Celebrity

Studies



Amsterdam

2024

Dear delegates,

A warm and sincere welcome to the 5th international Celebrity Studies Journal Conference: 'Celebrity Crises and Conflicts'! Hosted by the Humanities Faculty of the University of Amsterdam, and sponsored by Routledge publishers, the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA), the University of Exeter, Cardiff University, Oakland University, and the Amsterdam University Fund (AUF), the conference offers a wonderfully rich and diverse three day programme filled with keynotes, panels, presentations, masterclasses discussions, and social events.

What do celebrity crises and conflicts tell us about the social, political, economic, and cultural dimensions of stardom? What can we learn about current, as well as historical, celebrity crises and conflicts? What impacts do they have on the study of celebrity as an academic endeavor? These are some of the driving questions that we tackle during the conference.

The celebrity studies community coming together at this conference is truly a community and you are about to become part of it. We ask you to embrace the philosophy of this community—to share, discuss and debate, in an open, safe, constructive and supportive environment, the ideas that emerge in and across the keynotes, panels and papers you go to see and hear.

A special issue of the journal *Celebrity Studies* will be dedicated to the best papers of the conference; details of submission requirements will be shared during the conference.

In this booklet, you will all keynote and presentation abstracts, as well as practical information about the city of Amsterdam—travel instruction, Internet access details, information about public transport, important addresses and phone numbers.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to our keynotes, our review board, delegates acting as panel chairs, our student helpers, and the ASCA office for their support in helping us to prepare for these three days. Let's celebrate!

The CS2024 organizing team

Practical information

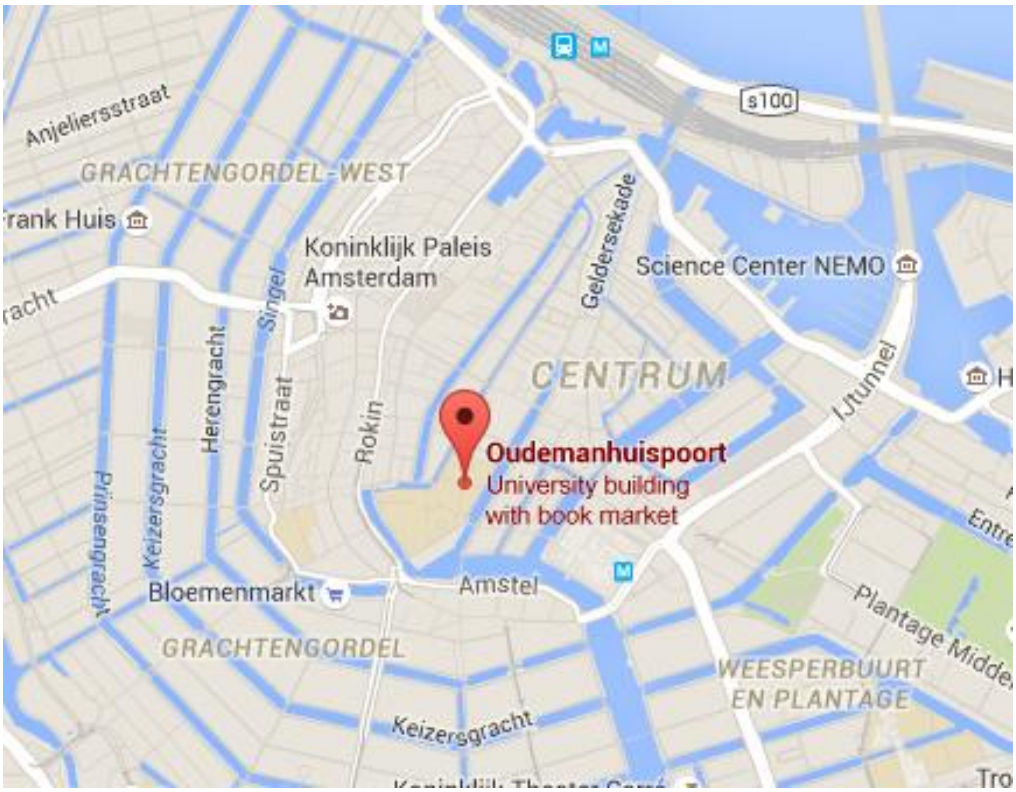
WIFI/Internet at the University of Amsterdam

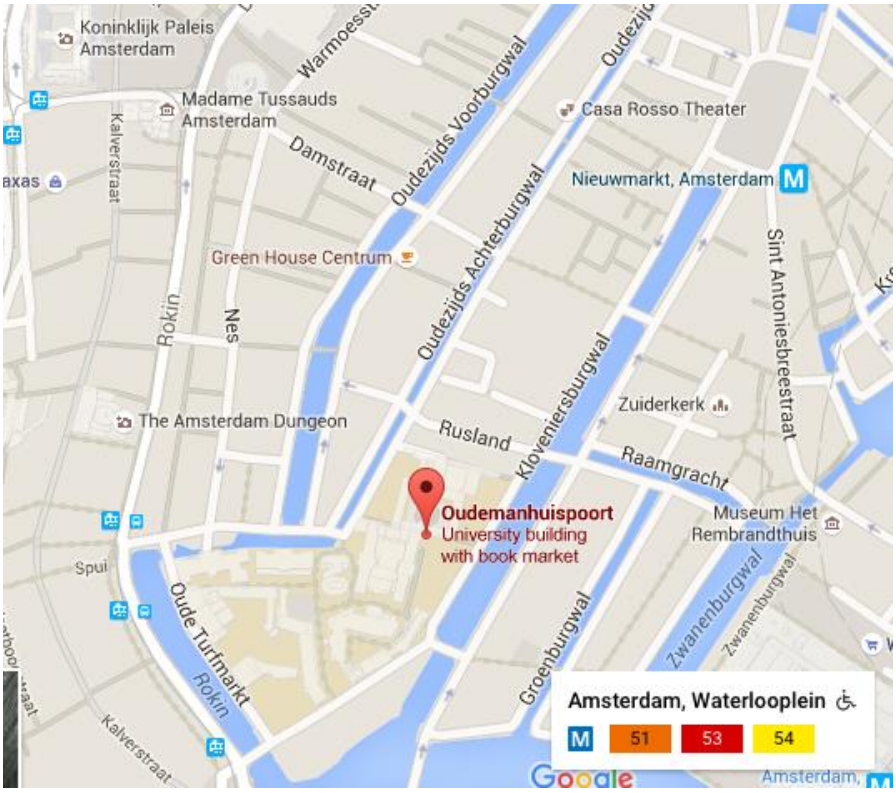
- If you already have **eduroam access** through your own institution, you can make use of the UvA “eduroam”, using your own login details.
- If you **do not have eduroam access**, please use your mobile device to send a keyword to the following phone numbers: 7873 (for Dutch delegates) or +316 3525 0006. The keyword is: “**beroemd**” (no capital letters, no quotation marks: “beroemd” is actually the Dutch word for “famous”). You will then receive temporary login details.

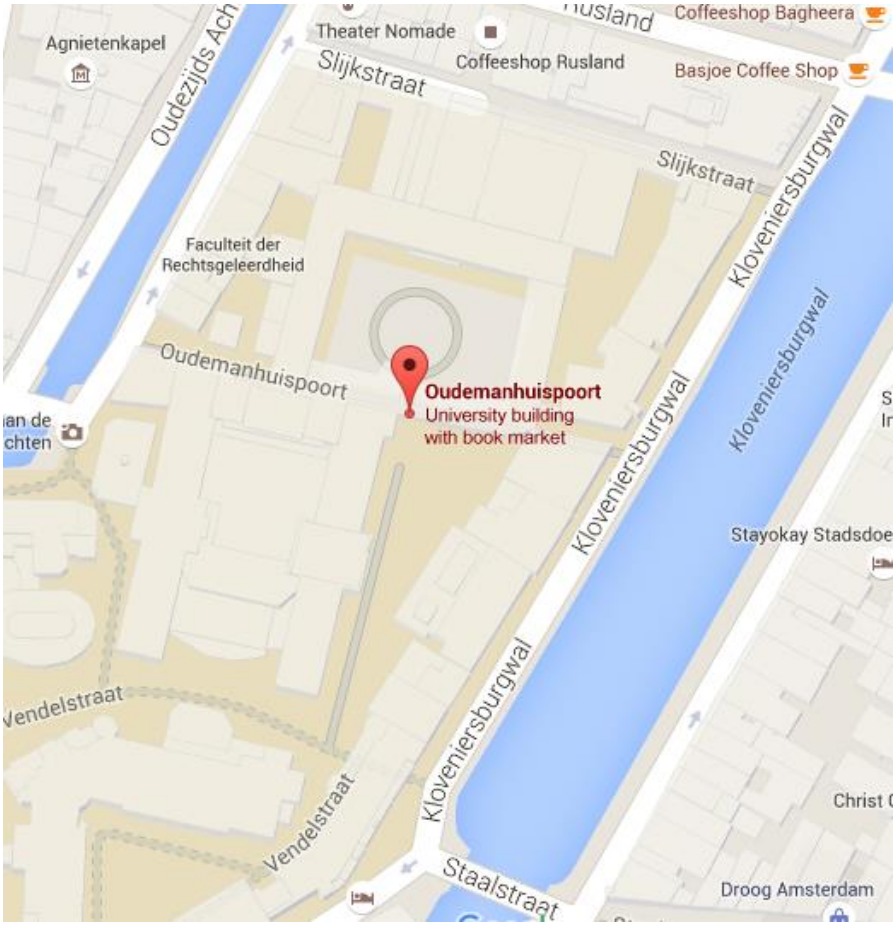
Conference venue

All keynotes and panels will take place in the Oudemanhuispoort, Kloveniersburgwal 4-6, Amsterdam. The conference venue is close to Central Station and to the Metro Stop ‘Nieuwmarkt’.

- From Central Station (10 minutes’ walk): walk down Damrak as you leave Central Station. When you arrive at Dam Square, take the first street on your left directly behind the Dam Square Monument—this is the Damstraat/Dam Street. Follow Damstraat until you reach the Oudezijds Voorburgwal, then turn right onto the Kloveniersburgwal. The conference venue will be on your right hand.
- From Metro Station Nieuwmarkt: any metro boarded from Central Station will pass Metro Station Nieuwmarkt—it’s the first stop. As you leave the station, you will arrive at Nieuwmarkt. Turn onto the Kloveniersburgwal. The conference venue will be on the right side of the canal.




Koninklijk Paleis Amsterdam
Madame Tussauds Amsterdam
Casa Rosso Theater
Damstraat
Oudezijds Voorburgwal
Oudezijds Achterburgwal
Nieuwmarkt, Amsterdam
Green House Centrum
Sint Antoniesbreestraat
Rokin
Nes
Zuiderkerk
The Amsterdam Dungeon
Rusland
Kloveniersburgwal
Raamgracht
Oudemanhuispoort
University building with book market
Museum Het Rembrandthuis
Spui
Oude Turfmarkt
Groenburgwal
Zwanenburgwal
Kalverstraat
Amsterdam, Waterlooplein
M
51
53
54
Google


Agnietenkapel
Theater Nomade
Coffeeshop Rusland
Coffeeshop Bagheera
Basjoe Coffee Shop
Slijkstraat
Faculteit der Rechtsgeleerdheid
Oudemanhuispoort
University building with book market
Kloveniersburgwal
Stayokay Stadsdoe
Vendelstraat
Staalstraat
Droog Amsterdam



Entrance to Oudemanhuispoort



Conference venue

AV facilities

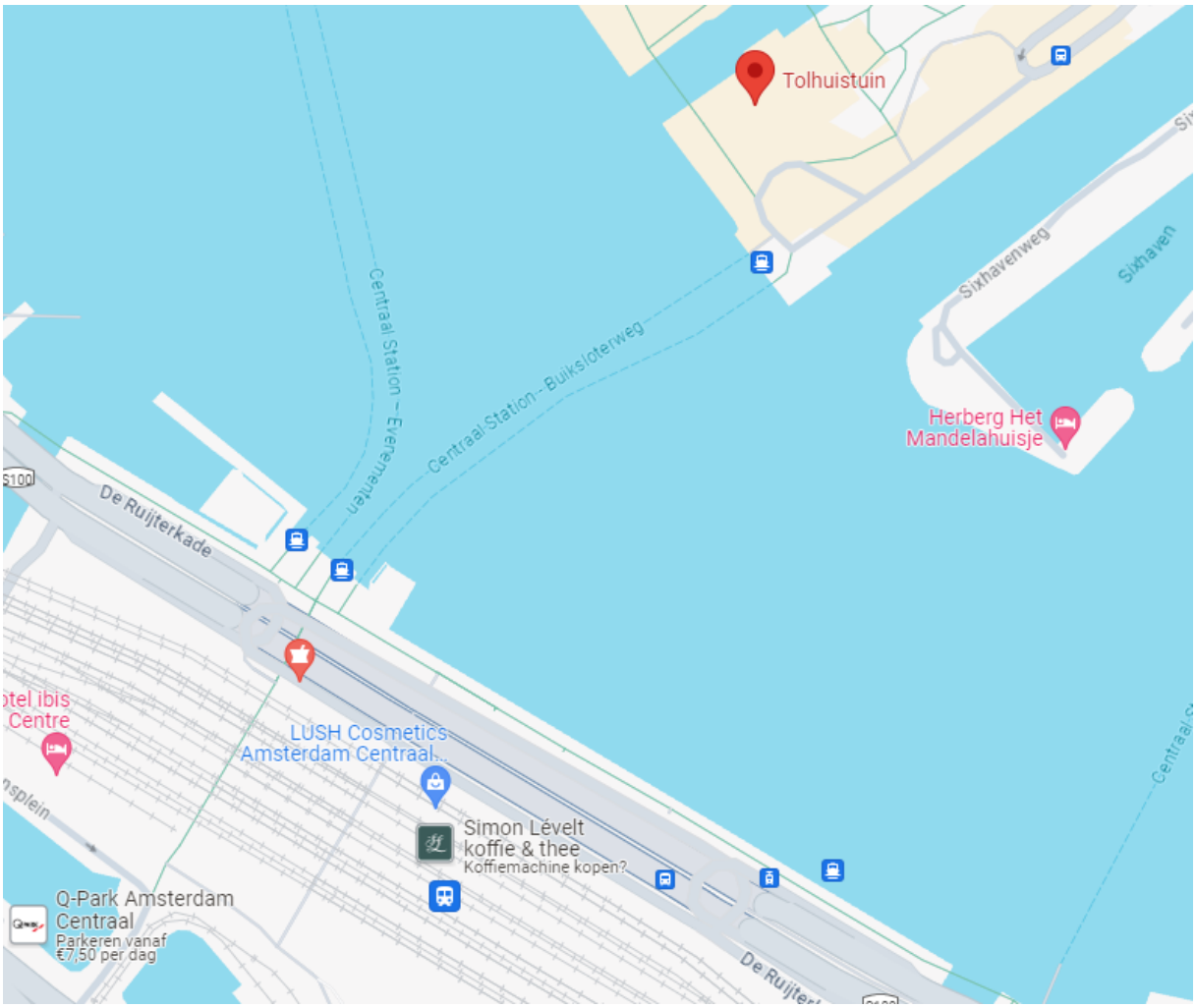
All seminar rooms have a **Windows desktop computer** and beamer/screens for PowerPoint presentations. You can also **plug in your own laptop** and project your presentation from it. Please note that if you want to project from **an Apple computer** or device, you have to bring your own cable adapter.

Desktop computers should be on and accessible. If the computer requires you to **login**, please note that there is a **note attached to the screen in each room with login details**: you can use these to login.

Conference dinner (only for delegates with a dinner ticket)

The conference dinner (only for those who have purchased a dinner ticket in advance) will be held in the **IJzaal of Tolhuistuin**: https://tolhuistuin.nl/en/venue-rental/ijzaal, located at **IJpromenade 2**.

Note that Tolhuistuin is on the other side of the river IJ: delegates need to take the **ferry leaving from Central Station** to reach IJpromenade 2. The ferry ride takes only a couple of minutes and do not require tickets: ferries are free of charge.



To get to the ferry, make your way to **Amsterdam Central Station**: this is a 1,5 klm walk:



At Central Station, make you way through the station to the other side: there are signs pointing you to the ferries.

At the ferry port, make sure you get on ferry **no. F3: Centraal Station – Buiksloterweg. Do not take any other ferries, as they will take you to other locations**.



Ferry access point

When leaving the ferry, you can already see Tolhuistuin on your left. Access to the IJzaal is on **the ground floor, left from the main stairs**:



How to get from Amsterdam Airport (Schiphol) to Amsterdam city centre

Options	Price (€)	Price ($)	Duration
Taxi	45-55	48-59	22 min
Bus	6.50	6.90	27 min
Train	4.90	5.20	14-17 min

By train
Schiphol Airport Train Station is located directly beneath the airport. In the arrival hall, follow the 'Trains' signs to Schiphol Plaza and then take the stairs, moving walkway or lift down to the platforms.

- Travel by train from Schiphol
- Plan your journey and buy your ticket online
- Check in and out with your debit card, credit card or mobile phone

By bus
At the airport, buses depart right in front of Schiphol Plaza – a few minutes' walk from the arrival hall. You can take the bus to various places, including Amsterdam, Leiden, Lisse, Haarlem and Noordwijk.

- All about travelling by bus from Schiphol
- Info about Dutch public transport tickets

By taxi
There are taxis waiting at Schiphol Plaza.

- How to take a taxi from Schiphol

Travel/discount cards
https://www.amsterdam.info/discount-cards/

Electricity
Within The Netherlands 230 Volts/50 Hertz electrical supply is used. Visitors may need converters and adapters.

Weather
The Netherlands has a mild North Sea climate, with moderate temperatures. In the winter, it rarely drops below -5° C (23° F), and in summer it seldom gets warmer than 28° C (82° F). No matter what time of year you visit Amsterdam, there is one thing you can count on: the weather will change quickly, so dress in layers! In October you can expect some rain, often accompanied by wind.

Packing tips
Regardless of the season, we recommend you pack an umbrella, a sweater and

perhaps even a scarf. It’s also a good idea to bring some comfortable walking shoes that can handle several hours of sightseeing!

Embassies and consulates
Dutch embassies and consulates abroad and foreign embassies and consulates in the Netherlands can be found on www.government.nl/ministries/bz.

Tourist information centers in Amsterdam

Please note: the offices and agencies do not accept 200 or 500 euro banknotes.

Amsterdam Schiphol Airport
I amsterdam visitor center
Arrivals Hall 2.
open daily from 7:00 to 22:00

Central Station
Located in a small wooden house outside of central station building on the station square. Between the central station main entrance and city center.
I amsterdam visitor center
Stationplein 1
open daily from 9:00 to 18:00

Please visit this website for more practical information:
www.iamsterdam.com

Conference Chair Instructions

We kindly ask panel chairs to observe the following points in chairing sessions over the three days of the conference:

1. Please make your way to the presentation room well on time.
2. If the desktop computer in the presentation room requires login details, please see the details on the note attached to the computer screen and login in with the details provided there.
3. Introduce yourself to the panel prior to the session and ask participants how they would like to be introduced (pronunciation of names, preferred pronouns, etc.)
4. Papers should be 20 minutes maximum. We ask that you chair the sessions strictly to this time limit to allow time for all speakers and questions.
5. Provide speakers with a 2 minute warning and 1 minute to wrap up at 20 minutes if they are still presenting.
6. Panels should be organised according to listings in the conference programme, unless otherwise discusses with the panellist.
7. Questions should be taken at the end of all papers in the session.
8. Use your chair's privilege advisedly: it is often best to ask for question from the floor at the outset before asking your own.
9. If there are technical difficulties, student helpers are on hand to assist with AV problems or call one of the phone numbers you will find the conference booklet supplied to you at the start of the conference.

Keynote lecture abstracts

That JLo Glow™: Aging Celebrity and the Transatlantic Rise of Imperative Culture

Brenda R. Weber

In the broader aura that is hegemonic femininity, the glow is not only temporally bound; the glow is referenced as the exclusive domain of the young. The dew of youth. Yet, those who identify as women are hailed across media and throughout the lifespan to "develop your glow," to "awaken the glow" and to let the glow be the solution for the problem you didn't know you had. Indeed, increasingly not only are older women hailed by these imperatives, they are directly threatened by them. Awaken your glow (or else!); reclaim your youthful dew (or you'll be sorry). The glow, and other light-filled words indicating luminosity such as "sparkle," "brilliance," "brightness," and "shine," create a prescriptive gender code, tying normative femininity to an ontology of glowing often made intelligible through the female celebrity. While many celebrities could well prove this point, perhaps none more brilliantly makes the case for the "glow as imperative" than Jennifer Lopez, who has herself commodified its appeal through her makeup and skincare line called, fittingly, That JLo Glow™. In this presentation, I thus examine several key transatlantic mediated sites that interpellate female and women-identified audiences – ads, magazine copy, beauty blogs, and reality television, and finally JLo herself – to begin to account for the complexity of these mandates that women make glowing objects of themselves as aspirational objects. It is important to note, that while these mandates are in place for those who identify as female regardless of age, the imperatives become more insistent for older women precisely because time is running out, thus marshalling the death drive as the biggest reason of all to invest in the glow by reinforcing that *it's never too late to live your best life* (until it is).

Brenda R. Weber is the Director of the College Arts and Humanities Institute and Provost Professor and Jean C. Robinson Scholar in the Department of Gender Studies at Indiana University, Bloomington. Her books include *Makeover TV: Selfhood, Citizenship, and Celebrity* (2009); *Women and Literary Celebrity in the Nineteenth Century* (2012*); Reality Gendervision: Sexuality and Gender in Transatlantic Reality TV* (2014); *Latter-day Screens: Gender, Sexuality, and Mediated Mormonism* (2019), and *Ryan Murphy's Queer America* (2022). She is presently writing a book with Deborah Jermyn called *It's Never too Late to Live Your Best Life: Celebrity, Aging, and the Transatlantic Rise of Imperative Culture.*

Celebrity, Crisis, and Reality Television: Extraordinarily Ordinary Celebrity in the Early 21st Century

Erin A. Meyers

As contemporary celebrity culture continues to expand to incorporate an ever-widening range of individuals into the realm of fame, many scholars have highlighted the turn to "ordinariness" as a dominant component of contemporary fame. This presentation will trace the ways this shift to ordinariness is connected to broader moments of crisis within popular media culture. Specifically, I will unpack the ways in which the decline of the American print magazine industry that began in the mid-2000s in the face of threats from the growth of digital media platforms and intensified in the wake of the 2008 economic recession helped establish reality television cast members as a distinct form of 21st century celebrity – the extraordinarily ordinary celebrity. Through an analysis of celebrity gossip in top American gossip weekly *Us Weekly*, I will connect the economic and industrial forces that helped propel the magazine to the top of the celebrity gossip market in the early 2000s with the ways in which reality television cast members helped buoy the gossip formulas of the magazine during the subsequent economic and media industrial crises. As a result, *Us Weekly*'s attention to the reality television celebrity, particularly cast members from ABC's *The Bachelor* franchise and MTV's *The Hills*, within its gossip narratives helped shift celebrity culture towards discourses of ordinariness in which fame is paradoxically grounded in "just being yourself" while simultaneously defining what the "right" sort of self is in contemporary culture.

Erin A. Meyers is a Professor in the Department of Communication, Journalism and Public Relations at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, USA. She has published multiple articles on the intersections of celebrity, new media, and audience cultures in journals such as *Celebrity Studies, New Media & Society*, and *JCMS*, as well as two books on contemporary celebrity cultures, *Dishing Dirt in the Digital Age: Celebrity Gossip Blogs and Participatory Media Culture* (Peter Lang, 2013) and *Extraordinarily Ordinary: The Rise of Reality Television Celebrity* (Rutgers University Press, 2020). She is currently co-editor of the journal *Celebrity Studies.*

Online Celebrity and Influencer Culture: The Triumph of Neoliberalism?

Milly Williamson

Celebrity culture has long been understood to hold together contradictions in the ideologies and discourses of capitalism. Most significantly, celebrity culture seems to disclaim hierarchy (which it is steeped in) (Couldry 2003), through 'myth of success' (Dyer 1979) where celebrity discourses oscillate between 'talent' and 'luck', underpinned by the narratives of meritocracy which insist that anyone can 'make it' and position social elites as 'just like us' (Littler 2017). This paper suggests that celebrity culture, much of which has morphed into online influencer culture, has intensified the myths of success and meritocracy, as the promise of DIY social media celebrity and 'making it' circulate on a global scale (Duffy 2017). These narratives of the democratisation of online fame (Cashmore 2019) sit easily alongside the vaunted neoliberal values that structure influencer culture, which tie promises of fulfilment to notions of success bound up in branding the self, individual consumption and entrepreneurial drive.

So while star and celebrity systems rely on integrating aesthetic considerations with economic ones – of tying the meanings and images attached to the star or celebrity persona to the promotional activities surrounding media and cultural goods (Williamson 2016), rapidly expanding influencer culture has produced an intensification of the connection between celebrity/influencer image and the economics of exchange. The proliferation of influencer culture online is a case of 'quantity' turning into 'quality', where the meaning or image of the influencer is no longer a form of symbolic capital which is brought to promotional activities, as we see in wider celebrity culture (Davis 2013); instead promotion and exchange are at the centre of influencer's image - the branded promotional self is the product, its meaning, and its value (social, cultural and economic). But in a contemporary twist, the branded self-image of the influencer is often developed through hollowed out notions of feminism and antiracism which reduce aspirations for social transformation to celebrating the entrepreneurial self and the circulation of consumer goods. Is the reduction of the self to a brand and the branding of liberation as a promotional tool a sign of the triumph of promotional and neoliberal values online (Duffy & Pooley 2019)? Is it evidence that online celebrity culture no longer has a role in resolving the contradictions of capitalism because it has fused with its core values? Or are there cracks in the surface celebration of selling?

Milly Williamson teaches in the Department of Media, Communications and Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London. She has published extensively on celebrity culture, including the monograph *Celebrity: Capitalism and the Making of Fame* (2016). Her work examines aspects of race and gender in media culture and the way that celebrity contributes to normative constructions of gender and race, and the role of celebrity in the expansion of promotional culture. She is currently working on a new book on imperial statues, in the context of myths of empire, race, gender, national belonging.

Consuming Germaine Greer: Celebrity Feminism, Audiences, and The Archive

Anthea Taylor

Provocative celebrity feminist Germaine Greer has consistently deployed her attention capital to shape popular understandings of gender, sexuality and feminism itself across her six-decade public career. Greer's archive, which has only relatively recently become publicly available to researchers and has been heavily curated by Greer herself, provides a unique opportunity to assess the considerable impact of her celebrity feminism on readers and viewers across time and space. As a media pragmatist who clearly recognises the consciousness-raising potential of celebrity, Greer has consistently used all the media platforms and genres available to her to reach and move as wide an audience as possible. Audience letters collected and curated by Greer provide significant insights into this life-long political and cultural project. Readers and viewers, however, have not just passively imbibed Greer's feminism; they have actively worked to make it meaningful in the context of their everyday lives. From fans effusively celebrating her feminist blockbusters to misogynists seeking to curtail her speech, the vast correspondence contained in the archive illuminates how and why viewers and readers came to affectively invest – or indeed disinvest – in this iconic feminist figure. Through my work with the Greer archive, and especially this extensive audience correspondence, I critically reflect upon the use of archival methodologies in celebrity studies to better come to terms with the social and political function of celebrity.

Associate Professor **Anthea Taylor** is Chair of Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney. She is the author of five monographs in feminist cultural studies, including Germaine Greer, Celebrity Feminism and The Archive (in press).

The Celebritisation of Politics/The Politics of Celebrification, Digital Media, and Permacrisis in New India

Nandana Bose

In March 2024, a report entitled *Democracy Winning and Losing at the Ballot*, published by the Swedish Varieties of Democracy Institute, announced that 'India has been one of the "worst autocratisers" in the world in recent years. The country continued to be an 'electoral autocracy' at the end of 2023 after first being categorised as one in 2018. The ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), one of the largest and richest political parties in the world, has used laws on sedition, defamation and counterterrorism to silence critics and undermine the Constitution's commitment to secularism. New India is defined by increased and systematic efforts to censor the media, suppress freedom of religion, intimidate political opponents, and silence dissent in academia (*Scroll*, March 8, 2024). The populist, right-wing state apparatus has repeatedly engaged in the misuse of investigative agencies against civil society activists and opposition politicians, arbitrary persecution, punishment and displacement of minorities whilst underplaying genderbased violence, dubious economic measures such as demonetization, and massive youth unemployment and underemployment. Consequently, thrown into permanent states of crises, or 'permacrisis,' inhabitants of New India, particularly Muslims, other minority communities, and dissenters, hurtle from one crisis to another, experiencing unprecedented levels of anxiety and precarity. An insidious 'deeper state,' to quote political scientist Christophe Jaffrelot (2021), has been at work for at least a decade since the BJP won the general elections in 2014.

From the late-1980s, the Hindutva nationalist movement, a political behemoth, has been sustained by efficient, innovative, powerful propaganda machinery, propelled in more recent times, by millennial mass digitization and privatization of media networks, BJP IT cells, and easy access to social media via mobile phone technology. It has been noted that crisis is an inherent characteristic of digital media (Chun 2011) and right-wing populist movements, worldwide and in New India. A pervasive sense of crisis fomented by 'Hindu nationalism's crisis machine has been hugely productive for Hindu nationalism's rapid radicalization of politics since 2014' (Sundaram 2020:734). Manufactured crises, and conflicts against imagined (and occasionally real) enemies and threats, have operated in mediated, competitive populist public spheres as diversionary tactics for the electorate. Political anthropologist and historian, Partha Chatterjee refers to a 'conflict centered sovereignty effect' in *I Am the People: Reflections on Popular Sovereignty Today* (2019:101). 'A crisis ontology inherent in digital media has helped Hindu nationalism to optimize techniques of mobilization across time and space' that have led to, what Ravi Sundaram calls, 'the "eventalization" of time where online populations are drawn into periodic bursts of sustained intensity' (2020:735).

Against this fractious backdrop of crises-centered mediated populism (Chakravartty and Roy, 2015), the paper explores right-wing mobilization of an impressively diverse array of celebrities from entertainment industries, sports personalities, popular public figures (including authors, industrialists, spiritual leaders and gurus, fashion designers and socialites), influencers and

microcelebrities, such as vitriolic ‘H-pop stars’ who form the subject of Kunal Purohit’s disturbing, revelatory book H-*Pop: The Secretive World Of Hindutva Pop Stars* (2023). What have been the varying roles of such celebrities in the making of Hindutva India? What is the nature and significance of their participation/engagement in this accelerated transformation of the nation over the past decade? Studies reveal that ‘the ruling BJP has been more effective than the opposition in organized outreach to celebrities, by eschewing explicit party-based partisanship, and instead employing non-partisan narrative techniques, such as maintaining nationalism as the central theme in tweets’ (Mothilal, Mishra, Nishal et.al 2022). The paper seeks to examine the celebritisation of politics and the politicisation of celebrities in New India; specifically, the aggressive co-option of popular stars from major Indian film and televisual industries into the ever-expanding Hindutva digital universe (Rai 2019, Mitra 2021), notable for weaponizing the selfie and digital holograms during election campaign (Baishya 2015); spreadable utilization of Twitter posts, retweets and hashtags (Pal 2015); aggressive tagging of celebrities; and quotidian mobilization of a vast WhatsApp ecosystem, the ‘like’ economy, and social media platforms that have transformed cult leaders into Everyman (Govil and Baishya 2018) and charismatic spiritual godmen (Rai 2023). It focuses on predictable, repetitive *modus operandi* of the ruling dispensation to instantly appropriate and subsume individuated celebrity achievements, status and networked star power within the Hindutva ideological and political macrocosm.

Nandana Bose has published on gender, stardom and celebrity cultures in the context of the Bombay film industry, film censorship, and right-wing interventions in 1990s popular Hindi cinema in such refereed journals as *Cinema Journal*, *Celebrity Studies*, *Feminist Media Studies, Velvet Light Trap*, *Studies in South Asian Film and Media* and *Senses of Cinema*; and in edited volumes such as *World Cinema on Demand: Global Film Cultures in the Era of Online Distribution* (2022), *Indian Film Stars* (2020), *Silencing Cinema: Film Censorship Around the World* (2013) and *Figurations in Indian Film* (2010). She has received awards and grants from such scholarly organizations as Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) and Association for Asian Studies (AAS). She is a former Associate Professor of Film Studies at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, USA, the author of the BFI Film Star series monograph *Madhuri Dixit* (2019), and an editorial board member of *Celebrity Studies*. Her most recent research on the transformation of celebrity cultures in the digital era of global streaming services in post-pandemic India is forthcoming in the edited volume *Asian Celebrity Cultures in the Digital Age* (2024).

