

## Making it all up:

### 'The Sex-Event as 'Pornobiography'

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"Everything you are about to see and read is a fantasy, a dream, pretend... any similarity between characters and events depicted in this book and real persons and events is not only purely coincidental, it's ridiculous. Nothing in this book is true, I made it all up".<sup>1</sup>

"[W]hen you go into a psychiatrists office and you don't really tell them what you did, you lie... even the lie you've chosen to tell is revealing".<sup>2</sup>

In 1992 and 1993, popular performer Madonna's career moved into a phase of sexual exploration. Having recently signed a lucrative 'multimedia' contract with the Time Warner company, she unleashed a trio of sexually charged texts - a book (*Sex*), an album (*Erotica*) and a film (*Body of Evidence*), as well as a new persona, Dita. The projects were closely associated, especially the *Sex* book and *Erotica* album, which were released almost simultaneously and referenced each other insistently. The video for the single "Erotica" was both a promotion for the album and the book, since it was comprised of 'teaser' photos from the book. Included with the book was a one-track CD "Erotic", the lyrics of which are printed at the start of *Sex*. "Erotic" is an alternate - supposedly more 'adult' - version of the song "Erotica", the lead track of the album of the same name, and introduces Dita, who promises to "teach you how to (fuck)".<sup>3</sup>

"This book is about sex. Sex is not love. Love is not sex," begins the disclaimer at the start of *Sex*, which takes pains to point out both the necessity of safe(r) sex and the fictional nature of the contents. In her witty homage to the opening lines of *Sex*, Cathay Che writes "This piece is about 'Dita'. Dita is not Madonna. Madonna is not Dita."<sup>4</sup> This piece is also about Dita. It is about Madonna. It is about Rebecca Carlson and Louise Oriole.<sup>5</sup> It is about Cathay Che and the numerous respondents to *Sex* who made a book of soft porn into what has been termed "The Sex Event Which Is Not One".<sup>6</sup> This piece is about "the Sex Event" (to borrow the shorthand used by Frank and Smith for the trio of book, album and film<sup>7</sup>) as an intertextual exploration of the *Sex* life that may (not) be Madonna's; as a set of texts in which semi-fictive subjectivity interrupts pornography and erotica; and as a set of texts which permit other authors to mirror, amplify and redefine this process and use "the Sex event" to (re)read their own lives.

In coining the term 'pornobiography' to encapsulate this notion of contested and multiple subjectivities in autobiographic erotic texts, I am drawing on

literature pertaining to written autobiographies, in particular that of Audre Lorde, whose coining of the term “biomythography” to describe the life story she wrote in which she deliberately interwove the threads of biography and mythology provides the basis of my consideration of ‘Madonna’ as a pop culture text.<sup>8</sup> For Lorde, the dislocation she experienced as a black lesbian meant that she could not locate herself within a ‘true’ history or a singular narrative. Experimental autobiographical texts like *Zami* query the notion of an authentic narrative and posit the idea of fiction as an alternative reality. Lorde’s declaration of the fictive nature of *Zami* serves to decry the idea that there can be an ‘objective’ history. In her rewriting of her own past, Lorde demonstrated that conventional history is itself just one of many possible fictions, the fiction of the dominant perspective.

Lorde’s “biomythography” neatly weaved her life story with a recreated lesbian-feminist mythology based on the idea of a “home” to which the women in her life led her.<sup>9</sup> In doing so, she redefined her subjectivity in terms of collectivity, breaking with the autobiographical convention of a man who “develops into an understanding of his separateness from others”.<sup>10</sup> It is my argument that the production of pop culture creates meaning that echoes Lorde’s concept, and that when this meaning is created within the realm of pornography and erotica, it creates new possibilities for engaging with sexual subjectivities. As pop performers’ own lives are scrutinised, analysed and deconstructed alongside their actual work, the potential to create texts which problematise the binary of ‘truth’ and ‘fiction’, or ‘artifice’ and ‘reality’, is inherent. Whilst Madonna’s *individual* subject position may not be quite the “outsider” position from which Lorde proceeds,<sup>11</sup> the multiplicity the ‘Madonna’ text embodies produces its own collectivity. Thus, like Lorde, and as Janis Bergman-Carton convincingly argues, like Frida Kahlo, ‘Madonna’ “refuse[s] a single essentialist self”,<sup>12</sup> not only for ‘herself’ but for those who “live out [their] fantas[ies]”<sup>13</sup> through ‘Madonna’ and (re)write their lives through the works which engage with that bigger text.

