastic, a victim of false consciousness, or cultural "fluff."

What makes this photo glamorous is, first, the heightened nature of her appearance. Gorman wears a bright, enrobing gown that lacks practicality, adorned with makeup and gold jewellery, with her hair and nails meticulously styled. Immediately her appearance alone signals that we are witnessing a heightened event. She presents herself as a performer fully aware of being observed, with a reciprocal desire to be seen and circulated, setting this event apart from everyday behaviour. Next is the mixture of proximity and divinity. Gorman is the largest figure in the frame as her body fills much of the space, occupying almost the entire sky and dwarfing the mountains behind her. With no end to her lower body insight, Gorman reflects the tension within glamour, appearing both strikingly proximate and divinely distant.

Lastly, Gorman is inviting contact and connections, real or imagined, between her and her spectators, calling on them to be seduced and transformed by her presence, her powerful stance, her direct stare, her precise gestures, and her agency. This excess *may* influence their consumption, namely of the Estée Lauder cosmetics she is associated with; but this feels secondary as no mention of the brand appears in the image. Therefore, I posit that this image takes glamour *seriously*, demonstrating its performatic influence, and calling into question the habit of labelling glamour as frivolous, shallow, or any other suspiciously gendered adjective that implies it to be of little consequence, a reductive arm of patriarchy, or anything less than a divine feminine presence capable of transferring embodied culture, history, and power. However, I now pass the torch to you, dear reader, to ask yourself: *How does the repertoire of glamour create and perpetuate the transcendent power of embodied femininities?*

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[1] Danielle "Dani" Achiaa Boachie, otherwise known as Mistress Velvet, was Chicago's premier African dominatrix and Goddess. They used Black feminist theory and anti-oppression frameworks to challenge both white supremacy and the patriarchy through sex work. Sadly, they died by suicide on May 8, 2021.

[2] Definitions of femininity can be contentious; I footnote one in this paper to hold space within the new theoretical framework of glamour that I am developing, but I do not wish to be rigid or prescriptive about what "the feminine" is or is not. Alternative definitions and understandings of femininity can be interchanged with my own. However, an important conclusion that I make over the course of this paper is that glamour is a type of performance interwoven with celebrity, femininity, urbanity, and mass culture. I offer concepts of all these terms to build a foundational and alternative framework for understanding glamour in an expansive, rather than restrictive manner.

[3] As a critical strategy I use the plural when possible to both acknowledge the need for diversity and avoid narrow definition in any understanding of "the feminine."

[4] "'Archival' memory exists as documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, CDs, all those items supposedly resistant to change. [...] Archival memory works across distance, over time and space; investigators can go back to reexamine an ancient manuscript, letters find

their address through time and place, and computer discs at times cough up lost files with the right software. [...] Insofar as it constitutes materials that seem to endure, the archive exceeds the live." (Taylor 19)

[5] "The repertoire, on the other hand, enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge. Repertoire, etymologically "a treasury, an inventory," also allows for individual agency, referring also to "the finder, discoverer," and meaning "to find out." The repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by "being there," being a part of the transmission. As opposed to the supposedly stable objects in the archive, the actions that are the repertoire do not remain the same. The repertoire both keeps and transforms choreographies of meaning." (Taylor 20)

[6] For a full etymological analysis of "glamour" see Gundle and Castelli's excellent introduction in *The Glamour System* (2006).

[7] The feminine here refers not only to the shifting cultural constructions of femininity to which glamour contributes much, but also to a higher, more spiritually inclined understanding of femininity allied to both the divine and the demonic, connecting the feminine to the annals of magic, occultism, and witchcraft, and to the restoration of a feminine divine through repertoires of glamour. I argue that heteropatriarchal Christianity has deprived the West of both divine and demonic feminine deities and that in this deprivation glamorous, feminine beings have risen in their place. I further emphasize that the feminine is not in a one-to-one relationship with "female" or "woman" (although that *might* be the case where glamour is concerned) and that the feminine is not defined through absence, void, negativity, and lack. In Moshe Idel's book, *The Privileged Divine Feminine in Kabbalah* (2019), he argues that "[...] the failure to ascribe a more significant role to the divine feminine power is correlated with an essentialist vision that also neglects the centrality of performance, as in many cases, religious rituals were supposedly devoted to the female" (Idel 2), synthesizing femininity with deity status through performance, which I argue, is a primary impulse of glamour.

[8] "[Georges] Bataille argues that eroticism signifies a break from the social order of work, reason, and calculation; it is an aspect of human sexuality that is divorced from the reproductive drive and through which the individual experiences the shifting grounds of existence. Eroticism is associated with transgression and approaches the condition of death, for its aim is dissolution of self and continuity of experiences. The erotic state can be a heightened form of consciousness in which the furthest possibilities and intensities of selfhood are explored. Eroticism is an unknown territory, a mental and emotional *terrain vague*, and in this it resembles death also. The spiritual, sacred dimension to the experience of eroticism is captured by Bataille's use of the term 'sovereign' to describe erotic desire's movement of transgression and effect of transformation." (Gritzner 6–7)

[9] Joseph Roach dedicates his 2007 book to defining and exploring the possible origins of the concept of "It," or what might otherwise be known as the effervescent "wow-factor," arguing that It is produced by the illusion of availability, vicariousness, and personality driven mass attraction (Roach 3). In his framing, Roach situates It within the "deep 18th century," which saw the rise of the Stuart dynasty and the Restoration theatre in the Anglocentric world, ultimately arguing that the eighteenth century did not end, but is ongoing.