Panel list and panel abstracts

CELEBRITY STUDIES CONFERENCE 2024: PANEL LIST

PANEL #

A1	The Britney Crisis	
	Arcieri, Joanna	"We Need to Talk About Britney": The #FreeBritney Movement and the Illusion of Intimacy
	Fletcher, Harriet	(Re)framing Britney Spears: The Celebrity Bimbo in the #MeToo era
	Zurovac, Elisabetta	Screenshotting Britney: distrust, fan theories and online narratives of a celebrity in crisis

A2	Celebrity Housewives 1	
	Coelho, Ana Margarida	Mediatizing humbleness and simplicity: the case of Portuguese middle- class housewife vloggers
	Hargraves, Hunter	The Labor of a Real Housewife and the Coercive Performance of the Innocent Self
	Jones, Rhys	The Real Housewives Reckoning: Labour, Reality Television, and the Housewife

A3	Watching Gerard Butler in the Pandemic	
	Affuso, Elizabeth	"Bourbon and Poor Choices:" Masculinity, Pleasure, and Action Heroism in the Films of Gerard Butler
	Scott, Suzanne	Gerard Butler Fandom and/as Ontological Security: A Gerry Sue Story
	Fortmueller, Kate	Gerard Butler: Star for the Streaming Age

A4	Fans and Anti-Fans 1	
	Jerslev, Anne & Kristensen, Nete Norgaard	Self-scandalization and Conflict to Pull in the Audience: Exploring the Dynamics of Co-Construction in the Celebrity Feud between Andrew Tate and Greta Thunberg

Mitra, Sreya	Toxic masculinity, damsels in distress, permissive wives and cuckold husbands: Examining moral policing and public condemnation of Bollywood celebrity couples on social media
Proctor, Jasmine	“I’ll go and come back safely”: The case of BTS and relational labour in the face of military enlistment

A5 (Anti)Social Media

Brilli, Stefano	In The Beginning Was Gemmadelsud: Two Decades of Italian Social Media Through 'Ridiculous' Stars.
Ulusoy, Nilay	Haters Gonna Hate: Salt Bae's Irrepressible and 'Unbeatable' Social Media Phenomenon
Morris, Amelia	Buffy’s ‘Slay’ Era: Instagram, Escapism and the Fashion of Buffy the Vampire Slayer in an Age of ‘Perma-Crisis’

A6 Conflicts in Celebrity Media and Communication

Dennis, Matthew J	Towards an Ethic of Online Content Creation
Marshall, P. David	Mapping the Transformation of the Communication of Fame in the 20th and 21st centuries: A Comparison of Celebrity’s deep and powerful (predominantly recent past and future
Usher, Bethany	A short history of attack journalism

B1 Videographic Criticism and Celebrity: Politics of Resistance in Contemporary Spanish Film & TV

Gil Vasquez, Asier	Carmen Machi and the Embodiment of the “Authentic” Spanish Woman
Torrent, Anna	Ana Torrent: The Cinematic Gaze
Rodríguez Ortega, Vicente	Javier Bardem from James Bond to the Sahrawi Struggle: Resisting Conformity

B2 Celebrity Housewives 2

Dong, Ruo & Zhou, Lulu	“I Still Prefer You Portraying the Role of a Career Woman”: Celebrity, Fandom, and the Social Stigmatization of Housewives
Ouellette, Laurie	Pat Loud, An American Family, and the Prehistory of Reality TV Celebrity
Valdes Olmos, Tjalling	Celebrity Housewives in Crisis: Navigating Rural-Urban Affective Dynamics

B3	Celebrity Girlhood in Crisis	
	Castellvi-Lloveras, Maria & Olivia, Merce	Desiring and fearing visibility: Teenage girls’ perceptions of tiktoker’s celebrity
	Yelin, Hannah & Paule, Michele	"Every Black person that’s done something good got shot in the head": Girls, Power and Celebrity as Cautionary Tale
	Villegas-Simón, Isabel & Castellví-Lloveras, Maria	"I’m a normal girl with strong values": a critical discourse analysis of Spanish influencers’ docurealities

B4	Celebrity Crises and Media Coverage	
	Kishore, Vikrant	Ambedkar's Ascendancy: Celebritisation and Conflict in India's Social Fabric
	Kvitkova, Natalia	The Materiality of Celebrity: Le Corbusier & his controversial Unité d'habitation
	Shail, Adrew	The ‘first’ ‘Miss World’s’ ‘oral history’: a case study of lying on national television in 1988
	Wright, Ellen	The Viper Room: A case study in mythology, liminality, celebrity and media scrutiny

B5	Contesting the Female	
	Frymus, Agata	Aspiring stars or runways? Girlhood, Hollywood celebrity and the rhetoric of failure, 1920 - 1929
	Hong, Tiffany	Ali Wong and her “counter-stereotype” Asian American Woman image in Taiwan
	Diefenthaeler, Samantha	Rafaela Aparicio: Pluriemployment on Screen

	Zhang, Liao & Zhang, Ning	Losing 640 million with one finger? A postfeminist reading of Baihe Bai's stardom in Chinese film industry

B6	Queering Celebrity	
	Gurgen, Deniz	Şokopop, The Nostalgic Cringe: Once Upon a Time in Turkey
	Fransen, Esme	What in #TÁRnation? Cate Blanchett and the "real" Lydia Tár
	Andreevskikh, Olga	LGBTQ+ microcelebrities in the post-2022 Russia: New challenges and new survival strategies
	Thompson, Violet	"It could be sacrilegious in other cultures, but to us Brits, that's the way to do it": Conflict and Cultural Resistance in RuPaul's Drag Race UK

	Masterclasses	
M1	Arcieri, Joanna	"She's So Lucky, She's a Star": Manufacturing Britney Spears: Fans, Journalists and the #FreeBritney Movement
M2	Cancela Lopez, Nuria	Female Fatality and Censorship: the Femme Fatale Archetype in the Spanish Francoist Cinema (1950-1975)
M3	Hunter, Sian	Celebrity Feminism and Jameela Jamil
M4	Prins, Annelot	The Loyal Fans of Problematic Faves: On the audiences of immoral artists
M5	Wang, Hui	Why Were They Invited? 'Unwelcome' Celebrities as a Legitimation Approach for Indie Film Festivals in China

C1	Celebrity Scandal	
	Unwin, Hannah	Avoiding celebrity scandal in 1890s West End Theatre: the shrinking lion-tamer and the untameable lioness
	Zhang, Chi	"My Wife/Sister Can Do No Wrong" —— A Case Study of scandal, nisu fans and Cai Xukun
	Lanckman, Lies	"Does She Smile, Or Does She Mouth 'F*ck You Forever'?": Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford, and the Celebrity Feud in the 1930s

C2	#MeToo 1	
	Deller, Ruth	In Plain Sight: British television exposés of Jimmy Savile, Rolf Harris and Russell Brand
	Nasir, Amna	Celebritising #MeToo in the Subcontinent: A Comparative Study of Celebrity Silence Breakers in India and Pakistan
	Sammartino, Eleonora	'Correcting the Record': Biopics, Women's Collaborative Creative Labour and Equal Pay in Post-#MeToo Film and Television
	McDowell, Eve	Selling Stalking: Predatory Behaviours in Paparazzi Engagement with Celebrities

C3	Celebrity and Legal Crises	
	Selfe, Melanie	Contesting the Cantor Picture: from profitable entrepreneurial collaboration to bitter contractual obligation
	Young, Ashley S.	Lizzo's Legal Limbo: An Analysis of a Celebrity Brand in Crisis
	Moro, Sabrina & Hardiman, Amber	Conceptualising the 'celebrity trial': mediations of gender-based violence as transmedia spectacle
	Sabourin, Rachelle	Reality Reckoning: Labour Rights and Activist Capital in Reality TV

C4	Crises of Influence	
	Mortara, Ariela & Roberti, Geraldina	To buy or not to buy? The de-influencing movement
	Panlee, Piyarat	From Ivory Tower to the Digital Realm of Influence: An Unfinished Pursuit of Academic Scholars as Public Intellectuals
	Williams, Jenessa & Sobande, Francesca	Old Faves and New Fame: Entangled Emo Stardom, Influencer Culture, and Music Fests

C5	Fans and Anti-Fans 2

Cook, Tanya, Joseph, Kaela & Puglin, Jamie	Cancel Culture and Counter-Starticipants: Celebrity Controversy and Fan Activism
Martin, Jessica & Coveney, Claudia	Anti-fandom and the governance of snarking
House, Melody	The Captain and The Turd: The power of fandom in celebrity scandals
Timsit, Vincent	Me, myself and Notre-Dame de Paris. On self valuation in front of a famous site during a tragedy: the case of selfies with Notre- Dame de Paris on fire

C6	Virtual Celebrity
Giuliani, Alice	“Please, Don’t Call me Uncanny”: The Digitised Celebrity Body and the Life of the Posthuman
Lamerichs, Nicolle	Virtual Celebrities: Branding, Streaming and Augmenting Stardom in the Metaverse
Meikle, Graham	Deepfakes, Celebrity Porn, and the Exploitation of Everyday Digital Life
Norman, Callan	Deepfakes Killed the Movie Star (And Brought Them Back Again): Envisioning ‘Synthetic Stardom’ in the Era of Digital Actors

D1	Aging Celebrity
Jerslev, Anne	”She was never pretty anyway”: Visibility and the ageing female celebrity
Bonthuys, Justin	Hollywood stardom as a Faustian Bargain: How the aging Starlets of Hollywood’s classical era navigated their reckoning in the 1960’s and beyond
Mascio, Antonella	Feud: Bette and Joan. The representation of ageing in Tv series between female ageing crisis and wardrobes

D2	#MeToo 2
Tomsett, Ellie	Celebrity comedians and sexual misconduct: Exposing Russell Brand

	and the complex post #MeToo context for women comics
Diaz Garces, Elisenda	Reframing Female Stardom after Weinstein: Catherine Deneuve and Ashley Judd's Divergent Stances on #MeToo Movement
Driessen, Simone	Fandom in the Shadows of a Scandal: Studying Fan Responses to Marco Borsato's Cancellation

D3	Brands in Crisis/Conflict	
	Perez, Jorge	Rosalía's Butterflies: Self-Reflective Celebrity and the Confessional Text
	Pesce, Sara	Affirmative Marginality. Isabella Rossellini
	Lusty, Natalya	Fashion as Celebrity: The Revival of Maison Schiaparelli

D4	Affective Crises 1	
	Serpe, Joaquin	A Precarious and Zany Youth: The Feminist Comedy of Malena Pichot
	Jones, Bethan	She may be a symbol of British colonialism but she's still someone's mother: Dislike and distaste in online discourses about the Queen's death
	Monk-Payton, Brandy	Black Celebrity Entanglements: Couples Therapy with the Smiths

D5	Celebrity, Scandal & Documentary	
	Fairclough, Kirsty	Whitney/Britney: Rewriting the Scandal in the Female Pop Star Documentary
	Haastrup, Helle Kannik	Reclaiming the Scandal: from Swift to Beckham. The Celebrity Portrait Documentary in Digital Media Culture
	Fuhs, Kirsten	Deep Enough?: Sports Scandal and Reputation Management in In Deep with Ryan Lochte

D6	Celebrity Masculinities and Populist Affect in Times of Crisis: Nigel Farage, Joe Rogan, and Conor McGregor	
	Ewen, Neil	Shifting the Centre of Political Gravity: Nigel Farage, Celebrity Power, and Brexit Britain

O'Sullivan, Odin	"You Should Thank Toxic Masculinity:" Joe Rogan, Crisis Celebrity, and Cultural Remasculinization
McIntyre, Anthony	"Ireland, We are at War": Conor McGregor, Crisis Populism, and Celebrity Provocation

E12 Affective Crises

Castellano, Simona & Tirino, Mario	Now allow me some fear": Football Celebrities' Post-Career, Between Self-Narrative and Mainstream Media Representations. The Case of Francesco Totti
Luckett, Moya	The Affective Politics of Celebrity Failure: Britney Spears, Meghan Markle and the Spectacle of Misplaced Feminine Fame
Suparsad, Viraj	Global superstar Deepika Padukone, celebrity platform and depression in the global south

E2 Celebrity Branding and Tensions of Gender, Race, and Nation

Davé, Shilpa	Merle Oberon and Racial Press Narratives in the 1930s
Beltrán, Mary	Orange is the New Black and Hegemonies of Celebrity Branding
Nishime, LeiLani	"Your Black card is revoked": Naomi Osaka and Mixed Race Celebrity Branding

E3 Remaking and remediating Generation X: enduring fame

Cobb, Shelley	Ethan Hawke's perpetual goatee and the gendered politics of enduring Gen-X celebrity
Hamad, Hannah	"I heard you might be Lebanese": Celebrity, Generationality and the Queer TV Persona of Rosie O'Donnell
Leppert, Alice	"When You Grow Up, Your Heart Dies": Gen X Celebrities All Grown Up

E4 Star and Celebrity Cultures: Histories, Bodies, and Aesthetics in Tamil/Indian Cinema

Geetha, B.	"The entire Tamil Nadu says Sivaji [Ganesan] is dead": Spectral Bodies,

	Haunting Histories, and Star Figures in Tamil Cinema
Nakassis, Constantine V.	Semiotics of Celebrity: Notes from the Tamil Cinema
Eswaran, Swarnavel	Madhuri Devi: The Diva/Other Icon of Dravidian Cinema

E5	Artistic Genius: Celebrity Auteur-Directors after #MeToo across Hollywood and Central Eastern Europe
Havas, Julia	"Separate the Author from the Work": Examining Academic Debates about Roman Polanski through the Symbiotic Relationship between Hollywood and Eastern Europe
Mártonfi, Anna	A Controversial Retreat: Woody Allen's (Un)problematic Star Text and Positioning in Post-#MeToo Hungary
Ewen, Neil	[Panel respondent]

E6	The Responsibilities of Fans and Celebrities
Matheson, Benjamin	Should Fans Feel Guilty about the Crimes of their Idols?
Isern-Mas, Carme	Affective Power and Celebrity Responsibilities in Parasocial Relationships
Robb, Catherine M.	Celebrity Responsibility and Toxic Fandom

F1	Celebrity capitals: from elite to ordinary 'struggles'
Wood, Helen	Celebrity and the mental health main stage
Kay, Jilly & Kilroy, Eleanor	The subtle gradations of reality celebrity work: tracking the platformised labour of reality celebrities in the UK

F2	Masculinity at War
McKenna, Mark	The Politics of Performing Rambo
Williams, Jenessa	Bad Vibes, Forever? Masculinity, Community and Self-Improvement Narratives in the XXXTentacion Reddit Community

McAllister, Clodagh	‘What colour is your Bugatti?’: Analysing Andrew Tate’s Weaponisation of Conflict and the Culture Wars

F3 The Conflicted Production of Stardom

Weidhase, Nathalie	Crisis and Capitalism: Modes of British Royal Celebrity in the 21 st Century
Williams, Rebecca	“Somehow, Iger Returned”: Brand Fandom, Stardom, & Disney’s Celebrity CEOs
Xenos, Christos	Greek Film Production, 1950-1972: The Star System

F4 Videographic Criticism and Celebrity: Politics of Gender and Power

Fowler, Catherine	Delphine Seyrig: Acting Feminist
Santiago, Maillin	Aubrey Plaza: The Vulnerable Monstrous Feminine
Zecchi, Barbara	Isabella Rossellini: Embracing Old Age

F5 Celebrity Bodies at Risk

Feng, Yixuan	Stepping out the ‘comfort zone’? Male stars endorsing cosmetics Negotiating masculinity and male stardom in contemporary China
Lehto Brewster, Maureen	Khloe Kardashian’s Body Image as Celebrity Brand (Crisis)
Wheeler, Stephanie	Lady Gaga’s ARTPOP: When Crises Gets Ugly

F6 Transnational Celebrity Conflicts

Li, Yuan	Multimedia Platforms and the Transnational Stardom of Ann Hsu
Vedric, Natalia	Mesut Ozil and Josip Simunic: exploring sports celebrity, hybrid ethnicity and the impact of transnational belonging
Chin, Bertha	Hollywood’s Diversity Project: transnational Asian celebrities, fandom and media representation as participatory culture

G1	From Bad Gays to Radical Kindness: The Crisis of Queer Celebrity	
	Aslinger, Ben	Gay Grift: George Santos and Gay Celebrity Villainy
	Brady, Anita	George Michael, Public Sex, and Crises of Heteronormativity
	McIntyre, Joanna	We're in the same fight, we should all work together against the gender binary": Alok Vaid-Menon, Trans Activism, and Internet Celebrity

G2	Reputational Risks: Politics and Celebrity in an Era of Revolution and Reform, 1830-1870	
	Wesołowski, Adrien	The Politics of Popularity in the November Uprising (1830-31)
	Mayer, Sandra	"Things were pressing to be said; and […] I was the person to say them": Harriet Martineau, Celebrity Activism, and Authorial Autobiomyths
	Morgan, Simon	The Struggle over Garibaldi in Great Britain and Ireland, 1860-1870

G3	Taylor Swift at Risk	
	Wilkinson, Maryn	A closet full of cardigans: Taylor Swift's political 'coming out' in Miss Americana
	Raphael-Luu, Jackie & Lam, Celia	Female Friend or Fo: Swift and Beyoncé
	Johnson, Lauren	The Pressure to 'Speak Now': Parasocial Relationships, Fan Activism and Celebrity Silence

G4	The Perils of AI	
	Rawlins, Justin	The Scandalous Speculative: Stardom and the AI-ification of Posthumous Performance
	Thomas, Sarah	Somebodies and Nobodies: the impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) on star labour and image
	Avdeeff, Melissa	Anna Indiana, AI Singer-Songwriters, and the Conflict of Gendered Value Judgements in Pop Music Discourse

G5 (Un)Professional Celebrities

Kakko, Katariina	Discursive Celebrity Practices in Artist's Professional Relationships in the Music Industry
Sebastiampillai, Chrishandra	Liza Leaves Her Love Team: Stardom, Agency and the Studio in Contemporary Philippine Cinema
Gerarghty, Christine	The Inside Story of a Celebrity: the Diaries of Alan Rickman

G6 Political Conflicts and Crises

Casson, Rebecca	Political conflicts and crises created by directly elected celebrity mayors: the case of Geelong, Australia
Kavka, Misha	The Celebrity of Crisis: Santos, Trump and the Perilous Fun of Camp
Vukovic, Silvija & Krapic, Nina	Celebrity populist politician as an influencer: A qualitative analysis of Marin Miletić's TikTok communication

H1 Reassessing Celebrity in Techno-Cultural Infrastructures: Digital Scrapbooks, Documentaries, and Holograms

Malina, Marie	Is this Paris? Documenting the voice of Paris Hilton
Podlesnigg, Clara	Holograms on Reality TV: How to negotiate the Crisis of Celebrity Authenticity

H2 Videographic Criticism and Celebrity: Politics of the Personal

Harris, Cydnii Wilde	Beyoncé: On Mothers, Muvvas, and Icons
Middents, Jeffrey Romero	My Mother is Rita Moreno
Kooijman, Jaap	Diana & Me: On Fandom and Scholarship

H3 Celebrity Sexism

Masterson, Alice	Live through this: The social functions of the young celebrity widow
Cheng, Yao	Nancy Kwan: Model Minority and Racialized Sexuality

	Morris, Meaghan	Doing celebrity as a martial art: Cynthia Rothrock's creative struggle with sexism.

H 4	Crises & Celebrity Activism	
	Needham, Gary	Living to Tell: Madonna, Celebrity Activism, and the AIDS Crisis
	Peeters, Eline	Teaching the refugee crisis through celebrity authorship
	West, Caroline	From Celebrity Culture to Consent Culture: How Consent Education can be made Sustainable through Pop Culture and #metoo

	Repression and Resistance	
H 5	Bogush, Rachel	Interwar Celebrity: Negotiating Tradition and Modernity Through Feminine Role Models
	Panaite, Mara	Framing Celebrity Culture in Romania: From State Socialist Television to Private Channels Television
	Yang, Fang-Chih	Becoming a Proud Taiwanese Celebrity: Akio Chen and the Struggle for Taiwan Independence

	Crises of Authenticity	
H 6	Perkins, Claire	Authentically abject: the star-creator as messy millennial woman
	McDonnell, Andrea	Discursive self-cleaving: Fame, authenticity, and post-truth media
	Wrochna, Agata	Nancy Risol: Depicting Andean communal authenticity through the lens of mediated self

A1 The Britney Crisis

“We Need to Talk About Britney”: The #FreeBritney Movement and the Illusion of Intimacy

In April 2019, “Britney’s Gram”— a comedy podcast that typically reveled in pop star Britney Spears’s lighthearted Instagram account — released a special emergency episode titled “#FREEBRITNEY”. In the episode, an anonymous voicemail alleged that Spears was being held in a mental health facility against her will. This moment kickstarted the #FreeBritney movement during which Spears’s fans organized rallies, attended court proceedings, and investigated the conservatorship, often working in tandem with legal and media professionals. The fan-led social movement successfully advocated for the termination of Spears’s conservatorship in November 2021.

This paper presentation examines the digital roots of the #FreeBritney movement. While #FreeBritney gained widespread attention in 2019, the movement emerged as early as 2008 in response to media portrayals of Spears as trashy and unstable. Spears’s digital presence—first on her official website and then on her social media accounts—facilitated a direct relationship with her fans, who believed they believed they knew the authentic Britney Spears. Fans then turned to the popular fan forum, BreatheHeavy.com, memes, and self-produced podcasts such as “We Need to Talk About Britney” and “Britney’s Gram” to reexamine Spears’s public image and foster community among fellow fans. These online spaces for fans, as well as Spears’s Instagram that shares an unrefined view of her daily life, spurred #FreeBritney into existence. Through interviews with #FreeBritney movement leaders, this paper also shows how fans engage with the “illusion of intimacy” (Schickel, 1985) and perceive a celebrity’s authentic self.

Joanna Arcieri is a Ph.D. candidate in Communications at Columbia Journalism School. Her dissertation research focuses on celebrity journalism, Britney Spears, and the #FreeBritney movement. She holds in MA in Media Studies from The New School and a BA in Film Studies from Mount Holyoke College.

(Re)framing Britney Spears: The Celebrity Bimbo in the #MeToo era

The bimbo has always had a pervasive and complex presence in various avenues of popular culture, from the performative ‘dumb blonde’ personas of Marilyn Monroe and Dolly Parton to the more recent #NewAgeBimbo content creators on TikTok. The bimbo is never far from popular discourse on gender and celebrity but has been given little scholarly attention.

In this paper, I argue that the bimbo of the early noughties became a media-constructed symbol of unruly femininity, and in turn, a label that signalled the sexual objectification and exploitation of young female celebrities. My argument will follow the shifting discourses surrounding the celebrity bimbo through media and celebrity texts in the wake of #MeToo, focusing on the figure of Britney Spears and her portrayal in the documentary *Framing Britney Spears* (2021). Spears, among other young female celebrities during this period, was explicitly

denigrated with the term ‘bimbo’ in the American media. *Framing Britney Spears* makes this overt in the narrative it presents around Spears’ fame and deploys the idea of the bimbo in its wider critique of exploitative tabloid practices. After contextualising the bimbo in reference to the rise of celebrity gossip journalism at the turn of the millennium, my analysis interprets various journalistic artefacts featuring Spears that are presented in the documentary. After exploring this, I will consider how the film fits into the broader context of the #MeToo era – a cultural shift that has led to female celebrities from the early 2000s being re-examined and reclaimed, especially those who have had the bimbo label attached to them.

This paper reveals a cultural shift in which maligned female celebrities are undergoing revision narratives. *Framing Britney Spears* is part of a cycle of documentaries, biopics and autobiographies emerging in the wake of #MeToo that critique the depiction and treatment of female celebrities at the turn of the millennium. I use *Framing Britney Spears* as a case study to examine this post-#MeToo cycle in which media texts are used to confront and validate women’s experiences of existing in a culture of sexual surveillance.

Dr **Harriet Fletcher** is a Lecturer in Media and Communication at Anglia Ruskin University. Her forthcoming monograph *Gothic Celebrity*, published by Bloomsbury Academic, explores the intersections of celebrity and the Gothic in literature, media and popular culture. She is currently researching the representation of the bimbo in celebrity culture.

Screenshotting Britney: distrust, fan theories and online narratives of a celebrity in crisis.

Since 2019, the #FreeBritney movement has been organizing online and offline protests due to concerns about Britney Spears' well-being related to the conservatorship she had been held under for over a decade (Daros 2021). According to Hopkins (2022), fans used to decode Britney Spears' social media posts to understand her situation, ultimately gaining recognition for their effectiveness in bringing an end to the conservatorship in November 2021. However, as noted by Daros (2021b), after her public meltdown and conservatorship, Spears’ public image underwent a notable transformation, losing the precision in articulating herself and the ambition to maintain her status as a role model for other popstars. This crisis in crafting her public image, expressed through her erratic online behavior, failed to dispel fans’ doubts about her well-being, resulting in the production of other, alarmed, user-generated content (UGC) (Jennings 2023).

This research aims to analyze content about such arising narratives on Tiktok, given its current popularity, in order to answer to the following questions: RQ1) what theories are presented? RQ2) what kind of elements are presented in support? RQ3) how is such content received by audiences?

More precisely, it has been took into consideration content featuring screenshots (or screenrecordings), as they are understood to be a common mean to share, show and cut online information (Zurovac 2023). 100 videos had been qualitatively gathered and analysed, exploring Tiktok’s hashtags

#BritneySpears, #freeBritney, #freeBritneymovement. In order to answer to RQ3, the 5 most-liked comments (Eriksson Krutrök and Åkerlund, 2022) per video have been also analysed.

Data shows that fans disseminate information made “from scratch”, but sustained by the punctual analysis of Spears’ posts, elaborating narratives which rhetorics resemble those of conspiracy theories. While the “distrust” has been studied by several scholars as the basis of conspiracy theories’ uprise (Sustein and Vermule 2009; Aupers 2012), it also had a positive impact on the superstar’s life: therefore, labeling such user-generated content as “conspiratory” may demobilize the movement’s voice and discard any further concern (Husting and Orr 2007). That said, this research could give useful insight to reflect upon the loose boundaries between participatory culture, conspiracy theories, and celebrity gossipping.

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Elisabetta Zurovac is a Research Fellow at the Department of Communication Sciences, Humanities and International Studies of the University of Urbino. Her research interest concerns online self-narrative practices and the mediatization of memory. She has recently published the book *Screenshot Society: come le fotografie dello schermo raccontano il nostro stare online* (FrancoAngeli 2023).

A2 Celebrity Housewives 1

Mediatizing humbleness and simplicity: the case of Portuguese middle-class housewife vloggers

Digital platforms and the way they encourage processes of celebrification (Turner, 2014) have been motivating renegotiations on the concepts of public and private spheres (Jerslev & Mortensen, 2018). While traditional celebrities are challenged to adapt their previous posture of inaccessibility to a more proximate behavior towards their fans (Driessens, 2012), anonymous users invest on self-branding their personas through performances of authenticity and intimacy (Duffy, 2016; Duffy & Pruchniewska, 2017; Hou, 2019), basing on microcelebrity strategies in order to create established audiences (Khamis et al., 2017). In this context, several niche cultures related to household maintenance have proliferated on digital platforms – on TikTok, for example, the hashtag #CleanTok, popular for turning viral house cleaning products, became a profitable trademark, worldwide viewed more than 98.5 billion times (TikTok, 2023); there is also the popularization of personalities like Marie Kondo, whose organization and housecare content has connected domestic labor, traditionally associated with the female figure, to pleasure and happiness (Ouellette, 2019). Domestic workers relate to laborers of the digital industries, since both apply "affect, ideation, socialisation and care" on their jobs (Jarrett, 2015, p. 16).

This paper analyses a purposive sample of three YouTube vlogs shared by Portuguese middle-class female digital creators who focus their content on the domesticity of their daily routines, including cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, organizing, and family caring. The three of them are considered to be microinfluencers (Morrison, 2023), with a following on YouTube ranging from 10 to 19 thousand subscribers. The comments sections of the videos are also considered. Our main objective is to understand the role that the values of humbleness and simplicity play on the authenticity perception of this middle-class community. Simultaneously, this research aims to answer the following questions: a) By being women performing household tasks, do these creators contribute for the perpetuation of women as domestic laborers?; b) Is commercialism well-seen in the community?; c) How do the fact that these are middle-class women, who accumulate their main job with content creation, impacts their content, the audience, and potential commercial partnerships?.

Ana Margarida Coelho is a PhD student in Communication Sciences at the Catholic University of Portugal. Her PhD research focuses on female YouTubers, particularly the beauty community. Ana holds a Masters in Film at the University of the Arts London and a Bachelor in Communication Sciences at NOVA University Lisbon.

"The Labor of a *Real Housewife* and the Coercive Performance of the Innocent Self"

Profiles of scammers have become a staple of the resurgence in true crime television, framed partially as a critique of the repeated performance of a branded self constitutive of the digital economy. Women scammers are coded

within this subgenre as especially calculated in leveraging their hustles of deception; one assessment by a postfeminist blog calls these scammers the "accidental antiheroes of the girlboss era," highlighting the weaponization of their own calculated optimization and mediated celebrification as a means to garner sympathy with audiences all too familiar with falling prey to late capitalist systems.

A year after the consequential COVID-19 pandemic, two members of the Bravo reality franchise *The Real Housewives* faced federal fraud allegations. Seasons 11 and 12 of *The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills* saw entertainer Erika Jayne accused of co-conspiring with her husband, infamous trial lawyer Tom Girardi, to defraud victims from their courtroom spoils. Multiple episodes showed Jayne maintaining her innocence (with her refusal to show compassion to the fraud victims sparking melodramatic confrontation) while also separating from her mentally incapacitated husband. Elsewhere, *The Real Housewives of Salt Lake City* cast member Jen Shah was arrested in 2021 during production of that franchise's second season. Charged with conspiracy to commit wire fraud as part of a massive telemarketing scheme, Shah also spent many episodes maintaining her innocence before pleading guilty in July 2022; she is currently in federal prison.

My presentation examines the storylines of Jayne and Shah as an example of what I call a coercive performance of the innocent self. To labor as a Housewife is to confess, to air your dirty laundry in front of audiences, but the more each woman maintained her innocence, the more she possibly opened herself up to further legal liability. At the same time, however, each woman needed a Bravo paycheck following their changed financial statuses. I diagram how this compulsory double-bind is illustrative of the performative crises present within late capitalism's promises of fame in the branded digital economy, while also calling into question the *Housewives* as itself scam-like in its mechanical creation of antiheroic girlbosses.

Hunter Hargraves is Associate Professor of Cinema & Television Arts at California State University, Fullerton, where he researches and teaches in television studies and affect theory. He is the author of *Uncomfortable Television* (Duke UP, 2023) and several articles found in *JCMS*, *Camera Obscura*, and *Television & New Media*.

The *Real Housewives* Reckoning: Labour, Reality Television, and the Housewife

On July 14 2023, the SAG-AFTRA strike began – Hollywood actors joined their already-striking screenwriter colleagues on the picket line in the biggest interruption to the American film and television industries since the Covid-19 pandemic. SAG-AFTRA currently represents approximately 160,000 actors, announcers, broadcast journalists, dancers, DJs, news writers, news editors, program hosts, puppeteers, recording artists, singers, stunt performers, voiceover artists and other media professionals, but very few reality TV stars. On July 21 2023, former *Real Housewives of New York* alumnus and multi-millionaire Bethenny Frankel announced to her 1.5 million TikTok followers that it was time for a 'reality reckoning'. A month later, SAG-AFTRA released the

following statement “We stand ready to assist Bethenny Frankel… along with reality performers and our members in the fight and are tired of studios and production companies trying to circumvent the Union in order to exploit the talent that they rely upon to make their product.”

Drawing on a critical framework of social reproduction theory (‘The Logic of Gender’, Endnotes, 2013), this paper explores the visual reality of *The Real Housewives*, specifically the ways in which the wider reality-television franchise capitalises upon and generates value from the spectacle of celebrity housewives. This paper will trace how the apparatus of reality television transforms socially ‘elite’, predominantly white women into aesthetically dazzling, ultra-feminized image-commodities. This paper also sets out to make a distinction between the ‘labour’ of these housewives, other SAG-AFTRA performers and the production crews who work on *Real Housewives*. Finally, this paper will highlight moments of formal rupture of the franchise’s post-feminist fantasy of the entrepreneurial housewife by analyzing the onscreen appearance of the racialised and feminized labourers whose reproductive labour forms the foundation for these television realities, yet whose existence is often made invisible onscreen.

Dr **Rhys Steven Jones** is a Lecturer in Film, Television and Cross-Cultural Studies at the University of Amsterdam (r.s.jones@uva.nl). He is currently working on his first book, *Abjection as Process*, which re-examines the critical paradigm of abjection and its application in media studies from a Marxian perspective. His research interests include: theories of social reproduction, gender, and racialisation; reality television; speculative fiction and film; philosophies of disgust; queer theory; and literary and cinematic representations of waste.

A3 GButtz Fan Club: Watching Gerard Butler in the Pandemic

Lead Contact/Panel Chair: Elizabeth Affuso at elizabeth_affuso@pitzer.edu

From the pandemic to the rise of streaming, the 2020s have been marked by crisis and upheaval. This panel looks at Gerard Butler as an anchor for comfort and nostalgia in an unstable media landscape. Like so many others, during the Covid-19 lockdown, we sought a return to communal movie-viewing via Zoom. The release of *Greenland* in December 2020, spurred the development of the GButtz Fan Club, a regular Zoom screening series devoted to the oeuvre of actor/producer Gerard Butler. Using autoethnography, star/fan studies, and media industry studies as a frame, this panel is devoted to the examination of the pleasures of a particular celebrity in times of crisis. In particular, we are interested in exploring the arc of Butler's career to his current position as producer/star of mid-tier action films and the soothing potential of action stars in moments of global crisis.

Presentation 1: "Bourbon and Poor Choices:" Masculinity, Pleasure, and Action Heroism in the Films of Gerard Butler

The title of this paper refers to a line in *London has Fallen* (2016) where Gerard Butler's character describes himself as made of "bourbon and poor choices." While this line is specifically in reference to his character Secret Service agent Mike Banning, it serves to describe the appeal of Butler's masculinity. In the old-fashioned, nostalgic action movies that Butler has been starring in and producing consistently since the 2010s including—the *Fallen* series (2013 on), *Geostorm* (2017), *Greenland* (2020) and *Plane* (2023)—he plays macho, individualist middle-aged characters who struggle to play by the rules. When faced with situations where coworkers or family members are threatened these very traits enable him to succeed at saving those under threat.

While many critics have commented on the ways that Butler's action star text calls back to other stars such as Harrison Ford, Liam Neeson, Mel Gibson, or Bruce Willis (Roberts, 2023; Ebiri, 2019), this paper will be focused on investigating the particular pleasures of Butler's persona. It will be devoted to an examination of the sensitive masculinity that he continuously embodies. Butler's characters repeatedly struggle with work/life balance and with maintaining personal relationships. As he has moved into middle age, Butler's aging body has become central to his celebrity brand, moving beyond the sculpted good looks that propelled him to fame in *300* (2007) or turned him into a romantic leading man in *P.S. I Love You* (2007), *The Ugly Truth* (2009), and *The Bounty Hunter* (2011). The Butler brand is rooted in masculine professional success commingled with personal failure, the ravages of middle age, and a life hard lived. These onscreen characters reflect Butler's personal struggles, as disseminated through the celebrity gossip industry which often focus on his addiction issues and failure to settle down. Through an examination of Butler's action films, this paper will explore how his persona reflects larger concerns about masculinity in contemporary culture and Butler's comforting position as a reliable mid-tier star.

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Elizabeth Affuso is Academic Director of Intercollegiate Media Studies at The Claremont Colleges. She is co-editor of *Sartorial Fandom* (2023) and *Film Criticism*'s "Films and Merchandise" issue (2018). Her work has been published in *JumpCut*, *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, *Point of Sale,* and *Documenting Fashion.*

Presentation 2: Gerard Butler Fandom and/as Ontological Security: A Gerry Sue Story

A series of 2023 articles touting Gerard Butler as "the King of B-movies" or "the last great B-movie action hero" frame the star's box office success as stemming from a certain dependability of character and content. As a similar headline from *The Daily Beast* summarized: "Gerard Butler Keeps Making the Most Gerard Butler-iest of Movies. Thank God." While it would be easy to point to this consistency as a core draw of Gerard Butler as a star fan object during a deeply unpredictable and chaotic period of our lives, this presentation more actively engages the pleasures afforded by Butler as a celebrity fan object within a pandemic context. While firmly entrenched as a middlebrow, mid-budget movie star, this paper will place the discursive framing of Butler as a "B-movie" star in conversation with the longstanding participatory fan tradition of mocking or "riffing" cult or "B" movies. Contra the intertextually dense and ironically detached properties of a show like *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, this paper will draw on theories of ontological security within fan studies (from Rebecca Williams, Lori Morimoto, and others) to consider participatory viewing of Butler's star text as a source of comfort. Adapting Anthony Giddens' 1991 discussion of the "pure relationship" produced by ontological security, in which external criteria is set aside and the rewards of self-identity are centered, this presentation also recuperates the trope of the "Mary Sue." Originating in Paula Smith's parodic "A Trekkie's Tale" in 1973, the Mary Sue has evolved into a derisive shorthand for a well-worn fanfiction trope. Describing a story with an overly perfect female characterization, Mary Sue stories are commonly perceived as poorly written, thinly veiled self-insert characters by a presumed younger, female fan author. Drawing on both interviews with Butler fans and analysis of self-insert Gerard Butler Real Person Fanfiction composed at the peak of the pandemic, ultimately this presentation will explore how Butler's distinct star persona produces ontological security for fans.

Suzanne Scott, University of Texas-Austin (suzanne.scott@utexas.edu)

Suzanne Scott is Associate Professor of Radio-Television-Film at the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of *Fake Geek Girls: Fandom, Gender, and the Convergence Culture Industry* (2019), and co-editor of *Sartorial Fandom: Fashion, Beauty Culture, and Identity* (2023) and *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom* (2018).

Presentation 3: Gerard Butler: Star for the Streaming Age

The traditional notion of the movie star is in crisis. The boom in production

ushered in by the streaming era has altered both the commercial value of stars and the economics of stardom. Streaming companies have demanded content to fill their catalogs and suggest an offering of limitless content, but have not invested in marketing those films. Whereas stars of previous eras have relied on publicity for their theatrical films to promote their images as stars, contemporary actors face greater challenges.

