

Jack Monroe: An Investigation

By Katie Roche
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Introduction

On 31 July 2022, food writer and campaigner Jack Monroe posted a blog entitled “The Curse of The Poverty Hangover, Ten Years On”. In this blog, Monroe revealed that she was in great financial difficulties. She has been unable to afford shampoo and conditioner for two years. She must make shower gel by mixing soap with boiled water. She has turned off the hot water too. As well, Monroe has removed her light bulbs and replaced them with outdoor solar lanterns. And she’s about to take some possessions to a pawnbroker. At the bottom of the page is a link to her PayPal with a message asking for donations (1). Supporters heed that call. From someone sending enough for jam and bread for her son (2) to another who sent £200 (3).

A few days later, an anonymous Twitter thread appears by someone named “AwfullyMolly”, revealing the contradictions in Monroe’s story. Monroe retaliated: people are attacking her, knowing she is mentally and physically fragile (4). That her critics are motivated by transphobia and various other prejudices. About a week later, AwfullyMolly publishes a Medium post titled “Jack Monroe: Saint or Scammer” (5). After this is published, some Twitter users began to express doubts about Monroe. And others reaffirmed their support for her.

As regular readers of my blog will be aware, I don’t normally write investigative pieces. But I have found the case of Jack Monroe so intriguing, I have decided to look into it more deeply. I wonder: is there a co-ordinated attack by right-wingers who feel threatened by Monroe’s message and her influence over policy makers? Or are there actual questions that Monroe needs to answer?

I am not Awfully Molly. I do not know AwfullyMolly’s real identity. I have not been working with AwfullyMolly either. But I think she’s done a great job of uncovering the inconsistencies within Monroe’s story. Some of the things she’s found will be included in this report. Tatler Life’s forums and Wiki have also been a great help.

The problem with Jack Monroe isn’t that she was once in poverty and is now affluent. Indeed, if that is the case, she deserves plaudits for not forgetting her past struggles. Nor is there a problem with using Patreon or PayPal to be paid for her work. The problem is that there are discrepancies in her story. Those discrepancies call her story into question.

When I first heard of Jack Monroe, I believed everything she said. I have never been particularly interested in her work. But I quite often would see articles she’d written in The Guardian or The New Statesman. I was aware that some conservatives had doubted her story. I assumed they disagreed with her views and wanted to discredit her. In the early 2010s, there was a rabid anti-benefit sentiment, and I thought that was why people were doubting her. I never gave her story much thought. I have never met Jack Monroe in real life. I have no personal vendetta against her. I am not “funded” by anyone either. I have no ideological opposition to Monroe. Moreover, I don’t think everything Monroe says is untrue.

I myself am on benefits. I have Autism, ADHD and various other physical and mental health problems (the DWP know about my writing). I have gone through the process. I know how much money you get and what that can afford. I can afford shampoo and conditioner, and to eat. I have a laptop and a mobile phone. I don’t live in the lap of luxury. But I’m not starving to death either. I don’t have children, which is one key difference between mine and Monroe’s situation. I accept a child brings additional financial strain.

Monroe identifies as nonbinary and uses both she/her pronouns and they/them pronouns. I will use she/her pronouns throughout, as most articles about Monroe do.

Life story and Family

The point of this section is to give some background information about Monroe and to highlight worrying inconsistencies in Monroe's life story.

In 1988, Melissa Hadjicostas, the woman who would later be known as Jack Monroe, was born in Southend-On-Sea (6). She is the daughter of firefighter and army veteran David Hadjicostas and his wife, Evelyn (7,8). She has three siblings. In 1993, when Jack was five years old, her parents began taking in foster children (9).

At age 11, Monroe was assessed as gifted and talented by a school-appointed psychologist (10). The same year, she started Westcliff High School for Girls, a grammar school. Monroe has also reported she was diagnosed with Autism at this point, but that she did not find out about the diagnosis until she was an adult (11). However, this contradicts other reports. An interview in The Scotsman said Monroe had received her diagnosis a few years prior. She describes being assessed and diagnosed with "99 per cent of the qualities of classic autism and there are ADHD qualities to it" (12). In 2021, she also said she'd been diagnosed with ADHD "a few years ago" (13). It is possible that Monroe had been diagnosed with Autism as a child and then diagnosed with ADHD as an adult. But, an article in iNews said she was diagnosed with both Autism and ADHD at age 11 (14). It's unclear which version of the story is correct. Monroe also developed alcoholism as a teenager (15).

