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# 'IT'S WHAT I DO': A CLOSE READING OF LYNSEY ADDARIO'S INSTAGRAM PROFILE AS DIGITAL MEMOIR

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## ABSTRACT

*This close reading of the public persona outlines how high-profile war photojournalist Lynsey Addario articulated 'it's what I do' in her public Instagram account construed as an ongoing digital memoir. Addario's Instagram profile and her formal journalistic memoir, *It's What I Do: A Photographer's Life of Love and War* (2015), are fluid continuums of different forms and features that support, authenticate, and promote her public work persona, using various visual and literary techniques to articulate 'it's what I do'. Through self-life-writing, Addario blurs the distinction between public and private and incorporates her personal life into her work. The strategies common to autobiographical journalism, self-life-writing, and celebrity culture substantiate, authenticate, and promote her brand. Yet, complicating the professional life and persona with personal and intimate performances does not happen without critical concerns such as intimisation and celebritisation of conflict photojournalism. Findings shed light on public persona work in professional photojournalism through personalised, visual, and branded auto/biographical content on Instagram.*

## KEY WORDS

Instagram; Photojournalism; Self-presentation; Work Persona; Professional Intimacy; Self-life-writing

## INTRODUCTION –THE MEANINGS OF 'IT'S WHAT I DO'

Journalism professionals increasingly share aspects of their private lives and themselves within the public, intimate spaces of social media (Steensen 2016). Journalistic practice may benefit from persona and presentational media forms such as Instagram accounts (Marshall 2014). Professional war photojournalists have begun to seek ways to reform their positions and roles, introducing challenging yet possibly productive hybridisation to their practice (Solaroli 2016, 2017; see Alper 2014). There is a need to qualitatively investigate the meanings of mixing the professional life and persona with publicly personal performances within an Instagram profile. The study takes the perspective of persona studies to extend examinations of photojournalistic persona performances on Instagram in professional photojournalism, thus further widening the field of auto/biography studies.

In the present paper, I provide a close reading of the high-profile war photojournalist Lynsey Addario's public Instagram account. In her Instagram portfolio, Addario uses her private or personal life to authenticate and promote her public photojournalistic persona as both a Pulitzer prize-winning photojournalist and author of a journalistic memoir, *It's What I Do: A*

*Photographer's Life of Love and War* (2015). My contribution to the scholarly dialogue comes from (a) a close reading of how Addario creates a public photojournalistic persona and (b) a particular focus on Instagram as the platform on which her self-branding through self-life-writing occurs.

Addario's self-branding practices are similar to those of many other public professionals who incorporate their personal life into their work to attract and consolidate interest in their public personas. Indeed, the strategy is a well-trodden path for professional individuals who aim to take advantage of their professional life and persona with intimate performances. For example, star politicians showcase their everyday life in self-life-writing media forms as an ideological, rhetorical tool deployed for political purposes, and portray themselves as 'ordinary' and 'approachable'. Like a celebrity politician (Abidin 2017; Lalancette & Raynauld 2019; Street 2004; Wheeler 2013), a high-profile photojournalist can also use the strategies of celebrity culture (Driessens 2013; Marshall 2010) to present a particular version of themselves by means of personalised, visual, and branded auto/biographical content on Instagram.

Yet, personal and intimate persona performances are a double-edged sword acting both for and against Addario's professional brand and practice. Addario's subjective, constructed, and curated persona performances of her everyday life, personal habits, and intimate emotions may undermine her photojournalism. Instagram can be a slippery tightrope for a war photographer to walk between the professional and the personal (cf. Steensen 2016). Whilst memoir readers and social media audiences expect the use of these strategies to construct intimacy and realness, readers of photojournalism do not necessarily do so. The personal and intimate can undermine a photojournalist and their brand, especially in professional conflict-related photojournalism. The practice of blurring the distinction between public and private may be viewed within professional photojournalism as de-professionalisation. On Instagram, this can lead to credibility issues and more generally a lack of trust in the practitioner's professional presence or journalistic contributions. One can read these personal and intimate persona performances as evidence of the intimisation and celebritisation of professional photojournalism.

On the other hand, navigating between professional, personal, and intimate registers (Barbour 2015; Marshall et al. 2020), as I will argue, establishes objectivity based on subjectivity. The strategies commonly used in autobiographical journalism, self-life-writing, and celebrity culture can be interpreted as a prerequisite for authenticity, creating the impression of realness and offering transparency to Addario's public persona performances. I suggest that Addario's publicly shared, personal lived and felt experiences and the different roles she shows herself inhabiting inside and outside her profession offer a more truthful expression of herself and her practice.