Success as a star now means taking on hyphenate roles to capitalize on the multiplatform environment. Dwayne Johnson, for example, has been able to leverage his global stardom into his own tequila, a sports league, television show, and collaboration with Under Armour. Johnson is an exemplary model of intertextual stardom, but in this crowded media landscape, what constitutes a movie star?

This paper looks at Gerard Butler as an exemplary movie star of the current media landscape. Gerard Butler was launched into fame during a more robust era of theatrical releases with his ab-tastic breakout performance in Zack Snyder's *300* (2006). In this early stage of his career, Butler physically aligned with the image of the hardbody action star, even if the film itself was a bit of a departure. In the aftermath of this star-making role, Butler formed G-Base Productions in 2008 and has consistently starred in and produced approximately 1-3 films per year. I contend that much of Butler's fame stems from his hard work to become a ubiquitous face in contemporary film. Much like the stars of the studio era, contemporary stars have to be busy, making multiple films per year. Unlike the studio era, financial success comes when actors take on producing roles alongside their work as a performer. Whereas my co-panelists examine Butler's familiarity as an important source of comfort, this paper looks at his consistency as a necessity for maintaining stardom in the contemporary media landscape.

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Kate Fortmueller is Associate Professor at Georgia State University and author of *Below the Stars: How the Labor of Working Actors and Extras Shapes Media Production, Hollywood Shutdown: Production, Distribution, and Exhibition in the Time of COVID* (both UTX Press, 2021) and co-editor of the forthcoming anthology *Hollywood Unions.*

A4 Fans and Anti-Fans 1

Self-scandalization and Conflict to Pull in the Audience: Exploring the Dynamics of Co-Construction in the Celebrity Feud between Andrew Tate and Greta Thunberg

Contemporary scandals are constructed by the scandalized, the mass media, and an active audience that potentially becomes a forceful communicative co-driver by exposing, sharing, and negotiating a scandal online (Chen, 2019). Diana Zulli (2021) has coined the notion of *socio-mediated scandals* to describe these new scandal dynamics, introduced by digital communication and user participation. Socio-mediated scandals involve audiences' collaborative co-construction of the scandal on social media, personalisation and intimate communication, amplified partisanship, and liveness.

This paper analyses intentional self-scandalization (Haller, 2015) as a specific strategy exploiting these dynamics as calculated, attention-creating, self-promotional, and celebrifying activities across platforms to pull in audiences (Marwick & boyd, 2011; Marwick, 2013; Khamis et al., 2017). With the spread of social media, self-scandalization makes use of audiences' (un)willing affective co-construction of the scandal. Examples include populist politicians provoking controversy by crossing norms (Haller, 2015; Krämer, 2018) and celebrities or influencers spurring platform dramas (Lewis & Christin, 2022).

To exemplify these dynamics, we analyze a conflictual incident of self-scandalization from December 2022, when (in)famous influencer Andrew Tate started a feud with environmental activist Greta Thunberg on Twitter/X. Tate – a former kickboxer and reality TV personality – is active in the Alt-Right and Incel online culture of the so-called "Manosphere" (Barcellona, 2022) and claims a crisis of manhood and masculinity to attract young men with his toxic, misogynistic statements, conspiratorial myths, and self-improvement content.

Based on a digital ethnography (Kozinets & Gambetti, 2020), following the user communication surrounding the feud from Twitter/X to Reddit, we demonstrate how the strategy of self-scandalization enticed different online communities to amplify the scandal: users not only debated the incident in personalized and sometimes politically partisan ways but also engaged in practices adding to its liveness, e.g., by commenting/sharing posts or creating memes. We show how self-scandalization disrupts expectations and draws from affect to gain visibility in the attention economy online, not only by moral transgressions but also by creating an entertaining drama connecting to popular and internet culture. Compelling conflict, sensationalism, and exaggeration paired with moral transgressions along politicized trenches unfold the potential to pull in large and niche audiences outside of the self-scandalizer's usual sphere of influence.

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The three co-authors are from the Section of Media Studies at Department of Communication, University of Copenhagen. Professor of Film and Media Studies, Anne Jerslev, specializes in celebrity studies, audience studies and television entertainment; Professor of Media Studies, Nete Nørgaard Kristensen, specializes in media, journalism and popular culture; and Tenure track Assistant Professor of Media Studies, Manuel Menke, specializes in new digital public spheres and memory culture.

Toxic masculinity, damsels in distress, permissive wives and cuckold husbands: Examining moral policing and public condemnation of Bollywood celebrity couples on social media

For popular Hindi cinema, or Bollywood, as it is more commonly known, the star has undeniably been central to the cinematic experience, dominating almost all realms of the idiom, from its economic structuring to its textual and narrative conventions (Majumdar, 2009). Despite recent changes in the Indian mediascape, the Bollywood star's centrality remains undiminished. With increasing synergy between film, television, and digital realms, they are no longer simply perceived as movie idols but as transmedia celebrities, effortlessly straddling diverse media platforms. Social media, in particular, has

emerged as a crucial and intrinsic aspect of contemporary Bollywood celebrity culture. The constant visibility, courtesy social networking sites like X (formerly known as Twitter) and Instagram, ensure the continuing presence of the Hindi film star, consolidating their celebrity status and reach. The numerous followers, likes and comments underline their resignification from film stars to transmedia brands and influencers. However, the stars' engagement with social media has inevitably complicated discourses of both stardom and fandom. As the boundaries between the 'reel' and the 'real' collapse and blur, hegemonic norms of Hindi film star-fan engagement are also disrupted. No longer regarded as simply objects of adulation and veneration, stars are now often chastised and publicly ridiculed for their actions on social media. The emergence of the fan as troll (Mitra, 2021), with the female stars bearing the brunt of the public shaming and chastisement, underlines the problematic discourses of contemporary Bollywood celebrity culture.

Employing the case studies of two contemporary Bollywood star couples – Ranbir Kapoor-Alia Bhatt and Ranveer Singh-Deepika Padukone – this paper examines the phenomenon of moral policing and public condemnation of celebrities on social media. As social media users comment and criticize 'Ralia' and 'Deepveer' (the monikers for the celebrity couples), the resultant narratives underline contradictory and problematic gender discourses. While Ranbir Kapoor is chided for his toxic masculinity and consequently, his wife, Alia Bhatt for being the enabler, Deepika Padukone's relationships prior to her marriage with Ranveer Singh marks her as the permissive wife and Singh as the ever-suffering, unfortunate husband. The moral policing and public shaming on social media, despite references to wokeness, seem to reinforce dominant cultural diktats, especially with regards to gender and female celebrities. This paper further analyzes how this social media discourse shapes the star texts of the celebrity couples, underlining the symbiotic relationship between social media platforms and contemporary Bollywood celebrity culture.

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Sreya Mitra is an Associate Professor at the Department of Media Communication at the American University of Sharjah, UAE. Her research focuses on popular Hindi cinema, contemporary Bollywood stardom & celebrity culture, fandom, gender, globalization, and culture industries. She has presented at various international conferences and her work been published in edited collections and peer-reviewed journals.

“I’ll go and come back safely”: The case of BTS and relational labour in the face of military enlistment

On December 5, 2022, BigHit Music, the label of the global K-pop sensation BTS, announced the group’s decision to actively enlist in the South Korean military. This announcement was long-awaited, as the country mandates that all adult men enlist before the age of 30. Within the Korean popular music (hereafter K-pop) fandom sphere, military enlistment is often understood as a form of hiatus, one that carries the potential for a loss in popularity for the artist and, ultimately, a decrease in revenue for the company. However, given BTS’ global popularity, the announcement was met with feelings of resolution, upset, and contempt. Taking to social media sites, members have, over the last year, engaged in what Nancy Baym (2015; 2018) calls “relational labour” to continue cultivating their relationship with fans despite the gap in direct connection. From scheduling video messages to posting on Weverse, a platform dedicated to fan-artist interaction, BTS implemented relational measures through their labour to mitigate potential crises of their absence.

The efforts exerted by BTS to appease and reassure fans following their military announcement underscore the transcultural nature of relational labour inherent in the K-pop celebrity framework. Specifically, K-pop operates as a relational fan text, grounded in the affective connection between artist and fan (Oh & Oh, 2017; Phillips & Baudinette, 2022; McLaren & Jin, 2020). Simultaneously, in the case of BTS and their military enlistment, fans engaged in a similar form of relational labour by offering consolation to both the artists and the broader fandom. This type of relational labour is transcultural in its production, extending beyond the confines of the nation-state and enabling fans to traverse boundaries through shared affinities (Lau, 2003, as cited in Morimoto, 2013; Morimoto & Chin, 2017). By juxtaposing the theories of relational labour and parasocial interaction with an analysis of BTS’s digital and physical activities before and after enlistment, this paper argues that K-pop celebrity intimacy, shaped by the specific cultural context of South Korea and gendered perceptions of the military, represents a form of transcultural relational labour. This labour is multi-directional in fostering a mediated yet intentionally authentic relationship.

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Jasmine Proctor is a Media Studies Ph.D. student at Western University. Her research focuses on online fan communities' relationship to gender and sexuality through their transcultural networked labour practices. Particularly, she is interested in how queer fandoms construct safe spaces within online platforms and how affective production facilitates connection.

A5 (Anti-)Social Media

In The Beginning Was Gemmadelsud: Two Decades of Italian Social Media Through “Ridiculous” Stars

Since the early development of online participatory cultures, mockery has been an essential driver of digital content circulation. The evolution of the celebrity semantics that has accompanied Web 2.0 is closely linked to networked ridiculing processes (Brilli, 2023). Classic viral phenomena, around which the very notion of “virality” has been built, have shown how digital propagation is often linked to a derisive attitude (Shifman, 2014).

This can be seen in cases where *anti-fans* (Gray 2003, Click 2019) contribute with their hostility to the rise of the celebrities they oppose, but also in the emergence of *anti-stars* (Gamson, 2011) whose fame stems primarily from mockery. If being “hated because famous” is nothing new, one can now see how the translation of public attention into visibility enabled by social media increases the possibility of also being “famous because hated” or “famous for being mocked”: the figure of the laughingstock and that of the celebrity find in digital cultures numerous ways for overlap.

In the present “post-web 2.0” context, as a result of the platformisation of cultural production (Poell et al. 2021) and the rise of influencer culture (Abidin 2018, Hund 2023), ridicule seems to have become even more a *lingua franca*. For example, in irreverence as a style of political debate (Highfield 2016; Phillips, Milner 2017) and in the extensive use of formats such as duets and reactions based on ironic response (Matamoros-Fernández 2023).

This paper wants to investigate the links between derision and fame in Italian digital culture. To this end, the presentation attempts to historicise these changes by tracing the different forms of fame-through-derision that characterised the Italian participatory web over the last two decades: the initial pre-social media phase of TV myths transferred onto the web (2003-2006), the explosion of “web freaks” denoting the first spread of YouTube in Italy (2006-2011), the era of lolrap (2012) and YouTube “trash stars” (2012-2015), the rise of the “degrade” galaxy on Facebook and Instagram (2016-2019), till the "horizontal mockery" typical of the cross-platform circulation of short videos (2020-2023). Each of these configurations of the laughable celebrity allows us to observe periods with specific socio-technical characteristics that recount the evolution of digital popular culture in Italy and how users use digital laughingstocks to produce their own vernacular histories of the development of social media.

Stefano Brilli is a Research Fellow at the Department of Communication Sciences, Humanities and International Studies of the University of Urbino (Italy). His research interests focus on irreverence and celebrity in digital culture, performing arts audiences and the sociology of the arts. He has recently published: *YouTube Freak Show: Fama e derisione alle soglie dell'influencer culture* (FrancoAngeli 2023).

Haters Gonna Hate: Salt Bae's Irrepressible and "Unbeatable" Social Media Phenomenon

Nusret Gökçe, commonly known as "Salt Bae," is a Turkish chef and restaurateur who gained worldwide fame for his unique and theatrical way of seasoning and serving meat dishes. He became a celebrity primarily due to his viral video in January 2017, in which he is seen sprinkling salt on a steak in a dramatic fashion. With a single "meme", Salt Bae can go beyond the borders of Turkey, and with 53.7 million followers on Instagram, he is Turkey's celebrity with the highest number of followers on social media platforms. His chain of high-end steakhouses is called Nusr-Et (a play on his name and the word “et”, which means “meat” in Turkish), which regularly hosts high-profile celebrities, politicians, athletes, artists, and more. Despite consistently receiving negative reviews of his restaurants the celebrity guest list as David Beckham, Leonardo DiCaprio, and Dr. Mehmet Öz has promoted Nusr-et's reputation as a place to eat and be seen eating.

In reality, what makes Salt Bae so successful both as a globally recognized personality and in the restaurant business is his hyper-awareness of what the internet loves and even the bad press can’t stop him. His distinctive style and charismatic persona have helped him amass a large following on social media, and he often shares videos and images of his culinary creations. In his Instagram reels, which have received hundreds of thousands of likes, he sometimes wears a white tank top, sometimes a stylish tuxedo, and sunglasses that he never takes off, kissing steaks, caressing ribs, and kneading large balls of minced meat. Hence Salt Bae's success is an indication that Internet celebrities have become key sources for their followers' purchasing decisions. This study aims to examine the antecedents of consumer attitudes toward internet celebrities' brands, specifically for Salt Bae, by bringing together the brand authenticity and celebrity involvement literature. In this way, it is aimed to ensure that the concepts of celebrity meaning, celebrity status, celebrity capital, and celebrity culture are reconsidered in the 21st century.

Dr. **Nilay Ulusoy** is a professor at Bahcesehir University, Istanbul. She teaches courses on the history of art and visual culture, film and fashion (B.A. level), history of cinema (M.A. level), and film theory (Ph.D. level). She is the head of the Film and TV Department.

Buffy’s ‘Slay’ Era: Instagram, Escapism and the Fashion of Buffy the Vampire Slayer in an Age of ‘Perma-Crisis’

Created by Joss Whedon, Buffy the Vampire Slayer was a hugely successful television show that ran from 1997 to 2003. The story followed the teenage vampire slayer, Buffy, and her group of friends, The Scooby Gang, in fighting supernatural forces in the fictional town of Sunnydale. In 2021, *Vice* magazine reported on Buffy’s “army” of new millennial and Gen-Z fans, many of whom had not been born when the show first aired. Alongside the resurgence in the show’s popularity has been an emphasis on its fashion, particularly on social media.

Ewen (2020, 2018) and Ewen and Cobb's (2016) work on nostalgia in television and film contextualises the recent rise in 90s trends within an age of precarity and 'perma-crisis,' from climate change to the rapidly increasing cost-of-living. Like these authors, the paper suggests that the liberal construction of the 90s as a period of hope and peace has created 'prosthetic memories,' which play out across the cultural zeitgeist. In terms of *Buffy*, feminist media theorists have noted that the fashion of the show has always been essential to the fandom and the character's story arcs (see: Stenger, 2006; Adams and Jarvis, 2006; Dale, 2020). Whilst Buffy and friends' clothing helped position them as the 'saviours of the world,' the styling of the vampires was intended to reflect their evil intentions (Clemons, 2006).

This paper will conduct a critical discourse analysis of popular Instagram pages, '*Buffy the Outfit Slayer*' and '*Every Outfit Buffy Wore*,' exploring the memorialization of the show's style on social media as cultivating a time capsule that has multiple effects. The Instagram grid acts as a guide for replicating 'lewks' and for building up a soothing archive of childhood 'memories' that exist before the multiple crises that have shaped the millennial and Gen-Z experience. The paper will interrogate the ways that, when coupled with the symbolism of the show's fashion, engagement with Buffy-inspired fan pages demonstrates young people's desire for escapism under late-stage capitalism.

Dr. Amelia Morris: I am a Lecturer of Communications at the University of Exeter and my research explores the relationship between capitalism, gender and popular culture. I published my first book, *The Politics of Weight: Feminist Dichotomies of Power in Dieting*, in 2019. I am currently writing about Taylor Swift, cults and weight.

A6: Conflicts in Celebrity Media and Communication

Towards and Ethics of Online Content Creation

Digital wellness content creators can sharpen our understanding of what it is to lead a good digital life in many ways. The tabloid media routinely characterises 'influencers' as either risible or obnoxious, framing these digital workers as narcissistic, entitled, self-(care) obsessed digital natives ('Gen-Z') who have little understanding of the exigencies of life. Each day offers new examples of influencers behaving badly. Content creators such as Marcella Zoia ('Chair Girl') and Bacari-Bronze O'Garro ('Mizzy') have become TikTok-famous for documenting themselves causing distress, misery, or endangering the lives of innocent strangers. Despite these horror stories, critics often ignore how the creation and sharing of online content has revolutionised how we understand each other, as well as how we understand our working lives. Understanding how wellness content creators increase our understanding of 21st century well-being (and how it can be cultivated in the digital world) is the aim of this presentation.

To do this, this talk will focus on wellness content creators. I will argue that many of the activities of these kinds of digital workers can be understood as offering novel answers to the question: '*What does a flourishing life look like in the 21st century?'* Viewing wellness influencers through this lens reveals them to be a valuable source of knowledge in answering a series of age-old philosophical questions, such as *What is a good life?* and *How it can be cultivated?* I will show that the online content of wellness influencers not only offers unique answers to such traditional philosophical questions, but that they also expose how digital mobile devices can be integrated into this process.

Matthew J. Dennis is an assistant professor in ethics of technology at TU Eindhoven. He is the co-editor *of Philosophy of Fame &* Celebrity (with Al. Archer & C. Robb, forthcoming with Bloomsbury), 'Exemplars & Expertise: What We Cannot Learn from Saints and Heroes' (*Inquiry,* with A. T. M. Archer), and 'On the Uses and Abuses of Celebrity Epistemic Power' (*Journal of Social Epistemology*, 2023, with A. T. M. Archer, M. Alfano, 2022).

Mapping the Transformation of the *Communication of Fame* in the 20th and 21st centuries: A Comparison of Celebrity's deep and powerful (predominantly recent) past and future

Celebrity has been a form of power and influence in its construction of culture and cultural impact for many centuries - and probably best identified as truly emerging in the communication structures of the enlightenment (Cowan 2018; Jones 2018). This paper explores the 20th and 21st centuries re-integration and formations of celebrity in terms of how it has been instrumental in how ideas, opinions, values, and culture have been communicated interculturally and with global impact. The paper will map first of all the *Representational systems of renown - identifying its impact on politics, movies, the press and broadcasting in the first half of the twentieth century*. It will then investigate the second half of the twentieth century and *Television – as a transnational representational*

system of visibility and fame as well as a brief reading of *how music and celebrity also shifted in the second half of the twentieth century* and pull it further together with *a study of fame's impact through the film industry's construction of the blockbuster* from the 1970s (with a short focus on *Jaws* (1975) and *Star Wars* (1977)) onwards. It will then aim to conclude with the most contemporary version of celebrity and fame in terms of the *"Presentational" Communication of Fame and the twenty-first century transformation of celebrity*. Critical to this will be how this has intersected with the idea of **influence** and **influencers** in our contemporary echo-reconstructed and reformed contemporary social-mediated communication world of celebrity, fame and influence.

P. David Marshall is Professor of Communication at Charles Sturt University, emeritus professor at Deakin University and Honorary Professor at University of Nottingham - Ningbo China. He has published many books and articles that deal with celebrity, persona and digital media culture - including *Celebrity and Power* (2014), *Celebrity Persona Pandemic* (2016), *Persona Studies* (2020), *Contemporary Publics* (2015), *Advertising and Promotional Culture* (2015), *Fame Games* (2000), *A Companion to Celebrity* (2015) and many others. He is also the series editor of the six-volume and the forthcoming *Culture History of Fame* (in-press 2024).

A short history of attack journalism

Celebrity journalism is convivial and cunning. It has evolved to create complex rhetorical discourses of fame-maker, confidant, mentor, liberator, judge, jury and executioner. At their most febrile, journalism's rituals of celebrification can become cultures of attack. While there is a broad acceptance that modern societies have been information societies from their inception, there are few examinations of the micro-meso-macro relationships that explain *how and why* news and journalism developed tools of information and instruction together and the place of representational dimensions of fame in this process. Seminal research into the constructs of news identified how (post) modern forms shape our understanding of reality, others and ourselves and the political, commercial, and cultural institutions that govern our lives. Attack journalism first developed in early modern newsbooks and was subsequently transformed by press popularisation and the first boom of celebrity culture in the 18th century, then by transformations to celebrity news and journalism that occurred as reflections of 19th century press modernisation, multi-media technologies in the 20th century and most recently their convergence in digital spaces. It raises the visibility of individuals but looks to simultaneously casts them and/or their ideas out of heavily constructed and controlled "right-minded" public spheres. This paper offers a short history of the development and methodology of attack journalism to clarify how it emerged as a mechanism to challenge hegemonic power, but soon became a tool to sustain social control by targeting those perceived to risk, for example, the priorities of capital, patriarchy, white privilege, or the press itself. It demonstrates the patterns of attack journalism, how and why they formed and the reasons for some enduring spectacular rituals and looks to what we can do to tackle this vicious culture of celebrity news.

Dr **Bethany Usher** is the author of Journalism and Celebrity, described by Professor Graeme Turner (Understanding Celebrity) as a “nuanced, thoughtful and compelling…historically revisionist account.”. In this, and her new book Journalism and Crime, she draws from her own experiences as a young Fleet Street reporter and argues for changes to codes of practice.

B1: Videographic Criticism and Celebrity: Politics of Resistance in Contemporary Spanish Film & TV

Panel Overview:

This panel addresses three contemporary Spanish film and TV stars, Carmen Machi, Ana Torrent and Javier Bardem, through a set of videographic works. First, Asier Gil explores Machi's star persona, revealing her versatility and enduring popularity over two decades, grounded in her ability to embody the "authentic" Spanish woman. Second, Celia Sainz scrutinizes in detail Torrent' filmography, portraying her not just as a symbol of historical change in Spain but as an embodiment of the allure embedded in the act of looking, echoing our fascination with cinematic stars. Third, Vicente Rodríguez Ortega studies how Bardem oeuvre symbolizes resistance against societal norms and the constant commitment to political struggles. The video essay underscores Bardem's deliberate choices, revealing a dynamic relationship between his stardom and socio-political undercurrents, emphasizing his exploration of conflict and resistance, as well as his role in the field of social advocacy.

Presentation 1: Carmen Machi and the Embodiment of the "Authentic" Spanish Woman

The prevailing ageism in film industries, like the Spanish one, very often translates into a loss of visibility for actresses as they reach middle age. Still, there are always exceptions to the rule, especially for those performers whose star image is not based on their (youthful) beauty. Carmen Machi gained prominence as a comic actress when she was almost 40 years old and has worked on more than 70 films and TV shows ever since. This is largely explained by her ability to revisit and reformulate some common traits that connect with deep-rooted and widespread conceptions of the "authentic" Spanish woman.

Carmen Machi's success in the sitcom *7 vidas* (Telecinco, 1999-2006) led to an even more successful spin-off *Aída* (Telecinco, 2005-2014), centered on her character as a working-class mother living in a poor neighbourhood in Madrid. The character's personality connected with Spanish audiences through the comedic tone used to portray many viewers' day-to-day struggles during the economic crisis's aftermath. Every week millions could find in Machi an escape valve to laugh at the precarious situation that affected the nation. Equally, Machi character's conflicts and strengths relate to many working-class women's resilience and survival tactics as well as her ability to resist hegemonic conceptualizations of womanhood. Soon Machi's public image gained the aura of "authentic Spanish woman" that audiences expected in different roles that she played.

This video essay collects a wide range of characters played by Carmen Machi to interweave some common traits that define her star persona. The reiteration of physical features, attitudes, and themes provides the opportunity to explore the key elements that makeup Machi's popularity. At the same time, the combination of titles that belong to different genres opens up the possibility to explore how this very same reiteration gains a sense of versatility as Machi adapts her character to meet the standards of a legitimised performer whose popularity and public recognition have not diminished in the last two decades.

Asier Gil Vázquez is a lecturer at the Media and Communication Department at the University Carlos III of Madrid. He is a member of the TECMERIN research group and the University Institute of Spanish Cinema of the UC3M where he has been working on the history of screen actors and stars.

Presentation 2: Ana Torrent: The Cinematic Gaze

In the dim glow of a movie theater, Ana Torrent sits among a group of children, her large, dark eyes fixated on the screen, captivated by the unfolding vision of 1931's *Frankenstein*. Through witnessing this cinematic experience, a generation of Spanish filmgoers found themselves entwined with a gaze that would lock onto a nation's collective imagination. Torrent here becomes the very essence of cinema—embodying both the spectacle and the spectator, the subject and the object of the gaze. This unique convergence, as described by Dezin (1995), generates a double subjectivity, a mirror reflecting self-awareness in both the observer and the observed. The gaze, reciprocated between Torrent and the audience, heightens our awareness of our own position as spectators. This enchanting moment, recorded in real time during her initial encounter with the horror classic, encapsulates one of cinema's most memorable events.

From her iconic roles in *El espíritu de la colmena* and *Cría Cuervos*, Torrent emerged as the face of a generation navigating the complexities of late Francoism and the Transition. Her work signifies the formation of a new national cinema intersecting with evolving cultural, political and economic identity. Despite a prolific career thereafter, her childhood success didn't find a parallel until two decades later, with her performance in Alejandro Amenábar's *Tesis*. Continuing to represent the allure with looking, Torrent evolves into the face of a nation grappling with the lingering shadows of a 40-year dictatorship through an attraction to *looking at* violence (Klodt, 2007). My video-essay delves into Torrent's extensive filmography, revealing how the actress symbolizes not only a historical past but also one fundamental aspect of the cinematic experience—a medium that elicits fascination through the act of watching. By focusing on Torrent's hypnotic stare and profound dark eyes, I explore the captivation with the gaze in cinema, rooted in a filmic tradition traceable to Buñuel's *Un chien andalou*. This transforms Torrent into a symbol not only of Spanish historical change but of the profound allure embedded in the act of looking, echoing our fascination with stars in the cinematic firmament.

Celia Sainz is a Ph.D. Candidate in Hispanic and Film Studies at UMass. Her video-essay *Cinema Turns: Catalan Creative Documentary* was published in *[in]transition* and also appeared among the best video-essays of 2021 polled by *Sight and Sound*. She is currently working on her dissertation *Ecopathic Imaginaries: Iberian visual cultures in the Anthropocene.*

Presentation 3: Javier Bardem from James Bond to the Sahrawi Struggle: Resisting Conformity

This videographic presentation delves into Javier Bardem's multilayered stardom, examining how his cinematic prowess and media persona allow us to engage with a variety of political, ideological and aesthetic issues in

contemporary cinema. Bardem, a globally acclaimed actor, not only demonstrates unparalleled, chameleonic, skill in his craft but also emerges as a symbolic figure engaging with socio-political themes, notably through his commitment to the Sahrawi struggle.

The video essay begins by scrutinizing Bardem's diverse range of roles, from his early breakthrough in *Jamón, Jamón* (1992) to compelling performances in politically charged films like *Before Night Falls* (2000) and *No Country for Old Men* (2007) or his portrayal of the ultimate transnational cyberterrorist in the James Bond film *Skyfall* (2012). This analysis aims to unravel how Bardem's stardom becomes a dynamic canvas, depicting conflicts that encompass both personal struggles and broader societal issues.

Moreover, the presentation investigates Bardem's capacity to embody characters that resist conventional norms, challenging established power structures. Whether portraying a persecuted gay Cuban poet or an enigmatic hitman in the American Southwest, Bardem's characters often symbolize resistance against oppression and conformity. In this context, the discussion will also address Bardem's active involvement in the Sahara struggle.

The interplay between Bardem's stardom and the thematic content of his films unveils a dynamic relationship, shedding light on the actor's deliberate choices and the ideological undercurrents in contemporary cinema.

To sump, this video work underscores the significance of Javier Bardem's stardom as a conduit for the exploration of conflict, resistance, and social advocacy.

Vicente Rodríguez Ortega is Tenure-Track Professor at Universidad Carlos III (Madrid), and member of the TECMERIN research group. He is the co-editor of *Contemporary Spanish Cinema & Genre* (Manchester University Press), author of *Spanish Horror Film and Television in the 21st Century*, and has written over 20 academic articles and book chapters. He is the founding editor of *Tecmerin: Journal of Audiovisual Essays*.

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B2: Celebrity Housewives 2

“I Still Prefer You Portraying the Role of a Career Woman”: Celebrity, Fandom, and the Social Stigmatization of Housewives

In many cultures, housewives face double stigmatizing: on one hand, mainstream society often views them as idle and unproductive; on the other hand, some feminists believe that they contribute to lower female labor participation rates and hinder progress towards gender equality. Consequently, societies often create a moral dichotomy between career women and housewives, portraying the former as hardworking and progressive while the latter are seen as lazy and backward. Previous research, employing methods such as in-depth interviews, has sought to challenge this dichotomy by listening to women's own voices (Hochschild, 2012; Oakley, 2018; Orgad, 2019). This study explores media representation and asks: Can a well-known celebrity, renowned for portraying career women, complicate audiences’ understanding of housewives by playing a housewife herself?

The selected celebrity for this study is Hong Kong actress Sheren Tang. Known for her frequent portrayal of ambitious and assertive career women, she has twice won the prestigious "Best Actress" award in the Hong Kong television industry. However, in 2007, she surprised audiences by taking on the role of a housewife in the TV drama *The Family Link*. Through an “internet ethnography” (Hine, 2015), we have researched several fan forums and discovered that: (1) Despite being the highest-rated TV show of that year, this drama has rarely been discussed by her fans; instead, fans focus more on relishing the career women roles she played prior to and after this drama; (2) Even when fans do discuss the drama, the conversations primarily center around her drastic change in appearance; (3) Nevertheless, some fans express appreciation for and begin to learn the drama's depiction of various cooking and grocery shopping skills, which they consider valuable knowledge not taught in schools. This study cuts through celebrity, fandom, and gender studies, arguing that even a charismatic celebrity can hardly inspire her own fans to question the moral dichotomy between career woman and housewives; however, Tang’s celebrity still creates space for fans to reconsider some feminist issues about housewives, such as the undervalued importance of domestic labor.

Ms. **Dong Ruo** is a PhD student, and her supervisor is Dr. **Zhou Lulu**, an assistant professor in the Department of Literature and Cultural Studies and the associate director of the International Research Centre for Cultural Studies at The Education University of Hong Kong. They both specialize in researching celebrity, fandom, and TV dramas.

Pat Loud, *An American Family*, and the Prehistory of Reality TV Celebrity

The history of reality television is frequently traced to *An American Family* (PBS, 1973), a fly-on-the wall documentary series about the Loud family of Santa Barbara, California. In this prescient program, real life is packaged as serial entertainment in ways that also claim to reveal the truth of an archetypical (white, upper-middle class, heterosexual) “American family.” Drawing from

archival materials, I accent the particular significance of Pat Loud, a stay-at-home housewife and mother of five, whose request for a divorce became the focal point of reflection and controversy on screen and off. Focusing on her engagement with the politics of self-representation and nascent self-branding, I argue that Pat Loud embodied and helped shape a new form of reality celebrity.

An American Family has not previously been recognized as a production about gender or the changing culture of celebrity. Nor has it been placed within the context of the women's movement of the 1970s, the backdrop of her malaise and a crucial impetus for making private problems public (the personal is the political). In her biography and extensive media interviews, Pat Loud drew from second wave feminist discourse to make sense of her experience as an instantly famous real-life housewife and control her own story and mediated persona. However, she also capitalized on *An American Family* in the service of fame, visibility, gigs, and deals that articulated agency to an emergent neoliberal culture.

This entanglement of feminism, reality television, and notoriety generated by living one's life on television constitutes the prehistory of *The Real Housewives* and other TV programs that shape and constrain self-representation in media culture. Drawing from archival materials, including the television program, media coverage, and the Loud collection at Yale University's Beinecke Library, I trace this history, revisiting the past to flesh out critical understandings of reality celebrity now.

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Laurie Ouellette is a Professor of Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Minnesota, USA. She has written extensively about the history and politics of reality television and is the author, co-author, editor, and/or co-editor of several books on the topic, including *Better Living Through Reality TV: Television and Post-Welfare Citizenship*, *Lifestyle TV*, *A Companion to Reality TV*, and *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*. She is the editor-in-chief of *Television and New Media* and a columnist for *Film Quarterly.*

Celebrity Housewives in Crisis: Navigating Rural-Urban Affective Dynamics

Celebrity and stardom are predominantly regarded as urban phenomena, with its functions often analyzed in relation to the spatiotemporal context of the globalized city. While the reality TV franchise *Real Housewives* reasserts feminized celebrity – and its affective economies – as determinately cosmopolitan and urban, this paper investigates particular instances in which this urban-centric imagination of celebrity is complicated by the franchise's engagement with distinctively regional and rural geographies. In doing so the paper explores the affective management performed by certain celebrity housewives in affirming and shifting spatially-informed understandings of crisis in the context of globalization. In the first part of this paper I analyze the *Real Housewives* spin-off *Luann & Sonja: Welcome to Crappie Lake* (Bravo 2023), in which celebrity housewives from the New York City series—Luann de Lesseps and Sonja Morgan—are invited to help mitigate a crisis the rural town of Benton, Illinois (nicknamed as Crappie Lake) faces in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. Drawing on a longer genealogy of reality TV in which urban celebrities (temporarily) leave their urban locales to help out rural communities (*The Simple Life*, *Queer Eye*), I am particularly interested in the kind of affective labor performed by *Welcome to Crappie Lake* and its celebrity housewives and how this shapes popular understandings of globalization and its effects within the contemporary context of a growing US rural-urban divide. In considering the notion of rural-urban polarization as a particular form of political crisis, I also take note of the manner in which notions of the regional slide into the rural and vice versa. Exploring this rural-regional slide, in the second part of this paper I turn my attention to the *Real Housewives of Salt Lake City* (Bravo, 2020 - present) to ask what happens to understandings of space and crisis when the celebrity housewife is dislocated from the more spectacular (bi-coastal) geography of the celebrity city. This section analyzes the affective frictions between the series' imagination of Utah and Salt Lake City through the genres of the rural idyll and frontier and the series' representation of the celebrity housewife as navigating intersecting forms of oppression and crisis associated with the globalized city.

Tjalling Valdés Olmos is a lecturer in the department of Literary and Cultural Analysis at the University of Amsterdam. His research examines the role of genre and affect in representations of rural and hinterland geographies, paying specific attention to how the affective inheritances of settler colonialism manage contemporary and globalized urban-rural/hinterland dynamics.

B3: Celebrity Girlhood in Crisis

Desiring and fearing visibility: Teenage girls' perceptions of tiktoker's celebrity

The main objective of this research is to examine girls' readings and meaning-making processes about celebrities on TikTok. This connects with the tradition of examining how celebrities play a role in young people's identity work (Allen & Mendick, 2013, 2015; Keller & Ringrose, 2015; Jackson et al., 2016). Previous scholarship claimed that the rise of TikTok influencers represents an intensification of the ideals of young female celebrity culture (Kennedy, 2020).

In this context, our research questions are: a) How do young girls conceptualize, perceive, and make sense of the celebrity status of some of the most popular Spanish tiktokers? b) What are the risks and opportunities perceived by young girls about being a famous tiktoker? c) How does this have an impact on their practices and aspirations regarding visibility?

To answer these questions, we have conducted 8 focus groups and 8 in-pair interviews with teenage girls aged 14 to 15 and analyzed transcriptions applying reflexive thematic analysis.

Results show how young girls perceived internet celebrity as something fleeting and unstable that relies on the platform's trends and followers' preferences and, therefore, is not a solid career option. When discussing which tiktokers were more deserving (or undeserving) of their online celebrity, young girls drew on neoliberal discourses of working hard to justify that some of the discussed profiles had a legitimate status. Also, authenticity played a central role, with young girls constantly navigating the double bind of demanding tiktokers to be neither "too real" nor "not real enough" (Duffy & Hund, 2019).