In 2004, shortly before she was due to sit her GCSEs, Monroe was excluded for stealing a scalpel. She has said she stole the scalpel for a dare, and also implied it was to use for self-harm. She said she never told her mother that she was excluded. Nor did the school. She reports that she pretended to go to school for the last few days of term (16). She also said she was "struck off" because her mediocre grades could damage the school's league table position (17). She took seven GCSEs and got an A* to C pass in four of them, as well as a half GCSE in Religious Education (18).

After leaving school, Monroe started work in various entry-level service industry jobs (6). She was forced to leave two of those jobs after her stalker- a primary school teacher who assaulted her as a child- began coming to her place of work (19). She continued to work in the service industry for three years. In 2005, she moved out of the family home at age 17. She moved to a house share (20).

In 2007, Monroe found work at the fire service as a call handler (6). She was paid £27,000 per year (21). In the same year, her father was awarded an MBE for his work as a foster carer (22). Alongside her work in the fire service, Monroe was doing photography, some of which was sold to her local newspaper (23). She also wrote poetry during this period. It is a very similar style to her later blog writing (24). Monroe also began training to become a firefighter (25,26). When Monroe discovered she was pregnant, she was forced to stop her firefighter training and to give up her second job at a cocktail bar (15,26). In 2010, Monroe gave birth to her son. He was born two weeks late. However, he also had to go to either NICU or SCBU. (27–29). It is unclear which, although many use NICU and SCBU interchangeably. She lived with her son's father during this period.

November 2011 to May 2013- The Poverty Years

In October 2011, Monroe's relationship with her son's father broke down. She and her son moved out of their home to a two-bedroom flat (30). The following month, Monroe quit her job. In one interview, she said this was because she had to work nights (6). She told another newspaper the commute was too long (31). She later said she resigned while she was an inpatient in a psychiatric hospital, which she'd been admitted to because of stress (32).

In 2021, Monroe came out with a different story. On Twitter, Monroe tweeted that she resigned, then immediately asked for the resignation to be rescinded. Monroe had found a colleague who was prepared to take her night shifts, but the fire service decided it wasn't in their best interests to rescind her notice. Monroe also said her union told her she could take them to tribunal. Monroe feared her personal affairs would be reported in public and chose not to do this (33).

After this, Monroe claimed benefits for 18 months (34). This means she claimed benefits from November 2011 to May 2013. In this period, she reports being in such desperate poverty that she had to unplug her fridge and feed her young son a single Weetabix, mashed up and mixed with water (35). She went to a free lunch club and at one point, a food bank. Monroe started her blog in February 2012. She also began work on her first recipe book at the same time (36). In August 2012, Monroe was forced to sell her television to cover the rent (30). She held a house sale in the same month where she raised £3000. In an article about the sale, it says she received Income Support. However, she was in arrears with her rent and so most of her income was paying this back (30).

In December 2012, the Daily Mirror published an article under the headline: "Living in poverty: Young mum has just £10 a week for food" (31). Monroe describes not having heating or any Christmas decorations. This article includes a breakdown of her income and outgoings. Note that her Income Support is not mentioned. Nor is the debt to her landlord. In fact, the article specifically said she was debt-free. According to this article, Monroe's income comprised of £250 a month from her crafting business, child benefit for her son and housing benefit. What else is interesting is that Monroe said her son's father didn't pay child support even though he was working. However, In 2019, Monroe wrote an article describing her son's father as "the most decent man I've ever met" (37). This seems a very strange way to describe a man who let his own child go without food or heating.

In March 2013, Monroe appeared in the press again. This time, in the Daily Telegraph in an article called "My 49p lunch with a girl called Jack" (38). She reported having a budget of £10 a week for food. Her then-current home was furnished with items her friends no longer wanted, as well as things retrieved from skips. The lunch is eaten at her flat, so again, she has a home at this point.