### **Is My Name ‘Dita’?**

Once the disclaimer is dispensed with, the first words of *Sex* are a welcome from Dita, who informs the reader that she will be “your mistress tonight”. She claims ownership of the text and makes her presence felt throughout the book. There are letters to ‘Johnny’ signed by Dita, and a ‘comic book’ (comprised of photographic rather than drawn images) attached to the book, entitled “Dita in the Chelsea Girl,” explicitly states that its images of ‘Madonna’ are Dita. Hence all the photos of ‘Madonna’ in *Sex* itself are arguably Dita also. The name Dita is apparently a reference to French silent film actress Dita Parlo.<sup>14</sup> In the most iconic

of the 'Dita' photographs, and in the video for "Erotica",<sup>15</sup> Madonna's appearance recalls Parlo (albeit with a whip and mask), but the only other hint of this derivation is when Dita mentions being arrested in Paris to her doctor. This reference, however, more strongly recalls Mae West, who was indeed arrested for her 1926 Broadway revue entitled "Sex".<sup>16</sup> Further, the name Dita recalls Marlene Dietrich, whose legendary image is referred to visually in the book (albeit more in the photographic representations of actress Isabella Rossellini), just as it is in other Madonna texts.<sup>17</sup>

Dita is, then, a fiction. Yet she resembles 'Madonna' in numerous ways. Her talk of maids and a manager suggests that she is a woman of wealth, and possibly fame. Her best friend, with whom she has a (non-exclusive) sexual relationship, is "Ingrid", just as Madonna's widely acknowledged 'gal pal' and rumoured sexual partner at the time of publication was Ingrid Casares. Casares appears in the book cavorting with Madonna and Rosellini, a teasing gesture which plays upon media speculation not just about Madonna and Casares, but also Sandra Bernhard, whose lesbian side-kick status (most publicly displayed during the pair's 1998 appearance on *The David Letterman Show*) was supposedly terminated when she introduced the pair.<sup>18</sup>

One 'story', wherein the description of Dita/Madonna unwittingly responding to an advertisement for topless dancers, refers to well-established details of the 'Madonna' story quite precisely. As well as referring to "studying at the Alvin Ailey School" after "I first moved to New York", which is what Madonna did, Dita/Madonna relates that she "got a job nude modelling for art schools" instead. Of course, it was the "unremarkable art school" photos from this period that surfaced in *Playboy* and *Penthouse* in 1985.<sup>19</sup> This particular tale is hardly the most controversial passage in the book, but it calls into sharp focus the verity of the "I made it all up" disclaimer.<sup>20</sup>

References to Madonna's life, career and mythology pepper the book throughout. The story about sex with a Puerto Rican boy is defiantly reminiscent of stories told about her picking up Latino boys in her limousine in certain neighbourhoods of New York, and to the video for her early single "Borderline", which portrays a similar scenario.<sup>21</sup> Displaying classic Hollywood glamour throughout, she recalls her own "Vogue" video,<sup>22</sup> and photos of her in a shimmering gown at the gay strip-club Gaiety almost flawlessly recreate the Marilyn Monroe look she perfected to sing "Sooner or Later" (from the film *Dick Tracy*, in which Madonna played a Monroe-esque lounge singer) at the 1991 Academy Awards ceremony.<sup>23</sup> A photograph of her astride a pinball machine might be a rewriting of a scene in *Desperately Seeking Susan*.<sup>24</sup> Most interesting are the posters for "Totally Nude Adult Shows" that Madonna/Dita poses next to at the end of the book. These recall images of the "Open Your Heart" video, in

which the 1925 Tamara de Lempicka painting *The Green Turban* is reproduced as the billboard for the theatre, with huge light bulbs where the breasts of the women in the paintings would appear),<sup>25</sup> and the text that shares these pages is a telling commentary:

Doctor: Have you ever been mistaken for a prostitute?