Participants also highlighted the risks associated with social media celebrity (hate speech, online harassment, and lack of privacy), which were framed as the price to pay in exchange for visibility (Duffy et al., 2022). Connected to this, young girls expressed an ambivalence in their own practices and aspirations: on one hand, they desired to be visible and put strategies in practice to achieve it (use of hashtags or participation in viral trends). On the other hand, they connected exposure with vulnerability and expressed a significant fear of how getting viral on this social media platform could jeopardize their reputation.

Maria Castellví-Lloveras is a PhD candidate at the Communication Department of Pompeu Fabra University with a FI-AGAUR fellowship. She is a member of MEDIUM Research Group.

Mercè Oliva is an Associate Professor and Serra Húnter Fellow in Media Studies and Popular Culture at Universitat Pompeu Fabra. Currently, she is the Coordinator of the UNIC Research Group.

“Every Black person that’s done something good got shot in the head”: Girls, Power and Celebrity as Cautionary Tale

> Participant: I don’t want to get shot in the head and I don’t want to be like oh she’s a woman, she can’t do it. This world that you’re in, you can’t do it, it’s a man’s world.
>
> Interviewer: Why are you talking about being shot in the head, who are you thinking of?
>
> Participant: Being shot in the head?
>
> Interviewer: Yeah.
>
> Participant: Every Black person that’s done something good got shot in the head. Martin Luther King. Except for Nelson Mandela. But Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, um what’s his name, Tupac.

This paper offers an intersectional examination of the risks of visibility as perceived by girls in state schools in the UK. Using data from 13 focus groups which asked girls aged 13-16 about their attitudes to celebrities and their own imagined futures, this paper demonstrates that girls’ understanding of celebrity is inflected through a prism of risk that is heavily informed by their own positionality. For example, the verbatim quote above demonstrates a consideration of risk in gendered and racialised terms. Meanwhile other girls raised intersectional issues of class, region, religion, disability and sexuality. This research argues against popular discourse around role models, that young people seeing people who like them in high profile positions of power will inspire them to believe that they can also hold such positions. This data shows that celebrity culture can be seen as a hostile, disciplinary space of crisis and conflict with unequally distributed risk, functioning as much as cautionary tale.

Dr Hannah Yelin is a Reader in Gender, Media and Culture at Oxford Brookes University. Her research examines the politics of visibility. She is the author of *Celebrity Memoir: from Ghostwriting to Gender Politics* (2020) and is working on her second book *Girls, Leadership and Women in the Public Eye* with Dr Michele Paule. She is Director of Cultures of Digital Hate, Convenor of the Celebrity Culture Club, and Chair of the Creative Industries research and Innovation Network. hyelin@brookes.ac.uk

Dr Michele Paule is a Reader in Gender, Media and Audiences at Oxford Brookes University. She is the editor of *Interrogating the Neoliberal Lifecycle: The Limits of Success* (2019) and the author of *Girlhood, Schools, and Media: Popular Discourses of the Achieving Girl*, Routledge (2016). She is working on her second monograph *Girls, Leadership and Women in the Public Eye* with Dr Hannah Yelin. mpaule@brookes.ac.uk

“I’m a normal girl with strong values”: a critical discourse analysis of Spanish influencers’ docurealities

Lifestyle influencers are well-established agents in the creator's economy, pioneers in the professionalization of social media, merging the showcase of their everyday and intimate lives with product advertisements (Abidin, 2016). They embody the neoliberal ideal of self-made entrepreneurial femininity, being able to turn their passion into their profession with effort and dedication (Duffy & Wissinger, 2017). Authenticity and relatability are central in their identity building (Marwick, 2013), and are assets in constant tension with the fact of being successful content creators who seemingly “have it all” (Duffy & Hund, 2015). Within this context, in Spain, docurealities about influencers have proliferated with the promise of being a window to “the real” person behind the influencer and to show a hidden and more honest part of themselves.

This paper asks: a) what is the role of these docurealities in the construction of lifestyle influencers' public persona? and b) what are the underlying social and political discourses that influencers express in them? To do that, we have conducted a critical discourse analysis (CDA) on a sample of four documentaries about some of the most relevant Spanish lifestyle influencers: Dulceida, Lola Lolita, Marta Díaz, and Maria Pombo.

The results unveil three common strands: first, all documentaries narrate the trajectory from the origins to becoming professional and successful influencers by emphasizing their humble beginnings, their unintentional and unexpected success, and their special and unique talent. Second, the four documentaries address a conflict between personal and professional life, where influencers fulfill their professional commitment despite dealing with a personal problem (e.g., a romantic breakup or a relative’s death). Third, the nuclear family is prioritized, and relatives take an active role in developing and expanding influencers’ businesses, taking the role of managers, agents, or assistants. Conclusively, we identify that these discourses reinforce and legitimize the influencers as deserved and successful professionals while they spread conservative and neoliberal social values: effort, sacrifice, and traditional family. Moreover, these traits that are portrayed as personal values of the influencers reveal a political and ideological position that is expressed in a veiled manner.

Isabel Villegas-Simón is a postdoctoral fellow at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra. Her main research interests address the analysis of digital and popular culture from a critical perspective. Since 2021, she has been developing a research project about digital content creators and new social imaginaries within the Spanish context. Her works have been published in *Poetics*, *International Journal of Communication* or *Sex Education*.

Maria Castellví-Lloveras is a PhD candidate at the Communication Department of Pompeu Fabra University with a FI-AGAUR fellowship. She is a member of MEDIUM Research Group.

B4: Celebrity Crises and Media Coverage

Ambedkar's Ascendancy: Celebritisation and Conflict in India's Social Fabric

This paper explores Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's complex legacy, blending celebrity studies perspectives with his socio-political impact in India. Ambedkar's transformation from a social reformer to a symbol of resistance and reverence, especially among the Dalits, echoes Driessen's (2013) concept of celebritisation. He has transcended the boundaries of traditional fame, embodying the traits of a 'celebrified' intellectual and social leader, whose life and work extend beyond mere admiration to a form of cultural and political worship.

Drawing on Sean Redmond's and David Marshall's (2016, 2018) insights into celebrity influence, the article examines how Ambedkar's persona has shaped social and political dialogues in India. His enduring influence, similar to the phenomena described by Redmond and Marshall, extends beyond his lifetime, affecting contemporary politics, social movements, and cultural practices. Ambedkar's celebrity status, stemming from his intellectual prowess and socio-political endeavors, has inspired a form of collective identity and resistance among his followers, a dynamic resonant with Marshall's (2014) ideas on the power of celebrity in shaping public consciousness.

Crystal Abidin's (2018, 2022) analysis of internet celebrity phenomena provides a framework to understand the digital-era proliferation of Ambedkar's legacy. In the age of social media and digital communication, Ambedkar's image and ideals have found new platforms for dissemination and expression, much like the internet celebrities described by Abidin. This digital propagation has played an important role in both sustaining his legacy and sparking contemporary debates about caste and social justice.

The article also engages with the controversies surrounding Ambedkar's legacy, highlighting the dichotomy of reverence and revulsion he evokes, akin to the complex public perceptions often surrounding figures of high celebrity status. His demi-god status among followers contrasts with the aversion from conservative upper castes, a phenomenon that encapsulates the divisive nature of celebrity in the context of deep-rooted social hierarchies.

This paper attempts to integrate celebrity studies perspectives to understand Ambedkar's multifaceted legacy. His journey from a revered leader to a symbol of cultural and political resistance exemplifies the transformative power of celebrity in socio-political realms, making him a subject of enduring fascination and debate across the globe.

Dr. **Vikrant Kishore** is an Associate Professor at the University of Nottingham, China, and an Honorary Fellow at Deakin University, Australia. An accomplished filmmaker, academic, and journalist, he has authored works on Indian cinema, celebrity culture, and intangible cultural heritage. He is involved in organizing film festivals and international conferences.

The Materiality of Celebrity: Le Corbusier & his controversial Unité d'habitation

My paper explores the significance of controversy within the entangled and reciprocal process whereby celebrity is produced. It will elaborate a more complex understanding of the celebrity phenomenon and test a methodological approach that combines more traditional historiography methods with digital humanities tools. It will depict this phenomenon through the perceptions and projections of media of the famous modernist high-rise residential housing typology, the Unité d'habitation, designed by the architect Le Corbusier. It considers Le Corbusier, one of the most recognisable names from architectural history, as a technocelebrity (TC); a celebritized embodiment of technological change that translated into social progress through the enhancement and sustenance of quality of life, particularly in the urban environment.

The story unfolds from the construction of two particularly notorious examples of the Unité d'habitation typology, one in Marseille and the other in Berlin. I will situate their significance in both a historical and social context before delving into the controversies that plagued their press coverage in both local and international press. In my wider research into the media coverage of Le Corbusier, I found that both projects generated a significant amount of media coverage. By affording the same degree of agency to both human and non-human actors in the mechanisms behind the emergence of a technocelebrity, the housing blocks can regarded as material manifestations of the celebrity of Le Corbusier; actors within the process of his celebrity, which this paper traces. I argue, using text mining to generate the commonly occurring keywords and a close reading of the article corpus, that aside from their newsworthy qualities alongside key global topics such as housing and new modalities of dwelling, it was the element of controversy that made them attractive topics for the media. Furthermore, it was Le Corbusier's own fervent interactions with the press on the topic of the Unité d'habitation that fueled their newsworthy allure. This case allows me to illustrate the tension between celebrification and celebritisation in the celebrity phenomenon.

Natalia Kvitkova is a doctoral researcher part of the KU Leuven project "The Rise of the 'Technocelebrity'. The Politics of Social Expertise in the Public Careers of Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius" which investigates the entangled and reciprocal process whereby celebrity is produced and its connection to society, media and capitalism.

The 'first' 'Miss World's' 'oral history': a case study of lying on national television in 1988

The ninth BBC Children in Need telethon, broadcast on 18th November 1988, included a short segment about the Miss World contest, where Terry Wogan and Joanna Lumley interviewed first the winner of that year's Miss World contest, Linda Pétursdóttir, and then a 94-year-old woman named Alice Hyde, who Wogan introduced as the winner of the first ever Miss World contest,

which, he claimed, was held in 1912. Responding to Wogan's questions, Alice presented her oral testimony about her time participating in the contest. But almost everything that Alice said was a lie: she had never won the Miss World contest, the first Miss World contest took place in 1951, the first national beauty contest in the UK took place in 1907-8 (and she didn't win that), and while Alice had won a contest in the 1910s, it didn't take place in 1912 and it wasn't a beauty contest. In this paper I will look into what actually happened in Alice's life in the 1910s (winning the 1918-1919 'Pictures Girl' contest) and early 1920s that, through a lengthy chain of events, resulted in Alice lying on national television I her 90s. I will show that Alice was almost certainly not merely misremembering or merely miscategorising, and that her principal reason for lying on national television was that she was backed into doing it by tabloid newspaper misreporting in the months leading up to the telethon. I will show that this case reveals much about the workings of talent contests, about how gate-keepers police the boundaries of celebrity and about why we lie.

Andrew Shail is a specialist in film culture before 1930. He is currently a Senior Lecturer in Film at Newcastle University. His books include the edited collection Reading the Cinematograph (2011) and the monograph The Origins of the Film Star System (2019). He was co-editor of Early Popular Visual Culture 2011-2022 inclusive.

The Viper Room: A case study in mythology, liminality, celebrity and media scrutiny

This paper considers the cultural symbolism of The Viper Room; a small, but influential Hollywood rock n' roll dive bar, known for being owned, between 1993 and 2004 by actor Johnny Depp, for being the haunt of A-list celebrities looking for live music, wild partying and a house policy of discretion, and for being the venue where actor River Phoenix died from an accidental overdose at the height of his fame.

Situated at 8852 West Sunset Boulevard, on that infamous and iconic two-mile stretch of road that runs from a now dilapidated West Hollywood to the exclusive Beverly Hills, in its 1990s heyday, The Viper Room was at once a site of celebrity crisis and celebration, trading heavily upon the Sunset Strip's reputation which, due to being outside of LAPD jurisdiction until the 1980s, was considered a liminal site, where LA's rich, famous and notorious could unwind in its strip clubs, casinos, prohibition bars, expensive restaurants and exclusive hotels.

Equally though, in November 1966, frustration at police anti-loitering tactics in the area sparked the 'hippie riots' involving youths drawn to the space by its 'hip' reputation. As such, the idea of The Viper Room also draws on a larger Los Angeles mythos whereby celebrity, glamour, conspicuous consumption, exclusivity, authenticity, youth, hedonism and the countercultural coalesce. These potent ideological associations, combined with larger-than-life tales about celebrity exploits in the club have turned the bar into a site of pilgrimage for celebrities, the paparazzi and a film-fascinated public, a location of such significance within Hollywood myth and psychogeography, and LA's cultural economy that the recent prospect of its demolition has caused popular outcry.

Using photographic imagery, contemporaneous and retrospective press interviews and articles, and celebrity autobiographies, this paper considers The Viper Room as a site that embodies both a Hollywood ethos and the complex public/private dichotomy of celebrity culture; a place Depp conceived of as being where famous people “won’t feel like they’re on display” but which inevitably became a site of prurient fascination, in all its glamorous yet grubby glory.

Dr Ellen Wright is a multidisciplinary scholar whose expertise covers the leisure industries, consumer culture, and broader social contexts surrounding Hollywood cinema. Her research frequently examines glamour, celebrity and labour, and she is currently writing her first monograph, on the photographic depiction of Hollywood, as a site and an idea, entitled *Shooting Stars: Intimacy, identity and ideology in Hollywood photography*. Ellen.wright@dmu.ac.uk

B5: Contesting the Female

Aspiring stars or runways? Girlhood, Hollywood celebrity and the rhetoric of failure, 1920 - 1929

Since the mid-1910s, cinema was favored as a site where female fame could be produced, debated, and imagined (Stamp 2000; Fischer 2016; Frymus 2020). One of the ways in which American film magazines and popular press appealed to young female readers was through the discussion of film acting as a laudable ambition. In 1915, a prominent journalist Louella Parsons – soon to be a ruling queen of the celebrity gossip – run a column titled "How to Become a Movie Actress" in *Chicago Herald,* advising readers on how to realise their dreams. Simultaneously, critics discussed Hollywood in reference to moral – often sexual – threats that awaited young women in their pursuit of celebrity status (Anselmo 2017). Public commentators grew increasingly worried that movie fame can entice fans – young women in particular – to commit transgressive acts, or even push them to a life of crime.

This paper investigates the rhetoric of danger inscribed in such gendered narratives. To that end, it examines a series of reports on girl runaways and aspiring starlets circulated in the 1920s discourse. In doing so, it aims to destabilize the concept of historical celebrity, broadening to include those whose time in the spotlight was fleeting, and whose attempts at stardom were deemed unsuccessful by contemporary sources. While mass media painted film professionalism as a zero-sum game, where a leading woman stands for success, and an aspirant to screen fame signifies failure, portraits of specific individuals show us that their experiences were much more nuanced. Rather than seeing girl runaways as emblematic of failure, "of potential never realized, promise unfulfilled," (Gregory 2020, 39), I use them as case studies that complicate conventional understandings of girlhood, fandom, and celebrity.

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Agata Frymus is a feminist film historian and Lecturer in Film, TV, and Screen Studies at Monash University Malaysia. She is the author of *Damsels and Divas: European Stardom in Silent Hollywood* (Rutgers University Press, 2020). Her work has been published in *Feminist Media Studies, Celebrity Studies Journal,* and *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies,* among others.
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Ali Wong and her “counter-stereotype” Asian American Woman image in Taiwan

After her initial Netflix stand-up special "Baby Cobra" went viral in 2016, comedian and actress Ali Wong has gained prominence and was renowned for her sharp critiques of gender differences and the “atypical” portrayal of her Asian American identity (bold, hilarious, and unapologetic). Following the releases of her subsequent stand-up specials, "Hard Knock Wife" (2018) and "Don Wong" (2022), along with the acclaimed comedy-drama series "Beef" on Netflix, her popularity has extended beyond the United States, reaching a global audience. While Wong's representation is already complex due to the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity, the transnational flow of popular culture, which reversely translates the Asian American narrative “back” into Asia, complicates her reception in Asian countries.

This essay explores the transnational circulation of Wong’s "counter-stereotype" Asian American woman figure in three sections. The first section analyzes Wong’s performances through the lens of representation theory and argues that her “opposite of traditional” persona is still a form of stereotyping. Racial stereotypes often function in binary opposition, portraying Asian American women as either meek and submissive ("Madame Butterfly") or aggressive and domineering (the "Dragon Ladies") in Western popular culture. Shifting between these extremes does not alter the fundamental nature of othering. However, the portrayal of outspoken Asians aligns with multicultural discourse in Western liberal democratic societies and fits into Netflix's cultural politics and global expansion strategy. The second section discusses the alignment of Wong's rise with Netflix's expansion in Asia, noting the platform's dominance and cultural influence in Asian countries, including Taiwan. Netflix entered Asia in 2015, and subscriptions later accounted for the highest contribution, reaching 66% of the quarter's total during the Covid-19 pandemic. Asian-led American productions, like the television series "Beef," their diasporic narratives act as a bridge for Asian audiences overseas to gain cultural proximity with transnational content. The last section examines the reception of “counter-stereotype” Asian images, using Wong as an example. It explores how her wild persona is interconnected with her success, and together the image of the “ideal” Americanized Asian woman is celebrated and incorporated into the discourses of commodified post-feminism and elite discourse in Taiwan.

Tiffany Yuan-Chen Hong earned her B.S. in biochemistry from UC Davis, an M.A. in Taiwanese Literature from NCKU, and is currently a Ph.D. student in communication at National Cheng Chi University in Taiwan. Her research is grounded in cultural studies, postcolonialism studies, inter-Asia popular culture, and television studies.

Rafaela Aparicio: Pluriemployment on Screen

The presentation examines the career of Rafaela Aparicio, a renowned Spanish comedic figure in cinema, with a focus on her distinctive approach to multiple roles on screen. In an interview with RTVE (Autoretrato, 1984), the actress stated that at the age of seventy, she had not stopped working and could never retire, combining her film career with theater. Following in the footsteps of great

comediennes throughout the history of film, Aparicio crafted a cinematic universe that reflects her profound desire to continue working tirelessly.

Her universe, more comedic than tragic, narrates the story of a woman ensnared in the obligation of labor. Throughout her career, she assumed roles such as maids, cleaners, caregivers, and janitors, embodying the destiny of a working woman. Even when portraying a mother in "Mamá cumple 100 años" (Carlos Saura, 1979), the ultimate symbol of work and endless care, Aparicio continued to care for her children despite their lethal intentions, revealing the persistent theme of caregiving in her portrayal of the dysfunctional family. By connecting her roles with her personal life, this presentation aims to highlight the relationship between the actress's personal life, as an indefatigable worker, and her on-screen characters.

Samantha da Silva Diefenthaeler (Itaituba, Brazil, 1990) holds dual bachelor's degrees in Journalism from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil) and the University of Lisbon (Portugal), as well as a Master's in Contemporary Film and Audiovisual Studies from Pompeu Fabra University, where she completed her doctoral thesis focused on the comedic roles of women in the history of cinema. Currently, she is a postdoctoral researcher in training at Pompeu Fabra, affiliated with the CINEMA research group.

Losing 640 million with one finger？A postfeminist reading of Baihe Bai’s stardom in Chinese film industry

Xiaoniu Dianying (or Chinese chick flicks) is an emerging film genre in China that began to attract increasing attention in the 2010s. One of the representative works in this regard is Bai Baihe's *Love Is Not Blind* (2011). The film has grossed 320 million RMB at the box office for a fraction of the cost, and thus has been described as the “highest yielding domestic film” (Chen, 2012). Bai has also been hailed as the face of this genre for her vibrant performance in five subsequent Chinese chick flicks. In all of these films, Bai invariably played an urban, well-educated young woman who is depicted as empowered postfeminist subject through their braveness of chasing romantic relationships. In addition to her successful career, another celebrated highlight is her happy and fulfilling marriage with singer Yufan Chen. The successful career and personal happiness made Bai an ideal postfeminist icon in China who can happily “have it all”. However, this positive situation was shattered by the leaking of her cheating scandal in 2017. Since then, Bai 's career came to a complete halt for almost three years before she began to make a gradual comeback in 2021.

As Dyer (1972) states, star image is constructed by various media, including roles, gossip, media coverage, etc. These forms of media not only constituted to Bai’s stardom, but also ultimately led to her downfall. Drawing on postfeminist theories, this paper focusing on Bai's on-screen persona and related off screen coverage between 2008 – 2021, to investigate how Bai’s star image was constructed through her screen performance and personal traits that conform to social expectations towards women in a neoliberal postfeminist landscape. More importantly, how Bai’s stardom was dismantled by a media scandal and societal prejudices against women under the specific Chinese socio-political

environment. Furthermore, we also attempt to examine how Bai's changing career trajectory intertexts with the dynamic Chinese gender discourses by comparing changes in her on-screen image before and after the scandal.

Liao Zhang is a final year PhD candidate at the University of Nottingham. Her research interests include Chinese and Western (post)feminism, girl's culture and girlhood cinema, female (inter)subjectivity and female spectatorship, female celebrities and women's film festivals in East Asia.
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Ning Zhang is a final year PhD candidate in Film and Television Studies at the University of Nottingham. His research focus on the construction of the collective memory of Hong Kong passed away star Leslie Cheung in mainland China through offline and online commemorations.

B6: Queering Celebrity

Şokopop, The Nostalgic Cringe: Once Upon a Time in Turkey

“Şokopop” (Chocopop) launched as a YouTube channel and Instagram account in 2018 and quickly became a popular culture phenomenon of contemporary Turkey. Led by Ekim Acun, the queer digital creator, Şokopop delves into the tabloid magazines of 90’s and early 2000’s Turkey and revives the daring popular culture scenery of the recent past in the contemporary digital media. Şokopop offers a nostalgic cringe as the opening line salutes the audience by "welcome to the deepest magazine hole in Turkey where you'll meet the scrap, vulgarity and scandal". The tabloid news of 90' and 2000's Turkey covered in Şokopop shelters a variety of scandals and daring comments of the celebrities where Acun frames the flashy past magazine incident as a narrator in drag costumes with mask that covers his face. While Şokopop's content is not limited to the celebrity queer performances in Turkey's recent past, the striking critical discourse of Şokopop emerge in the representation of LGBTQ+ among the celebrity crowd. In a tabloid news covered by Şokopop from the 2002, Özcan Deniz an -in the closet- pop-arabesk star brings the sensational headline "I have a distinct interpretation of manhood" as he poses top naked with unbuttoned jeans revealing his underwear generously gazing into the camera with dreamy eyes (sokopop [@sok-o-pop] June, 2023). In another one Bülent Ersoy, transsexual Turkish music diva is portrayed breastfeeding a baby -a shot taken from a movie she stars- praising her relationship with her adopted son in 1997. In his caption Şokopop creator Acun states that Ersoy's motherhood did not receive a hostile reaction in society back in the day as it surely would in 2023 Turkey with the hashtag "lgbtrightsarehumanrights" (sokopop [@sok-o-pop] March, 2023).

The significance of Şokopop’s content emerges in the diversity it reveals through the representation of queer performances in Turkey's recent past compared to the contemporary conservative cultural climate. Islamic Conservative account of Ak Party that has been on the rule for the last twenty years certainly has great impact on such disparagement of the queer identity. Emergent nostalgic cringe for the queer coverage of Şokopop in 90's and early 2000's grounds on the strict heteronormative grounds established by the Islamic conservative government through the years. Placing the hashtag "onceuponatimeinturkey" Şokopop manifests itself for spotlighting the conservative transformation on the cultural tendencies of Turkey especially on the representation of queer in celebrity culture.

Şokopop Youtube Channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCuWU6m3EH-kTjYrFm2A2N1g

Şokopop IG: https://www.instagram.com/sok_o_pop/?hl=en

Ekim Zafer Acun IG: https://www.instagram.com/ekim.acun/?hl=en

Deniz Gürgen Atalay, PhD, studies the historiographical performance of the film medium. She is the author of the book "Historiography of World War II in Contemporary American Cinema" (2018). She is an Assistant Prof. in the Bahçeşehir University Film and TV Department and continues her research on film theory, popular culture, and gender studies.

What in #TÁRnation? Cate Blanchett and the "real" Lydia Tár

For Cate Blanchett's lesbian fandom, *Tár* (Todd Field, 2022) presents a problem. The film features the star as a self-described "u-haul lesbian," a seemingly exciting choice for a fandom that has been circulating extensive Blanchett-as-lesbian fantasies since the release of *Carol* (Todd Haynes, 2015). Unlike those fantasies, in which Blanchett is generally constructed as a welcoming recipient of lesbian admiration and desire, however, *Tár*'s titular character abuses those who admire or desire her. From attacking a young queer person of colour's identity politics to preying on the young women aspiring to be like (or with) her, Lydia Tár is not as easily romanticized as Blanchett's previous lesbian portrayals. Despite this, Cate Blanchett's lesbian fandom eagerly rebranded itself as "#TÁRnation" at the film's release, with *Tár* once again firmly cementing Blanchett's status as a lesbian icon online.

This paper explores the seemingly conflicting relationship between *Tár* and lesbian fantasies surrounding Blanchett in the reception of *Tár*. Through the lens of Katrin Horn (2017)'s theorization of camp as "detached attachment," I argue that fans' construction of a "real" Lydia Tár offers a way for Blanchett's lesbian fans to enjoy the similarities between *Tár* and their Blanchett fantasies, such as her masculine fashion and confident attitude, while simultaneously remaining critical of the problematics of loving a character who is a sexual predator. Originally inspired by confusion around whether the film was a biopic of a real person or not, the "real" Lydia Tár is circulated through memes placing her in purposely unrealistic scenarios; parodied in the Twitter account @LydiaTarReal that constructs a coherent, entirely extratextual narrative around her; and reported on as if she was real in *Slate* and *Vulture.* The overemphasis on her "realness" turns the "real" Lydia Tár in a vessel of camp excess through which a communal criticism of the predatory type is communicated even as it is enjoyed. In doing so, Blanchett's portrayal of the character in the film is freed up for identification and desire in ways easily integrated into the larger fantasy of a lesbian Cate Blanchett.

Esmé Fransen is a PhD candidate in Cinema Studies at Stockholm University. Her research interests include queer reception, lesbian stardom, and audience-industry relations in Hollywood. Currently, she is working on a project exploring the interaction between queer politics, reception, and market structures in the construction of lesbian icons in Hollywood.

LGBTQ+ microcelebrities in the post-2022 Russia: New challenges and new survival strategies

The February 2022 full-fledged invasion of the Russian Federation into the neighbouring state of Ukraine brought about a geopolitical crisis in the region, as well as worldwide. The socio-political situation within Russia underwent dramatic changes, too. Thus, the new legislation aimed at banning 'fake news' about the war in Ukraine, which was introduced in March 2023, forced the remaining independent media outlets working in Russia at the time of the invasion to either stop their activities or to move their operations outside of Russia. A new crackdown on the civil rights movements resulted in multiple arrests of anti-war protesters, human-rights activists and non-activists alike,

resulting in particularly harsh prison sentences.

Russia's war in Ukraine turned out to have devastating consequences for Russian LGBTQ communities, too. Firstly, a high number of LGBTQ-rights activists fled the country immediately or soon after the invasion, fearing for their personal safety. Secondly, in October 2022, the notorious law banning promotion of non-traditional sexualities among minors, which was introduced at the federal level in 2013, was extended to all age groups. This predictably resulted in a sharp decrease of queer-themed content circulated through various Russophone media. In July 2023, transgender transition was banned, and on 30th November 2023, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation ruled that the non-existent organisation under the name 'International LGBT movement' be considered extremist and banned inside the country.

The above has put the Russian LGBTQ microcelebrities under an unprecedented amount of pressure, both personally and professionally. The proposed paper aims to investigate the range of discursive strategies applied by these celebrities for overcoming the new waves of political oppression. The analysis presented in the paper draws from multiple media sources, both mainstream media outlets and social media platforms (YouTube, Instagram, Telegram, Twitter, Facebook, TikTok). The microcelebrities whose case studies are selected for the Critical Discourse Analysis in the proposed talk represent a wide range of non-heteronormative identities, such as gay men and lesbian women, trans*gender and non-binary persons, bi- and pansexual men and women, as well as drag performers and drag make-up artists.

Dr **Olga Andreevskikh** is a Senior Lecturer in Russian Language and Culture at Tampere University, Finland. Her research focuses on contemporary Russophone media and culture, in particular – on (self)-representations of queer communities. Olga has recently published her first monograph with Routledge, titled 'Media and Masculinities in Contemporary Russia: Constructing Non-heteronormativity'.

"It could be sacrilegious in other cultures, but to us Brits, that's the way to do it": Conflict and Cultural Resistance in *RuPaul's Drag Race UK*

RuPaul's Drag Race, the reality competition series in which drag performers compete for the title of the 'next drag superstar', has experienced global success. Given the international appeal of its original American version, the series has grown into a global franchise – translating into multiple local and national forms. This paper will explore the conflicts which have emerged as a result of this translation, by focusing on a case study of one of these localisations, namely *RuPaul's Drag Race UK.* This emerged as the first season outside of the United States to feature RuPaul as host, and provides a valuable insight into the framing of British drag culture, in conjunction with significant American involvement and production. Methodologically, the paper draws upon qualitative textual analysis of the first season of *Drag Race UK,* which aired between October and November 2019 over 8 hour-long episodes.

This paper will argue that this season places a conflict between British drag culture, embodied by its contestants, alongside American drag culture, largely

embodied by RuPaul. Furthermore, this conflict extends to the cultural experiences of the British contestants, which do not mirror the American hegemonic understandings of British identity which the season reinforces. These conflicts are manifested in three central tensions throughout the season. Firstly, the British contestants are seen to criticize Cheryl Hole, a fellow contestant, who is deemed to replicate American drag culture, at the expense of authentically representing British drag identity. Secondly, British guest judges, namely celebrities and pop-culture figures, defend contestants who are criticised by RuPaul, as well as Michelle Visage, the second American presence on the judging panel. This personifies the cultural conflict, and further highlights tensions between cultural authenticity and success within the franchise. Thirdly, ultimately, contestants who do not conform to these American cultural understandings of British drag and identity are punished, with RuPaul remaining as the ultimate authority within the season. Overall, this paper will argue that this conflict maintains the dominance of American cultural imperialism, which is central to this local translation, and fails to reward those who subvert this constructed superiority.

Violet Thompson is a PhD candidate in the School of Journalism, Media and Culture, Cardiff University. Her thesis considers the global expansion of the *Drag Race* franchise, assessing how this success has influenced its representations of local drag performances and cultural identity. Her research interests include the mainstreaming of drag culture, representations of gender non-conformity, and queer pop culture more broadly. She also holds an MA in Journalism, Media and Communications from Cardiff University.
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Masterclasses

The Celebrity Studies conference of 2024 includes a special format: masterclasses for early career researchers (ERC), advanced PhDs or early-stage postdocs. The masterclasses, moderated by members of the conference organization team, will **include informal discussions on work provided by the ERC and sharing of ideas in a safe and constructive environment**; feedback will be offered from keynote speakers and relevant senior academics. Masterclasses are first and foremost **interactions between ERCs and selected senior researchers**. Other conference delegates are free to audit masterclasses.

Please note that the ERCs who have volunteered to participate in masterclasses are young and/or beginning scholars, who have put **their trust in us as an academic community**. It is essential that we create and maintain an **open, safe, constructive and respectful environment** during the masterclass.

M1: “She’s So Lucky, She’s a Star”: Manufacturing Britney Spears — Fans, Journalists and the #FreeBritney Movement

Respondents: Erin A. Meyers, Jaap Kooijman

Description of Project:

My dissertation-in-progress aims to bridge a gap between fandom, celebrity, and journalism studies. Through in-depth interviews with Britney Spears fans, #FreeBritney activists, and journalists, this dissertation examines the sensationalism and paparazzi culture that dominated mid-2000s print tabloids. It also provides a study of the #FreeBritney movement.

First, my dissertation is a star study of pop star Britney Spears, which analyzes her significance as an entertainer as well as the media representation of Spears. Spears’s career serves as a conduit to examine the evolution of tabloid and celebrity journalism since the late 1990s. Because of when Spears became famous (in the late 1990s), her career intersects several critical shifts in media history including: (1) the emergence of *Us Weekly* as a powerhouse celebrity gossip magazine (2) the launch of online gossip sites such as TMZ and Gawker (3) the paparazzi boom of the mid-2000s and (4) the emergence of participatory celebrity gossip blogs and online forums. For Britney Spears, the convergence of these events created an ideal environment for her to be maligned and stalked by the tabloid press.

Drawing on extensive archival research, I show how Spears was represented in the tabloid and celebrity media throughout her career. Popular media narratives about Spears, particularly her mental health, emboldened the public acceptance of Spears’s court-approved conservatorship that was in place from 2008 to 2021. I also draw on interviews with former celebrity and tabloid journalists who covered Spears to show how these media narratives were crafted in newsrooms.

Second, my dissertation provides a case study of fandom journalism within the #FreeBritney movement. Throughout the course of #FreeBritney, Britney fans took on the role of investigating Spears’s conservatorship. Using Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and other online platforms, fans mobilized and advocated for the termination of the conservatorship while often performing the role of professional journalists. They shared and crowdsourced information about legal documents, scooped major media outlets during court proceedings, and emboldened far-right conspiracy theories. The #FreeBritney movement acted in service to and to the detriment of professional reporters and mainstream media outlets.

Joanna Arcieri is Ph.D. candidate in Communications at Columbia Journalism School. Her dissertation research focuses on celebrity journalism, Britney Spears, and the #FreeBritney movement. Her reporting has appeared on Buzzfeed and Jersey Digs. She holds in MA in Media Studies from The New School and a BA in Film Studies from Mount Holyoke College.
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M2: Female Fatality and Censorship: the Femme Fatale Archetype in the Spanish Francoist Cinema (1950-1975)

Respondents: Nandana Bose, TBA

Description of project:

This thesis studies the femme fatale archetype in Spanish Francoist cinema from 1950 to 1975 through the star studies methodology. It is a compendium PhD project that analyzes the performance and the star image of the actresses that incarnated the archetype in this cinematography. In the first place, it studies the performance of stars like Katia Loritz, María Félix, or Emma Penella, known for interpreting the archetype. It investigates if their acting imitates the Hollywood femme fatale —taking as models the work of actresses like Barbara Stanwyck, Rita Hayworth, or Lana Turner— or if they proposed new gestures and expressions associated with the Spanish cinematographic and theatrical performance tradition. In the second place, it explores the performance of the parodic fatal woman, with stars like Gracita Morales, Niní Marshall or Laura Valenzuela. Third and last, this research examines the star image in film and press of influential performers like Katia Loritz, analyzing the contradictions between incarnating a transgressive archetype and being a star during a dictatorship with repression and censorship. Authors who studied the femme fatale archetype —as Ann Kaplan, Mary Ann Doane, or Núria Bou—, the performance concerning film genres —as Donna Peberdy or Richard de Cordova— and the personification/impersonation in the star image construction —as Barry King and Paul McDonald— are essential for this PhD thesis.