In the same month, Monroe did a sponsored sleep-out for an anti-homeless charity. In a blog post about the fundraiser, she wrote that she had been at risk of homelessness, but she never had to sleep on the street (39). But in 2018, Monroe told the Washington Post that she "lived rough" for two years and relied on food banks for six months (36). When? Look at the times above. When did she spend two years sleeping rough? There is nowhere for these two years to fit in. Admittedly, "lived rough" is ambiguous. But it does imply homelessness.

In 2013, The Guardian said that Monroe had found work as a reporter for her local newspaper, the Southend Echo (34). In spite of this, Monroe continued to experience financial struggles. Her housing benefit stopped after the benefits office heard she had a £25,000 book deal. It was reinstated after Monroe showed the benefits office a copy of the contract. But after that, she moved to a house share. She reported sharing a home with five people and sleeping on a mattress on the floor (34). In more recent years, Monroe has said she was evicted after the housing benefit was withdrawn multiple times (40). She has gone from “nearly evicted” and moving to a different home in the 2013 interview, to actually being evicted in.

Monroe’s Family

What about Monroe’s family? Why didn’t they help? Although earlier interviews and blogs described Monroe’s upbringing as middle-class, in 2021, Monroe tweeted that she was the poorest kid in her year at school (41). From that, it would appear her family weren’t able to provide financial support. Is that true? Evidence shows maybe not.

Some have said Monroe’s father is a millionaire. Indeed, David Hadjicostas ran a charity called The Fostering Network. It was founded in 1980 under the name The National Foster Care Association. Like many charities, it is also registered as a company. According to the 2003 director’s report compiled by Deloitte and Touche, directors received no remuneration (42). So, the charity received millions. But Hadjicostas didn’t. Thus, it’s incorrect to say Hadjicostas is a millionaire. That doesn’t mean the family were impoverished though.

Indeed, her grandfather, John Hadjicostas was a landlord and restaurateur. According to probate records, his estate was worth just over £1.8 million when he died in 2012 (43). Does that mean David Hadjicostas is a millionaire now? John Hadjicostas had four children (44). His wife was also still alive, so she would have got the main home. Each of his children got a property in the will. David Hadjicostas was willed a semi-detached house. The property was bought in 1999 for £100,000 (45). Presumably, the house was converted into flats which were let out. Monroe described this property as “a glorified fucking cupboard” (46). She says it is let to a former homeless person (47), even though she had previously said it wasn’t allowed to be let out as a dwelling.

Even if they aren’t millionaires, Monroe’s family isn’t without money. So why didn’t they help her? She says she didn’t want them to know about her poverty. Yet she went to the press with her story. Surely, her family would have found out from the newspaper articles. You can’t keep something a secret while there are stories about it in the papers. It is surprising that these pillars of the community are willing to help everyone except their own daughter. It simply doesn’t make sense. Maybe before the first story was printed in August 2012, they may not have known how dire things had gotten. But in 2013, Monroe wrote that she was forced into prostitution and stealing food to survive (48). Her family must have known by then that she was facing financial difficulties.

There is a broader issue with benefits and family. Lots of people don’t have family who can support them. They may have grown up in care. Or their parents may have died. Or their parents are in poverty themselves. Adult shouldn’t be forced to rely on their parents for financial support. But still, Monroe did have family she could turn to. Indeed, it’s astounding that her pillar-of-the-community family were happy to leave their daughter in such hardship.

Jack Monroe Today

We've seen some inconsistencies in Jack's history. Now, we will look at Jack Monroe's current financial status.

Monroe's Income

Most writers don't make much money. Most authors are lucky to sell a few hundred copies of a book. For that reason, most authors have a second job. But Monroe isn't the average author. By 2018, Monroe had sold over 90,000 books (49). She reports being paid less than a pound a book. That's probably right. But if you sell enough, it adds up. And Monroe has other streams of income too. How does anyone know how much Monroe earns? We can't tell for certain. But one area we can make an estimate is of her Patreon income.

Patreon

Patreon is a subscription service where people give money regularly in return for gifts and exclusive content. Monroe's Patreon doesn't show how much she earns. She could display this, but she has chosen not to. However, the site displays how many subscribers each member has. Monroe has over 750 subscribers (this figure fluctuates). The minimum donation Patreon will accept is £1 a month (50). However, the £1 only applies if the user searches out the custom amount option. The subscription tiers Monroe offers are £3.50, £7, £10, £12, £24 and £44.