Addario's Instagram profile and her book are fluid continuums of different forms and features to support, authenticate, and promote her public work persona articulating 'it's what I do'. This article examines how Addario performs a professional 'holistic' self within her Instagram profile and also, to a lesser extent, within her formal written memoir, *It's What I Do* (2015). I analyse the ways in which Addario articulates 'it's what I do' across her self-life-writing. I investigate what the publicly narrated and performed 'I' is trying to demonstrate with this performative argument. The phrase 'it's what I do' refers both to the hashtag and the name of her book. Before and after publishing the written memoir, Addario started to use the branded hashtag #itswhatido to frame some of her Instagram posts.

## READING INTIMATE PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCES

My reading distinguishes between the professional, personal, and intimate registers within this photojournalistic celebrity figure's public performances. To some extent, I echo Barbour's (2015, pp. 57–69) and Marshall et al.'s (2020, pp. 65–67) views of these three registers. 'Professional' refers to the occupational, expert knowledge of a field of work (including its normative models of quality and ethics), and membership of a specific social group(s) (Barbour 2015; Marshall et al. 2020). 'Personal' implies hobbies, interests, off-duty events, and activities undertaken outside photojournalism (Barbour 2015; Marshall et al. 2020). I also connect the personal and intimate to the informal, sensitive, and intense presentation of values, thoughts, and emotions (Barbour 2015; Marshall et al. 2020). 'Intimate' encompasses content related to close acquaintances as well as the private and personal that is traditionally shared, for example, in family photo albums (Barbour 2015; Marshall et al. 2020). In addition, I distinguish between two types of intimacy: the autobiographical and the professional. 'Autobiographical intimacy' includes the personal and intimate registers from the private sphere outside professional photojournalism. 'Professional intimacy' refers to the declared emotional or personal commitment and overt devotion of an individual to their professional group, or to a particular topic and subjects - in Addario's case, women in regions of conflict.

In this close reading, Addario's Instagram account constitutes an ongoing digital memoir. I understand the public display of Addario's journalistic self-presentation in her Instagram profile as a part of the narration of autobiographical experience (see Cardell et al. 2017). Here, 'Addario' is a strategic construction, a visible articulation of this photojournalistic celebrity figure. I observe a public manifestation of Addario's public persona: as a photojournalist and author; as a first-person narrator-memoirist in her autobiographical text; in her text/act; and through the message, 'it's what I do' (see Allen 2017). Because of its emphasis on the self (or persona), I prefer 'self-life-writing' over the term 'life writing'.

I use the word 'memoir', but my understanding of 'autobiographical' follows the definition of 'self-life-writing' from Smith and Watson (2010, pp. 18–19). Their self-life-writing comes close to Miller's understanding of genre (1984, pp. 151–167), which centres on the social action the genre accomplishes instead of seeing, for instance, memoir as a fixed unitary form. As Smith and Watson state, the self-(re)presentation of autobiographical texts can take many appearances using various features from the novel, biography, and history "as narrators selectively engage their lived experience and situate their social identities through personal storytelling" (2010, p. 18). I add photography, journalism, and photojournalism to Smith and Watson's list. I observe the autobiographical texts for what they do rather than what they are (Smith & Watson 2010). Addario's Instagram profile and book are fluid continuums of different forms and features that support, authenticate, and promote her public work persona, using various visual and literary techniques to articulate 'it's what I do'.

Addario highlights her profession publicly in the intimate public sphere of Instagram by blurring the distinction between public and private. The themes and content of many of the posts are the same as in her formal journalistic memoir, *It's What I Do* (2015), but the book was published after she created the Instagram profile. According to my data, Addario shared the first posts on 1 August 2012 (a total of six posts likely to be taken via Hipstamatic, a digital photography application). These initial images are highly personal and private, suggesting that her account was initially private but later changed to be public.

On her Instagram portfolio, she incorporates her personal life into her work. By alternating the content of posts between the public-and-professional and the private-and-

personal, Addario sets the rhythm of publishing content from outside her professional life and content specifically related to her public work and profession. She navigates between professional, personal, and intimate registers within her promotional persona performances on Instagram. Whether the Instagram imagery showcases her photojournalism or reveals glimpses of her everyday life behind the public facade, Addario employs intimacy, both autobiographical and professional, to create an emotional relationship and social connection with her readers.

Her public persona work is an intended, framed, and assembled testimony of 'it's what I do' for public consumption. The intimate glimpses of a 'real' life "I" publicising the private from her public persona are curated versions of her life and herself. Whilst some of her experiences, thoughts, and emotions may appear personal and private, Addario shares them for public purposes. I have treated Addario as a public figure and her Instagram account as a publication. The Instagram data that I consider covers 807 manually collected visual posts on Addario's account between 1 August 2012 and 30 May 2017.<sup>1</sup>

I look at the totality of her Instagram profile during this period, including the platform's particular features such as captions and hashtags. I exclude the comments from other users that Addario received on her posts. When reading her persona performances on Instagram, I rely on what Addario has marked in her posts and what I can see and interpret in these visual texts.