Nuria Cancela is a fourth-year PhD student at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona, Spain) while receiving an FPU grant (FPU19/02441) from the Spanish Ministry of Universities. Her thesis studies the femme fatale archetype in the Spanish Francoist cinema from 1950 to 1975. nuria.cancela@upf.edu

M3: Celebrity Feminism and Jameela Jamil

Respondents: Brenda R. Weber, Maryn Wilkinson

Description of project:

My PhD explores the role of celebrities working within the film and television industry in mainstreaming concepts of feminism. The chapter-in-progress I would like to present as part of one of the Masterclasses for Early Career Researchers is my case study of Jameela Jamil, whose controversial celebrity persona could be seen to be in crisis as she turns against the very systems that contributed to her success. My chapter explores Jamil's use of digital platforms to express her political views and the tensions inherent in her celebrity persona. Jamil's celebrity status makes her a recognisable figure and gives her a platform from which to critique the systems of power that she is a part of. It is arguably Jamil's beauty and charisma that gave her a career in television, and yet her outspoken approach to her exploration of feminism is mainly targeted at the diet and beauty industries in her pursuit of changing the culture around body image. I argue that Jamil's personal experiences both allow her to demonstrate authenticity as a celebrity feminist but also make her vulnerable to critique through her participation in these systems. I examine her British-Asian nationality in relation to her confrontational persona and the ways in which this will be seen through the lens of gender and race. I will explore the difficulty of navigating issues such as body positivity or neutrality as a thin woman who is beautiful and rich, and the ways in which the persona she honed during her early career both helps and hinders how she presents herself to the world now through social media and her podcast. The authenticity of celebrities is becoming ever more important due to the seemingly accessible nature of social media and its ability to give the audience a peek behind the scenes. I will examine the ways in which Jamil could be seen to use this sense of authenticity as a branding tool to draw in her audience, with the intention that by exposing her own vulnerabilities she can distance herself from the media and beauty industries.

Siân Hunter is a sixth year part-time PhD student in Art, Media, and American Studies at the University of East Anglia. Her current research explores the role of cinema and other screen media in mainstreaming concepts of feminism through celebrity. sian.k.hunter@uea.ac.uk

M4: The Loyal Fans of Problematic Faves: On the audiences of immoral artists

Respondents: Anthea Taylor, Tanya Cook

Description of project:

The mythologically masculine figure of the creative genius has often been employed to minimize and excuse violence against marginalized people. In exchange for great art, audiences might be more than willing to look the other way when women, people of color, queer people and children get hurt. With the arrival of social media, the violent price of art by so-called “problematic faves” has become harder to ignore. Their crimes are all over the internet. When knowledge of the wrongdoings of artists spreads, it becomes challenging for fans to ignore the reprehensible behavior of people like Michael Jackson, Roman Polanski, Louis CK, Woody Allen, Bill Cosby, Kevin Spacey and R. Kelly. In my next research project, I wish to reflect on the dilemma this leaves for audiences: how do they defend their investments in art made by horrible people?

Annelot Prins is pursuing her PhD in American Studies at the Graduate School of North American Studies at the Freie Universität, Berlin. Her research is grounded in Feminist Theory and Celebrity Studies, and mostly focuses on American popular culture. Currently, she is developing a research proposal that aims to examine the consumption practices of fans of tainted celebrities like Woody Allen, Michael Jackson, Bill Cosby and Roman Polanski.
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M5: Why Were They Invited? ‘Unwelcome’ Celebrities as a Legitimation Approach for Indie Film Festivals in China

Respondents: Milly Williamson, P. David Marshall

Description of project:

This research goes beyond the conventional examination of the commercial value of celebrities at film festivals to explore their socio-political dimensions. This study examines how film festivals strategically leverage celebrities in their outreach to engage with locals and attain legitimacy in the host city. It sheds light on the role of celebrities in building relations between festivals and local communities. The research investigates how two independent and artistically labelled film festivals in China’s inland cities employ young celebrities, specifically ‘liuliang celebrities’ (流量明星), as ambassadors or guest jurors for their festivals despite their immature professional expertise. Drawing on data collected from interviews and field research, this paper argues that celebrities function as key communicators to bridge the gap between indie film festivals and the general public, while also helping festivals gain the support of local governments. Overall, this study explores the unconventional role that celebrities assume at film festivals. It highlights the significance of celebrities in establishing connections between film festivals and their respective locales.

Hui Wang, a PhD student in the Geography Department at the University of Liverpool, delves into the role of cultural economy, specifically Chinese cinema, in the evolution of cities within China’s inland regions. Her ongoing dissertation research is highlighted in a published article in the peer-reviewed journal *City, Culture and Society*.

C1: Celebrity Scandal

Avoiding celebrity scandal in 1890s West End Theatre: the shrinking lion-tamer and the untameable lioness.

In the beginning of the 1890s, the theatre actor Johnston Forbes-Robertson was employed by John Hare with a sufficiently established celebrity that dramatists wrote plays to suit his celebrity persona. Arthur Wing Pinero's plays were popular with audiences, however, due to its controversial presentation of a sex-worker and fear of offending Victorian audiences, Hare categorically refused to present Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* intended for Forbes-Robertson. A rival theatre manager, George Alexander, assumed the play, engaged Mrs Patrick Campbell (Stella Campbell) for the leading part and his gamble proved exceptionally lucrative and catapulted Campbell's fame. Hare did not pass up the opportunity of producing Pinero's next play, *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*, nor did he fail to engage Campbell – the latest stage sensation – alongside Forbes-Robertson. This pairing proved popular with audiences and so, when in 1895 Forbes-Robertson took a sub-lease of Henry Irving's Lyceum Theatre, he engaged Campbell to star alongside him and thus began a partnership that was both popular and disastrous.

Forbes-Robertson's celebrity hinged on the construct of him as an aesthetic, sensitive gentleman and courtly lover, while Campbell's reputation stemmed from roles depicting fallen women. The pairing inspired George Bernard Shaw to write *Pygmalion* as he blended the on and off-stage personae of the celebrity pair into Henry Higgins (professor of phonetics) and Eliza Doolittle (a flower seller who wants to improve her manners and elocution to enable her to work in a shop). The partnership was initially commercially successful but conflicts emerged when the stars deviated from their established personae.

Furthermore, off-stage crises surmounted as their personal lives and off-stage behaviours interfered with their business arrangements. Rumours of a romantic relationship between them circulate in memoirs from the period although (tellingly) each of the individuals make little mention of the other in their own memoirs. The rumour was potentially damaging to the reputations of both actors – Campbell had a husband working abroad. Towards the end of the century the relationship collapsed and, on the brink of a mental breakdown, Forbes-Robertson fled to Europe to escape scandal. This paper explores these crises and scandal that informed the actors' (and thus the industry's) future careers and businesses.

Hannah Unwin completed her Ph.D thesis "Johnston Forbes-Robertson and the Functions of Theatrical Celebrity, 1880-1920" at Newcastle University in 2020. Her MA in Shakespeare and Theatre is from The Shakespeare Institute, Birmingham University, and her BA in English Literature is from Salford University. She lives in the Shetland Islands where she teaches English.

“My Wife/Sister Can Do No Wrong” —— A Case Study of scandal, nisu fans and Cai Xukun

This paper explores star scandal and nisu fan loyalty through a case study centered on Cai Xukun, a controversial and popular idol in China. Unlike the traditional star-making system, his popularity largely benefits from China's booming fan economy. Controversy centres on his androgynous image, which deviates from traditional masculinity. These "sissy" male images are criticized in China for having deformed aesthetics and are considered inferior to male celebrities who adhere to traditional gender hierarchies. In addition, Cai Xukun’s fans are widely criticized as irrational even “crazy”.

The scandal which forms my case study here has sparked widespread discussion on Chinese social media. It centres on accusation of forcing his girlfriend to have an abortion. Unlike fans who use positive posts and hashtags to create scandal-clarifying content online, some of Cai Xukun’s fan groups, especially those identified as “nisu fans” (who generally emphasize the femininity of male celebrities or portray them as women), showed intriguing reactions. Far from giving up or withdrawing their support, nisu fans constructed a unique narrative that portrayed Cai Xukun as a "bad girl" and a "slut". This image aligns with the fantasy of nisu fans that "Cai Xukun is a girl". This paper aims to reveal how nisu fandom resists and negotiates its fan positions and practices by carving out non-traditional avenues to express loyalty in a cancel culture. Fans' support for idols in the face of scandals that prompted cancellations has ignited discussions about overhauling the stars industry, reinforcing stereotypes of toxic fandom.

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“Does She Smile, Or Does She Mouth ‘F*ck You Forever’?”: Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford, and the Celebrity Feud in the 1930s

Although the Joan Crawford/Bette Davis feud is arguably the best-remembered star rivalry of the classic Hollywood era, immortalised on screen in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (Aldrich, 1962), this conflict with Bette Davis was not the first public celebrity feud Crawford had been involved in. This paper will focus on an earlier rivalry, equally documented both on and off screen: that between Joan Crawford and her MGM contemporary Norma Shearer.

Much like Crawford and Davis, Crawford and Shearer shared the screen in one well-remembered film: *The Women* (Cukor, 1939), in which Shearer portrayed society matron Mary Haines, while Crawford played shopgirl Crystal Allen, who successfully steals away Mary’s milquetoast husband, Stephen – and who pays the price at the end. This was not, however, the first time the two stars had featured together; in the much less frequently remembered *Lady of the Night* (Bell, 1925), a young Shearer, already a significant star, had played both main characters, while a young Lucille LeSueur, then a bit player making her screen

debut, was chosen to play Shearer's body double. Within the year, LeSueur would adopt the stage name 'Joan Crawford' – and the rest is history.

This paper will therefore focus on the significance of both films in terms of the stars' feud, and the ways in which we can read within the production history of these films some common themes relevant to their rivalry, connected to celebrity, gender, and class privilege. At the same time, however, I will add to this an investigation of how, between 1925 and 1939, fan magazines such as *Photoplay* and *Motion Picture* brought this ongoing rivalry to the public's attention, in turn exploiting it – for example through a 1939 magazine cover which featured Shearer and Crawford's profiles alongside the line "They Don't Like Each Other" – and attempting to defuse it. In this way, I will investigate how this long-lasting feud was used for publicity purposes both on screen and off, and how it was used by MGM and by the popular press to help shape the star personae of both Crawford and Shearer along the way.

Lies Lanckman is Senior Lecturer in Film at UWE Bristol. She is the co-founder of NoRMMA, the Network of Research: Movies, Magazines, Audiences, and editor of *Stars, Fan Magazines and Audiences: Desire by Design* (2022). Her research focuses primarily on stardom, fan magazines, and the career of Norma Shearer.

C2: #MeToo 1

In Plain Sight: British television exposés of Jimmy Savile, Rolf Harris and Russell Brand

The 2012 revelations that the late broadcaster Jimmy Savile was a serial sexual abuser became one of the biggest British media stories of the 21st century so far. Subsequent years have seen several further exposés and allegations surrounding sexual assault and harassment by celebrities from all sectors of the entertainment world.

In the UK the biggest sexual scandals have involved television personalities, not only Savile, but several other veteran presenters investigated during Operation Yewtree during the 2010s, including Stuart Hall and Rolf Harris. In 2023, presenter, actor and comedian Russell Brand was accused of sexually assaulting several women whilst newsreader Huw Edwards and daytime host Philip Schofield were accused of inappropriate (though not illegal) relationships with younger (adult) men.

Television was quick to respond with numerous documentaries, dramas and reports into the different scandals. In this presentation I focus on three such accounts, all released within six months of each other in 2023: documentaries *Rolf Harris: Hiding in Plain Sight* (ITV) and *Dispatches – Russell Brand: In Plain Sight* (Channel 4) and drama *The Reckoning* (BBC One), which was largely based on the most comprehensive book to date of the Savile scandal, Dan Davies' *In Plain Sight: The Life and Lies of Jimmy Savile* (2014).

I have chosen these examples for three reasons: their timing within a close period; their presence on public service broadcast networks where the stars had worked; and the repeated use of 'in plain sight' implying a level of cross-platform branding for this kind of scandal. Whilst it's a common phrase, it is no coincidence that the Brand and Harris documentaries used it after it had been long associated with Savile.

TV is often regarded as an intimate medium due to its presence in the home; and presenters are typically associated with ideals of 'ordinariness' and 'authenticity' (Bennett, 2011). Each broadcaster concerned had previously shown programmes hosted by the subject of their coverage (although not exclusively-Brand and Harris especially had careers across several networks). Therefore, the transgressions of these stars represent a severe violation of the trust contract between TV and its audience. It is unsurprising that broadcasters attempt to win back that trust through programming such as this. However, by reinforcing the 'in Plain Sight' message, these shows serve as a slightly uncomfortably 'mea culpa'; one that is tempered with a message of 'they hoodwinked us too'.

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Celebritising #MeToo in the Subcontinent: A Comparative Study of Celebrity Silence Breakers in India and Pakistan

In this paper, I explore the celebritisation of the #MeToo movement in India and Pakistan by comparing the cases of silence breakers from these countries, and the impact created by their respective cases (Rashid, 2019). This paper provides a comparative study of the news media and social media representations of celebrity silence breakers Tanushree Dutta in India and Meesha Shafi in Pakistan, whose accounts of reporting harassment at the hands of powerful and celebrated media figures acted as a catalyst for the #MeToo movement in the subcontinent.

The roles of social media and celebrity culture are integral to my study. Social media users have become the producers as well as consumers of news – a phenomenon not found in mainstream media platforms (Xiong, et al., 2019) and this has enabled celebrities like Dutta and Shafi as well as common people to use hashtags to self-produce news about themselves and become a part of this digital social phenomenon. The celebrity status of Dutta and Shafi as well as their choice of platform to address sexual harassment is an interesting combination, especially because it mimics the same trend that exposed Harvey Weinstein in Hollywood albeit with different results (Naik, et al., 2020). However, despite the difference in scale, hashtag activism and celebritisation of the #MeToo movement made it into a significant movement in India and Pakistan – something that would not have been possible with traditional media platforms and without celebrity culture.

While there was overwhelming support for Dutta and Shafi on social media, the mainstream media and various fractions on social media caricaturised them and attacked their character. This divide in narratives between mainstream and social media coverage of #MeToo and feminism more broadly reflect the central concerns of my research, namely the politics of respectability, and celebrity culture. By conducting in-depth comparative analysis of mainstream talk show coverage and hashtags associated with #MeToo in India and Pakistan, I will analyse how the perceptions built in news media correlated with the perceptions found on social media and how, collectively, these media representations impacted the #MeToo movement in these countries.

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‘Correcting the Record’: Biopics, Women’s Collaborative Creative Labour and Equal Pay in Post-#MeToo Film and Television

Since the mid-2010s, various scandals have put Hollywood under pressure in relation to unequal pay and opportunities (Donoghue, 2020), subsequently exacerbated by the #MeToo movement, the pandemic and, most recently, the WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes. Not only have women been the most impacted by these crises, but female celebrities have been also fundamental in ‘sustaining media attention’ on #MeToo, for example, through public statements and appearances at awards ceremonies (Cobb and Horeck, 2018).

As a genre that emphasises the constructedness of stardom and that recognises stars through prestigious awards such as Oscars and Emmys (Kennedy-Karpat, 2020), the biopic emerges as a fertile site across film and television to investigate the role of celebrities within the industry at moments of crisis. In this paper, I will focus on Michelle Williams and Jessica Chastain as celebrities who, through their appearances at awards ceremonies and interviews for their award-winning performances in biopics *Fosse/Verdon* (FX, 2019) and *The Eyes of Tammy Faye* (Showalter, 2022) respectively, have called attention to the collaborative nature of their labour and on equal economic opportunities as conducive to creative processes. Through the survey of such media appearances, I will demonstrate how issues of gender equality have fundamentally informed these projects, who offer themselves as examples of post-#MeToo media attempting to ‘correct the record’ on women’s creative role in the entertainment industries, both narratively and in the production process.

I argue that, while these celebrities’ promotional work meaningfully intervenes into broader socio-cultural debates, it also complicates hierarchies in the industry by putting the spotlight on below-the-line workers and showing their fundamental, yet still neglected contribution to the biopic. Both Williams and Chastain have repeatedly singled out their collaboration with makeup and hair stylists in achieving such effective performances. Significantly, these roles, often fulfilled by women due to a gendered division of labour, still remain relatively marginalised in the industry and debates, unlike the above-the-line sectors at the centre of initiatives like Time’s Up and discourses in mainstream media. Although individual and performative in nature, such celebrity activism could offer a potential model of solidarity among workers at moments of crisis.

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Selling Stalking: Predatory Behaviours in Paparazzi Engagement with Celebrities

> *'You edit together these images together to look like I'm happily waving. But that is deceitful. The real story is: My children were being stalked by a man all day.'* - Blake Lively

The 1990s saw an increase in the demand for paparazzi photos of celebrities, particularly female celebrities. However, these photos were often obtained in situations that post #metoo, deserve to be understood in terms of sexual violence and stalking. Stalking is defined as any pattern of behaviour(s) that is/are fixated, obsessive, unwanted and repeated. In today's celebrity culture, we can recognise that the obsessive harassment of celebrities- and their children- is problematic. People who follow and photograph regularly without consent and sometimes defame celebrities, however, are referred to as paparazzi.

This presentation will explore why, when these behaviours are monetised, they become more socially acceptable; ask when upskirting photos sold by paparazzi will be actually framed as sexual violence; and how might such violence impact celebrities? In addition, this presentation will examine paparazzi behaviour as it sits within the sphere of sexual violence.

Conversely, some paparazzi have acted as protectors of the same celebrities from those who fit the more traditional idea of a stalker. This appears to create a strange alliance between people who may protect the celebrity but also exploit them and commit violence against them, in exchange for money.

This presentation also examines the behavioural links between the career of Paparazzi, the crime of stalking, and the impact of these behaviours on those subjected to them. Using that examination, I will explore how such insights can further inform consent education, by providing relatable examples, which in turn draw attention to stalking and highlight how the newly enacted Irish law on stalking has been incorporated into consent resources designed by Active* Consent.

Eve McDowell works as the Advocacy Specialist at Active* Consent, which specialises in consent education across Irish education and society. She has a Master's Degree from the University of Galway in Public Advocacy & Activism, and successfully campaigned for the recent introduction of a standalone stalking offence in Ireland.

C3: Celebrity and Legal Crises

Contesting the Cantor Picture: from profitable entrepreneurial collaboration to bitter contractual obligation

Between 1930 and 1936, United Artists released six highly successful, big budget musical comedies, built around Eddie Cantor – Broadway's 'apostle of pep'. Cantor arrived in Hollywood in 1930 as an established stage star and recording artist, and a recently published author. His deal with independent producer Samuel Goldwyn involved making one film per year and included 10% of the profits. By late 1931 he also had a hit national radio show on NBC, the *Chase and Sanborn Coffee Hour*, broadcast from New York, and demonstrated an entrepreneurial approach to brand endorsements that matched Goldwyn's own enthusiasm for forging product placement deals. The films were produced in Hollywood during the summer and timed for release over the Thanksgiving/Christmas holiday season, by which point Cantor was alway based in New York and able to combine film promotion with his radio work. But while Cantor's independent, cross-platform, multi-media stardom was initially something that Goldwyn perceived as an asset, helping each of the first four films to reap North American box office returns in excess 1.5 million, by the release of the fifth film, *Kid Millions* in November 1934, the appeal of the formula was starting to falter and tensions between the two men began to show.

This paper examines the deteriorating relationship between Goldwyn and Cantor, beginning with blame and recriminations over their conflicting promotional approach to *Kid Millions*. Goldwyn began to see some of Cantor's non-film related work, particularly live stage appearances, as competing with and diluting the public profile of the latest release, potentially spoiling audience appetites for the annual Cantor spectacular, rather than consolidating and magnifying them. As preproduction began on what would be their last film together, *Strike Me Pink*, the frequent missives between East Coast and West became increasingly acrimonious. Conflicts over the script exposed both the two men's desire for creative control and their competing ideas of what the essential components of a successful 'Cantor picture' were, delaying the film's release until January 1936. Ultimately, both the success and failure of their partnership rested on models of stardom and independence that were ahead of their time.

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Lizzo's Legal Limbo: An Analysis of a Celebrity Brand in Crisis

Lizzo, the Grammy and Emmy award winning singer, has recently come under scrutiny for a lawsuit filed by three of her former dancers alleging sexual harassment, creating a hostile work environment, as well as racial, size, and religious-based discrimination. Lizzo's brand as a celebrity is premised on body positivity, female empowerment, and self-acceptance, but the impending lawsuit

threatens to not only derail her newfound fame but potentially destroy her public reputation and overall brand. She took to social media to defend herself claiming, “I am not the villain that people and the media have portrayed me to be...I am very open with my sexuality and expressing myself but I cannot accept or allow people to use that openness to make me out to be something I am not…I know what it feels like to be body shamed on a daily basis and would absolutely never criticize or terminate an employee because of their weight.” I utilize close readings of the HBO documentary *Love, Lizzo* (2022) and the reality series *Lizzo’s Watch Out for the Big Grrrls* to demonstrate how Lizzo’s celebrity is positioned within discourses of body positivity, self-love, and inclusivity. Can Lizzo as a symbol of acceptance continue to confront fatphobic, anti-Black, and misogynistic attacks online when her entire brand is being called into question? Does the lawsuit impede her ability to challenge and reframe cultural ideologies of full-figured Black women? What are the stakes for Lizzo’s career if this lawsuit continues to gain traction? With an analysis of what the *Los Angeles Times* has referred to as “The Lizzo Effect” to describe the way her cultural impact has shifted what celebrities can look like, this paper examines Lizzo’s popular culture influence given her polarizing reception on social media, the loss of hundreds of thousands of online followers, and decreased streaming sales. I argue that Lizzo’s staunch celebration of varying body types, gender identities, and self-love has uniquely positioned her as a beloved but equally criticized figure within contemporary popular culture.

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Conceptualising the ‘celebrity trial’: mediations of gender-based-violence as transmedia spectacle

Public expressions of (in)justice, and related emotions such as rage, grief, and dissent, often transpire through mass media. Mediated trials constitute privileged outlets through which anxieties around gender, race, class, sexuality are articulated (Cuklanz 1996; Harris 1996; Clover 2019). The remediation of trials as consumable forms of entertainment via streamable true crime documentaries (Bruzzi 2016; Monk-Payton & Hardiman 2022), podcast series (Sherrill 2022), and social media platforms (Moro et al. 2023), reveals the extent to which these productions generate cultural and economic value, and appeal to discourses of legitimacy and justice to mask their commercial imperatives (Larke Walsh 2021). Similarly, celebrity claims to justice can be read as intimate revelations that sit alongside other moments of heightened and marketable emotional displays prevalent in confessional media forms such as the talk show or reality TV (Redmond 2008; Nunn and Biressi 2010). For celebrities, the trial can be a productive rehabilitation strategy because personal testimonies are embedded within its structure. As such, the mediated trial offers a seemingly neutral terrain through which celebrities manage tensions between publicity and privacy and resolve crises in legitimacy.

This paper aims to theorise the ‘celebrity trial’ as a transmedia spectacle, one that capitalises on performances of injustice, yet paradoxically obfuscates the negotiation of social power that occurs through both celebrity culture and mediated trials. We contend that celebrity trials intensify existing public interest in cases through their heightened representation and commercialisation of social issues (Harris 1996). For the purpose of this presentation, we focus on trials that mediate gender-based violence (GBV) while implicating celebrities or making unknown parties famous. Our focus on GBV responds to critical analyses of the sensationalism of GBV trials, to interrogate how industrial and technological shifts underpin the evolution of the celebrity trial as a lucrative transmedia format. As such, we historicize the relationship between trial mediation and popular culture (Clover 2019; Friedman 2015; Smith 2022), celebrity criminals (Schmid 2005; Penfold-Mounce 2009), and celebrity desecration (Andò and Redmond 2020; Bainbridge 2020) to better understand how and why myths and ideologies concerning GBV are often transformed into commodity objects, even as they claim to offer alternative vehicles for justice.

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Reality Reckoning: Labour Rights and Activist Capital in Reality TV

In this paper, I argue that celebrity activism is developing a new sub-category of self-fulfilling activism that seeks to address issues that exclusively affect reality tv stars, namely, labour rights. Using *Vanity Fair*’s article “Inside the ‘Real Housewives’ Reckoning That’s Rocking Bravo,” featuring ex-Real Housewife of New York City Bethenny Frankel and the self-proclaimed leader of this new activist movement, I will address how this new brand of celebrity activism connects with existing research such as popular feminism (Banet-Weiser, 2018), activist capital (Chigdey, 2020), and the affective economy of reality TV (Kraidy et al, 2011) to capitalize on the current socio-political climate or “strike season” to push for new labour rights while serving her own entrepreneurial and influencer pursuits.

In this insular, cyclical branch of celebrity activism, the cause has turned in on itself, for while it promotes necessary revisions to unscripted series production, it also promotes Bethenny Frankel, considered the “most successful housewife” for her many off-shoots and businesses. As more reality tv stars join Frankel’s new mission, they too benefit from the publicity and positive association with the labour movement, while potentially diminishing the credibility of their labour-based complaints. Frankel’s entrepreneurial spirit creates a disconnect from the authenticity of her call to action, and the use of more traumatic (or authentic) claims of abuse from Housewives’’ ex-stars Leah McSweeney and Eboni K. Williams are overshadowed by Frankel’s public reception and image.

This complication mirrors the complex labour involved in starring in and producing reality TV: stars receive ample promotional opportunities, status, and payment for their work while they are also subject to ridicule and humiliation (as noted directly in their employment contracts). They face pressures to discuss personal issues or traumas, often experience mental health issues or addiction relapses, and become fodder for Bravo’s multiverse of other content such as Andy Cohen’s *Watch What Happens Live*, or annual *BravoCon* event. This paper will explore these complexities and examine Frankel’s use of activist capital in her own brand of feminist celebrity activism to push both for greater

labour rights and for her own financial success, perhaps at a cost to her colleagues and supporters.

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C4: Crises of Influence

To buy or not to buy? The de-influencing movement

The digital age has opened up new avenues for ordinary individuals to gain media attention and subsequently translate it into promotional opportunities, particularly in the realm of celebrity endorsement. Indeed, the rise of social media platforms has fostered the expansion of an influencer culture enabling influencers to ascend to celebrity status (Brooks et al., 2021). These individuals use platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and others to build a following by creating and sharing content that resonates with their audience. The term 'influencer' comes from their ability to influence the opinions, behaviors and purchasing decisions of their followers. To achieve the status of celebrity influencer, they must be authentic (Nunes et al., 2021) and reliable, they must cultivate a certain type of parasocial connection with their followers (Bond 2016), and they must engage them through comments, likes, and shares (Pradhan et al., 2023).

Recently, many social media influencers have been adapting their presentation style to emphasize products that they discourage their followers from investing in, a practice known as de-influencing. De-influencing encompasses different interpretations, ranging from simply discouraging the purchase of certain products to suggesting more economical alternatives or advocating minimalist lifestyle choices (Singer et al. 2023).

The paper aims to explore the phenomenon of de-influencing in order to identify: a) the motivation behind de-influencing discourses; b) the main commodity sectors involved; c) the communication strategies employed.

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Among her publications (with G. Roberti) (2018), “From celebrities to influencers and back. Web 2.0 and the emerging trends in the celebrity system”, in Antonella Mascio, Roy Menarini, Simona Segre Reinach, Ines Tolic, *The Size Effect. A Journey into Design, Fashion and Media, Mimesis International*, pp. 217-227.

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Her works include "Female influencers. Analyzing the social media representation of female subjectivity in Italy", *Frontiers in Sociology*, 7:1024043.

From Ivory Tower to the Digital Realm of Influence: Thai Scholar Celebrities Reshaping Political Landscape Amidst Crisis

In the midst of global democratisation movements, this study meticulously examines the strategic ascent of Thai scholar celebrities as influential political figures within the complex fabric of contemporary Thai politics amidst societal turmoil. Navigating the evolution of celebrity culture and political landscapes, the inquiry culminates in a focused lens on Thailand from 2006 to the present, unpacking pivotal events that deeply etched societal divisions and interwove celebrity dynamics within the political fabric.

Delving deeper, the article unveils the enigmatic realm of Thai scholar celebrities, portraying their unparalleled influence in shaping political discourse across diverse digital platforms. Exploring the intricate web of online political communication, the study probes the synergy between these platforms and the tactics employed by scholar celebrities, shedding light on their transformative role within Thai society.

Furthermore, by examining the transformation of political communication into a form of entertainment, the article offers insights into its effects on public engagement and multifaceted implications within the labyrinthine realm of Thai politics. This article invites readers to traverse a landscape of nuanced political influence, showcasing the transformative role of Thai scholar celebrities amidst societal upheaval and paving new paths for future research in this burgeoning field.

Piyarat Panlee, an anthropologist at Kasetsart University, Thailand, earned her Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from the University of Sussex, UK in *2020.* Her research interests centre on material culture, anthropology of food, celebrity, and fandom. Her completed ethnographic project explores the cultural impact of celebrity chefs, while her next focus is the ethics and politics surrounding celebrity politicians.

Old Faves and New Fame: Entangled Emo Stardom, Influencer Culture, and Music Fests

In response to the mainstream revival of emo music, this paper explores the role of stardom and influencer culture in the positionings and perceptions of emo-revival music festivals. Drawing on studies of emo music and fans (Fathallah 2021) and research on the stardom of musicians/bands, we analyse thorny entanglements between forms of emo stardom, influencer culture, and recently established music festivals. Shaped by scholarly work that addresses tensions between notions of "alternative" music/subcultures (Hill 2016) and "selling out" (Klein 2020), we consider who and what is discursively invoked and how, as part of the media coverage, marketing, and fan responses surrounding three music festivals: (1) *Emo's Not Dead Cruise*, (2) *Is For Lovers*, and, (3) *When We Were Young*.

In the context of both the Covid-19 crisis and the Astroworld/Fyre Festival disasters, we reflect on friction between emo's traditionally DIY sensibilities and "outsider" status, and its continued yet conflicting incorporation into the corporate workings of large-scale and contentious event promoters. In doing so we examine how notions and narratives of "legacy" emo stardom, and both "new" and "renewed" fame, are implicated in the promotion and portrayal of the music festivals under analysis. Accordingly, we consider raced, gendered, and aged dimensions of current concepts of who and what emo (including an emo celebrity) is. Overall, informed by prior research and our experiences of the history of emo and its racial and gender politics, we reflect on uncritical celebrations of famous musicians/bands framed as "old faves" and the ways that new(er) performers and fans are dismissed as "e-stars/girls/boys". Collaboratively, we interrogate binary notions of emo stardom as either entirely removed from or preoccupied with contemporary influencer culture (aka constructed as either pre- or post- online stardom era), and the ways that such narratives lend themselves to legitimising emo-revival music festivals.

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Jenessa Williams (she/her) is a feminist media and communication researcher, awarded her PhD on 'MeToo and Music Fandom' from the University of Leeds in Autumn 2023. Jenessa also works as a freelance music journalist, writing regularly for the likes of *the Guardian*, *NME*, *the Forty-Five*, *DIY* and *Alternative Press*.

Francesca Sobande (she/her) is a Senior Lecturer at Cardiff University. She is the author of *The Digital Lives of Black Women in Britain* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), *Consuming Crisis: Commodifying Care and COVID-19* (SAGE, 2022), and *Big Brands Are Watching You: Marketing Social Justice and Digital Culture* (University of California Press, 2024).

C5: Fans and Anti-Fans 2

Cancel Culture and Counter-Starticipants: Celebrity Controversy and Fan Activism

In the summer of 2020, author J.K. Rowling revealed that she supported a biological essentialist view of the relationship between sex and gender. Rowling, author of the beloved *Harry Potter* series, was experiencing increasing criticism from fans online after reposting and liking the tweets of outspoken so-called TERFs (trans-exclusionary radical feminists) who do not recognize the validity of transgender identities. Millennial and Gen Z fans who disproportionately identify as part of the queer community and who had grown up with the series, took to social media to express their outrage and elaborated the ways they would be protesting. From separating the art from the artist to leaving the fandom altogether, Rowling's actions provoked collective action responses from a cadre of fans who had also disproportionately engaged in fan activism and social justice work. Notably, the Harry Potter Alliance, a non-profit created specifically to engage young people in activist work, changed its name to Fandom Forward. Despite the strong reaction, however, Rowling did not experience total cancellation. She continues to write, produce, and speak publicly about her views. This article investigates what happens when a formerly-beloved celebrity expresses controversial opinions or engages in behavior deemed to be inappropriate. We hope to better understand how fans respond in times of controversy and how and why some celebrities are more or less affected by cancel culture. Specifically, we argue that based on ethnographic research into fan activism, celebrities like Rowling can become motivating figures for activists to work against the views they espouse. In this article, we elaborate the concepts of "starticipant" and "counter-starticipant," A "starticipant" is a famous figure who motivates fans toward activism, while a "counter-starticipant" motivates fans to counter their views or actions deemed problematic by the fandom. Drawing on our backgrounds in sociology and psychology and years of ethnographic research into fan activism, we argue that fandom can increasingly be understood through a social movement lens, and counter to being canceled, when celebrities retain power and become problematic, they can still induce fan activist response.

Tanya Cook, Ph.D., is a sociology professor at the Community College of Aurora in Colorado. Cook researches fan activism and has been quoted in international press regarding cancel culture. Their current book, co-authored with Kaela Joseph, is *Fandom Acts of Kindness: A Heroic Guide to Activism, Advocacy, and Doing Chaotic Good*.

Kaela Joseph, Ph.D., is a queer/nonbinary, licensed clinical psychologist in San Francisco, CA. They work as a clinic director, program manager, and supervisor for hospital and community clinics, with roles emphasizing LGBTQ+ health equity. They co-authored *Fandom Acts of Kindness: A Heroic Guide to Activism, Advocacy, and Doing Chaotic Good*.

Jamie Puglin, Ph.D. is a sociologist and a lecturer at North Carolina State

University. Her research areas include activist identity, organizations, education, and collective behavior. Her research into fan activism began with her dissertation: *Collective Identity, Organizational Structure, and Framing in Fan Activism.*

Anti-fandom and the governance of snarking

This paper examines online celebrity “snarking” communities, otherwise known as anti-fandom spaces or even hate forums. Specifically, we consider the negotiation of hierarchies, reinforcement of feeling rules and particular sanctions which emerge in snarking communities, providing an analysis of the governance of these groups and how they are able to mobilise effectively. We argue that despite the perceived “incivility” of these online spaces, discourses of care, justice and solidarity often emerge which complicate the narratives of these groups. Class tensions and opposing positions on gender identity are cast aside in solidarity against the supposed dishonesty of the snark subject. Alongside this, the perceived inauthenticity of the celebrity subjects is explored against the implicit authenticity of the snarkers, as well as the role suspicion can play in creating intimacy and developing relationships. We consider the politics of knowledge production in these spaces, the perceived illegitimacy of snark forum subjects and the pursuit of snarkers to discredit them. We also interrogate what happens when celebrities are forced to respond to their critics, and consider the aims and objectives of the users of snark forums. To do so we select two case study forums across the platforms Reddit and Tattle, specifically those dedicated to Caroline Calloway and Jack Monroe.
These cases allow for a cross-platform investigation of snarking functions and governance, with a particular focus on the relationship between users of snark forums, celebrities and their anti-fans as well as their relationship to the perceived “scammer” identity. The celebrities selected for this study enable an examination of two responses to anti-fans and snark forums: to ‘double down’ against allegations of wrongdoing or embrace the ‘scammer’ mentality. This paper therefore explores the micropolitics of these online anti-fan forums, interrogating notions of justice, solidarity, truth and legitimacy.

Jessica Martin is a lecturer in sociology at the University of Leeds, UK and runs the MA in Gender Studies there. Her research interest are in feminist cultural studies, and she has published on postfeminism, celebrity and popular culture. She is assistant editor for The European Journal of Cultural Studies and her book on “Feminisms, Austerity and Domesticity” will be released with Bloomsbury in 2024.