Dita: Every time anyone reviews anything I do, I'm mistaken for a prostitute.

These words amplify the reference to "Open Your Heart", since they echo the message it communicated about the objectification of female celebrities by a sexist media, and also foreshadow the backlash to *Sex* that Madonna cannot, given her previous history of controversy, have been naïve about.

A more intriguing reference to Madonna's 'real' life comes in the form of a comparison between "being tied up" in sexual bondage and being "strapped... in the car seat" by "your mother", and the suggestion – the most genuinely shocking moment of the book – that some women in abusive relationships must "be digging it". These play on an awareness of Madonna's mother's death when she was six and on stories about Madonna being abused by former husband Sean Penn,<sup>26</sup> respectively, and invite an amateur psychological analysis about Madonna's 'real' life, in particular whether 'her' interest in sadomasochism is a result of having lost her mother or a reaction to abuse. Thus the reader is engaged directly in the use of sexual fantasy to read life-stories. As Madonna herself has said: "[M]y sex life is absolutely the centrepiece of everything that's ever written about me, and I probably have a lot less sex than other people – that's the final irony of it all."<sup>27</sup> By exaggerating the 'deviant' nature of her sex life in *Sex*, but confusing herself with 'Dita', 'Madonna' complicates the reader's notion of the 'real' Madonna. In these and other sections of the book, Madonna appears to be toying with the reader's (or voyeur's) notions of her motives and personal psychology, and thus creates a space for the questioning of where 'truth' begins and 'mythology' ends.

Dita similarly serves as an alter-ego on the *Erotica* album. Hal Espen argues that it is Dita who sings certain songs on *Erotica* (besides the title track), in particular "Where Life Begins", a punning paeon to cunnilingus, and "Waiting", "a throbbing ode to romantic anticipation".<sup>28</sup> He argues that ironically "Dita's voice is perhaps the closest we've yet gotten to Madonna herself – to her nerve, her power, her beauty and her undeniable sway over our collective dreams", something which certainly rings true as Dita/Madonna poses the question: "What do I remind you of? / Your past, your dreams / Or part of yourself that you just can't love?"<sup>29</sup> This play on the audience, or even critic, as lover, unfurls the tension of subjectivity that underscores 'the Sex Event': all at once, the listener is spoken to by Dita, a prostitute cum counsellor ("I'm not a witch / I'm a love

technician”<sup>30</sup>), by ‘Madonna’, the star whose career has been built around living out what her fans ‘Wannabe’,<sup>31</sup> and, further, overhears Madonna Ciccone, who is evidently addressing a lost love. The song ends with same words with which Dita ends her final letter to Johnny in *Sex*: “next time you want pussy, go look in the mirror”.<sup>32</sup>

### The Agency of Pussy

That “pussy” gets the last word is appropriate. Whilst much of the book’s photographic content is evidently simulated, the sex in *Sex* is nonetheless pornographic, insofar that it portrays full frontal nudity and sexual scenarios, and often sadomasochistic. However, it is not conventional pornography. *Sex* positions ‘Madonna’ as subject rather than object.<sup>33</sup> Or, as Kent usefully observes, “[w]e are her subjects, not vice versa.”<sup>34</sup> The argument that Madonna is ‘calling the shots’ – she owns the company and has the photographer on her payroll – is more convincing in this instance because of the near-impossibility of an audience that is unaware of these factors. Because ‘Madonna’ is so present in the text, it is difficult to see *Sex* simply within the patriarchal framework the word ‘pornography’ entails. These are not pictures of a random, objectified woman, they are pictures of ‘Madonna’ and the reader, knowing this, cannot escape purely into fantasy.