### **PHOTOJOURNALIST AS CELEBRITY-MEMOIRIST AND WESTERN FEMINIST**

Addario is a star photojournalist of the digital visual era. *American Photo Magazine* has nominated her as one of the five most influential photographers of the past 25 years, stating that "Addario changed the way we saw the world's conflict" (The International Photography Hall of Fame and Museum 2021). As a well-known and prize-winning photojournalist in conflict photojournalism, an influential Instagrammer, and author of a journalistic memoir, *It's What I Do* (2015), Addario's achievements have made her a public figure of interest. She has visibility in the media over and above her photojournalism profession with a public persona created by means of self-life-writing. For these reasons, I consider Addario a celebrity.

The journalist-as-celebrity who publishes autobiographies to offer interpretations of themselves and their views is not a new phenomenon (Russell 1995). War photographer Robert Capa (1913–1954) is a fine example of a photojournalist who expressed himself through memoir, publishing *Slightly Out of Focus: The legendary photojournalist's illustrated memoir of World War II* in 1947. According to Whitlock (2006), a memoir is for those with cultural capital and "who have acquired cultural legitimacy and influence" (p. 20). In this Whitlockian sense, Addario reinforces and maximises her professional status using the form of memoir to articulate 'it's what I do'. Capitalising on her existing reputation as one of the most influential war photographers of the twenty-first century, Addario uses both her Instagram portfolio and her memoir to assert her social and professional status and maintain and promote her brand.

Journalists and celebrity feminists (among other public figures) build their brands by telling personal stories as their effective self-promotion and marketing strategy (Kenny 2018; Horwitz & Daily 2019). Revealing intimate sides of public work and roles is an established technique across self-life-writing by celebrities and public figures. Horwitz and Daily (2019, p. 90) argue that the glances into the 'real-life' of celebrity feminists allow the reader to develop an emotional relationship with them: the repeated positioning of celebrity feminists such as Addario as (extra)ordinary is a meaningful strategy to attract attention and use it to the benefit of their political causes.

Focusing on women's issues, Addario has covered conflicts for *The New York Times*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Newsweek*, and *National Geographic* (Kaplan 2014). She has earned her reputation as a conflict photographer, according to *Time*, by "witnessing the true human cost of war, particularly for women across the world" (King & Laurent 2015). Addario continues the Western feminist tradition of raising awareness of other women's intimate life stories in conflict zones (Zakaria 2016). So, whilst the fact that a strategy is used by feminists does not necessarily mean that the strategy itself is feminist, I interpret Addario's persona work in professional photojournalism and self-life-writing as an act of Western feminism. Her self-life-writing as a feminist is not the same as feminist life writing. However, there are moments and features where her tactics serve particular feminist purposes across her self-life-writing, for example, driving the feminist goals of defining, defending, and establishing equal rights for women, or challenging the normative expectations and representations which constrain women (see Figure 6).

When Addario uses her personal experiences across her self-life-writing in the sense that the personal is political, we can see her participation in Western forms of feminism. Giving voice and thus value to her subjectivity, she presents the different aspects of her life as a war photojournalist and woman with emotional sensitivity and intensity. Addario uses professional, personal, and intimate registers, with autobiographical and professional intimacy, not only in promoting her public persona but also in advocating woman-to-woman solidarity, for instance, by raising issues important to women in conflict zones. Addario mixes her life and persona with the intimate stories of other women, yet not without criticism. Addario is branding her story using the genre of memoir, but is it always her/story to tell and share?

In an article for *The Nation*, Zakaria (2016) questions the status of conflict-related reporting as a feminist project. Zakaria (2016) criticises Western female journalists, naming Addario, for the way in which they gain intimate access to the spaces of Muslim women in the name of journalism and feminism: the Western journalists have built their careers by exposing the lives of other women. The stories may adhere to journalistic ethics yet, their value in promoting woman-to-woman solidarity is, Zakaria (2016) argues, questionable. Despite its potential for boosting a public persona's brand or journalistic output, the sharing of such stories by a Western photojournalist in their own personal and intimate record is a debatable feminist strategy. We need an ongoing critical discussion about how these stories should be told and shared and by whom in what context.