Claudia Coveney is a lecturer in sociology and social policy at the University of Leeds. Her academic interests lie in understanding the opportunities that changing government structures, offer to civil society and social movements. Her book ‘Collective Action and Civil Society: Disability Advocacy in EU Decision-Making’ is out with Emerald in 2024.

The Captain and The Turd: The power of fandom in celebrity scandals

In the aftermath of the actor Alyssa Milano's seismic #MeToo tweet, many fans have had to contend with the knowledge that a favourite celebrity might be guilty of sexual violence. However, whilst the reaction to #MeToo was unprecedented, there has always been a resistance to it. As Sarah Banet-Weiser and Kathryn Claire Higgins (2023) point out, another key historical moment that developed alongside #MeToo was the contentious 'post-truth' debate. This, alongside the growing trend in defamation cases brought against women who have accused men of violence (Jennifer Robinson and Keina Yoshida 2023), has resulted in a strong backlash narrative that positions (powerful, white) men as the *real* victims. Where #MeToo centres women speaking out against sexual violence, the #MeToo backlash is centred around concern for the reputation of the accused. As such, women's material victimisation is being conflated with the discursive victimisation of accused men. This is further complicated when the man being accused is a celebrity, whose reputation represents not only him, but his fans as well.

This paper considers how the above debate plays out on social media by drawing on the recent celebrity scandal and defamation lawsuit involving Johnny Depp and Amber Heard. It explores how fandom works to reconstruct narratives around celebrities accused of sexual violence, and how that complicates public understandings of violence against women. Based on the research and data collected as part of my PhD, this paper analyses social media posts collected the day before and the day of the *Depp v Heard* verdict announcement (31 May – 1 June 2022) from both 'pro-Heard' and 'pro-Depp' hashtags. Building on existing feminist literature on contemporary backlashes against feminism, and writing on the 'post-truth' debate, my analysis shows how fandoms can control, and distort, public understandings of violence against women as a means of defending the reputation of an accused celebrity. As anxieties over the rise in popular misogyny continue to grow, it is essential to understand how these narratives operate online, in order to effectively challenge them.

Melody House is a third-year PhD student at the University of Strathclyde. Her thesis is centred around social media commentary on reputation in high profile cases that involve sexual violence and misconduct. She has previously published on media reactions to high profile men accused of sexual violence.

Me, myself and Notre-Dame de Paris. On self valuation in front of a famous site during a tragedy: the case of selfies with Notre-Dame de Paris on fire

This paper takes interest in cultural tourism and the agency of social actors and their interactions with a world renowned monument and heritage site, almost contextually bearing the status of a celebrity *in the flesh*, namely, Notre-Dame de Paris.

While, on April 15th 2019, Notre-Dame caught on fire, numerous selfies taken in front of the cathedral before, during and after the fire were shared online worldwide. These images were posted by ordinary people as well as celebrities or political figures, and led to many comments, most of which consisted in criticisms questioning the ethics of the photographs and their authors.

Grounded on the analysis of those criticisms (104) and the legends posted along the selfies, this research highlighted the images' controversial reception. Denounced as an implicit quest for self worth and valuation by proxy, through the consumption associated with the monument's celebrity, these photographs rose criticisms directed towards those who, sharing their selfies with the cathedral would try to appropriate a share of its value. As such, posting a selfie was – often humourously – discredited by many internet users as a 'barely dissimulated' attempt to twist the event into some form of self valuation, nay political reappropriation, where, on the contrary, a decent behaviour would have consisted in stepping aside and adopting a grieving attitude: paying tribute, caring and testifying the pure and sole worth of the burning edifice.

Using the tools of pragmatic sociology of values, this work sheds light on a particular aspect of celebrity crises: reacting to 'glamorous' selfies posted by both famous and anonymous individuals during a universal tragedy, internet users pointed out a contextual misappreciation of value scales, leading our analysis to underline a discrepancy between qualification regimes (according to the categories developed by Nathalie Heinich in her books *Des valeurs* (2017) and *La Valeur des personnes* (2022)). The flood of criticisms shifted the object of the analysis from Notre-Dame to the people who shared their photographs, incidentally portrayed as guilty of putting themselves into a 'regime of singularity' towards reputational ends where the exceptional circumstance called for testimonies in the 'regime of community'.

Vincent Timsit is a PhD candidate in Sociology at the EHESS, Paris. His thesis, under the supervision of Nathalie Heinich, focuses on the problematic of value transfer, and consists in an analysis of the practice of selfies in front of famous artworks, celebrities and heritage sites.

C6: Virtual Celebrity

"Please, Don't Call me Uncanny": The Digitised Celebrity Body and the Life of the Posthuman

My paper will discuss the intermingling of human bodies and cinematic technologies in filmmaking practices that seek to digitally de-age or resurrect actors. By combining Deborah Levitt's (2018) reflection on the potential of the "animatic" as the generation of life in moving images with Anneke Smelik and Nina Lykke's (2010) critical posthumanist figuration of "bits of life", which "signifies today's cultural fusion of the biological and the technological". If there is a tradition of thinking about digitally-enhanced celebrity bodies as a promise of digital eternal life (Bode 2010), I will argue that *lively* synthepians emerge as a site where the status of the human and life in the posthuman predicament (Braidotti 2013) are negotiated vis-à-vis the intensified technological mediation of celebrity bodies. Sifting through examples of performance capture, seen as a process of abstraction of the fleshy body of the celebrity which then reconstitutes it as an "image-body", I will discuss conceptions of the (post)human body, gender, and life as they come to be each time in each of my case studies. I will begin Martin Scorsese's *The Irishman* (2019) to argue that its spectacle of cinematic rejuvenation rests upon humanist and technomasculinist conceptions of the body and its "enhancement". Then, I will move upon a discussion of Ari Folman's *The Congress* (2013) and its dystopian narrative "substitution" of the ageing (cisgender) woman's body by an animated one. In this case, performance capture "decomposes" (Parisi 2005, 122) the body in a deathly way, so that its eternally young and "lively" simulacrum may circulate as a commodity. Finally, I will conclude with Cécile B. Evans' artist film *Hyperlinks or It Didn't Happen* (2016) and its synthespian, PHIL—a simulacrum of Philip Seymour Hoffman with a complicated relationship with the human "original". Evans' film will become the gateway into a reflection upon simulated celebrity bodies as Deleuzian simulacra—potentially, as queer and non/human bodies with a digital life or their own. The film, I argue, opens up a space for thinking life after the humanist subject, after the organism, and after the binarily gendered body.

Alice Giuliani is currently a Ph.D. student at the School of Film, Media and Design at the University of West London. In her doctoral research, she engages with New Weird cinema, critical posthumanism, ecocriticism, and monstrosity to investigate (post-)cinema's 'will to art' as a narrative-aesthetic-technological assemblage *of* and *for* the posthuman condition.

Virtual Celebrities: Branding, Streaming and Augmenting Stardom in the Metaverse

The past years virtual celebrities and influencers have become more popular on different platforms. Virtual influencers have presented themselves in unique ways, allowing for a plurality of performances (Robinson, 2020). Think of wholesome play lists of YouTube icon Lo-Fi Girl, the modelling of Instagrammer Lil Miquela and the game streams of Kizuna AI. Behind some of these accounts are creative agencies and artists, but users themselves also create celebrity

personas. They create virtual idols in VR Chat (Bredikhina, 2020), as well as virtual YouTubers ("VTubers"). These influencers do not have to look like a human, but can also be alien, like the famous Zlu (@iam_zlu). These non-human celebrities are generally more appreciated by audiences than the near-human ones (Arsenyan & Mirowska, 2021).

Virtual celebrities are related to the augmentation of existing celebrities as well. Celebrities increasingly are mediated as holograms or avatars (Banks, 2017), which offers new possibilities for their persona, creative projects and branding. Think of the Ariana Grande Rift Tour in *Fortnite* where she is a soaring, magical celebrity that players can approach. Eminem was even released as a playable skin in this metaverse (Fillery, 2023). These performances allows fans to interact with celebrities in new ways, and even embody them as avatars in digital spaces.

I argue that virtual celebrities are part of a larger posthuman turn in celebrity culture and fandom, where the brand of a celebrity is extended across media. I discuss related developments, such as the platformization of celebrity, generative AI and the creator economy, as key drivers of this change. This paper aims to provide a categorization and conceptualization of virtual celebrities, but also focuses on the wider social implications for fans and consumers.

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Dr. **Nicolle Lamerichs** is senior lecturer and team lead at Creative Business, HU University of Applied Sciences, Utrecht. her book *Productive Fandom* (2018), she explores intermediality and affect in fan cultures. She has published in various journals on fandom, platforms and media culture.

Deepfakes, Celebrity Porn, and the Exploitation of Everyday Digital Life

Deepfakes are among the most prominent examples so far of synthetic media — videos, images, audio, or other texts that are created or significantly altered using AI techniques such as deep learning. Deepfakes first appeared as fake celebrity porn. The term *deepfake* itself emerged in 2017 from the name of a

forum on the social media platform Reddit, whose members were making and sharing synthetic videos in which the likenesses of female celebrities such as Gal Gadot or Taylor Swift were digitally manipulated onto the bodies of performers in actual porn videos. Reddit banned the forum quickly, but other online spaces immediately took its place, and there are now hundreds of thousands of synthetic celebrity porn videos, with many more created every day on dedicated websites.

This paper uses content analysis of one such website and situates it within the wider cultural environment of social media. Online fan cultures are sometimes celebrated for their enabling of progressive activist fandoms, but these deepfakes demonstrate a particular kind of toxic fandom. By *toxic,* I mean fan behaviours that assert ownership over their favourite shows, films or celebrities. Pornographic deepfakes take the image of the individual celebrity as an object to be not only shared but also edited and manipulated. They reduce that individual person to digital content, to raw material for a bespoke text.

Such deepfakes are not just significant in their own right, but also offer important insights into the wider digital environment of the 2020s. Deepfakes did not just happen to emerge in the time of social media — they are a product of those media. Through two decades of everyday sharing on social media platforms, we have unwittingly created vast archives of images, video, text and audio. These data have been appropriated as raw material that enable machine-learning researchers to train AI systems to recognise, classify and create images for use in synthetic media, with non-consensual pornography by far the largest use of these to date. Celebrity deepfakes are a logical extension of those social media business models in which all human experience becomes data to be exploited.

Graham Meikle is Professor of Communication and Digital Media at the University of Westminster, UK, and Director of its Communication and Media Research Institute (CAMRI). He has published nine books, including *Deepfakes* (Polity, 2023) and *Social Media* (Routledge, second edition 2024).

Deepfakes Killed the Movie Star (And Brought Them Back Again): Envisioning ‘Synthetic Stardom’ in the Era of Digital Actors

Stardom has never been a static epistemology, requiring constant critical re-examination in response to changing social mores and technological advancements, but few developments in the history of cinema unsettle traditional theorisations of stardom and celebrity as the industrial embrace of AI-generated digital actors like deepfakes. In this new age of ‘synthetic stardom’ stars become more literally manufactured than ever before, enabling (or even requiring) actors to digitise their faces and detach their likenesses from their material selves, allowing corporations to craft stars with no necessary human involvement while superficially gesturing towards inclusivity and diversity, and accommodating the exploitation of performers who have been dead for decades in largely novel and unproblematised ways. This paper will trace synthetic stardom’s origins back to contemporary Hollywood’s discreet emulation of video game aesthetics and cultures and a growing preference for proprietary characters over film stars engendered by the intensification of franchising as a

mode of production, both shifts which occurred throughout the 2010s. From there, it will consider how we might theorise synthetic stardom with the entrenched language and concepts of star studies, which retain deceptively strong utility in the digital age and offer a powerful head-start for apprehending these posthuman, post-cinematic celebrities. Star studies scholarship constantly returns to how stars give us insight into public attitudes towards fame and labour, social categorisations of class, gender, and sexuality, and structures of racism and privilege; synthetic stars provide similar insights into the digital era's reconfiguration of these same ideas and more, for we might say that being an individual in a digital world is a more slippery, disembodied, and ultimately posthuman experience than a flesh-and-blood star could reflect. Some scholars have opined that digital celebrities might spell the end of movie stars, but, in truth, synthetic stardom is unlikely to be the death knell for stardom 'proper.' It transforms how we value stardom in subtle and gradual ways, harnessing its commercial and cultural power whilst fostering a mediascape where we appreciate characters, superficial appearances, and brands above individuals, and engendering new, urgent questions for how we value performers' agency and autonomy in a synthetic landscape.

Callan Norman is an early career researcher in digital media at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. He submitted his PhD thesis for examination in December 2023, which explores the implications deepfakes pose for cinematic representation in photographic, cultural, and political terms, including chapters on synthetic stardom and performers' rights.

D1: Aging Celebrity

”She was never pretty anyway”: Visibility and the ageing female celebrity

This paper adds to the discussion in celebrity studies about older female celebrities and visibility. Despite the media’s continuous celebration of a host of ageing female celebrities which demonstrate that style, glamour, and desirability are compatible with age, “visibility is never simple” as Sarah Banet-Weiser put it (Banet-Weiser, Gill & Rothenburg 2020, p. 12). The visibility of the older celebrity is a highly contested and ambiguous field which is intertwined with the pathologizing of age (Whelehan 2013) and “the scandal of anachronism”, that is “not acting one’s age” (Russo 1999, p. 21). Older women – and older celebrities - are still subjected to “a damning invisibility” (Holmes & Jermyn 2015, p. 19).

To fully understand how images of older female celebrities are not only celebrated but policed, contested, and negotiated, attention needs to be paid to viewer and user reactions. Accordingly, the paper answers to Jermyn and Holmes’ call (2015) for studying ways “people actually respond to discourses of ageing” by analyzing a large amount of reader comments to an article (in *Mail Online* 19 July 2021) illustrated with two paparazzi photos of Sarah Jessica Parker having lunch with a couple of acquaintances during filming of the first episode of *And Just Like That ….* I present the results of a qualitative content analysis of the 1450 comments to flesh out a gendered regime of celebrity visibilities of ageing. In short, 60% of all comments were highly toxic, spiteful, and aggressive posts about Parker’s ageing appearance, 20% commented positively, whereas around 20% reflected more generally on ageing and gender.

Hence, when it comes to ageing female celebrities, visibility is still a contested matter. Richard Dyer (1986) famously claimed that ”being interested in stars is being interested in how we are human now”. In a digital media culture, the ubiquity of celebrity journalism may be of interest to readers/users because it offers a public space to discuss what we think “being human now” means, for example what it is like and could be like to be an older woman and an older celebrity and, in a broader sense, what visibilities of ageing mean and look like today.

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Anne Jerslev is professor of film and media studies at the Department of Communication, University of Copenhagen. She has published about celebrity among others in *Celebrity Studies* (of which she is an editorial board member), *MedieKultur, European Journal of Cultural Studies* and the *International Journal of Communication*.

Hollywood stardom as a Faustian Bargain: How the aging Starlets of Hollywood's classical era navigated their reckoning in the 1960's and beyond

In a June 19, 1964, *Time* magazine review of the film *Lady in a Cage,* Olivia de Havilland is described as adding her name to the "list of cinema actresses (Bette Davis, Joan Crawford) who would apparently rather be freaks than be forgotten".

The irony of this disreputable 'choice' is jarring given that in 1943 De Havilland famously took Warner Brothers to court and won the right to be released from her contract after seven *calendar* years (rather than seven years of work) so that she could seek better roles. Bette Davis had faced the opposite of this problem six years earlier, when she was sued by Warner Brothers Pictures after fleeing her contract for 'better roles' in British films. Her argument of contracted 'slavery' was later derided in court as having the 'silver lining' of being "well-remunerated."

Faced with limited prospects, top-billing actresses of Hollywood's golden era went into the 1960s and beyond with a choice between retirement, or facing the "scandalous anachronism of aging"(Russo 1998) due to their inability to live up to their prior star personas. This paper will explore how those who chose to continue acting were offered less prestigious roles and were denigrated for this by critics.

Many of these films featured themes of show business or performance, serving the dual purpose of recalling the leads' illustrious pasts as a form of marketing while also allowing audiences to relish in how far the former stars would stoop to maintain their celebrity status. These films frequently depicted aging females as abject or bizarre, and while horror was predominant, other genres such as comedy and blacksploitation featured similar tropes.

In concluding, this paper will consider the quality of roles which older women receive today, and how these problems still affect actresses such as Meryl Streep, who spoke of receiving three 'witch scripts' after turning forty and her reservations about the "terror of the older woman" while filming *Into The Woods* (2014).

Justin Bonthuys is a PhD student in cinema and media studies at Indiana University Bloomington. He specializes in Star Studies, Genre Studies, Film History, & LGBTQ representation. His dissertation will focus on the Faustian Bargain as a trope and its value in understanding fictional and nonfictional power imbalances.

Feud: Bette and Joan. The representation of ageing in Tv series between female ageing crisis and wardrobes

The focus of the paper is the analysis of the crisis linked to ageing in the series Feud: Bette and Joan (Fx, 2017), which is displayed through events and rivalries involving two show biz icons: Bette Davis and Joan Crawford.

Through a complex narrativity (Mittell 2015) Feud makes reference to sexism and misogyny-related issues typical of the times. In other words, age questioned the celebrity's aura, thus exacerbating the rivalry of Hollywood's actresses. The success they had enjoyed in the past with its high degree of notoriety was not enough for some of them to counter the value of youthfulness of their rival newcomers.

In the Tv serial, the roles of Bette Davis and Joan Crawford are played by two other cinema icons: Susan Sarandon and Jessica Lange. The presence of these two great performers sets an additional level of textual interpretation linked to contemporaneity. Getting old, depicted in Feud as a source of crisis, capable of creating a path of solitary struggles in the storytelling, becomes - off screen and in today's scenario - an occasion of exchange and complicity for the actresses and between the actresses and their audiences.

The complex narrativity provides the viewer with the opportunity to move around several levels and frames, as Feud recalls different - and overlapping - timeframes. On the one hand, the 'archival' model is being used, through clips which are the remakes of excerpts from the past, thus opening towards a historical, shared and individual memory, at least for a portion of the audience. On the other hand, there are different jumps leading viewers to the focus of the plot towards an elsewhere which is much closer to the present, thanks to a series of characters taken from real life.

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D2: #MeToo 2

Celebrity comedians and sexual misconduct: Exposing Russell Brand and the complex post #MeToo context for women comics.

On September 16th 2023 Channel 4's *Russell Brand in Plain Sight: Dispatches* aired allegations of the celebrity comedians' sexual misconduct with women over the course of his career. The documentary, which was dramatically revealed in the schedule only the day before transmission, resulted in significant international press attention, several internal reviews of production company practices, and the opening of an ongoing police investigation (Booth, 2023).

After starting out as a circuit comic in 2000, Russell Brand's 'rebranding' across the 2010s saw him assume the role of political commentator (Arthurs and Little, 2016) before finding an audience as an online addiction recovery/ wellness influencer. His professional transition away from edgy sexually explicit stand-up comic to online wellbeing influencer gave him a platform, underpinned by a narrative of personal development, from which to distance himself from his past behaviour when allegations emerged.

This paper will initially consider how Brand's dual status as both comedian and transgressive celebrity facilitated some of the abuses of power of which he is accused, and how the comic framing of interpersonal interaction within comedy industry practices can obscure abuse (Tomsett, 2023).

By maintaining his innocence using language reminiscent of the "anti-woke" manosphere (Lawson, 2023), and positioning himself as an outsider to the mainstream media (despite at the peak of his fame being enmeshed in such spaces and discourses), Brand provoked other politically right-leaning public figures (e.g., Elon Musk, Alex Jones, Andrew Tate) to leverage their status to defend him online. Thus, how Brand tried to take control of the exposé narrative by framing himself as a victim of cancel culture, and his suspension from certain monetized online platforms (without a trial) as a freedom of speech issue, will be scrutinized

Finally, this paper will analyse the consequences of this exposé for celebrity women comedians. How comedian Katherine Ryan had to navigate a tension between her outspoken comic persona and her personal knowledge of Brand's behaviour will be examined. The professional complexities faced by Ryan and her contemporaries evidence aspects of a post #MeToo culture of 'enforced disclosure' that Karen Boyle (2019) warns against.

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Dr **Ellie Tomsett** is a Senior Lecturer in Media and Communication at Birmingham City University. She is the author of *Stand-Up Comedy and Contemporary Feminisms: Sexism, Stereotypes and Structural Inequalities* (2023) and co-editor (with Poppy Wilde and Nathalie Weidhase) of *Working Women on Screen: Paid Labour and Fourth Wave Feminism* (2024, Palgrave).

Reframing Female Stardom after Weinstein: Catherine Deneuve and Ashley Judd's Divergent Stances on #MeToo Movement

After the massive allegations of sexual abuse against the producer Harvey Weinstein, it is urgent to recognize the #MeToo movement as a crisis in defining what constitutes a successful actress's career. At this juncture, female stars in the spotlight must take a stand.

This paper will explore the divergent public positions of two actresses: Catherine Deneuve and Ashley Judd. On one hand, it will be presented the French reaction led by Catherine Deneuve. The anti-#MeToo manifesto published in Le Monde articulates a singular understanding of the female star as a figure of desire embodying female sexual freedom, which is presently succumbing to a victimology paradigm. Moreover, this discussion placed the responsibility of sexual abuse on the victims by posing tautological questions: What did actresses expect from a meeting with a producer in a hotel room? Or even, what does society expect from a misogynistic and corrupted industry like Hollywood? While these arguments focus on the Weinstein affair, they overlook sexual harassment as a form of abuse of power through institutionalized and open-secret practices such as the casting couch. In this arena, the response of French female artists, advocating sexual freedom 'à la française' against American puritanism, represented challenges in redefining sexual consent and professional ambition for women (Chandra & Erlingsdó[r, 2021: 272).

On the other hand, female Hollywood stars, enjoying economically and racially privileged positions, are erected as perfect victims with media platforms for disclosing experiences of sexual harassment (Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019: 42). Ashley Judd illustrates the reformulation of actress figure in post-#metoo era. By supporting mediatic campaigns such as Time's Up and publishing a speaking up biography –All That Is Bitter and Sweet: A Memoir–, Judd positioned herself as a celebrity survivor. As a silence breaker and #MeToo activist, her participation in the movie She Said (2022) about the journalist investigation on Weinstein, is an attempt to connect with female audiences and victims of sexual harassment (Boyle, 2019: 34).

Reviewing these two contraposed positions, this communication aims to shed light on the consequences affecting female movie stars career and public image a1er #MeToo movement.

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Elisenda Díaz is a PhD candidate in Theory of Literature at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Her dissertation examines biopics of female Hollywood stars approaching sexual harassment in film industry a1er #MeToo movement. The thesis proposes an analysis of Marilyn Monroe's figure and the case of Blonde (2022). Her research interests are focused on feminism, sexual violence on screen, female Hollywood stardom, the #MeToo movement, among others.

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Fandom in the Shadows of a Scandal: Studying Fan Responses to Marco Borsato's Cancellation

This contribution delves into the complex dynamics of fandom in the wake of allegations against Dutch singer Marco Borsato. In December 2021, rumors surfaced accusing Borsato of grooming and sexual assault involving a then 15-year-old female, sparking a chain of events that shook the artist's career. Despite the Public Prosecutor's decision not to prosecute some of the allegations in 2023, Borsato faced severe consequences – his music was banned from radio stations, his wax figure at the Madama Tussauds-museum removed, and he had to stop his role as ambassador for NGO War Child.

Drawing on twelve interviews with fans and online comments on Borsato-fan pages, this study sheds light on the complexities of being a fan of a canceled artist. The findings underscore how fans navigate supporting a celebrity caught up in controversy: Some fans remain steadfast in their commitment, invoking the principle of innocent-until-proven-guilty, while others are cautious and hesitant to, now, publicly express their fandom. They signal an awareness of the situation and by being cautious wish to convey solidarity with the victims. Another sentiment identified in the data is how fans want to learn more about the situation from the celebrity himself: to better understand it, but also to be able to move forward (or not) with their fandom.

What this study illuminates is how this celebrity crisis-situation leads to a multifaceted response from the fans involved. Additionally, this exploration

helps to understand the interplay between fandom, celebrity morality and how this help us to reflect on our own values and morals and cancel culture as a phenomenon. More so, exploring these polarized feelings consequent to a celebrity's cancelation on the micro-level of fandom might help to understand them a bit better on the societal level too. (289 words)

Simone Driessen works as an assistant professor in Media and Popular Culture at Erasmus University Rotterdam. She is interested in exploring why fans (dis)continue their engagement with a celebrity over time. Simone published on this in a.o. Convergence, and currently co-edits an edited collection on "Participatory Culture Wars".

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D3: Brands in Crisis/Conflict

"Rosalía's Butterflies: Self-Reflective Celebrity and the Confessional Text"

In this presentation, I examine Rosalía's third studio album *Motomami* (2022), as a confessional text in which the artist speaks openly about her feelings and reflects about the business of being a celebrity and her relationship with audiences. Music critics immediately noted that it radically departs from the successful formula of her previous flamenco-based albums and praised its experimentation and combination of multiple genres (reggaeton, bachata, bolero, flamenco, hip hop, jazz, etc). The symbol of the butterfly that appears on the album cover, in the lyrics of the first track ("Saoko"), and on Rosalía's dental grills represents this transformation. But perhaps the biggest change has to do with the intimate tone of the entire album. For the first time, Rosalía is not singing about other people's stories or performing a character *(El mal querer*). She sings about herself, and openly confesses her struggles, her fears, her crises, and her desires. As Foucault showed In the *History of Sexuality*, confession has been a central ritual in the discursive production of truth in Western societies at least since the Middle Ages. Celebrity studies scholars such as Sean Redmond have noted that the confessional address has become pervasive in contemporary celebrity culture, since it is almost mandatory as a promotional strategy to brand the celebrity persona, to do damage control in the case of waning stars, or to offer a corrective to false information in the press and social media. Rosalía's confession is striking because it is played out not only in the self-reflective song lyrics of *Motomami*, but also through the musical features. Most songs have a minimalist composition, with few instrumentals that are filtered and devoid of high frequencies to allow for Rosalía's vocal delivery to stand out. And it is often a bare voice (without reverb) that appears in contrast to aggressive drums to convey the hostile environment Rosalía has faced in the last few years: the pressures of the industry, the expectations that come with her global stardom, the constant accusations of cultural appropriation, and the social media haters.

Jorge Pérez is Professor of Iberian Cultural Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. He is the author of *Cultural Roundabouts: Spanish Film and Novel on the Road* (2011), *Confessional Cinema: Religion, Film, and Modernity in Spain's Development Years* (2017), and *Fashioning Spanish Cinema: Costume, Identity, and Stardom* (2021). Currently, he is working on a book, titled *Celebrity Culture and Media in Spain*, that examines the formation of a new paradigm of stardom that is not exclusive of the film industry, and one that is connected to celebrity culture and the fashion industry.

Affirmative Marginality. Isabella Rossellini

Crises can become engines of change (Martin 2010) that reveal mechanisms internal to cultural processes, combining innovation with the known and settled values of a social group. Instrumental to the adoption of such an innovation is visibility, the social prestige and the satisfaction derived from it (Rogers 1983). This explains why established celebrities can be promoters of innovation while

they experience new forms of self-constructions as a response to crisis. Their self-presentation in a condition of imperfection, or in an unconventional, or defective position, helps to understand societies' conceptualization of critical conditions, including systemic crisis. This can also contribute to a sustainable mindset, one that overturns the notion of marginalization: a vision of projectable future, based on strategies that avert termination and prevent the depletion of resources.

This essay posits a cultural and conceptual continuity between our era of pronounced preoccupation with the longevity of certain stars and the concurrent rise of sustainability as a cultural discourse. Fears of obsolescence, and of time/utility running out, fuel both. In sustainable ecosystems the peripheral and central are interconnected. Elderly celebrities have experienced prominence and have been experts in centrality and conspicuousness. Some of them are examples of affirmative marginality and triumphant flexibility. A peculiar emphasis on their bodily decay – (i.e. Maggie Smith's Loewe Campaign) – plus humor about their marginalization (i.e. *The Kominsky Method*) helps reframe cognitive, psychological, and social vulnerability, turning the dynamics between preservation and disposal — of bodies, contents, values — into new inspirational entertainment. An example is Isabella Rossellini, who in the last decade has reinvented her public persona along peripheral trajectories (including her rebranding on Instagram) that involve anti-glamorization, over-exposition of her plump silhouettes and wrinkles, and a bucolic imagery defining her new identity as an ethologist. At the same time, her role in 2018 as Lancôme's testimonial, almost twenty years after her dismissal, offers a narrative of ageing female empowerment. Rossellini's conscious exposure of a social schizophrenia that demands both naturalness and artificiality, her embracing the stigmatization of a critical condition in life and career, is both subversive and validatory. But it is a model for younger generations concerned with sustainability and pliability as a broad ideal. Because it contrasts with the Fordist model of ever-increasing productivity, embracing instead reuse, resilience and connectivity.

Sara Pesce teaches film history and performance at University of Bologna. Her research concerns the cultural roots of the Hollywood film industry, cultural memory and digital culture, acting, stardom and fashion. She was a Fulbright scholar at New York University and Columbia University. She is co-founder of the "Italian Research Network on Celebrity Culture".

Fashion as Celebrity: The Revival of Maison Schiaparelli

This paper examines the recent revival of Schiaparelli haute couture under the helm of artistic director, Daniel Roseberry. Notoriety for Roseberry's revival began when Lady Gaga appeared in a voluminous red Schiaparelli gown adorned with an oversized gold peace dove for her performance at Joe Biden's inauguration ceremony (Jan 2021), which was followed that year by a string of other celebrities adorning Schiaparelli haute couture, including Beyoncé, Cate Blanchett, Noah Cyrus, and the infamous breast plate made of intricate gold weaving in the shape of the bronchial arteries of the lungs, worn by Bella Hadid for the 2021 Cannes Film Festival. It was, however, the Spring/Summer 2023

Inferno collection, with life-sized furry animal heads adorning gowns, distorted breastplates, and exaggerated clothing proportions that ignited a social media storm, attracting controversy, amusement, and awe in equal measure.

The antecedents of the label, however, have always attracted notoriety, if not a surreal sense of humour. Founded in 1929 by the Surrealist designer, Elsa Schiaparelli, the label was renowned for its scandalous creations, including the "Shoe Hat" (1937-38), the "Skeleton Dress" (1938) and for the invention of a signature colour, "shocking pink". Elevating couture to status of surreal art, Schiaparelli was a frequent collaborator with artists, including Salvador Dali, Jean Cocteau, Méret Oppenheim, and Alberto Giacometti, but also attracted a celebrity clientele that included Katherine Hepburn, Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo, and Joan Crawford, as well as the American socialite and divorcee, Wallis Simpson, who was photographed by Cecil Beaton in the "Lobster Dress" for *Vogue* in 1937 as a way to further scandalize her impending marriage to the newly abdicated Edward VIII. As Schiaparelli once observed, "in difficult times, fashion is always outrageous" (1954).

While the relationship between fashion and celebrity has typically focused on the use of celebrities to bring notoriety to fashion labels and designers or to sell clothes (Dyer, 1979; Eckert, 1991) or celebrity brand endorsement (Barron, 2019), this paper looks at the transhistorical celebrification of the Schiaparelli label, across old and new media domains, and across two of its most notorious designers, Elsa Schiaparelli and Daniel Roseberry, and asks how their work for the label speaks to "difficult times", then and now?

Natalya Lusty is Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Melbourne and author of *Surrealism, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2017) and the edited volume, *Surrealism* (Cambridge University Press, 2021) among other books. Her work has appeared in *Cultural Studies*, *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* and *Australian Feminist Studies*.

D4: Affective Crises 1

A Precarious and Zany Youth: The Feminist Comedy of Malena Pichot

Since 2008, the work of comedian, Malena Pichot, has highlighted the complex interwoven structures of Argentine patriarchy and precarity in the age of neoliberal governance. A stand-up comedian, writer, director, actress, radio host, and ubiquitous online presence, Pichot is a versatile entertainer whose work is as extensive and flexible as the wide array of genres and media platforms across which she operates. In the midst of a growing and increasingly mediatized Argentine feminist movement, Pichot became a significant referent as a feminist celebrity. Despite her established media presence, Pichot always seems to be mid-hustle, jumping from gig to gig. Pichot's career is characterized by short-term contracts, crowd-funding, and ad hoc projects. Whether solo or ensemble, however, Pichot's work always features her at the center, performing multiple onscreen and offscreen roles—a zany circus ringmaster whose work as master of ceremonies is compounded by the business end of securing contracts.

In this article, I present Pichot's YouTube series *La loca de mierda* (2008) and *Cualca* (2012) in order to examine how feminist politics and precarity inform both the content and the production structures of her comedy. By focusing on these specific texts—their production history, aesthetics, and narrative tropes—I trace Pichot's politics as a response to Argentina's distinct national "grass-roots and anti-neoliberal feminism." In these web-series, the targets of Pichot's sharpened satire are equally dispersed between the misogyny and widespread precarity inherent to the Argentine context. Pichot's feminist perspective reveals the extent to which sexism is part and parcel of capitalist accumulation, and her work pushes against neoliberal versions of feminism. Pichot's media content brings into relief the current generalized state of precariousness under neoliberalism, which affects the quality of life across the gender spectrum. Ultimately. Pichot's work asks for a reconsideration of both the material conditions of celebrities operating on digital platforms and the potential of popular forms of media activism.

Joaquín Serpe is a Visiting Assistant Professor in Media, Culture, and Communication at New York University. His research interest focuses on how the transition from broadcast to digital media has transformed media pedagogy and the dissemination of political thought.

She may be a symbol of British colonialism but she's still someone's mother: Dislike and distaste in online discourses about the Queen's death

On the morning of 8 September 2022, Buckingham Palace issued a statement declaring that Queen Elizabeth's doctors were concerned for her health and she would be kept under medical supervision at Balmoral. Typically a matter kept private, the tweet amassed nearly 12,000 shares and over 19,000 likes within 30 minutes. Speculation on social media continued throughout the day, along with discussions about the celebrification of the Royal family, the nature of the monarchy, and its relevance to contemporary society. Controversies over the

last five years, including the racism aimed at Meghan Markle and the allegations that Prince Andrew had sex with an underage girl, have provoked criticism of both the institution of the monarchy and the Queen herself, yet following the announcement of her death at 6pm on 8 September 2022, a moratorium on these criticisms began, often the result of gatekeeping by members of the public on social media.

This paper is interested in the ways dislike and distaste are framed in discourses surrounding the monarchy in general, and Queen Elizabeth in particular. I argue for viewing the Queen as a celebrity, albeit a reluctant one, and suggest that the social media activity that took place around her death mirrors other celebrity controversies while also differing in key ways. In particular, I suggest that the distinction made between Queen Elizabeth the person, and the Queen as the head of the monarchy, diverges from other criticisms of celebrities which have played out on social media. Through an analysis of tweets posted following the death of the Queen I consider the ways in which dislike of the monarchy was expressed online, by whom and when. I then turn to the 'anti-dislikers' who opposed these expressions of dislike as inappropriate, asking who they are, how they discussed their distaste and why they felt it. Drawing on Jonathan Gray's work on dislike and Bourdieu's field theory I argue that dislike can be a powerful tool to highlight inequalities and reinforce a sense of cultural identity, but that distaste equally functions to impose a sense of respectability and police 'appropriate' behaviour online.

Bethan Jones is a Research Associate in the School of Arts and Creative Technologies at the University of York. She has written extensively about anti-fandom, media tourism and participatory culture and is co-editor of *Popular Communication* as well as co-chair of the SCMS Fan and Audience Studies Scholarly Interest Group.