Some have tried to estimate Monroe's income by multiplying the number of subscribers by £3.50 (the lowest subscription tier). This doesn't work because Patreon takes various fees. First, Patreon takes processing fees for donations. For amounts less than £3.50, Patreon takes a 5% processing fee, and an additional £0.15. For amounts over £3.50, Patreon takes a 3.4% processing fee and an additional £0.35 (51). There is also a 2.5% conversion fee for donations made in other currencies (51). Given Monroe specialises in British social issues, it's unlikely many donors will donate in foreign currencies. As well, Patreon takes a percentage of the monthly total raised. The person who runs the Patreon (Monroe in this case) can choose how much they give. There are three levels of service: lite, pro and premium. Each offers different features. The lite level takes 5% of the total monthly earnings after processing fees, the pro level takes 8% and the premium level takes 12% (52). Only the pro and premium levels offer member tiers. So, Monroe uses either of these levels. In addition, a 75p or £1 pay-out fee is taken each month, depending on which payment system is used. Assuming she uses PayPal, this is £1.

I did some calculations to estimate her likely income. On the day I did this, Monroe had 792 subscribers. This may have changed since. This table shows her estimated income:

Payment band	Est no. subscribers	Processing Fee	Amount received (individual)	Total per tier
£1.00	278	5%+£0.15	£0.80	£222.40
£3.50	396	3.4%+£0.35	£3.03	£1,200.28
£7.00	79	3.4%+£0.35	£6.41	£506.55
£10.00	33	3.4%+£0.35	£9.31	£307.23
£12.00	3	3.4%+£0.35	£11.24	£33.73

£24.00	2	3.4%+£0.35	£22.83	£45.67
£44.00	1	3.4%+£0.35	£42.15	£42.15
Total (before commission and pay-out fee)			<u>£2,358.00</u>	
Total after 8% commission and pay-out fee			<u>£2,168.36</u>	
Total after 12% commission and pay-out fee			<u>£1,994.81</u>	

I estimated half of her subscribers were paying £3.50 and a third were paying £1. I also estimated 10% were paying £7 and just under 5% were paying £10. And that just under 1% of subscribers were paying more. As you can see, it's a lot- between £1,994.81 and £2,168.36 a month. That works out at around £24,000 to £26,000 a year before tax and other costs. That in itself is enough to live on.

In spite of this, Monroe denies that she makes a lot of money from Patreon (53–55). Is that possible? Let's calculate the minimum she could be getting. If all 792 subscribers donate the minimum of £1 a month and none of them pay in pound sterling, for each subscriber, Monroe would get £0.78. Multiply that by 792, and that comes to £617.76 a month. Then subtract 12% for Patreon's cut if Monroe is using the premium level. That leaves her with £540.14. Finally, take the £1 pay-out fee, and that leaves £539.14 a month. That's £6,469.73 a year. Not enough to live on alone, but not an insignificant sum either.

The second problem with her Patreon is that Monroe hasn't sent the promised rewards for subscribing (56). Monroe promises subscribers various rewards, including exclusive content, postcards and signed copies of her books (57). At least one user has asked for a refund for not getting the promised goods (58).

Brand partnerships

In addition to her other work, Monroe also does partnerships with brands, where she discusses certain products on social media or does other promotions with a company. Partnerships Monroe has done this year include: Netflix/Aardman animations (59), Del Monte (60) and Superdrug (61). It's not known exactly how much Monroe is paid for this work. But she will still make money from these. As well, Monroe has worked with other big companies in the past. She was on television advertisements for Sainsbury's in 2014 until she was dropped after tweeting about David Cameron's dead son (62).

What about her outgoings?

We've seen Monroe takes in a lot of money. But she will have costs to pay too. Are all her profits being wiped out by these costs?

Probably the biggest expense is her agent. Agents take 10% of their client's earnings. This is a big chunk of Monroe's income. But still, she's making a lot on Patreon alone. Furthermore, Monroe's agent represents many well-known figures, including Nigel Slater, Simon Reeve and Susie Dent (63). Look at those names. Do you think they are all bringing in paltry sums of money? If Monroe wasn't bringing in money, the agent would drop her.