## **NARRATING THE PROFESSIONAL AND THE PERSONAL IN A FORMAL MEMOIR**

Addario's Instagram account and book, *It's What I Do* (2015), function as a continuum of persona work that articulate 'it's what I do' using strategies common to autobiographical journalism, self-life-writing, and celebrity culture. Addario's book presents a grand narrative about "the *nature* of the work" that "comes before everything else" (Addario 2015, p. 107, emphasis hers). Addario answers questions about what she is doing in conflict zones, why she works as a photojournalist, and how she does or doesn't fit into her professional group. Social identity derives from the shared knowledge of the group members, in this case photojournalism professionals, together with the value and emotional significance they attach to their membership of the group (Tajfel 1982/2010; see also Barbour 2015 and Marshall et al. 2020). In her memoir, she narrates how she learned to act like a professional, to perform this socially and culturally constructed profession:

The truth is that few of *us* are born into this work. It is something *we* discover accidentally, something that happens gradually. *We* get a glimpse of this unusual

life and this extraordinary profession, and *we* want to keep doing it, no matter how exhausting, stressful, or dangerous it becomes. It is the way *we* make a living, but it feels more like a responsibility, or a calling. It makes *us* happy because it gives *us* a sense of purpose. *We* bear witness to history and influence policy. And yet *we* also pay a steep price for this commitment. (Addario 2015, p. 15, emphasis mine)

Throughout her memoir, Addario underlines the importance of collegial relationships for her career. She deploys a plural “we” that situates her firmly within a sphere of like professionals, defining who “we” are but also telling what “we” collectively do and why “we” do it.

When narrating her professional identity, Addario uses discursive triggers of journalistic ideals, phrases such as “as a neutral observer” (2015, p. 99), “I continued documenting the scene” (2015, p. 142), “I witnessed with my own eyes” (2015, p. 242), “be at the right place at the right time” (2015, p. 92), or “in the heart of the story” (2015, p. 255). Addario deploys the ideologically loaded words of religion such as “truth”, “obligation”, “commitment”, “mission”, “path”, “responsibility”, “calling”, “purpose”, “passion”, “ambition”, “vision”, “instinct”, and “testimony” when portraying her profession and group membership. She narrates intimate identification with her social and professional identity by talking about the ties, roles, and values within her professional group, creating a sense of connectedness with her fellow professionals.

On Instagram also, Addario emphasises her social identity and profession by posting images of colleagues or sharing posts of herself with colleagues or images of her taken by colleagues. Addario’s performative acts confirm her group membership and testify to her trustworthiness, seriousness, and dedication to the field. I connect this to the literary technique of using “we” as the narrative voice in her book. On Instagram, the technique promotes not only “it’s what I do” but also “it is who I am, with whom, where, and when”. Like the “we” narrated in her book, these acts on Instagram demonstrate to the reader Addario’s social, professional identity. Emphasising her professional membership, she makes herself and her values as a photojournalist visible.

As the second half of its title, *A Photographer’s Life of Love and War*, promises, her book presents the different sides of her life experiences as a war photojournalist and woman. Addario builds strategically negotiated ‘authenticity’ by using ‘real-life’ to form an intimacy and connection with her readers (Horwitz & Daily 2019). She draws attention to the mixed matrix of identity categories whilst positioning herself as a photojournalist who has “the privilege of witnessing things” (Addario 2015, p. 22). Early in the text, Addario narrates her conversion to “this extraordinary profession” (2015, p. 15):

Until I saw [Sebastião] Salgado’s exhibition, I wasn’t sure whether I wanted to be a street photographer or a news photographer or whether I could make it as a photographer at all. But when I entered the exhibition space, I was so overcome by his images – the passion, the details, the texture – that I decided to devote myself to photojournalism and documentary photography. Something I had perceived until that moment as a simple means of capturing pretty scenes became something altogether different: It was a way to tell a story. It was the marriage of travel and foreign cultures and curiosity and photography. It was photojournalism.

Until that exhibit, I hadn’t quite known what that was or could be. I hadn’t thought of photography as both art *and* a kind of journalism. I hadn’t known that

my hobby could be my life. I knew then that I wanted to tell people's stories through photos: to do justice to their humanity, as Salgado had done; to provoke the kind of empathy for the subjects that I was feeling in that moment. I doubted I would ever be able to capture such pain and beauty in a single frame, but I was impassioned. I walked through the exhibition and cried. (Addario 2015, p. 36, emphasis hers)

Addario narrates her conversion to photojournalism with professional intimacy. Therefore, she forms a connection and closeness with her readers. As a side note, on 23 May 2015, Addario shared on her Instagram profile the image of Salgado, expressing her fandom and the excitement of meeting the star. She uses the tags #sebastiaosalgado, @photo\_london (an annual photography event in London), and #feellikealittlegirl. In the post, the audience frames the famous photographer signing his books.

Following familiar traditions of Western feminist life writing (see Kenny 2018), Addario validates her personal experience and agency as a woman in a male-dominated profession. She emphasises the challenges posed by normative expectations and representations of women, revealing intimate sides of her public work and identity roles. The memoir shows her doubts, fears, and the struggle between career and private life as a war photojournalist and woman, in a humanly 'complete' presentation of the professional self. Addario selectively employs her lived experiences and locates her social identities through personal storytelling (Smith & Watson 2010). As in her Instagram profile, Addario uses the roles outside the profession to authenticate and advance her professional persona performance, offering authenticity for her autobiographical narration of 'it's what I do' with autobiographical and professional intimacy.