[10] "If we adopt the equation that performance does not save, does not remain, and apply [this equation] to performance generally, to what degree can performance interrogate archival thinking? *Is it not the case that it is precisely the logic of the archive that approaches performance as disappearance?* Asked

another way, does an equation of performance with impermanence, destruction, and loss follow rather than disrupt a cultural habituation to the imperialism inherent in archival logic? [...] Should we not think of ways in which the archive depends upon performance, indeed ways in which the archive *performs* the equation of performance with disappearance, even as it *performs* the service of 'saving'? It is in accord with archival logic that performance is given to disappear, and mimesis (always in a tangled and complicated relationship to the performative) is, in line with a long history of antitheatricality, debased, if not downright feared, as destructive of the pristine ideality of all things marked 'original'" (Schneider 99; emphasis in original).

[11] "Is the live really only a matter of temporal immediacy, happening only in an uncomplicated now, a 'transitory' present, an im-mediate moment? Is a 'mania-cally charged present' not punctuated by, syncopated with, indeed charged by other moments, other times? That is, is the present really so temporally straight-forward or pure – devoid of a basic delay or deferral if not multiplicity and flexibility? Does it not take place or become composed in double, triple, or multiple time—especially if the performance and the 'sedimented acts' that comprise the social are already a matter of 'twice-behaved behaviour?'" (Schneider 92). In this quotation Schneider is challenging the notion that live performance only pertains to the single, immediate moment in which it takes place. Schneider rejects this paradigm of a singular temporality for performance and instead claims that performance is always charged or haunted with multiple temporalities, especially considering the citational nature of performance as "twice-behaved behaviour." For Schneider and I, performance *de facto* implies multiple temporalities, engaging multiple kinds of time—some of which are linear, some of which are cyclical, and some of which are layered.

[12] "A very different set of connotations is linked to the concept of the threshold. It implies nothing forbidden or guarded by the law. While the border seeks to prevent one from crossing, the threshold seems to invite such a crossover. Since the space beyond is uncertain, its crossing requires certain provisions and precautionary measures. Thresholds frequently denote magical, partly even ominous places. It takes special skills and knowledge to ban their magic and transform their lurking evil into a blessing. If the threshold is unclean it must be purified before passing through it. Despite all possible adversities, risks, and dangers linked to the crossing of thresholds, their passage, if done in the right manner, holds a promise: the restoration of health, the mercy of the gods, the acquisition of a new social status, a precious gift or a secret skill. If, however, one makes mistakes in the passage across the threshold, it can have disastrous results: the person concerned may drown in a swamp or a fall into a secret trap door, may be attacked by ghosts or wild animals, be driven to madness, or hunted, stabbed, and mauled to death. Thresholds are highly ambivalent. While borders first and foremost evoke the law, thresholds instead point towards the occult. While borders are thought of as partitionary lines which include something and exclude the rest, the threshold is imagined as a liminal space in which anything is possible. While borders create clear divisions, thresholds mark a space of possibilities, empowerment, and metamorphosis" (Fischer-Lichte 204–5).

[13] The repeated truncation of the "re" prefix is in reference to the complicated relationship that performance will always have to reality, truth, or originality. In the "re" is always implied an again-ness, or a citation of a precedent.

[14] There are other genres and subgenres of glamour that pertain to glamorous masculinities, ambiguities, Queerness, and deviance that either adopt, transform, queer, or reject the feminine; however, these cultural and identity expressions warrant their own theoretical framing and their own unique, generic distinction as they each approach, define, and perform glamour in different ways and to different ends. In fact, large volumes could be drafted that dedicate themselves to identifying and

defining subcultural types of glamour that operate tangentially, or not at all, with the feminine, but I have chosen to centre this writing on glamorous femininities as they occupy the majority of the glamorous territory. I fully acknowledge the myriad sexual and identity-based subcultures of glamour. However, it is my hope that much of the theoretical work developed in this research is translatable across diverse repertoires of glamour—feminine, Queer, masculine, or otherwise.

[15] Including Richard Dyer, Deborah Nadoolman Landis, Valerie Steele, Edith Head, and Stella Bruzzi.

[16] I first viewed the image I am describing here in *The New York Times* on September 2, 2021, in both their digital and print editions. In *The New York Times* the image is credited to Estée Lauder and is both copyrighted and behind a pay wall. However, for the time being, *Covet Magazine* has a digital version that is viewable at https://covetmagazines.com/estee-lauder-has-just-added-a-new-talent-to-its-lists-amanda-gorman/.