Madonna’ is not reducible to an object of (male) lust, even in fantasy, but she does not erase that possibility either. *Sex* insists on the acknowledgement of female agency in the realm of pornography, but it still recalls images of objectification. This uneasy relationship is shown in the various comments made by ‘Madonna’/‘Dita’, who defends *Playboy*, saying “[t]he women who are doing it want to do it”. The obvious counter to this – that not everyone is ‘Madonna’, and not everyone has her degree of choice in the matter – does not derail the possibility that *Sex* evokes. *Sex*, rather than a postulation of a theoretical pro-woman erotic space in the mainstream, is an attempt to intervene: it is sexual reformism.

Whilst the naked woman cavorting on the pages can be read as many characters (Dita, Lolita, Marilyn, Mae and Marlene), she is always inescapably ‘Madonna’ and thus her control is never doubted, and these characters are invested with a new agency. The writing supports this, with stories of defiant female sexuality (sometimes in arguably disempowered positions, such as the sales assistant who fellates her customer) and, more importantly, vaginally-centred prose which culminates in the declaration “my pussy is the temple of learning”. As Dennis Selby argues:

Madonna's world is the world of cunt, as openly ravenous as Warhol's gay dick world. No one will ever be able to avoid the existence of hungry cunt again. That's art!<sup>35</sup>

The "pussy" in *Sex* is central and all-powerful: this is *Sex* by 'Madonna', not sex with Madonna. As Carol Squiers has argued of Madonna more generally:

...the penis is at her beck and call, and with her trademark crotch-clasp she has proclaimed the power of what is supposed to be an absence. In her hands, the phallic order has come hilariously unhinged.<sup>36</sup>

This may be the case, but the point stands that Madonna has not destroyed the phallic or patriarchal order, but altered it. She 'unhinges' the phallic order, but is nonetheless a participant; she is able to intervene because, as *Sex* attests, she has "a dick in my brain". Hence it is 'pornobiography': *Sex* (re)views pornography by investing it with subjectivity.

#### **"I'm Not Happy This Way"<sup>37</sup>**

This defiant female sexuality did not manifest itself in all aspects of 'the *Sex* Event', however. The third part of "the *Sex* Event" trilogy was the film *Body of Evidence*, released in 1993.<sup>38</sup> The film stars Madonna as Rebecca Carlson, a gallery owner with a penchant for older men and kinky sex, who is accused of having used her body as a weapon in order to hasten the death of her most recent lover, who has recently made her a significant beneficiary of his will. She becomes involved with Frank Delaney, her defence counsel. As the trial proceeds, a number of Rebecca's speeches invite speculation that the film is a metaphor for Madonna's trial by media over *Sex*. Imploring Frank not to desert her in the face of a hostile jury, Rebecca recalls Dita in *Sex* complaining of being "mistaken for a prostitute":

I know how their minds work. The women hate me. They think I'm a whore. And the men see a cold, heartless bitch they can pay back for every chick that's ever blown them off in a bar.<sup>39</sup>

This could be Madonna defending herself from critics, but ultimately Rebecca's defence of herself isn't as sophisticated as any of Madonna's own rationales. "I fucked you. I fucked Andrew. I fucked Frank. That's what I do. I fuck. And it made me eight million dollars," she snaps just before being thrown through a window, and the failure of the film is cemented.<sup>40</sup> Just as Madonna was unconvincing as a missionary in *Shanghai Surprise*,<sup>41</sup> she is equally so as a totally amoral deviant. The omnipresence of 'Madonna' means – regardless of her

acting, which is admittedly terrible in both of these films – she can never be believable as a character who is exclusively a virgin or a whore.