### SHOWING PRIVATE SIDES OF 'IT'S WHAT I DO' ON INSTAGRAM

On her Instagram profile, Addario's emphasis on the personal and intimate rather than purely professional sides of her work and profession constitutes an effective strategy for self-branding. Indeed, as a publication space, Instagram favours a certain kind of persona work bringing together the public and the personal by converging public media and personal communication (Meikle 2016): to gain visibility, Instagram and its users expect a commitment to broadcasting intimacy as a form of testimony (Vasey 2013). Addario's ongoing testimony of 'it's what I do' reveals the private and personal sides of her public profession and practice to attract attention to her political causes.

To authenticate and promote her professional brand by mixing autobiographical and professional intimacy, Addario shares her conflict-related, high-quality images, the result of assignments given by traditional publishers of photojournalism such as *Time*, *The New York Times*, *The New York Times Magazine* or *National Geographic*, alongside close-ups taken of snacks during those assignments. She juxtaposes the products of her photojournalism with snapshots from her everyday moments, such as baking Saturday morning scones for her family. She attaches her personal opinions and emotions to her photojournalism. Thus, her conflict-related posts become a part of her journalistic self-presentation and ongoing digital self-life-narration.

Her ongoing digital self-presentation draws attention, as the different identity roles in her book did, to a multiplicity of identity categories – photojournalist, memoirist, colleague, feminist, presenter, friend, mum, wife, daughter, and grandchild. By doing so, Addario supports the performance of a holistic professional 'I' who demonstrates 'it's what I do' through the Instagram profile. These intertextual Instagram posts present recurring photobiographical enactments of her identity-based experiences, tastes, and interests as an ongoing reflexive



authentication and promotion of her profession and practice. The curated glimpses into identity roles, everyday life, and different interests, both inside and outside the professional register, create the illusion of a fixed and holistic autobiographical subject or public persona when continually repeated. Recognition of ‘it’s what I do’ requires repetition to be recognisable. The plot is identifiable when Addario repeats these acts and so keeps her performative argument stable.

### **BRANDING #IT’SWHATIDO FOR SELF-PROMOTION**

Hashtags assist Addario’s self-branding by creating frames for her content and defining her Instagram persona. The online persona markets the value of self constantly (Marshall 2010). The hashtag #itswhatido promotes the self publicly (cf. Miller & Shepherd 2004). The hashtag #itswhatido is the performative element of her self-marketing to build a brand. It amplifies Addario’s agenda by asserting particular versions of her persona in public. This visually curated ongoing status performance with #itswhatido repeated and connected in different contexts capitalises on her reputation and establishes her brand.

A few examples of the self-promotional use of the hashtag #itswhatido serve to illustrate this point (Figures 1–4). In her post on 10 January 2015 (Figure 1), Addario started using the hashtag #itswhatido when promoting her new book: “#itswhatido final copies have just arrived @thepenguinpress @penguinpress. Release date February 5, 2015”. The post’s image is of the book and its cover, showing the photographer’s silhouette against the sky, taking a picture while standing on the roof of a car. Addario’s proof copies of the book have arrived. The caption also reveals the future release date for the memoir.

**Figure 1: Embedded image of *It’s What I Do* (2015), posted on 10 January 2015**

<https://www.instagram.com/p/xrM8T5DmDe/?taken-by=lynseyaddario>

In the next example (Figure 2), Addario, now nominated for The Goodreads Choice Awards 2015 for memoir and autobiography, encourages the readers to vote for her book, using informal language: “Please vote please vote!!!! So honored to be nominated for a goodreads choice award for Memoir & Autobiography book of the year! Please vote for “It’s What I Do” here <http://bit.ly/10ov3kq>. @penguinpress @penguinusa #itswhatido”. Posted on 4 November 2015, this image showcases the book cover, with the addition of a sticker reading ‘Goodreads Choice Awards Nominee’. The informality of Addario’s caption creates the illusion of authenticity and intimate emotion, aiming to construct a personal connection with the readers.