Black Celebrity Entanglements: Couples Therapy with the Smiths

On March 27, 2022, African American superstar Will Smith received the Oscar for Best Actor at the 94th Academy Awards. However, his win was overshadowed by what transpired on stage earlier that evening. When Chris Rock presented the award for Best Documentary Feature, the famed black comedian made a joke about Smith's actress wife, Jada Pinkett-Smith. The joke poked fun at Pinkett-Smith's shaved head, which is due to her struggle with alopecia. Smith shouted from his seat for Rock to "keep my wife's name out of your fucking mouth!" before approaching the comic and slapping him. "The Slap" became one of the most controversial moments on live TV. In fact, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences implemented a new "crisis team" to manage any potential real-time emergencies during future broadcasts.

This presentation examines the Smith/Rock conflict as a prime example of how Black celebrity crisis comes to be intertwined with televisual liveness. The Oscar moment resulted in the tarnishing of Smith's wholesome and heroic star image and prompted intense debate about the perils of African American fame as it connects to the politics of respectability. The moment also reignited discussion of the nature of Smith's marriage to Pinkett-Smith, which will be the main focus of my presentation. As Hannah Hamad has stated, the Smiths were

“celebrity culture’s emblematic black family for America at the dawn of the purportedly post-racial Obama era” (2015, p. 123). However, in recent years, their often rumored open relationship has come under scrutiny. In particular, the release of Pinkett-Smith’s *Red Table Talk* streaming series in 2018 on Facebook Watch showcased the couple’s strange dynamic amidst revelations of infidelity. In October 2023, after the release of Pinkett-Smith’s memoir *Worthy*, Smith admitted that their marriage is “a sloppy public experiment in unconditional love.”

By analyzing their respective memoirs, social media posts, and media appearances, I contend that the Smiths strategically use their platform as a high-profile celebrity couple to enact a form of public couples therapy through the exposure of the intricacies of their romantic arrangement. They have leveraged the gossip swirling around their marriage to brand themselves as a Hollywood power couple who can endure domestic strife. In so doing, I ultimately argue that the public image of the Black star couple, as epitomized by the Smiths, alters conventional perceptions of intimacy in celebrity culture.

Brandy Monk-Payton is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication and Media Studies at Fordham University. Her research focuses on theories of Black media representation and cultural production in the United States. She has published articles on blackness and fame in journals such as *Celebrity Studies*, *Persona Studies*, and *Women's Studies in Communication*.

D5: Celebrity, Scandal & Documentary

Panel Overview: This panel proposes to investigate the intersection between celebrity studies and documentary media, with a particular focus on how documentaries about celebrities engage with scandal. Specifically, the papers on this panel will probe how the structures and conventions of documentary influence how scandal is represented – and often reframed – both by documentary filmmakers and the subjects who are at the center of these films. Documentary's embrace of celebrity culture forces us to consider the role that streaming, social media, and the publicity industry have played in documentary's evolution into an increasingly popular, commercial form. Through papers on female pop stars, online audiences, and reputation management, this panel will consider the role that nonfiction representation – with all of its attendant claims to objectivity and authenticity – plays in how audiences come to understand the historical, economic, and cultural dimensions of celebrity, as well as the structures that produce and sustain it.

Presentation 1: Whitney/Britney: Rewriting the Scandal in the Female Pop Star Documentary

Pop music documentaries have played a significant role in shaping the narrative of popular music. Such documentaries shed light on the experiences, challenges, and achievements of female artists in the pop music genre and provide a platform to explore the artistry, cultural impact, and personal stories of women who have made an indelible mark on the pop music landscape. The portrayal of women in these documentaries occupies a crucial space in the exploration of popular music history. They celebrate the achievements of iconic female pop artists, challenge and reaffirm gender stereotypes, highlight artistic prowess and influence, and document personal journeys of resilience.
This paper will explore to what extent both Britney Spears and Whitney Houston's celebrity has been reinscribed via the documentaries made about their lives. Numerous documentaries have been produced on both stars and seek to reveal the 'truth' behind the scandals – namely, Spear's mental breakdown and Houston's drug addiction. It will address the ways in which documentaries seek to provide a more complex lens through which to view the celebrity, but rarely achieve this and their transgressions often become part of the nucleus of the star rather than a part of their past.

Using examples from documentaries focused on both stars, this paper will examine how scandal has multifarious meanings in the pop star documentary genre and how far the genre can succeed in its attempt to present complex narratives regarding complex women.

Kirsty Fairclough is Deputy Head and Head of Research and Innovation at the School of Digital Arts at Manchester Metropolitan University and the Chair of Manchester Jazz Festival. Kirsty's current research areas include the audio-visual mediation of popular culture, celebrity studies, and popular music with an emphasis on the life and legacy of Prince. Kirsty is the co-editor of *Diva: Feminism and Fierceness from Pop to Hip Hop*, *Prince and Popular Culture, The Music Documentary: Acid Rock to Electropop*, *The Arena Concert: Music, Media and Mass Entertainment* and *Music/Video: Forms, Aesthetics, Media* and

author of the forthcoming *Beyoncé: Celebrity Feminism and Popular Culture*.
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Presentation 2; Reclaiming the Scandal - from Swift to Beckham: The Celebrity Portrait Documentary in Digital Media Culture

The celebrity portrait documentary is a 'battle for public mythology' (Birkvad 2017), where you as a star can represent your image, reshape your life story, and even reclaim past scandals (Haastrup 2020). Still, in digital media culture the online audience becomes part of this narrative.

This analysis concerns two contemporary celebrity portrait documentaries and how they each represent stars and their individual scandals filtered through a particular narrative and style: Taylor Swift's film *Miss Americana* (Wilson, 2020) is a coming of age-narrative, whereas David Beckham's *Beckham* (Stevens, 2023) looks back on his career in four-part miniseries. However, in a digital media culture 'the battle' of a star image is also a collaboration with the online audience, which is why the digital reception, as expressed on Reddit and the Instagram profiles @davidbeckham and @taylorswift, is included in my argument. The analysis of the user comments focuses on how they address the transgressions and the representation of the scandal.

The aim of this paper is to investigate how scandals in celebrity portrait documentaries can be reclaimed. It builds on extant research on the celebrity portrait documentary genre (Birkvad 2017, Fuhs 2017, Haastrup 2017, 2021), the definition and analysis of scandals (Thompson 2000, Zulli 2023), and theories of digital reception (Hall 1980, Jenkins 2006, Pink et al 2015).

The combined analysis of the documentaries, scandal, and their digital reception is inspired by Diana Zullis' claim that "more work needs to be done to theorize how digital technology inhibits or contributes to scandal production" (2023) and adapts her concept of ´the socio-mediated scandal' to analyse how the scandals represented in the documentaries are discussed online. How they become part of a 'collaborative process' defining and exploring the 'reclaiming of the scandal', it is 'increasingly personal' when the celebrity is addressed directly on their social media profile, and 'amplifies partisanship' between fans and detractors (Zulli 2020, p. 866). This qualitative study of celebrity portrait documentaries offers a theoretical framework for discussing how scandals are represented and reshaped, as well as how these reclaimed scandals are subject to negotiation by online audiences.

Helle Kannik Haastrup is an associate professor at the University of Copenhagen. Her research focuses on celebrity culture, film and digital media culture. She has recently published in Popular Communication, Celebrity Studies Journal and Journal of Scandinavian Cinema and co-edited *Rethinking Cultural Criticism* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2021).

Presentation 3: Deep Enough?: Sports Scandal and Reputation Management in *In Deep with Ryan Lochte*

Ryan Lochte is the second most decorated male swimmer in US Olympic history, but he is also a famous idiot. His sporting success made possible a spotty if memorable career as a c-list celebrity, playing a “sex idiot” on *30 Rock* (2012), an “international bozo” on *Family Guy* (2018), and starring in his own short-lived reality television show, *What Would Ryan Lochte Do?* (2013), a “crushing commercial and creative failure” that proved Lochte was “as boring as he is beautiful” (AV Club). In 2016, Lochte gained global notoriety after claiming that he and three of his teammates had been robbed at gunpoint after a night out in Rio during the Olympic Games. The story Lochte told on *The Today Show* was quickly proved false though, as surveillance video showed security guards confronting Lochte as he vandalized and drunkenly urinated outside a gas station bathroom. Relative fame quickly beget infamy, as Lochte lost commercial sponsorships and became a trending internet meme (#Lochtegate, #LochMess). Public scorn following this event was so high, people even demonstrated against his appearance on *Dancing with Stars* just a few weeks later, with two protestors actually storming the floor while Lochte waited for scores on his debut foxtrot.

This paper will examine how documentary can operate as a mode for image rehabilitation through the case study of *In Deep with Ryan Lochte* (Peacock, 2020), a documentary portrait following Lochte’s bid to make the 2020 Olympic team and “prove he isn't the same man he once was.” Equal parts inspirational sports narrative and mea culpa, the film represents US broadcast channel NBC’s investment in long-form reputation management in the lead up to their tv coverage of the Olympics. As such, this paper is as much about the industries invested in Lochte’s positive reception (US Swimming, NBC) as it is about the athlete’s journey towards public redemption. Drawing on scholarship in celebrity studies as well as media industry studies, this paper will consider *In Deep*’s attempts to reshape Ryan Lochte’s image while at the same time examining the role documentary plays more broadly in the business of reputation management.

Kristen Fuhs is Professor of Media Studies at Woodbury University. Her work about documentary film, the American criminal justice system, and contemporary celebrity has appeared in journals such as *Cultural Studies*, *The Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television*, and the *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*. She is also the co-founder and editor of *Docalogue*, as well as the related *Docalogue* book series. kristen.fuhs@woodbury.edu

D6: Celebrity Masculinities and Populist Affect in Times of Crisis: Nigel Farage, Joe Rogan, and Conor McGregor

This panel examines the increasing appeal of anti-woke male media figures within populist 21st century trends, including the Brexit movement and the vaccine hesitance of the Covid-19 pandemic, and considers the possibilities and niche appeals offered by an increasingly fragmented mediascape. As a growing body of scholarship has recognised, white male masculinity constructs itself as increasingly embattled following advances in the rights of minority groups. Such grievances are oftentimes consolidated into a populist script that rails equally against immigration as well as an amorphous "woke agenda" antithetical to the perceived rights and freedoms of a white, male (often older) demographic. While recognising this as a global phenomenon, the panel narrows its focus to anglophone media and celebrity in the UK, Ireland, and the US, and through case studies of Farage, Rogan, and McGregor, examines how these celebrities interpellate their audiences as being, if not in crisis, then certainly under duress.

Presentation 1: Shifting the Centre of Political Gravity: Nigel Farage, Celebrity Power, and Brexit Britain

Despite standing for election to Westminster seven times, and seven times failing, Nigel Farage is arguably the most influential British politician since Margaret Thatcher. Farage forced David Cameron into calling the 2016 Brexit referendum; he played high-profile role in the Leave victory; and he exerted pressure on the Tories during the 2019 election campaign, pressuring Boris Johnson's government to redefine the UK's exit from the EU. More than any other figure in recent years, Farage has shifted the centre of political gravity in the UK – significantly rightwards. Yet, while there has been ample attention paid to Farage's influence via vehicles such as Ukip, the Brexit Party, and Reform UK, by political scientists, much less attention has been paid to Farage as a celebrity by scholars working in critical media studies. As such, this paper explores his mastery of spectacle, his value to and exploitation of legacy media, and the growth of his celebrity power within the conditions of structural collapse and the perpetual capitalist crisis. It follows Aditya Chakrabortty when he noted that, in the wake of the financial crisis, Farage distinguished himself from the rump of mainstream politicians by "channel[ing] the id of Middle England," and develops this thought, arguing that this "authentic", masculine, Everyman persona, curated over two decades, is coolly calculated, and displays a virtuoso example of the process theorized by P. David Marshall whereby, using the media, politicians "convey… affective information" that addresses "instinctive feelings" of voters rather than "rational decision making". Informed by academic work on celebrity and politics and populism, it maps Farage's rise as a political leader, through the development of his extra-parliamentary career as a pundit on British talk radio and GB News, his relationship with Donald Trump, his incarnation as an anti-immigrant citizen journalist on social media, and his stint in the jungle in *I'm a Celebrity…*: all key points in his becoming the British example par excellence of the populist celebrity politician, wielding an extra-parliamentary cultural power that exceeds that of the vast majority of his elected counterparts.

Neil Ewen is Senior Lecturer and Head of Communications at the University of Exeter, UK. He is co-author, with Anthony P. McIntyre, of *Post-Brexit Digital Cultures: Politics, Aesthetics, Affect* (Intellect, forthcoming), co-editor of *First Comes Love: Power Couples, Celebrity Kinship and Cultural Politics* (Bloomsbury, 2015) and *Capitalism, Crime and Media in the 21st Century* (Palgrave, 2019), and Cultural Report section editor of *Celebrity Studies* journal (Routledge).

Presentation 2: "You Should Thank Toxic Masculinity:" Joe Rogan, Crisis Celebrity, and Cultural Remasculinization

American commentator and podcaster Joe Rogan is a fascinating, influential, and broadly understudied popular media figure. Seen by his fans as a masculinist anti-woke truth teller with combat-sport bona fides and a libertarian approach to social and political issues he has risen from a career as a minor comedian, TV personality, and mixed martial arts commentator to a globally recognised celebrity with a prominent position in American culture and politics. This paper argues that Rogan is a popular *crisis celebrity* and that his podcast *The Joe Rogan Experience* (2009 -) is a syncretic site of cultural remasculinisation. The podcast, where he brings on various guests, from comedians and athletes to right-wing idealogues and conspiracy theorists, is significant in its output with, at the time of writing, 2292 total episodes. It is a potent space in which reactionary politics, conspiracy theories, fitness cultures, and the lionisation of violence intermix. Many of the connected but often distinct strands of contemporary American reaction converge on episodes of the *Joe Rogan Experience.* As such, I argue that the show, and Rogan himself, act as gateway to the wider "manosphere" and cater to a reactionary fandom of disenchanted and alienated young men who perceive themselves as under attack. The notion that young men are in crisis, or masculinity is under siege, is one which permeates all levels of cultural discourse in the 21st century. In 2000 Sally Robinson coins the term "identity politics of the dominant" (3) noting that "the white male victim — personally, individually targeted — is the emblem of the current crisis in white masculinity" (5). This identity politics of the dominant, in which the white male perceives himself as personally attacked by the gains of feminism and racial equality feeds into a propulsive affective force in contemporary culture driven by what Jilly Boyce Kay (2022) sees as "white men's anger and humiliation at being 'left behind'" (29). I argue that Rogan and his podcast are key drivers and legitimators of this affective force as he works to remasculinise an American cohort he sees as increasingly in crisis.

Odin O'Sullivan is a Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholar and Ph.D. candidate in Film and Media studies at University College Dublin. His research analyses cycles of cultural remasculinization with a focus on popular media. He has published work in *Celebrity Studies, Feminist Media Studies,* and *European Journal of Cultural Studies.*

Presentation 3: "Ireland, We are at War": Conor McGregor, Crisis Populism, and Celebrity Provocation

Conor McGregor is a polarising Irish sporting figure who often lives up to his stage nickname: "notorious". Having excelled in the octagon as a UFC fighter and even in 2017 crossing over to boxing for "the money fight" with Floyd Mayweather, the Dubliner has amassed an international fanbase, a millions-strong social media following, as well as a huge fortune through his fights and business ventures. While sporting celebrity has long been a prominent cultural script for an abrasive Irish masculinity through figures such as footballer Roy Keane and snooker player Alex Higgins, McGregor's recent pivot toward populist nationalism aligns him with both transnational and national trends drawing upon an affective wellspring of white disaffection. This holds true within Ireland where far-right agitators have increasingly stoked anti-immigrant sentiment as the nation reels from an intractable housing crisis, the residual impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and public services under seemingly perpetual duress. In this context, a knife attack that left a young girl fighting for her life sparked violent protests and looting on the streets of Dublin in November 2023. The night before the attack, on learning that non-nationals were to be allowed voting rights in local elections, McGregor claimed Ireland was "at war," a pronouncement seized upon by many as a rallying call against multiculturalism (both within Ireland and by far-right groups as far afield as France and the US). Fan-generated images of McGregor heroically posed in front of the burning Dublin streets went viral as the polysemy of McGregor's star image focalized a range of tensions that had long been gestating within Irish society, but also activated transnational cultural tropes of embattled white masculinity. Writing at the turn of the 21st century, Gary Whannel (2002), suggested that images of sports stars often constitute a "point of convergence of social anxieties over morality and masculinity" (2). This paper argues that given the pervasive growth of social media and rise of post-truth discourse (exacerbated during the pandemic), McGregor constitutes a post-truth crisis celebrity whose aggressive bravado offers a compelling social script to disaffected groups both on national and international scales.

Anthony P. McIntyre is Lecturer in Film and Media at University College Dublin. He is co-author, with Neil Ewen, of *Post-Brexit Digital Cultures: Politics, Aesthetics, Affect* (Intellect, forthcoming), author of *Contemporary Irish Popular Culture: Transnationalism, Regionality and Diaspora* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), and co-editor of *The Aesthetics and Affects of Cuteness* (Routledge, 2017).

E1: Affective Crises 2

"Now allow me some fear": Football Celebrities' Post-Career, Between Self-Narrative and Mainstream Media Representations. The Case of Francesco Totti

The paper aims to investigate contemporary forms of (former) football celebrity self-representation and self-narrative through Instagram profiles and their presence on mainstream media. Among social media, Instagram has consolidated aesthetic and cultural models (Manovich, 2017) and fostered the emergence of practices related to identity construction and performativity of the self. Within social media, individuals give rise to self-narrative and self-promotion phenomena, through images, linked to social, cultural, and aesthetic values (Caldeira *et al.*, 2018; Caliandro & Graham, 2020).

Football celebrities are a sociological category that includes individuals distinguished by notoriety, media echo (Rojek, 2004), athleticism, and exceptional sporting achievements. This category builds its identity on social media by disseminating content consistent with the self-narrative that is intended to convey to a real or "imagined" audience (Marwick & boyd, 2010). Instagram represents the ideal media environment for self-representation. Self-representation and self-narrative allow football celebrities to give rise to relevant meanings for audiences, intensifying para-social relations (Bifulco & Tirino, 2019). These concepts also apply to former football players. Indeed, these are individuals who face the end of their sports career – sometimes experiencing crisis moments –, but often the beginning of new activities, within mainstream media, realizing TV commercials or appearances in TV series, TV shows or movies. Starting from crisis episodes, these new activities allow them to renegotiate social capital and celebrity status. The narrative methods of the media may impact the transition path from competitive and professional life and retirement (Tinley, 2012). For these reasons, within the theoretical framework of the mediatization of sports (Frandsen, 2020), we focus on mainstream media processes and content related to former football celebrities. We analyze the case history of Francesco Totti. We decided to use media content analysis (Macnamara, 2005; Schreier, 2012) to analyze his Instagram content, and narrative analysis of audio-visual fictional products. We want to investigate: a) practices of self-representation and self-narrative, focusing on symbolic and communicative strategies of negotiating celebrity capital; b) modes of recognition by the public, through processes of identification (Wann *et al.*, 2001), interaction (Wheeler 2014) and imitation (Rojek, 2001); c) processes and practices underlying the construction of the mediatized image of former football players, also through the commission between different entertainment systems (sport, gossip, cinema and TV series).

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Simona Castellano is a Postdoctoral Researcher and Adjunct Professor at the University of Salerno. She has published papers in national and international journals and volumes and participated in conferences in Italy and abroad on sports cultures and the mediatization of sports, with reference to social media. Her recent publications include *The star and COVID-19: Serie A soccer celebrities and the self-narrative of contagion on social media* (Edward Elgar, 2022, with M. Tirino e L. Bifulco). sicastellano@unisa.it

The Affective Politics of Celebrity Failure: Britney Spears, Meghan Markle and the Spectacle of Misplaced Feminine Fame

Simultaneously attesting to and exposing myths around social mobility, celebrity is as much about failure as success. While undeniably glamorous and aspirational, its attractions often rely on fascination with personal decline. In an increasingly troubled world that equates hypervisibility with success, the appeal of watching the famous struggle offers up a range of emotions and dis/identifications--from melodramatic pathos and empathy to judgmental fury and distance—that media use to broader, often conservative political ends. Slippery and contradictory, celebrity failure has its own politics, singling out those whose fame seems aleatory or undeserved in order to scapegoat them for exposing neoliberalism's often false promises of happiness and success.

Focusing on two disparate examples of celebrity failure, Britney Spears and Meghan Markle, this paper explores what it means to "fail," particularly in the context of extensive privilege. Parsing the particular potency and allure of feminine failure, I trace its capacity to incite the kinds of anger that can be used to deflect broader socio-political critique of increasingly economically polarized modern societies. While failure is by no means a solely feminine trait, celebrity culture frames female decline, mishaps and falls differently, embedding them in terms of (fading) looks and the allied psychological surveillance characteristic of the celebrity gaze. Unlike famous men who are cancelled or fall from grace as a result of committing crimes or public hate speech (like Kanye West), the feminization of celebrity failure is linked to the negative consequences of misplaced and unwarranted fame. At the center of highly mediated emotional storms, media presentations of Spears and Markle as failures embed them both in hyper-feminine discourses of dysfunctional families and mental health crises, generating a range of affects to pathologize those who have "wrongly" acquired certain forms of privilege.

Moya Luckett teaches at New York University's Gallatin School of Individualized Study and is the author of *Cinema and Community* (Wayne State U.P, 2014). Her current book project explores how celebrity culture masks restricted social mobility in recessionary cultures, shaping concepts of work and discourses of failure.

Global superstar Deepika Padukone, celebrity platform and depression in the global south

In 2015, Bollywood actress Deepika Padukone sat down for an in-depth interview in India about her struggles with depression and anxiety. At the time Padukone's career had begun to take off and Padukone and her team saw it important to use her platform to have open conversations about these issues in an effort to raise awareness and normalize conversation about the same. Around that time, Padukone also launched the *Live Love Laugh* foundation with the aim of continuing to raise awareness about these issues while also working to reduce the stigmas that exist relating to mental health. The foundation also works to offer resources to help people cope with these challenges. Fast forward 8 years and Padukone's career has skyrocketed. She is now one of the leading actresses in Bollywood and has also emerged as someone with transnational appeal, having worked in Hollywood film and served as global brand ambassador for luxury brands like Louis Vuitton. In a recent 2023 interview, Padukone, now with an even greater platform, opened up once more about her mental health challenges. This paper therefore works to engage Padukone's discussions on the topic as part of unpacking the significance of her candid discussions around mental health in a cultural context where there remains work to be done to end stigma and tackle these issues as one would any other health challenge. I specifically mention cultural context because though Padukone's foundation focuses on serving people in India, as a global celebrity her content is engaged far beyond the bounds of a national border. Framing such a discourse within a cultural context recognizes that it has an impact around the world, especially given Padukone's global celebrity status. Through sharing her own experiences with such a personal crisis, Padukone enables room for greater conversation on such topics. This paper therefore aims to unpack the discourse within Padukone's 2023 interview as part of highlighting its significance in this cultural context. The paper aims to locate such an analysis within a decolonial framework recognizing the importance of such conversations in the global south in ways that are cognizant of the nuance in the context.

Dr **Viraj Suparsad** is a lecturer in Film & Television Studies at The University of Cape Town. He holds a PhD in Media Studies from the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. His new book, *Being Bollywood: Postfeminism, Celebrity Culture and Femininity in the Global South*, was published by Palgrave MacMillan in November 2023.

E2: Celebrity Branding and Tensions of Race, Gender, and Nation

As scholars of film stardom and mediated celebrity have long documented, celebrity branding and promotional texts have substantial social, aesthetic, and ideological impact on celebrities, the productions and industries to which they contribute, and to society. The dynamics of celebrity branding reflect, reveal, and at times challenge tensions inherent in society and mediated culture, however. As the papers in this panel illuminate, the commercial demands of celebrity branding can be jeopardized by conflicts over a star's image or the amplification of moments of celebrity crisis, while promotional texts also often have a complex relationship with hegemonies of race, gender and nation in the media industries and society at large. This panel examines these dynamics and what they reveal in case studies that range from Hollywood film star Merle Oberon, to the stars of the streaming series *Orange is the New Black,* to professional tennis player Naomi Osaka.

Presentation 1: Merle Oberon and Racial Press Narratives in the 1930s

> "Nobody could have become a 1930s movie star if they were of mixed parentage, particularly Anglo-Indian. Merle knew that and she was smart enough to do something about it. . .and then she was stuck with it. There was never a point in her life where she could say, "Oh, by the way, none of this is true." – Michael Korda, *Daily News [L.A.] TV,* on the book *Queenie*, May 10 - May 16, 1987.

Michael Korda's comments, reflecting on his fictionalized account of his aunt, Merle Oberon, provides a poignant exploration of the challenges faced by individuals of mixed parentage, particularly those of Anglo-Indian descent, in the context of the 1930s British and American racial restrictions. The Korda brothers' pioneering role in the Golden Age of film is unique as they discovered and promoted stars from India, including Vivian Leigh, Merle Oberon, and Sabu. Alexander Korda represented and marketed Estelle Thompson (Merle Oberon), a mixed-race Anglo-Indian woman, as a future star while strategically concealing her true heritage. Amidst the restrictive 1933 Hayes Code and prevailing social constraints, Alexander Korda's London Films emerged as an innovative force in the 1930s British studio system. However, this groundbreaking narrative was not without conflict. The conscious decision to conceal Oberon's mixed-race background became a point of speculation in stories about the actress. Oberon's press clippings from the 1930s, meticulously preserved in scrapbooks, offer insights into the deliberate construction and monitoring of a celebrity brand. This strategic concealment aligns with contemporary studies on the performative nature of fame, mirroring historical tensions within the studio-dominated film industry.

This essay investigates Oberon's adept use of press clippings to navigate the complex landscape of 1930s film production amid racial prejudices, thereby examining the intersection of fame, identity, and public narratives. The narrative awareness becomes a tool not only for conflict resolution but also for strategic negotiation of film deals and salaries within the confines of her contract with London Films. The heightened conflict arises as Oberon finds herself caught between two industry titans, Alexander Korda and Samuel Goldwyn, both crediting her integral role in launching their respective studios and productions

during this transformative period in film history. Merle Oberon's career as a movie star offers nuanced insights into the intersection of race, fame, and the construction of public narratives—a phenomenon marked by conflict, crisis, and enduring relevance in the evolution of celebrity culture within the media and entertainment industries.

Shilpa Davé is an Associate Professor of Media Studies and Assistant Dean at the University of Virginia. Her publications include *Indian Accents: Brown Voice and Racial Performance in American Television and Film,* and co-edited anthologies, book chapters, and journal articles in journals such as *Journal of Asian American Studies* and *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*.

Presentation 2: *Orange is the New Black* and Hegemonies of Celebrity Branding

The television series *Orange is the New Black* (2013-2019), a dramedy about women incarcerated in a U.S. penitentiary, is notable for how its initial focus on a blonde, upper-middle-class protagonist shifts across seven seasons to increasingly center an ensemble that includes many African American and Latina women, women who grew up in poverty, and women who identify as lesbians and bisexual. Creator Jenji Kohan was quoted describing protagonist Piper Chapman (Taylor Schilling) as a “Trojan horse” written to lure audiences in, when it would soon relate the stories of women overrepresented in the prison system: women of color and working-class women.

This narrative strategy resulted in its stars shifting from season to season. A few, Schilling and Laura Prepon (who played Piper’s girlfriend, Alex), who happen to be white, continue through season 7. In contrast, the major African American and Latina characters develop across seasons into starring roles. Arguably the most developed among them are Tastee (Danielle Brooks), Suzanne (Uzo Aduba), and Cindy (Adrienne C. Moore), and also Dayanara (Dasha Polanco), Aleida (Elizabeth Rodriguez) and Gloria (Selenis Leyva). Tastee, for instance, becomes *Orange is the New Black*’s moral center, while the Latina stars take center stage in the last season. A great many other characters, in addition, become important across the seasons, while Piper and Alex are increasingly sidelined.

An examination of the marketing of the series and its stars illuminates how hegemonic celebrity branding practices regarding race, ethnicity, and gender conformity prevailed through the series’ run, as Netflix centered mostly Schilling, Prepon, and other traditionally feminine white actors and ignored the series’ critique of the prison system, despite the evolution of the narrative. To explore these dynamics, this presentation engages in textual analysis of Netflix’s advertising and celebrity branding practices each season and discourse analysis of news coverage of the series and interviews that were conducted with its actors. I focus in this analysis in particular on ideologies linked to the show’s celebrity branding with respect to gender, femininity, race, and class, and assumptions regarding talent, authenticity, and audience appeal.

Mary Beltrán is a Professor of Radio-Television-Film at the University of Texas

at Austin. Her publications include *Latina/o Stars in U.S. Eyes: The Making and Meanings of Film and TV Stardom, Latino TV: A History*, and the co-edited anthology *Mixed Race Hollywood*.

Presentation 3: "Your Black card is revoked": Naomi Osaka and Mixed Race Celebrity Branding

Naomi Osaka vaulted into the public consciousness through her athleticism. In 2021 she became the highest paid women identified athlete of all time, yet her fame also hinged on her celebrity brand. While her athletic skills are undeniable, her iconic status as a mixed race, Japanese/Haitian, Generation Z woman also fuels her public appeal. The complexity of Osaka's biography sets her up as a vehicle to examine the intersections of nation, race, gender, celebrity, and generation in the present moment. Osaka's personal history, which takes her from her birthplace in Japan to her current residence in Florida, ideally positions her as the face of globalization, and her celebrity narrative reflects and negotiates her fans' hopes and beliefs about globalization, serving as a key entry into understanding the ideologies that undergird those beliefs.

This presentation will focus on the controversy that erupted around Osaka's decision to represent Japan in the 2020 Summer Olympics. Osaka was chosen to be the athlete who lit the Olympic torch, becoming a highly visible symbol of Japanese citizenship. As Osaka notes in her documentary, this decision meant that many of her fans wanted to "revoke her Black card," while Japanese media reported on citizen concerns that Osaka was not able to represent Japan as a Black woman. In this analysis, I focus on Osaka's own active role in shaping her global brand in the face of these attacks on her racial legitimacy. While still subject to xenophobic, sexist, and racist gatekeeping, Osaka has been highly successful in marketing her image, controlling the narrative around her celebrity, and speaking back to those attacks. This ability to communicate fluently in a predominantly visual mediascape also relies on the ambiguities inherent in visual communication and amplifies discourses of (in)authenticity and (il)legitimacy that haunt mixed race celebrities. Thus, this analysis of Osaka's celebrity points to the potential and the precarity of building a celebrity image on a mixed race brand.

LeiLani Nishime is a Professor of Communication at the University of Washington. Her book *Undercover Asian* theorizes a visual culture of mixed race Asians. Her work can be found in multiple edited books and journals such as the *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, *Communication Theory*, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, and the *Journal of Asian American Studies*.

E3: Remaking and remediating Generation X: enduring fame

Usually defined as including those born between 1965 and 1980, Generation X is well into middle age. Often referred to as the 'middle child' of generations, GenX-ers sit between the larger Boomer and Millennial cohorts (Woo 2016). In the early 90s, during the heyday of grunge music, it was characterised by *Time Magazine* as 'laid back, late blooming…just lost', establishing a stereotype that endures (1990). Though Strauss and Howe argue for generations as a way of organising and understanding history, this panel rejects their deterministic approach and instead is interested in the mediation of generational identities as images that are both too all-encompassing and too restrictive at the same time. Constructed as they are by media – film, television, music, sport, magazines, novels – often at the time the cohort comes of age, Gen-X remain strongly associated with the popular culture of the late 80s and the 90s. This panel investigates the ways iconic stars and celebrities of Generation X, who continue to be cultural touchstones of that era, alternately reference, reject and remake their images as needed to be relevant to both their audience of peers and the audiences of younger generations. As such, we argue that generational identity is a structuring element of celebrity culture (Ewen and Cobb 2016).

Presentation 1: 'Ethan Hawke's perpetual goatee and the gendered politics of enduring Gen-X celebrity'

In the contemporary economic downturn, mediated masculinity, dominated by the super-sized heroism of the Marvel and DC universes and the popular misogyny of figures like Donald Trump, Elon Musk and Andrew Tate is outsized, angry and ready for a fight. Even Keanu Reeves' 'too good for this world' (Horeck 2022) celebrity is counter-balanced by the vengeful violence of John Wick. Constructed as a site of loss and alienation, white masculinity is 'toxic' and, yet again, in crisis, fuelled by the attention economy of social media. At the same time, widespread nostalgia for the 90s idealizes, in some (con)texts, that decade's apparently more 'authentic' culture before the fragmentation of new media and peaceful prosperity that ended with 9/11 and the 2008 Great Recession (Ewen 2020). That decade's image of white masculinity is epitomized in *Reality Bites* (Stiller, 1994). Ethan Hawke's irony-obsessed, wanna-be grunge rock star Troy, with his barely-there goatee, long-ish unwashed hair, and romantic longing for connection amid his alienation from contemporary capitalist culture is the enduring image of the Gen-X slacker. This paper considers Hawke's celebrity through his recent film roles and his Instagram account, suggesting that he acts as a site of nostalgia for the 90s and a softer postfeminist masculinity. I argue that, for all his social media performance of politically liberal, middle-aged, hard-working father (Hamad 2016), Hawke simultaneously presents an image of a disaffected, laidback Generation X sensibility that depends on an opposing image of striving femininity.

Hawke's most well-known roles in the 2000s repeat the slacker type of Troy as a disaffected, ageing, and sometimes still idealistic Gen-Xer in the films of Richard Linklater: Jesse in the series of *Before…* films (1995, 2004, 2013), and Mason Sr in *Boyhood* (2014). His most recent return to this character is in *Juliet, Naked* (2018). An analysis of these roles and Hawke's Instagram

account, which showcases his wider work while regularly memorialising his films of the 90s, reveals an ambivalent use of nostalgia for the 90s and its particular image of white masculinity to sustain his celebrity today.

Shelley Cobb is Professor of Film and Feminist Media Studies at the University of Southampton. She led the AHRC-funded project Calling the Shots: Women and Contemporary Film Culture in the UK and is the author of Adaptation, Authorship and Contemporary Women Filmmakers (Palgrave-Macmillan 2014) and co-editor of First Comes Love: Power Couples, Celebrity Kinship and Cultural Politics (Bloomsbury 2015). She has published widely on the film industry, women and popular culture, gender, and celebrity.s.cobb@soton.ac.uk

Presentation 2: "I heard *you* might be Lebanese": Celebrity, Generationality and the Queer TV Persona of Rosie O'Donnell

The recent persona of Rosie O'Donnell is a useful jumping off point to think about the role played by generationality in the negotiation and mediation of Gen-X queerness on TV, as this generational cohort is interpellated by intertextually queer meanings carried by O'Donnell's celebrity in recent appearances in *The L Word: Generation Q* and *A League of Their Own*. Her casting adds a generationally specific historical dimension to the queer discourse circulating in these shows at primary textual levels, signifying in ways that resonate with her don't-ask-don't-tell era 90s persona, established in sub-textually queer film roles in *A League of Their Own*, in which she inhabited a prototypical version of the lesbian variant of the now familiar gay-best-friend trope whose job is to act as a sexless foil to the (hetero)sexual agency of Madonna's character. And romcom *Sleepless in Seattle* in which her best friend character enables a heteroromantic union for the female protagonist. Here, in keeping with the 90s context, the ostensible queerness of her foil status is offset by explicit references to 'my Rick' a notional and perfunctory male partner otherwise uninvolved in the narrative. Heavy-handed references to the never-seen Rick also recall a strategy employed by O'Donnell in the 90s to negotiate her closeted status during the era of her runaway hit *The Rosie O'Donnell Show* (NBC 1996-2002): to repeatedly lay claim to romantic interest in film star Tom Cruise, albeit indirect references to her still not publicly known queerness were playing their own part in the discursive struggle inherent to this negotiation. As indicated earlier, O'Donnell's queer persona interpellates audiences today via guest appearances in contemporary queer TV, and via the intertextual baggage that her persona carries. But especially members of Gen-X whose historical consciousness of the 1990s, having experienced youth or young adulthood during this decade, is necessarily different from succeeding generational cohorts for who this period is more historically remote, and less informed by lived experiences or personal histories/memories of this period. The changing nature of how O'Donnell's celebrity figures to Gen-X in today's mediascape reflects changes experienced by Gen-X media users of this generation, seen in the changing relationship of Gen-X to television culture over time, of Gen-X to celebrity culture over time, and of Gen-X to queerness, queer politics and queer TV.