At the close of *Body of Evidence*, the conservative moral order has been restored. The wicked woman and her accomplice are dead, and the man who dallied with deviance has been chastened. Hence the potential for the film to serve as a metaphor for the trial of ‘Madonna’ is limited: Rebecca Carlson is a victim, and Madonna, as she never tires of saying, is not.<sup>42</sup> Madonna complained that this predictable and antifeminist ending was not what was meant to happen, arguing that she took the role originally because it subverted the film stereotype: “In all the movies of the ‘40s, the bad girl has to die,” she says, “What I loved about the role was that she didn’t die. And in the end, they killed me. So I felt sabotaged to a certain extent.”<sup>43</sup>

However, it is more difficult to believe that Madonna lacked the ability to exercise control over the video for “Bad Girl”, the third single from *Erotica*, which pastiches the 1977 film *Looking for Mr Goodbar*,<sup>44</sup> but also resonates with *Body of Evidence*, which was released at about the same time.<sup>45</sup>

“Bad Girl” casts Madonna as Louise Oriole<sup>46</sup> – another semi-fictive version of herself, since Louise is Madonna’s middle name and Oriole is “the name of the street where she lived as a child”,<sup>47</sup> a successful executive who pursues casual encounters with a number of men, and is then murdered. The song is a tale of self-loathing:

Bad girl / Drunk by six / Kissing someone else’s lips / Smoked too many  
cigarettes today / I’m not happy when I act this way / I’m not happy this  
way.<sup>48</sup>

The video is without irony, although there is a twist: a ‘guardian angel’ who doesn’t do any guarding, but instead gives Louise a kiss goodbye. Rather than simply being an imposed moral lesson about the dangers of promiscuity, “Bad Girl” represents something of an internalisation, since Louise joins her ‘angel’ to watch her own corpse being taken away. She is not only shown as ‘deserving’ her fate, but approving of it.

### **Making It All Up**

The potential that ‘the *Sex* event’ posits for positive female sexual identity is sorely absent in these efforts, which demonstrate just how accidental an innovator ‘Madonna’ can be, and the necessity of reading ‘her’ as a multifaceted and problematic text rather than an author. As Laurie Schulze has noted, there are certainly “some cultural studies theorists and postmodernist critics [who] overestimate Madonna’s subversive possibilities”.<sup>49</sup> It is not my intention to follow

such a path. Indeed, the inability of even 'Madonna' to exercise total control over depictions of herself and her sexuality – for *Body of Evidence* must be read as a commentary on these to at least a significant extent – only serves to confirm the nature of pornobiography; It is a complex negotiation of subjectivity and other forms of power. However, in some responses to "the Sex Event", particularly those in *Madonnarama*, an unconventional set of critical essays cum stories, this potential is expanded and the negotiation rethought to accommodate a range of subjectivities.<sup>50</sup>

Daniel Harris, an outspoken critic of 'Madonna studies', has fairly argued that: "[Madonna's] academic admirers spend a great deal of time studying how she embodies the fantasies of other people; they devote remarkably little time, however, to discussing how she embodies their own."<sup>51</sup> In *Madonnarama* lies an answer to his challenge. The introduction to the book reveals its aim of "describing and measuring the ways in which Sex might be usable,"<sup>52</sup> an intervention which follows Madonna's reformist approach to porn. Moreover, the articles offer both critical engagement and employment of Sex as a basis for self-reflection. Cathay Che's "Wannabe" recognises that "Madonna made this possible",<sup>53</sup> acknowledging both the example Sex provided her, and the problematic nature of much of its content. In her letters to 'Dita', Che writes herself into the world of Madonna/Dita, finding escape from the homophobia and racism she faces (including from 'Madonna') as an Asian-American lesbian in the embrace of 'Ingrid', who she appropriates (or reappropriates, if 'Madonna' has appropriated lesbianism) as her lover: "[y]ou wouldn't be surprised at what a first generation Cuban and a third generation Asian American can get up to."<sup>54</sup>