Aside from this, the outgoings from writing aren't that much. There are costs in being a writer or influencer, such as stationary, IT equipment and software, and travel. But these outgoings aren't as much as for other types of self-employment. Aside from her business expenditures, she has said her personal spending is high too. Monroe has tweeted a breakdown of her bills.

The highest of which is £1500 a month rent for her bungalow. Oddly, she included the cost of cooking utensils and a cooker in her breakdown. She said her outgoings were £2,310.01 per month (64). Removing other costs such as food, utensils and appliances, her bills and rent come to £2075.06 per month. Her Patreon alone either almost covers it (if she is using the premium tier) or fully covers it (if she is using the pro tier). Admittedly, she would be struggling if that were her only source of income with her expenditures. But she would be over the limit for means-tested benefits.

Why doesn't Monroe move somewhere cheaper? That's a bit of a mystery. In August 2022, Monroe said she was locked into a tenancy for her bungalow for six months (65). But on 7 March, she tweeted that the tenancy was ending soon (66). In the same month, she implied she couldn't afford her heating bills. She complained that the house was draughty, and that the cold exacerbated her and her son's illnesses (67). Why did she stay for a further five months if the house is that bad? Also, if the lease was nearly up in March and she signed for a further six months, the lease must be nearly up now. How is she locked in for another six months?

Despite Monroe's self-proclaimed frugality and poverty, she makes many unnecessary purchases. In March 2022, she bought a Stetson hat. She said she buys expensive goods every time she hands a book in (68). She also acquired a goldendoodle puppy in June 2021. In July, she denied it was a goldendoodle and described the dog as "a scruffy mutt" (69). She had previously said the puppy was a goldendoodle on seven different occasions (70). Even if the dog itself wasn't expensive, looking after a dog has many costs. Especially a puppy. The dog will need a microchip, vaccines and neutering in the first year. It will need food, and possibly grooming. There are other costs to factor in, such as cleaning or replacing items damaged by the puppy. Less than a month after posting she was destitute, Monroe went on holiday to Pontins (71). Pontins isn't fancy. But for someone struggling to afford essentials, it's a lot of money. A holiday is a luxury, not an essential.

Most of us don't live in a house that's as large or as comfortable as they'd like. Many of us can't even afford to go to Pontin's. Or to buy other fancy items. But most of us don't ask for donations from the public either.

Fundraisers

Monroe has also done fundraising for her business and for charity. But as we will see, these are fraught with controversy too.

Book Crowdfunder

In 2015, Monroe launched a KickStarter for the book "Cooking on a Bootstrap". The fundraiser was for the costs of self-publishing the book. Backers who gave more than £12 were promised a copy of the book in return. They also had the option of donating the cost of a second copy to be given to a food bank. The crowd funder raised £68,761 from 3603 donors, greatly exceeding the original target of £8000 (72). But there were many delays in sending the books to backers. Monroe had posted the book was nearly finished in April 2016 (73). But it wasn't until after January 2018 that the books were sent out. Backers then received black-and-white copies of the book with no images. Admittedly, she never promised the books would be in full colour. But it's understandable that backers were disappointed. Many other commenters on the Kickstarter say they never got their books.

The backers were understandably disappointed by the delays and lack of communication. Many wrote comments asking when their copy was coming and pondering why the book was so delayed. Monroe described these negative posts as bullying and said that it was damaging her mental health. At this point, the books were over 18 months late. Is complaining about a delay bullying? I don't think so. While customers don't have carte blanche to mistreat business owners, naturally, they expect a service of a certain standard. A point that commenters frequently made was that Monroe was active on social media at the time she was saying she was unable to work on the book. So, she could still type on her computer or mobile phone, even if she didn't feel able to work on the book. She could have at least posted an update on KickStarter.