**Figure 2: Book cover of *It’s What I Do* (2015), posted on 4 November 2015**

<https://www.instagram.com/p/9q PtcjmPk/?taken-by=lynseyaddario>

In the following example (Figure 3), posted on 25 January 2017 and framed by #itswhatido and #photojournalism, Addario demonstrates who has read her book: “Thank you, @reesewitherspoon, for including “It’s What I Do” on your reading list in @closerweekly! @penguinusa #itswhatido #photojournalism”. This post portrays her and the celebrity actor,

Reese Witherspoon, smiling toward the camera: as public figures, they benefit from each other's publicity, reputation, and popularity. The book can be seen partly in front of them, clearly showing the title in capital letters: 'IT'S WHAT I DO'. Addario's shared image also includes the publisher's synopsis:

*War photographer Lynsey Addario's memoir is the story of how the relentless pursuit of truth, in virtually every major theatre of war in the twenty-first century, has shaped her life. What she does, with clarity, beauty, and candor, is to document, often in their most extreme moments, the complex lives of others. It's her work, but it's much more than that; it's her singular calling.*

With its intertextual elements, and the synopsis in particular, this post testifies to the journalistic ideals I referred to Addario herself using earlier, discursive triggers such as "truth", "document", and "calling".

**Figure 3: Lynsey Addario with the celebrity actor Reese Witherspoon, posted on 25 January 2017**

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BPsF1bZgQOj/?taken-by=lynseyaddario>

In the example below (Figure 4), Addario highlights when, where, and to whom she is talking about her career and memoir, using the hashtags #itswhatido and #photojournalism to identify the topic of the message: "If you're in Southern California next week, I am speaking with the @Natgeo Live speakers series on May 12 in Thousand Oaks, and May 13 in Santa Barbara. More info in the link in bio. #itswhatido @penguinrandomhouse #photojournalism". Posted on 5 May 2017, this post may be a screenshot from the *National Geographic* website advertising the talk event(s) with National Geographic Live under the title: "A Photographer's Life of Love and War" and subtitle "Lynsey Addario, Photojournalist". Addario's photograph (taken while on assignment for *National Geographic Magazine* in her photo essay "Veiled Rebellion") is of two women in blue burqas standing in a mountain landscape under a bright blue sky in Afghanistan. This image from her photojournalistic work is now embedded in a new context as an advertisement. In the Instagram post's caption, Addario invites readers to participate in the @Natgeo Live speakers series on May 12 in Thousand Oaks, and May 13 in Santa Barbara, promising more information in the link in her bio.

**Figure 4: Screenshot likely from the National Geographic website advertising the talk event(s) with National Geographic Live, posted on 5 May 2017**

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BTtUSn2Du3U/?taken-by=lynseyaddario>

To summarise, Addario's self-promotional persona performances framed by the custom branded hashtag #itswhatido illustrate an industrial model of the individual online, which is, according to Moore et al. (2017, p. 3), a polished, scheduled, and controlled version of the public self "produced and performed for launches, premieres, speaking engagements, and other live and mediated promotions, appearances, and events". These Instagram posts (Figures 1–4) not only boost and maintain Addario's professional and social status by marketing the value of her public, professional self but also hint at her social connections with institutions, people, brands, and locations, which may create credibility and trust in these kinds of promotional persona performances. Addario's persona performances assist in promoting her professional persona to attract interest to herself as a photojournalist. By cultivating her public image and defining her

brand via these self-promotional actions, her communication by means of #itswhatido and other tags performs a self-advertising campaign of 'it's what I do'. This campaign, as a self-promotion project, attracts interest to the benefit of this curated promotional version of the celebrity photojournalist by supporting the brand building.

On another level, Addario's tags attach her persona performances to the conversations and interests to which these frames contribute. As Barbour et al. (2017, p. 2) argue, different tags signal an Instagram user's willingness to participate and be represented in various conversations and interests, inviting the readers to consider the relationship between the post and the tag – in my reading, also to question this relationship, in the case of #photojournalism in particular. As the next section shows, Addario defines her Instagram persona by employing hashtags such as #photojournalism, #actlikeaPresident, #Dresslikeawoman, and #refugees (see Figures 5–7) to frame posts that offer professional intimacy. These hashtags may offer a clue about a particular post's strategic purpose and its genre, along with connecting the public persona to meanings, discussions, and interests already associated with these frames.

### PROFESSIONAL INTIMACY IN #PHOTOJOURNALISM

Since the digital turn, professional photojournalists have sought out new publication channels and audiences for journalistic photography: the elite photojournalists have strategically changed their traditional practices to demonstrate their expertise in the craft amid the rise of digital technologies (Solaroli 2017). They have renewed, as Solaroli remarks, "traditional practices of production and representational forms, to highlight their distinctive professional status" (2017, pp. 48–49). Indeed, Instagram offers Addario an opportunity to bypass traditional media and the possibility to connect with and impact the public via her photojournalistic contributions with less institutional oversight. Addario employs personal and intimate approaches by cultivating professional, personal, and intimate registers for the purposes both of self-promotion and professional communication. She gains attention, reputation, and benefit from these persona performances. To authenticate and support her professional status and value, Addario's acts of self-life-writing on Instagram aim to highlight the sincerity and realness of her professional persona and brand by means of professional intimacy (Figures 5–7). Addario thus expresses personal attitudes and political views when sharing her photojournalism on Instagram.