Thomas Allen Harris' response is an autobiographical account of ownership of Sex, from the "performance piece" of opening the mylar package,<sup>55</sup> through the reactions of his therapist, friends and relatives who "flip" incessantly through the book,<sup>56</sup> and are motivated by it to offer snippets of their own (sex) lives as well as analyses of 'Madonna' (who is never confused with Dita), culminating in masturbation. This journey produces critical gems such as "miss thing has a big dick in her brain and it's too bad she doesn't have a big clitoris there instead"<sup>57</sup> – a comment which not only references Madonna's own words but unravels the contradiction of female-centred pornography rather beautifully. It is Harris' own story that takes precedence, however. He uses Sex to tease out his own history of childhood dreams, failed loves, frustration, and sex, both loving and clinical, all between flips of the page. These flips become the hands of time ticking, and Sex thus frames Harris' own pornobiography.

In "the Sex event", then, lies a possibility for an engagement with pornography that celebrates multiple subjectivities. The presence of a fictionalised 'Madonna' in the texts creates a space which others have made their own;

'Madonna' "made it all up", but the likes of Che and Harris have added themselves to the project. As Frank and Smith note, in this creative engagement lies a possibility to do more than criticise: "[W]hen we speak about *Sex* we – like everyone else – might finally be able to say more about ourselves than about Madonna."<sup>58</sup> By 'making it all up' themselves, the contributors to *Madonnarama* have both embraced and stared back at the "semi-real character based on a fiction named Madonna"<sup>59</sup> and "let the music set [them] free".<sup>60</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> Madonna, *Sex* (London: Martin Secker and Warburg, 1992), (No page numbers). Further references, unless otherwise noted, are to this.
- <sup>2</sup> Madonna, quoted in Barbara Victor, *Goddess: Inside Madonna* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 204.
- <sup>3</sup> The word ‘fuck’ is unspoken, but strongly implied (“I’ll give you love / I’ll hit you like a truck / I’ll teach you how to...oh oh oh”) in the song(s), and printed – with great emphasis – in the book: Madonna, “*Erotica*”, *Erotica*, Maverick/Warner Bros., 9362-45031-2; *Erotic*, promotional only CD (packaged with Madonna, *Sex*).
- <sup>4</sup> Cathay Che, “Wannabe”, in *Madonnarama: Essays on Sex and Popular Culture*, Lisa Frank and Paul Smith, eds. (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1993), 34.
- <sup>5</sup> Madonna’s characters in *Body of Evidence* and the “Bad Girl” video: Uri Edel, *Body of Evidence* (USA: MGM, 1993), video recording; Madonna, “Bad Girl”, dir. David Fincher, Maverick/Warner Bros., music video.
- <sup>6</sup> “Ce sex event qui n’en est pas un”: Lisa Frank and Paul Smith, “Introduction: How to Use Your New Madonna”, in Frank and Smith, 7. Besides the reference to Luce Irigaray, this comment also draws on the countless reviews of *Sex* that describe it, almost invariably as an ‘anticlimax’. The briefest and best of these is: (Author uncredited) “*Sex* (Review: Books of the Year 1992)”, *Rolling Stone* (December 10-24, 1992), quoted in: Editors of *Rolling Stone*, eds. *Madonna: The Rolling Stone Files* (New York: Hyperion, 1997), 212. It is not my intention to debate this aspect of *Sex*, since a reading of the book as a text that posits the falsity of the binary of ‘truth’ and ‘fiction’ is not one reliant upon enjoying it.
- <sup>7</sup> Frank and Smith, 12.
- <sup>8</sup> Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (New York: Persephone, 1982).
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: “It is the images of women, kind and cruel, that lead me home”.