Monroe raised a lot of money and frankly, she could have made more effort to ensure the books went out at the deadline, or shortly after. If not, Monroe should have offered full refunds to backers. I checked some quotes for the cost of printing the books. The average fee for printing 3603 full-colour A4 books with 100 GSM paper came to an average of just under £30,000. The cheapest quote was around £23,500. So, she would have quite a lot of money left over from the crowdfunder to spend if needed. There was so much Monroe could have done to get the books sent out. She could have employed staff to help. She describes packing the items and writing envelopes herself in the comments. She could have employed casual workers to pack the books and had labels printed. It's possible to send items in bulk too (like how other mail order businesses do). At an absolute push, she could have employed a ghost-writer to help with writing. The money she had raised would have covered all of those things and still left her with a profit. Also, the book did later get published by Bluebird Publishing, who are part of Macmillan publishers. The Bluebird edition was published in August 2018.

The other troubling aspect of this affair was that people were donating to Monroe so she could donate copies of the book to food banks. It's disingenuous to say Monroe is donating the books, when her backers are the ones donating. As well, Monroe tweeted asking people to send £10.99 to her PayPal for her to donate copies to food banks (74). £10.99 for a book is retail price. It's much cheaper to buy them directly from the publisher. As Monroe was self-publishing, she could have asked for donations at the price of printing the books rather than at retail price if she wasn't able to stand the cost of donating the books. She has taken the opportunity to make extra profit instead.

It's also unclear why she needed to crowdfund in the first place. If she wanted to self-publish, she could have done pre-orders instead when she was ready to publish. Or she could have done print on demand. Also, she could have sought a traditional publishing deal. Given she already had been published and sold very well, the book would likely have been published, as it eventually was.

Teemill

On 1 February 2022, Monroe started a Teemill fundraiser for the Trussell Trust, selling t-shirts and other merchandise. These pieces have slogans printed on them, including "Dead people can't riot" and "No bread. Just a circus" (75,76). The money went to Monroe's bank account, even though Teemill enables donations directly to charity. Monroe said that no profits would go to her (77). The campaign was very successful and the target was met within a few days of the campaign being launched (78). On February 3, Monroe announced that instead of giving all the money to the Trussell Trust, she was going to give the first £10,000 raised to them and the rest of it would go to smaller charities. She tweeted that the Trussell Trust were "completely

on board” with this (78). On the same day, the Trussell Trust tweeted that they hadn’t approved the messages in advance and were trying to get in touch with her (79).

On March 10, the Trussell Trust tweeted that they were working with Jack’s agent to make sure that they received all of the money raised up to February 2 (80). On March 23, Monroe posted screenshots of her PayPal account showing the money being paid to the Trussell Trust (81). It appears the Trussell Trust were unhappy with how the entire thing was run.

Monroe has never said which other charities are getting the money. In addition, as of 19 August, several months after the Trussell Trust donation was made, the Teemill site is still operating. Where is the money going? Monroe has specifically said the money is going to charity. But which charities are benefiting from this? And why do they want to be anonymous?

Conclusion

There are many troubling inconsistencies in Monroe's story. This raises an alarming point: can we believe a word she says? Whether she is intentionally misleading people for financial gain, or if she is merely stretching the truth is impossible to say. But in any case, this is unacceptable behaviour. Moreover, there is a concerning lack of transparency and separation of personal finances and money for charity.

The harm Monroe does

The most obvious harm is that she is receiving donations from people who are themselves struggling financially, but who think her need is greater.

She is also creating unnecessary fear and stress for people at risk of losing their job. Why frighten people needlessly into thinking their life will be ruined if they fall on hard times? What effect would that have on your mental health, thinking this will be your life soon, unable to afford to even have your fridge turned on and having to sell your child's toys? Of course, for most people on Universal Credit, that's not what it's like. It's not a lot of money. But for most, it covers the basics (rent, food, toiletries, utilities, clothing). There are undoubtedly people whose living costs aren't covered by benefits. Plus, there are many at risk of poverty thanks to the cost of living crisis. But very few live in the type of poverty Monroe describes experiencing.

Furthermore, Monroe gives the appearance that poverty never ends. Why, after being a high-profile media personality for 10 years, is Monroe unable to afford shower gel? If you were someone who had lost their job and was going on Universal Credit, how would it make you feel to see that you'll never financially recover? That you could be on television and selling books, and yet still be unable to afford shampoo? In reality, many have recovered from financial hardship. Even where debts are involved.

Of course, many on social media have objected to the questioning of Jack Monroe.