In the post below (Figure 5), posted on 29 January 2017, the Yazidi refugee woman sits on cardboard waste, keeping her eyes down. She holds one child in her arms. The other child lies on the ground, hand in front of mouth and using a travel bag as a pillow. Addario exhibits her professional intimacy by giving her personal opinions and feelings in the accompanying caption:

*Terrorists, President Trump? No, they are Yazidi refugees, fleeing from persecution from the Islamic State. Iraqi Yazidis were among those denied travel to the US after President Trump issued an executive order barring refugees from entering the US. Photographed on assignment for the @nytimes in 2014.*

According to the caption, the image was photographed for *The New York Times* in 2014 when President Trump issued an executive order barring refugees such as Iraqi Yazidis from entering the US. Not providing location information can protect the subjects of the journalistic image. The gazes of the three refugees are relevant to my interpretation as a scholar-reader. There is no hope in the lowered closed eyes of an adult. The younger child looks to the left, maybe toward

the setting sun. The covered mouth of the older child, who looks straight at the camera and photojournalist, reinforces a message about these refugees whose voice has been taken away. They are alone in what appears to be a deserted landscape.

**Figure 5: A Yazidi refugee woman with two children, posted on 29 January 2017**

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BP3VG0XAkK8/?taken-by=lynseyaddario>

In her Instagram post of 4 February 2017 (Figure 6), Addario participates in digital hashtag activism linked to broader social, political, and moral issues. In response to a report that President Trump wanted women who work for him to dress a certain way, Addario performs personal symbolic action and shares her visual interpretation of the dress code as a woman and photojournalist. In the image, Addario holds a professional camera in her hands; in the background are a tent, soldiers, and military vehicles. As part of a broader online protest, Addario uses the hashtag #dresslikeawoman, linking the image of her in Afghanistan to President Trump's @realdonaldtrump Instagram profile. According to the caption, this image was taken when Addario was embedded with the US army in Afghanistan during 2009: "[#Dresslikeawoman](#) @realdonaldtrump? How's this? [#actlikeaPresident](#) [#photojournalism](#) embedded with US Troops outside Kandahar, Afghanistan 2009." Addario challenges, via this collective visual act, the normative expectations and representations which constrain women. She gives a personal example to demonstrate that there is no one way to 'dress like a woman'. The hashtag #photojournalism has been attached to the post as a specific topic, keyword, or category. #Photojournalism may confuse the ideological borders of professional photojournalism if it is interpreted as I do, in the Millerian sense (Miller 1984), as a social clue about the nature of the genre. Does the reader believe that what Addario frames with the hashtag #photojournalism is, in fact, photojournalism (Figure 6)?

**Figure 6: Lynsey Addario holds a professional camera in her hands in Afghanistan, posted on 4 February 2017**

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BQGP8Segh4k/?taken-by=lynseyaddario>

In the final example (Figure 7), posted on 20 November 2015, Addario directs her post to the @nytimes and @unrefugees Instagram accounts. Hence, the caption provides a social clue about her professional status and the genre of the post. Addario does not include a geotag that would indicate her location. The post shows a fragment of a love letter on the pavement that Addario found after photographing a ship of migrants and refugees disembarking in Sicily. She offers the translation: "*Rana, I wanted to be with you. Don't forget me. I love you very much. [...]*." Again, the content of the caption challenges the ideology of objectivity or neutrality: "[...] *Refugees are not terrorists; they are fleeing violence at home. There are over four million Syrian refugees. Welcome them. @nytimes@unrefugees #refugees #itswhatido*". One ideological role of the journalist professional has been that of the passive outsider obligated to bear witness objectively without making a subjective intervention in events (see Boudana 2011; Schwartz 1992). Yet, professional activism, opinion, and emotional or personal commitment to the topics

covered often guide the field (Steensen 2016). Addario's caption expresses professional intimacy, intimate and emotional interest in the topic, not the traditional journalistic ideals of balance and impartiality.

**Figure 7: Fragment of a love letter on the pavement, posted on 20 November 2015**

<https://www.instagram.com/p/-Ttp15DmDA/?taken-by=lynseyaddario>

The narrative of the profession and work in her journalistic self-life-writing breaks, for instance, the ideals of balance and impartiality mentioned. Yet, I interpret Addario's publicly shared personal lived and felt experiences and the roles she exposes inside and outside her professional accounts as a communication strategy to seek a more fact-intensive, transparent, and truthful expression of herself and her practice as a photojournalist by showing personal commitments, views, and opinions beyond the journalistic outputs. By doing so, she aims to achieve the impression of sincerity in her performative argument, 'it's what I do'.