- <sup>10</sup> Leigh Gilmore, *Autobiographics* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1994), 29.
- <sup>11</sup> Cf. Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (New York: Crossing Press, 1984).
- <sup>12</sup> Janis Bergman-Carton, “Like an Artist”, *Art in America*, 81.1 (January 1993), 35.
- <sup>13</sup> Madonna, “Into the Groove”, *The Immaculate Collection*, Sire/Warner Bros., 7599264402: “Live our your fantasy here with me, just let the music set you free.”
- <sup>14</sup> Hal Epsen, “*Erotica* (Review)”, *People Weekly*, 38. 20 (Nov 16, 1992), 33; JoAnn Wypijewski, “*Sex* (Review)”, *The Nation*, 255.20 (December 14, 1992), 744.
- <sup>15</sup> Madonna, “*Erotica*”, dir. Fabien Baron, Maverick/Warner Bros., music video.
- <sup>16</sup> Richard Lacayo, “*Sex* (Review)”, *People Weekly*, 38. 22 (November 30, 1992), 31.
- <sup>17</sup> Notable references to Marlene Dietrich in Madonna’s work include the controversial ‘peep show’ video for “Open Your Heart” in which ‘Madonna’ is shown in a poster in a recreation of the poster for Dietrich’s classic film *The Blue Angel* and the ‘Girlie Show’ world tour in 1993, when Madonna sang “Like a Virgin” in Dietrich-esque Cabaret style spoken-word, in a thick ‘germanic’ accent and in Dietrich-esque tuxedo: Madonna, “Open Your Heart”, dir. Jean Baptiste Mondino, Sire/Warner Bros., music video; Joseph von Sternberg, *The Blue Angel* (Germany: Universum Film A.G./Paramount Pictures, 1930), video recording; Mark Aldo Miceli, *Madonna: The Girlie Show – Live Down Under*, (USA: Warner Reprise, 1993), video recording.
- <sup>18</sup> J. Randy Taraborrelli gives a detailed account: J. Randy Taraborrelli, *Madonna: An Intimate Biography* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 2001), 221-223.
- <sup>19</sup> (Author uncredited), “Like a pinup: navel battle of the newsstands”, *Time*, 126 (July 22, 1985), 61.
- <sup>20</sup> The *Playboy* and *Penthouse* photos are more obliquely referenced later in the book on a page of nine pictures of Madonna’s naked body with the caption “My Pussy has Nine Lives”. This tacky joke recalls the furore caused by the publication photos in 1985, when “some of the tabloids were weak-minded enough to think they could make a scandal out of them”: Luc Sante, “Unlike a virgin: Madonna, minx without a riddle”, *The New Republic*, 203. 8-9 (August 20, 1990), 25. More importantly, it acknowledges that Madonna survived and even benefited from the scandal, defiantly stating at the globally televised ‘Live Aid’ concert: “I ain’t taking shit off today. You might hold it against me in ten years”: Christopher Anderson, *Madonna Unauthorised* (London: Signet, 1991), 199.
- <sup>21</sup> Anderson claims that Madonna’s “former lover” Mark Kamins described Madonna as running a “Puerto Rican stud farm”: *Ibid.*, 186; Madonna, “Borderline”, dir. Mary Lambert, Sire/Warner Bros., music video.
- <sup>22</sup> Madonna, “Vogue”, dir. David Fincher, 1990, Sire/Warner Bros., music video.
- <sup>23</sup> Taraborrelli provides a picture of this: Taraborrelli, (Picture sections do not have page numbers).
- <sup>24</sup> Towards the end of the film, Madonna’s character Susan is reunited with lover Jim and they kiss passionately atop a pinball machine: Susan Seidelman, *Desperately Seeking Susan* (USA: Orion Pictures, 1985), video recording
- <sup>25</sup> Madonna, “Open Your Heart”.
- <sup>26</sup> Accounts of this vary in the degree of violence they attest to, but generally concur that Penn tied up and beat Madonna on at least one occasion. See: Anderson, 294-5; Andrew Morton, *Madonna* (London: Bantam, 2001), 159; Taraborrelli, 160-162.
- <sup>27</sup> Madonna, quoted in Mim Udovitch, “Mothers of Invention”, *Rolling Stone* (October 6, 1994) in Editors of *Rolling Stone*, 232.
- <sup>28</sup> Epsen, 33.
- <sup>29</sup> Madonna, “Waiting”, *Erotica*.