“It's rude to go through someone's finances”

All of the information used to work out Monroe income is publicly available. Furthermore, Monroe has made her finances everyone's business by asking for money when it's unlikely she's as poverty stricken as she claims.

“So what if she lies? She's still a good person”

Some say “so what if she's not totally truthful. She's done so many good things”. This is something I disagree strongly with. We don't live in a children's superhero comic. The world isn't split into heroes and villains. People can do good things sometimes and bad things at other times. That doesn't make the bad things acceptable.

If Monroe is misrepresenting her circumstances for financial gain, this is wrong. Bella Gibson, who pretended she cured cancer by healthy eating, acted unethically. Like Monroe, she published a recipe book. She made her money by lying. But you could argue she inspired people to eat healthier. Does she deserve to be exonerated? No. Even though her books and the lie that sold them might have had a positive impact on some, she still was dishonest.

“There are worse people. Why not go after them instead?”

The government needs to be held to account for its role in both the benefits cuts in the 2010s, and more recently, the cost of living crisis. But saying “you should write about the government instead of Jack Monroe” is deflecting from Monroe’s potential misconduct. Two wrongs don’t make a right.

“She’s Autistic and ADHD. She can’t help it”

I have Autism and ADHD too. Both were diagnosed by NHS psychiatrists. They do affect my ability to work. I also accept that everyone makes mistakes. But instead of saying “it’s not my fault. My Autism/ADHD made me do it”, most of us take responsibility and aim to put things right. The difference is, Monroe acts improperly and then refuses to engage when people call her out, or says she is being bullied. It’s as if others are being unreasonable in pointing out her mistakes. Also, she repeats her errors. Perhaps the Kickstarter could have been forgiven if she didn’t do the exact same thing with the Patreon (promise something and deliver it late, if at all). Monroe is a troubled woman. That doesn’t mean she can act badly and expect people not to criticise her.

“This is libel”

Monroe frequently accuses people of libel. I wouldn’t be in the least bit surprised to be contacted and told this document is libellous. If Monroe or her representatives find anything untrue, they are welcome to get in touch. The trouble for Monroe is, “I don’t like what you’re saying about me” isn’t libel. As you see, there are sources for everything in this document. Most of which come from Monroe herself.

“Questioning her is mean-spirited”

Monroe has a loyal following who won’t see anything bad said about her. Although, Monroe herself has admitted she has many sock-puppet accounts (82). I suspect some of Monroe’s ardent supporters are actually Monroe herself. In any case, nobody should be above reproach. If she is being dishonest, people deserve to know before they donate. Monroe isn’t a random person on Twitter. She’s a high-profile public figure, and that comes with responsibilities. If Monroe is being dishonest, that’s unacceptable. She is potentially taking advantage of her supporter’s kindness. Some will have little money themselves. By not speaking out, it is condoning that behaviour.

Some people will have read this and be unconvinced. If giving money away to someone who probably earns more than you do makes you happy, go for it. If you’re struggling to make ends meet, and you’ve been taken in by her story, it truly is fine by me. If you’ve read all of this and still feel she requires your financial support, that’s your prerogative. But remember the old saying: “a fool and his money are easily parted”.

I doubt Monroe will ever change. Her die-hard supporters will stand by her too. The point of this is to alert potential donors, and those who consider her an expert in poverty that Monroe’s situation might not be exactly what she says it is.

References




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75. Jack Monroe 🏳️‍🌈 [@BootstrapCook]. In case you missed it yesterday, I've accidentally launched a clothing range. 100% of the profits to the Trussell Trust foodbank network - and over £5k raised already! Organic cotton, some of it recycled, ethically made in the UK. Head to <http://jackmonroe.teemill.com> to take a peek. <https://t.co/EidBuvf7Z3> [Internet]. Twitter. 2022 [cited 2022 Aug 19]. Available from: <https://twitter.com/BootstrapCook/status/1488799670281420804>
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80. The Trussell Trust [@TrussellTrust]. @BingoLittle75 Hi, we're actively working with Jack's agent to ensure that the money raised from this campaign (up until 2nd February) is being donated to the Trussell Trust. The money raised from 2nd Feb will be donated to independent food banks and other anti-poverty charities. [Internet]. Twitter. 2022 [cited 2022 Aug 16]. Available from:
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