The possible ambiguity of her persona performances is not a weakness but a strength: for a photojournalist, the memoir form offers the possibility to use journalistic imagination, express opinions, and add details to create engaging nonfiction (Maguire 2012). I did not interpret the Instagram posts where Addario's self-presentation plays with fact and fiction as autofiction, the genre of fictionalised autobiographical text. Her caption anchors the post as auto/biographical evidence, even if the visual expression presents more artistic features. In both her Instagram profile and her book, Addario creates a 'holistic' account of her professional persona despite possible ambiguities of auto/biographical testimony. That is to say, there is always an aspect of fiction, non-reality, manipulation, and imagination when dealing with photography, memory, and the subjective perceptions of self (Adams 1994; Eakin 1985; Flohr 2012; Jurgenson 2019; Lloyd 1986; Sontag 1977). Autobiographical journalism reveals facts through the writer's lived and felt experiences and emotions to construct a truth claim (Coward 2010, 2014; Fowler-Watt 2020). I place Addario's self-life-writing under the umbrella of nonfiction, near to, even equal to, subjective and confessional autobiographical journalism.

### **DILEMMAS AND BENEFITS OF SELF-BRANDED INSTAGRAM PROFESSIONALISM**

In this paper, I undertook a close reading of Lynsey Addario's public Instagram profile, using her written memoir *It's What I Do* (2015) as a supporting text for a close analysis of her public persona. The journalistic self-presentation has shifted between emotional, self-reflexive, and promotional acts (a) when Addario recurrently shares professional and non-professional life events, interests, attitudes, and tastes through Instagram and (b) when she narrates retrospectively valued memories in her book. Via repeated autobiographical acts such as sharing intimate images of her family and everyday life and telling personal stories from inside and behind the professional scenes and inhabiting different roles, she garners attention for the journalistic causes that she wants to keep in the public eye (see Horwitz & Daily 2019; Kenny 2018). By means of these tactics, she establishes her professional brand, creating a sense of emotional connection and intimacy with her as a celebrated photojournalist-feminist (see Horwitz & Daily 2019; Kenny 2018; Russell 1995). By cultivating professional, personal, and intimate registers (Barbour 2015; Marshall et al. 2020), she connects self-promotion with the photojournalism that visualises conflicts.

If professional information-oriented conflict image production and its conventions still matter, how do the readers identify and judge something belonging to the practice of photojournalism on Instagram? What is needed for a professional testimony to be credible? The reputation of an Instagram persona, hashtagging #photojournalism or linking @nytimes Instagram account may not be enough for the readers to interpret what they look at as photojournalism.

In addition, the pressure to promote content from the private and personal life can escalate on Instagram and generate a lack of trust in Addario's professional expertise and practice. Hence for Addario, the tactics of incorporating private life and personal emotions into the work and presentation of the profession may erode the credibility of 'it's what I do'. The repeated personal and intimate self-branding may affect how the readers evaluate photojournalism mediated by Instagram. Do they believe in the authenticity of the performed work persona articulating in the ways that I have described: 'it's what I do'?

Addario's professional intimacy demonstrates her emotional, personal commitment and clear devotion both to her professional group, and the topic and subjects of her journalism, focusing on women in regions of conflict. Her autobiographical intimacy reveals the personal and intimate sides of her private sphere outside her work and profession in ways that enable readers to develop an emotional connection and feel a closeness to her. I suggest that, at best, her persona performances navigating between professional, personal, and intimate registers seek more fact-intensity and a deeper truth of herself in public work than the professional account that denies the photojournalist's subjectivity.

Showcasing lived and felt experiences can be read as authentication of Addario's public, professional self and practice on Instagram. Performing professional and autobiographical intimacy can increase the professional persona's public potential by authenticating the professional, offering context to the practice, or gaining interest and awareness for journalistic contributions (among others). Jurgenson argues that social photography on Instagram can tell new truths about us and our life when "the 'truth' of capturing the essence of yourself and others, the mood, what it is like, the quality of experience can depend on expressiveness more than accuracy" (2019, p. 18). By bringing transparency, for example, to the values and ideology on which the work persona presentations are based, the performance seems more authentic than one which does not reveal the photojournalist-author's subjective and emotional influence on her self-promotional persona performances.

## END NOTES

1. As Addario's publications from her private life are available on Instagram, I will share only the links to her posts or her profile. But reading the self-presentation of an Instagram persona is a moving target. The Instagram profile and its content are incomplete, ever-changing, and unstable as an ongoing autobiographical text and act (Barbour et al. 2017). My remarks apply only to the time slot studied, from 1 August 2012 to 30 May 2017, and the content remarked on is subject to change. The Instagram post may have disappeared, the caption or its hashtags may have been amended, or the Instagram bio may have been updated during and after the data collection.

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