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- <sup>30</sup> Madonna, *Erotic* (lyric does not feature in “*Erotica*”).
- <sup>31</sup> The idea of the Madonna ‘wannabe’ – a teenage girl who idolised Madonna to the point of dressing and acting like her – may have been coined by John Skow in *Time* magazine, when he wrote of “these Wanna Be’s (as in ‘we wanna be like Madonna’)”: John Skow, “Madonna Rocks the Land”, *Time*, 125 (May 27, 1985). The term has certainly been used widely since 1985 to refer to Madonna, such as in Cathay Che’s afore-mentioned piece. Susan Hopkins argues that the term was coined in relation to Madonna and uses it to frame her argument about ‘girl heroes’ like Britney Spears – who is widely acknowledged to have drawn inspiration from Madonna and is quoted saying so – use “the careful release of ... autobiographical and semi-biographical fragments” in order to create “a space for girls to imagine themselves in the story”: Susan Hopkins, *Girl Heroes: The New Force In Popular Culture*, (Sydney: Pluto Press, 2002), 51-63.
- <sup>32</sup> Madonna, “Waiting”.
- <sup>33</sup> JoAnn Wypijewski’s incisive review notes this in particular contrast to photographs of Vanessa Williams, who was dismissed from her role as Miss America in 1984 for having been a porn model. The photos of Williams, Wypijewski argues, were “a businessman’s act of possession”, whereas those of Madonna “are performances of desire”: Wypijewski, 744.
- <sup>34</sup> Sarah Kent, “Virgin On the Ridiculous”, *Time Out* (October 21, 1992), reprinted in Jim Driver, ed. *The Mammoth Book of Sex, Drugs and Rock ‘n’ Roll* (London: Constable, 2001), 395.
- <sup>35</sup> Wypijewski, 744.
- <sup>36</sup> Carol Squiers, “The crotch we have to bear”. *Artforum International*, Volume 31, Issue 5, January, 1993, 10. (Specific page number unavailable as article obtained electronically from the Expanded Academic Index database).
- <sup>37</sup> Madonna, “Bad Girl”, *Erotica*.
- <sup>38</sup> Edel, *Body of Evidence*.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>41</sup> Jim Goddard, *Shanghai Surprise* (USA: Handmade Films/MGM, 1986), video recording.
- <sup>42</sup> “Marilyn Monroe was a victim, and I’m not”. Madonna, quoted in: Mick St. Michael, *Madonna in Her Own Words* (London: Omnibus, 1990), 95.
- <sup>43</sup> Madonna, quoted in Taraborelli, 245.
- <sup>44</sup> Richard Brooks, *Looking for Mr Goodbar* (USA: Paramount Pictures, 1977), video recording.
- <sup>45</sup> Madonna, “Bad Girl”, music video.
- <sup>46</sup> We learn the character’s name from her office door.
- <sup>47</sup> Victor, 152.
- <sup>48</sup> Madonna, “Bad Girl”, *Erotica*.
- <sup>49</sup> Laurie Schulze, “Not an Immaculate Reception: Ideology, *The Madonna Connection*, and Academic Wannabes”, *Velvet Light Trap* (Spring 1999), 37.
- <sup>50</sup> Frank and Smith, 12.
- <sup>51</sup> Daniel Harris, “Make My Rainy Day”, *The Nation*, 254.22 (June 8, 1992).
- <sup>52</sup> Frank and Smith, “Introduction”, Frank and Smith, 18.
- <sup>53</sup> Che, 34.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.
- <sup>55</sup> Sex came in a sealed package, supposedly because of its adult content, but arguably as a means of creating extra publicity: Thomas Allen Harris, “phallic momma sell my pussy make a dollar”, in Frank and Smith, 36.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 36 (and throughout).
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.
- <sup>58</sup> Frank and Smith, 19.
- <sup>59</sup> Richard Corliss, “Truth or Dare (Review)”, *Time*, 137.18 (May 6, 1991).
- <sup>60</sup> Madonna, “Into the Groove”.