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Presentation 3: '"When You Grow Up, Your Heart Dies": Gen X Celebrities All Grown Up'

Recent U.S. film and television have produced a wave of Generation X nostalgia texts. Teen media is an especially potent venue for nostalgia, soliciting an older, nostalgic audience alongside a core youth audience. While parents are usually peripheral, if not completely absent in teen media, *Riverdale* (CW, 2017-2023) and *Stranger Things* (Netflix, 2016-present) have highlighted their parent characters, played by aging Gen X icons—Winona Ryder in *Stranger Things*, and Luke Perry and Molly Ringwald in *Riverdale*. While aging stars playing parents on teen TV isn't new, *Stranger Things*' and *Riverdale*'s play with temporality make their casting and performances more complex, with *Stranger Things* set in Ryder's 1980s heyday, and *Riverdale* set in an amorphous, 50s-inspired present-past. I argue that *Stranger Things*' and *Riverdale*'s temporal shifts allow their Gen X stars to perform parenthood in a way that fixes (in both senses of the word) the perceived conflicts between Gen X and Baby Boomers by intertextually drawing on these stars' previous roles and celebrity personas.

Ringwald's stardom has long been associated with John Hughes's 1980s teen films. Her characters frequently had "mommy issues" often associated with a Gen X, latchkey upbringing—her mother doesn't appear in *Pretty in Pink* nor in *The Breakfast Club* and her parents forget her birthday in *Sixteen Candles*. As Elissa Nelson shows, *The Breakfast Club* pivots on the generational divide between the Gen X teen protagonists and their Baby Boomer parents, a tension nicely summed up when Alison (Ally Sheedy) tearfully proclaims "when you grow up, your heart dies." While Ringwald's performance in *Riverdale* confirms this maxim, as she has effectively morphed into her Hughes characters' absentee mothers, Perry and Ryder fix the perceived sins of Boomer parenthood—Perry plays a dependable, sensitive, and devoted father and Ryder's character is hyper-devoted to her sons, so close to them that she is able to communicate supernaturally. Because of the generational/parent culture conflict, the transition of Gen X stars not simply to middle-aged adults, but rather to *parents* carries more significance for their celebrity personas, as well as in the roles that they play.

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E4: Star and Celebrity Cultures: Histories, Bodies, and Aesthetics in Tamil/Indian Cinema

This panel examines three star bodies from the institutional history of popular Tamil cinema—Madhuri Devi, Sivaji Ganesan, and Rajinikanth—by focusing on their aesthetic, semiotic, and gendered implications for the larger intellectual terrain of star/celebrity studies. This triumvirate enables us to explore how star figures leave their traces across multiple intertextual worlds through indexical reminders, eruptive returns, and sustained relevance in bodily and spectral forms. Further, the panel foregrounds how the formal modality of cinema configures the coherence and contradiction of their screen personae in its scripting and stylistic specificity. While Swarnavel Eswaran discusses Madhuri Devi as the defiant "diva" who complicates our understandings of on-screen femininity in Tamil cinema, Constantine V. Nakassis examines how linguistic features—exemplified by speech registers in Tamil cinema—entail a direct indexical connection with the star/celebrity, particularly Rajinikanth in this case, like a patented artistic endeavour. Finally, B. Geetha's paper turns to the spectral resurrections of the star figure Sivaji Ganesan as he hovers over the [Tamil] cinematic memory like a historical apparition in the contemporary digital mediascape.

Presentation 1: "The entire Tamil Nadu says Sivaji [Ganesan] is dead": Spectral Bodies, Haunting Histories, and Star Figures in Tamil Cinema

In this paper, I position two Tamil films namely *Sivaji: The Boss* (2007) and *Naduvula Konjam Pakkatha Kaanom* (*NKPK*, A few pages in the middle are missing, 2012) alongside each other to examine the entanglements between cinematic death, spectral histories, and embodied memory of the actor-star Sivaji Ganesan who auratically animates these films like a phantom presence. The paper investigates the indeterminate aspect of absent presences or semi-presences rising from the historical vaults of Tamil cinema that haunt cinematic texts in their resurrections and recurrences through the bodily experience of the protagonist who occupies an interstitial state— "both here and there." In *Sivaji: The Boss* (2007), "the boss" Sivaji's *return* as MGR ("the new boss") presences the predecessor Sivaji (-Ganesan) by configuring him as a "double absence"—a slippage of cinematic identities through the splitting body. Further, I demonstrate how the authenticating legal documents—green card, passport, and driving license—in the filmic world complicate the intertwined notions of evidentiary truth and photographic indexicality by creating ocular uncertainties about visual knowledge through spectral doubling. In *NKPK*, the fractured memory of the amnesiac protagonist fails to register Sivaji Ganesan's death as he expresses his shock of disbelief at the loss of the deceased star. This paper contends that the "spirit" of Sivaji Ganesan in these films creates an *aesthetic image of history* that disrupts the narrative of linear time through the trope of disjunctive temporality that blurs the demarcations of past, present, and future. Further, I argue how the metaphor of Sivaji Ganesan becomes allegorical of the simultaneous project of cinematic obsolescence and preservation by handling the questions of (digital) medium and (im)mortality. Towards this intellectual pursuit, this paper explores the variegated understandings of "cinematic death" at the overlapping yet independent axes of textual analysis, star bodies,

medium specificity, and industry practices.

B. Geetha is a PhD candidate and Teaching Assistant in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay, India. Her doctoral dissertation focuses on the questions of star bodies, film aesthetics, digital technologies, and film comedy in (Tamil) cinema. She is a recipient of the Fulbright-Nehru Doctoral Fellowship (2022-2023) that extends her research at Michigan State University. Her recent book chapter on the anti-caste politics of the Tamil film *Pariyerum Perumal* (2018) is published in the anthology titled *The Routledge Companion to Caste and Cinema in India* (2022). (b.geetha1411@gmail.com)

Presentation 2: Semiotics of Celebrity: Notes from the Tamil Cinema

In this paper, I explore the semiotics of celebrity, as theorized through the semiotic theory of linguistic anthropology. In particular, I expand on the concept of *enregisterment*—the historical process by which repertoires of speech forms (speech registers: regional dialects, occupational speech styles, youth slangs, etc.) are invested with indexical meanings that can be enacted by speakers to "voice" social types of personhood/identity—by theorizing what I call person-indexing registers. While the types of register phenomena that linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists have focused on how stereotypes (in particular, social personae) get linked to ways of speaking, here I am concerned with how indexical meanings get linked to *specific individuals* (or individuated existents more broadly). Under such conditions—of which celebrity is a key case—sign forms, whatever else they are used to signify, come to have a rigid indexicality: they always seem to 'point' back to the individuals with whom they are linked. This makes such indexical meanings *proper to* that existent (precisely because they appear, to ideological consciousness, as unique to or differentiating of them) and, under certain conditions (such as regimented by intellectual property law), *property* owned by them. To explore this semiotics, I look at a range of cases from the Tamil cinema of South India, comparing the stardom of the "Superstar" Rajinikanth to the figure of the auteur director, two cases where elements of filmic form 'call out' to extra-textual figures (the hero-star, the auteur director) while also, thereby, providing (inter)textual coherence to the films of which they are a part.

Constantine V. Nakassis is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Chicago. A linguistic anthropologist, he has written extensively on the semiotics of brands and counterfeiting, mass media and cinema, and youth culture and language in South India. He is the author of two monographs, *Doing* Style: *Youth and Mass Mediation in South India* (University of Chicago Press, 2016) and *Onscreen/Offscreen* (University of Toronto Press, 2023). cnakassi@uchicago.edu

Presentation 3: Madhuri Devi: The Diva/Other Icon of Dravidian Cinema

Madhuri Devi was a unique actor and certainly was "difficult to please" and indeed "demanded a lot of attention," as per one of the dictionary definitions of Diva. She was not a stereotypical Tamil woman who suffered silently. She could assert herself in ways unimaginable, for instance, suing her own family for exploitation. This paper will argue for why Madhuri Devi's screen persona appears formidable even today: As Poongothai, if she unabashedly flaunts her desire for her lover *Ponmudi* (1950), she loses her innocence as the minister's daughter Amudhavalli when her lover cheats her and does not feel remorse when she kills him in self-defense in *Manthiri Kumari* (Minister's Daughter, 1950), both directed by Ellis R. Dungan. While Sivaji Ganesan is well known as the face of Dravidian cinema and its subnational politics in films like *Parasakthi* (Goddess, 1952) and *Thirumbi Paar* (Look Back, 1954), Madhuri Devi was the other unsung icon. One of the main reasons for her seminal and unparalleled work in the history of Tamil/Indian mainstream cinema was the scripts written by Dravidian ideologues like Bharathidasan and Karunanidhi for films like *Ponmudi*, *Manthiri Kumari* and *Devaki* (1951). In *Devaki*, a Westernized Madhuri Devi, in shirts and pants, plays the London-returned progressive feminist Leela, who brings order to the chaotic life of her sister Devaki (V.N. Janaki) by taming her wayward brother-in-law (N.N. Kannappa) and forcing him to rethink his life and change his ways. The bold and aggressive way Madhuri Devi elicits the confession from her brother-in-law and forces him to feel guilty and repent his past deeds, disavowing her sister's plea on behalf of her husband, is the film's climactic moment. This paper will foreground how Madhuri Devi's cross-dressing enabled her to create a unique space for female desire: In *Aayiram Thalai Vangiya Aboorva Chinthamani* (Chintamani, Who Took a Thousand Lives, 1947), not one but five women fall for her "masculine" charm, and in Jupiter Pictures' *Kanniyin Kadhali* (The Maiden's Love, 1949), a remake of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, her transwoman character was critically acclaimed.

Swarnavel Eswaran is a Professor in the Department of English and the School of Journalism at Michigan State University. He researches the history, aesthetics, and politics of Tamil cinema. His books include *Tamil Cinema Reviews: 1931-1960* (Nizhal, 2020) and *Madras Studios: Narrative, Genre, and Ideology in Tamil Cinema* (Sage Publications, 2015). eswaran@msu.edu

E5: "Artistic Genius": Celebrity *Auteur*-Directors after #MeToo across Hollywood and Central Eastern Europe

A ramification of the #MeToo movement has been its (re-)invigoration of popular and academic debates about how to reconcile the cultural positions of arthouse cinema's "problematic" directors. Seen as symbolic figures whose cultural importance lies in their significatory power for cinema's establishment as "art", as well as for the maintenance of the cinematic canon, these figures' validation is thrown into dispute when personal and/or professional behaviours and abuses of the power granted through that validation are exposed as morally unacceptable. The "cancel culture" debates about the "problematic artist" are ubiquitous in the public sphere and arthouse cinema itself (see e.g. *Tár* [2023]), entangled with debates about how to approach the work with which these *auteur* figures' star texts are associated.

This panel critically examines these issues through focusing on Central Eastern European discourses around the "problematic" *auteur*-director, and particularly these discourses' entanglement with Hollywood's cultural production/projection of #MeToo guilt.

Presentation 1: "Separate the Author from the Work": Examining Academic Debates about Roman Polanski through the Symbiotic Relationship between Hollywood and Eastern Europe

Exemplifying the entangled issues with which the panel engages is the academic debate that emerged in the 2023 special issue of the *Studies in Eastern European Cinema* journal, which focused on acclaimed and controversial director Roman Polanski's body of work. The debate, between editor Ewa Mazierska and contributor Agnieszka Piotrowska, positioned Polanski as key figure of European art cinema whose body of work and decades-long links to Hollywood make for an especially uncomfortable proposition to contend with his personal life, most importantly his 1977 rape of a thirteen-year-old child, for which he was sentenced in the U.S. but fled from the country to settle in France. Mazierska (2023) positions Polanski's controversial standing as post-#MeToo "dogmatism" and victimization, while Piotrowska's response (2023) provides an exhaustive rebuttal to, and rejection of Mazierska's relativization of Polanski's crimes and symbolic positioning in European art cinema culture. However, Piotrowska's final argument revolves less around whether Polanski as a person is acceptable according to moral and ethical standards – her answer to this is a resounding "no" – and more about to what extent "a genius's work [should] be abandoned if the genius is also a bad person" (2023: n/p).

This paper unpacks this latter point in Piotrowska's response, and the "bad artist" versus "good art" dyad implicit in it. I argue, with Fortmueller (2019, 2022), that such a conflation between moral and aesthetic judgement obfuscates the importance of institutional structures and cultural norms that enable the cultural production of the "artistic genius" and their abuses of power. In particular, I shed new light on such debates by unpacking the historic and industrial context of the symbiotic relationship between (Central) Eastern Europe and Hollywood for the Eurocentric production of the "artistic genius" as celebrity figure. While scholarship currently theorizes the symbiosis through an

institutional lens, such as Hollywood's economic reliance on Eastern European service productions (Imre 2023, Sayfo 2020, Szczepanik 2021), I argue that both this institutional-economic entanglement, as well as the European origins of the "artistic genius" figure, have crucial ramifications for the ways in which Hollywood projects #MeToo guilt onto Eastern Europe.

Júlia Havas is Lecturer in Film and Television at the University of York, and author of *Woman Up: Invoking Feminism in Quality Television* (2022). She has published on Anglo-American television, streaming culture, Eastern European film and TV, and the transcultural travel of media in various journals and edited collections.

Presentation 2: A Controversial Retreat: Woody Allen's (Un)problematic Star Text and Positioning in Post-#MeToo Hungary

In the aftermath of the #MeToo movement, reports in American journalism as well as fictional portrayals (e.g. *Tár* [2023]) have insinuated that star figures "cancelled" in the West still have opportunities to take refuge outside the Global West (see e.g. the widely reported casting of Kevin Spacey in a Hungarian film production in 2022). Such discourses implied that the reason for this is the cultural isolation of these "remote" locations. This paper uses the case study of Woody Allen's stardom in Hungary to query such assumptions and expose the complex relationship between "cancelled" Hollywood celebrity directors and Eastern European media contexts. Examining the positioning of an American "cancelled" director in Eastern Europe, it builds on the previous paper's argument by scrutinising the symbiotic relationship between Hollywood and Eastern Europe from the Hollywood end of the dyad. To do so, it draws on discourses around authorship, transcultural media practices, stardom as commodity, and debates around art versus artist (Adamou and Knox [2012], Whittaker [2012], Piotrowska [2023], Havas and Mártonfi [2019]).

The paper unpacks an incident involving Woody Allen and his long-time Hungarian dubbing voice András Kern, showcasing the fluidity of Allen's cultural positioning within transcultural contexts. In 2023 the Hungarian stage production of Allen's *Play it Again Sam*, starring the aforementioned Kern, celebrated its 40th anniversary, becoming national news when Allen sent Kern a congratulatory video message. Given Allen's contradictory status in Hollywood, the question emerges whether he would have paid such a gesture pre-#MeToo to a Hungarian actor who had his own established stardom as the Hungarianised version of Allen's authorship. Was this gesture a result of Allen's attempt at mending his reputation in a cultural context where his star text is seemingly unharmed? Such an assumption could be supported by the fact that for several days Allen's message was on the front pages of most Hungarian news sites, framed as an exceptional honour for both Kern and Hungarian theatre culture. Through this case study this paper critically examines the controversial retreat of "cancelled" Hollywood stars to Eastern European cultural contexts, where their star currency and status remain seemingly unharmed.

Anna Mártonfi is Lecturer at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam at the Department of Language, Literature and Communication. Her research interests include British radio, television and film comedy, Jewish comedy and transnational humour. Her most recent publications have appeared in *Animation Studies, View* and *Jewish Film and New Media*.

Respondent: Neil Ewen

Neil Ewen is Associate Professor and Head of Communications at the University of Exeter. He is co-author, with Anthony P. McIntyre, of *Post-Brexit Digital Cultures: Politics, Aesthetics, Affect* (Intellect, forthcoming), co-editor of *First Comes Love: Power Couples, Celebrity Kinship and Cultural Politics* (Bloomsbury, 2015) and *Capitalism, Crime and Media in the 21st Century* (Palgrave, 2019), and Cultural Report section editor of *Celebrity Studies* journal (Routledge).

E6: The Responsibilities of Fans and Celebrities

Celebrities have notably powers. If a celebrity acts wrongly, fans will often come to their defence. Given their power in society, celebrities also have a greater ability to shape the narrative surrounding their wrongs such that they can more easily get away with their crimes, such as those highlighted by the #metoo movement. Celebrities, then, have a kind of epistemic power (Archer et al 2020; Archer and Matheson 2021; Matheson, forthcoming). But fans *as a group* also have a certain power over celebrities. If all fans stopped attending an immoral musician's concerts and buying their music, fans could help to stop the musician committing certain kinds of wrongdoing by reducing, if not undermining, the power to commit such wrongs. In this panel, we investigate of the responsibilities of fans and celebrities based on the recent philosophical interest in the ethics of fame and fandom.

Presentation 1: Should Fans Feel Guilty about the Crimes of their Idols?

In 2019, the documentary *Leaving Neverland* was released featuring the testimonies of Wade Robson and James Safechuck, who detailed sexual abuse at the hands of the King of Pop Michael Jackson. While accusations against Jackson were longstanding, the documentary made a significant impact on perceptions of Jackson's guilt. While many fans still deny that Jackson did anything wrong, many fans also came to acknowledge that Jackson was indeed guilty for what he had done. In this paper, I argue that fans not only ought to recognize the crimes that their idols commit, but they also have reason to feel guilty about those crimes.

On the face of it, this might seem strange. It was not Jackson's fans who molested children, but Jackson himself. So, it is only Jackson who is personally guilty for molesting children. Fans who feel guilty therefore seem to be irrational for doing so. However, I first argue that the relationship between fans and idols is analogous to the relationship between a citizen and her country. Just as citizens take part in elections and so support the government of the country, fans support their idols through buying their products, attending their events, and encouraging others to be fans. And it is widely acknowledged that citizens often feel guilty about wrongs committed by their country – e.g., many Americans feel guilty about transatlantic slavery.

Of course, one might object that while citizens feel guilty for the crimes of their country, they are still irrational to do so. However, I argue it is both intelligible and valuable, and therefore rational, for citizens to feel guilty about the crimes of their country. Such feelings are intelligible because countries are part of a citizen's identity, and so the country's actions are the citizen's actions. Such feelings are valuable because citizens can motivate the country to apologise and make amends. I then adapt this account to fans, and show that fans have good reason to feel guilty about the wrongs of their idols. In doing so, I highlight an underappreciated aspect of fandom.

Benjamin Matheson is Assistant Professor at the University of Bern and PI of a SERI-funded ERC Starting Grant on "Collective Guilt and Shame". He is a co-author of *Honouring and Admiring the Immoral: An Ethical Guide* (Routledge,

2021). He has also written on celebrity apologies and celebrity epistemic power.

Presentation 2: Affective Power and Celebrity Responsibilities in Parasocial Relationships

This paper argues that celebrities have responsibilities towards their fans in virtue of the affective power they have over them. We define affective power as the capacity to influence how others feel, contending that in the case of celebrities, this influence arises from asymmetries in emotional investment and emotional attachment. Because fans invest more emotionally, and form stronger emotional attachments compared to the celebrities, celebrities have a high influence on the elicitation, regulation, and exemplification of their fans' emotions. From this affective power, we derive positive and negative responsibilities. On the negative front, we argue that celebrities ought to refrain from abusing their affective power in ways that could emotionally harm their fans. Positively, we assert that celebrities should actively address the unequal distribution of emotional attention, redirecting support and affections towards those in need, especially within marginalized communities.

Carme Isern-Mas is an Assistant Professor at the University of the Balearic Islands, specializing in moral psychology and applied ethics. Her research delves into blame, empathy, moral motivation, and self-deception. Additionally, she works on bioethics and ethics of fame, investigating the ethical responsibilities of celebrities and appropriateness of fan expressions.

Georgina Mills is a PhD candidate at Tilburg University. Her PhD is in philosophy of science, focused on personality science, but she has many other philosophical interests including philosophy of emotions, medicine, disability, punk rock. She is also co-editing a volume on Philosophy and Taylor Swift along with Catherine Robb.

Alfred Archer is an Associate Professor of philosophy at Tilburg University interested in ethics, social philosophy, philosophy of sport and moral psychology. He is the co-author of Honouring and Admiring the Immoral: An Ethical Guide (Routledge 2021) and Why It's Ok to be a Sports Fan (Routledge 2023).

Presentation 3: Celebrity Responsibility and Toxic Fandom

Fans can often be highly committed and loyal to their chosen celebrity. In some cases, this commitment can become extreme, with fans participating in what is now called 'toxic' or 'vigilante' behaviour, aimed at someone else who has supposedly insulted or offended their celebrity (Proctor and Kies 2018; Driessen 2020). These behaviours can include various types of emotional and physical harassment, including stalking, blackmail, cyberbullying and death threats, with the purpose of defending, seeking justice, or proving their loyalty to their celebrity. Instances of toxic fan behaviours are surprisingly common, usually take place online through social media, and have been utilized by fans of a variety of different celebrities, including Beyoncé, Taylor Swift, Novak Djokovic,

and George Lucas.

While the phenomenon of toxic fandom has been studied in detail from the perspective of the fan or audience, examining how and why toxic fandom emerges and the implications of this for the ethics of fan interaction (Williams and Bennett 2022; Trottier et al 2020), little attention has been paid to the role of the celebrity. Recently, it has been suggested that celebrities have a responsibility to emulate good behaviour for their fans, and should challenge and condemn the harassment, threats and bullying that many fans engage in on their behalf (Cheong 2022: 156-158). However, this claim seems too strong, as communities of fans may be characterised as autonomous groups, of which the celebrity themselves has little control or awareness.

This paper will analyse the extent to which celebrities are responsible for their fans' behaviours, by drawing on recent work in the ethics of celebrity that considers the duty celebrities have to be role models and moral exemplars (see for example Wellman 2003; Spurgin 2012; Archer and Robb forthcoming). I suggest that celebrity responsibility is indexed to two criteria: (i) the extent to which celebrities facilitate, endorse and engage with fan interaction and community building, and (ii) the extent to which celebrities make public their status as a role model for interpersonal relationships.

Catherine M. Robb is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Tilburg University. Her research focuses on the intersection between ethics and metaphysics, particularly the nature and value of talent, ability and skill, and the implications this for well-being and morality. She also works on the philosophy of fame and celebrity.

F1: Celebrity capitals: from elite to ordinary ‘struggles’

Celebrity thrives as it interfaces with a number of contemporary conditions of our time and is often useful, as in Sean Redmond’s (2018) “circuit of affect”, for telling us about everything else in any conjunctural moment. But the relationships between celebrities and those conjunctural contexts depend substantially upon the available resources or capitals that can be wielded in any given sphere or ‘field’. This collection of papers pulls into view a range of different celebrity sites which can help us to think through various gradations of the ideological work that celebrity does and can do. The operations of elites at the intersection of far-right populism in the work of cultural citizenship potentially looks very different to the ‘hustling’ work of ordinary celebrity at the commercial sharp end of celebrity. Similarly, whilst elites *and* ordinary celebrities can both mobilise the discourses of mental health narratives to extend their visibility, this unfolds in different ways that are tightly bound up with uneven celebrity capitals, and with different political and cultural implications. While all of these celebrity sites work within the available ideological myths of the conjuncture, this panel suggests that looking at seemingly disparate case studies together through the lens of ‘capitals’ might help to construct a more nuanced and transferable framework for the elite/ordinary dynamic in celebrity studies.

Presentation 1: Celebrity and the mental health main stage

This paper tracks some of the permutations of narratives of mental health which now operate across elite and ‘ordinary’ celebrity culture. Older narratives of the ‘crash and burn girl’ (Projansky 2014) were largely associated with young female celebrities seen to be *failing* in their celebrity status but this has shifted to more contemporary high-status celebrity associations with mental health advocacy. As mental health conversations have become more central to public debate, so too have elite celebrities like Demi Lovato been able to re-align mental health recovery with ideological narratives of self-care and self-work - positioning themselves as empowering others (Fransson 2020). At the same time Thelandersson (2022) tracks the explosion of the permutations of mental health across contemporary girl culture as part of the labour of femininity. This paper attempts to think through the ways in which conversations about mental health take on a different structure as they become more ‘ordinary’ and are now operating with a particular currency across reality celebrity media - particular in relation to social media trolling, podcasts of personal discovery and ‘duties’ of care. How are these extended conversations around mental health, which often seamlessly dovetail with medicalised discourses, incorporated into the realms of emotional and performance capital which may be laboured for and traded? How can these individualising rhetorics be compatible with the narratives of care that accompany them? How should we understand this heightened attention to mental illness as deflecting from the most common reading that it is advanced capitalism itself which is fuelling a decline in mental health?

Helen Wood is Professor of Media and Cultural Studies at Aston University, Birmingham UK. Her books include *Talking With Television* (2009) Illinois Press and with Beverley Skeggs *Reacting to Reality Television: Performance, audience and value* (2012) Routledge. Her new ‘key concept’ book is *Audience* (2024) with Routledge. She is PI of the AHRC project ‘ReCARETV:

Reality Television, working practices and duties of care' (2023-2026).

Presentation 2: The subtle gradations of reality celebrity work: tracking the platformised labour of reality celebrities in the UK

This paper is part of a broader project that seeks to understand the labour politics of 'ordinary celebrity' as 'illegitimate cultural work' (Wood 2021; Wood, Kay and Banks 2017), considering the subtle gradations of highly gendered capital exchange in the contemporary celebrity ecology. Reality Television (RTV) celebrities – those who sustain media visibility beyond RTV – have historically been understood as eschewing 'real' labour to pursue an apparently superficial lifestyle of endless leisure and consumption. More recently, however, t, UKhere has been a shift in mainstream media moving away from positioning RTV celebrities as work-shy narcissists to promoting RTV as a meritocratic opportunity structure, where participants can gain power, success and make a 'major impact' (Longeretta, 2023). Social media is where RTV celebrities sustain their popularity through offering 'authentic' access to their intimate lives. This involves sharing the drama and conflicts of romantic relationships, weight loss and gain and - increasingly – their mental health crises. These relations of highly gendered self-work have sustained impact on the body (Kokoli and Winter 2015). However – despite broader understandings of successful/failing RTV celebrities – none of these are understood as *work* regardless of their economic returns.

In this paper, we present emerging findings from our project, focusing on the social media activity of ordinary RTV celebrities across multiple platforms to explore how their media visibility depends upon often intensive forms of physical and emotional labour, even as their status as 'workers' is ambiguous or obscured. Focusing on a UK context, we situate their activities within broader, commercially orchestrated processes of industrial production, to detail the subtle gradations of gendered forms of exchange at work, and we map emergent categories of highly gendered platformised celebrity labour. Drawing on feminist theory, we consider whether the time, toil and the *toll* of endless self-work constitutes a form of agentive as well as exploited labour. We argue that it is the deeply gendered division between 'productive' and 'reproductive' labour under capitalism that functions as a barrier to understanding this as 'real' work and to fully accounting for this complex landscape of biopolitical relations.

Jilly Boyce Kay is Senior Lecturer in Communication and Media at Loughborough University. She is co-investigator on the AHRC-funded project 'Re-CARETV'. She has published widely on feminism and media culture, including the monograph *Gender, Media and Voice* (Palgrave, 2020). She is co-editor of the *European Journal of Cultural Studies*

Eleanor Kilroy is a post-doctoral researcher based at Loughborough University where she is working on the AHRC-funded project 'Re-CARE TV: Reality Television, Working Practices and Duties of Care'. She is an interdisciplinary researcher and has previously worked as a lecturer in Media, Communications and Cultural Studies and Theatre and Performance.

F2: Masculinity at War

The Politics of Performing Rambo

In an article that appeared in the *New Republic* magazine to accompany the release of *Escape Plan* in 2013, Isaac Chotiner questioned the appearance of Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone together in a film that outwardly appeared to be criticising the Bush administration and the Guantanamo Bay detention centre. In the article, 'Right-Wing Icons Trapped in a Left-Wing Movie', Chotiner reiterated the dominant view that Stallone was unwaveringly right-wing in his politics, a belief that for many was crystallised more than thirty years earlier under the Reagan administration with the success of *Rocky IV* (1985) and *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985). Both films were unashamedly jingoistic, the former seeing the perennial puncher draped in the American flag after fighting his own one-man Cold War, and the latter, capitalising on the unfounded belief that American soldiers classified as Missing in Action were still being held in internment camps more than a decade after the end of the Vietnam war. During this period Stallone was invited to the White House and Reagan proudly proclaimed Rambo a Republican, and famously, after the 1985 Beirut hostage crisis, said "Boy, after seeing 'Rambo' last night, I know what to do the next time this happens." In the years since, uncomfortable with this association, Stallone has tried to distance himself from the politics presented onscreen, preferring to see the Rambo character as at best politically neutral, or at worst, politically agnostic (Hannity, 2008). While these can be seen as reparative attempts that seek to temper these right-wing associations and position himself in more politically neutered terms, they also highlight the contradiction between his onscreen and offscreen persona that is not easily resolved, revealing inconsistencies and disruptions in the popular perception of the star. This paper seeks to present a more complex view of the star, complicating readings that have largely relied upon the implied political leanings of fictional characters, by mapping them back to the star.

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Mark McKenna is an Associate Professor in Film and Media Industries at Staffordshire University. He is the author of *Nasty Business: The Marketing and Distribution of the Video* Nasties, *Snuff*, and *Big Wednesday: Authorship, Genre and Myth,* and the co-editor of the collections *Horror Franchise Cinema* (2021) and *Stars and Franchises: Identity, Image and Intellectual Property* (forthcoming).

Bad Vibes, Forever? Masculinity, Community and Self-Improvement Narratives in the XXXTentacion Reddit Community

As a leading figure of the 2010's 'Soundcloud Rap' scene, Floridian-based rapper Jahseh Onfroy (aka XXXTentacion) was as well known for his genre-expanding sonics as he was his criminal behaviour. Despite building a significant viral fanbase, his various misdeeds culminated in a lengthy investigation for spousal battery, a case cut short when Onfroy was murdered in 2018.

In liking "rap's most controversial man" (Spin, 2017), XXXTentacion's young, male-dominated audience have earned perhaps one of the worst fan reputations on the internet. Drawing from wider PhD research on how fans reconcile (or not) with assault-accused artists, this paper utilises interviews and on-page analysis to speak directly with members of the XXXTentacion Reddit community, exploring how and why they related to the rapper, how they navigated their grief and complicated feelings towards his art, and how they reflected on aspects of his abusive behaviour as a 'cautionary tale' for their own self-improvement. Whilst very few fans in my sample were able to defend or deny the artist's wrongdoing, issues of class and race-based loyalty (as well as regret over his premature passing) complicated their ability to entirely reject his music, focusing instead on how his songs and community had helped them to overcome challenges in their own lives.

In recognising that online fan communities can facilitate modes of friendship and mutual support-seeking that transcend the initial celebrity interest (Chadborn, Edwards & Rayson, 2017), my research seeks not to excuse, normalise or 'explain away' the obvious implications of upholding a violent artist's legacy. However, it does demonstrate how, amidst 'cancel culture' narratives of polarity and zero tolerance, fans may still find something to salvage from participation in artist-themed spaces. I add nuance to scholarship on celebrity scandals by demonstrating that in actively trying *not* to be like their (former) idol, some fans who continued to post on r/XXXTentacion were doing so not out of naivety or misogynistic endorsement, but rather a desire to support one another to find healthy coping strategies and evade similar cycles of violence and harm.

Jenessa Williams (she/her) is a feminist media and communication researcher, awarded her PhD on 'MeToo and Music Fandom' from the University of Leeds in Autumn 2023. Jenessa also works as a freelance music journalist, writing regularly for the likes of *the Guardian*, *NME*, *the Forty-Five*, *DIY* and *Alternative Press*.

'What colour is your Bugatti?': Analysing Andrew Tate's Weaponisation of Conflict and the Culture Wars

When it comes to online notoriety and 'celebrity', one of the most intriguing evolutions of an online personality is undoubtedly Andrew Tate. Just the mention of that name is often followed by an utterance of 'Oh, him,' or 'I don't agree with everything he does, but some of his stuff is good.' However, this wasn't just a stroke of luck, and the methods he used to briefly become one of

the world’s most googled men were tactical and precise. To gain such a devout, yet toxic following, Tate had to tap into a demographic of young, impressionable men who at the tail end of the pandemic, were aimlessly looking for a leader to tell them how to navigate this changing ‘woke’ world. This article examines how Tate was able to weaponise different forms of conflict within society and build on this disorder to quickly gain a following of over 8 million across his platforms. It presents the argument that without the perfect storm of culture wars, the pandemic, and political uncertainty, Tate would not have found the levels of notoriety that he did. The research methods used in this article are critical discourse analysis, given the need to place Tate in the external institutional and sociocultural contexts of his fame, and semiotic analysis, as Tate’s unique identity is a crucial element to understanding his supporters. Spurred on by Donald Trump’s declaration that cancel culture was over with his election, many far-right and misogynistic cells found themselves legitimised in their ideologies, and empowered to spread their hate-speech far and wide. Pair this with Michael Kimmel's theory of ‘Aggrieved Entitlement’ during a pandemic alongside the legacy of the #MeToo movement, and you’ve got yourself the perfect storm with a gap in the market for a new thought leader to guide the way.

Clodagh McAllister is a PhD Researcher at Ulster University in the field of Communications and Media studies. Sparked by her background in Journalism, she is currently conducting a large-scale investigation into online culture, with a focus on online-radicalisation, masculinity, online-streaming platforms and Andrew Tate.

F3: The Conflicted Production of Stardom

Crisis and Capitalism: Modes of British Royal Celebrity in the 21st Century

Royals are often considered the first kind of celebrity (Rojek 2001), and the British monarchy in particular has been the centre of much debate, similarly to contemporary celebrity. At the same time, the ceremonial powers of the institution, the ways in which their money is managed and accumulated, and the elevated status based on birth privileges alone clearly separate them from now-traditional modes of celebrity. The British royal family, amidst deaths, family drama, accusations of racism, and legal cases, can be considered in a state of crisis after the initial wave of positive media and public attention during Meghan Markle and Prince Harry's royal wedding in 2018. Initial popularity of the couple quickly turned sour and they consequently left the UK and their roles as active royals to settle in the US. Having found themselves cut off from royal funding, and with an apparent desire to tell their side of the story, the couple turned to traditional forms of celebrity labour, ranging from confessional interviews to documentaries about their lives, and high-profile podcast hosting deals.

In mainstream UK media reactions, these activities are often considered as causing or contributing towards the current crisis of the UK monarchy. This press coverage of Meghan and Harry does not only reveal a range of criticisms of the couple, but also tells us about the expectations of royal celebrity – royals are meant to be everything celebrities are not. This is particularly centred around discussions of capitalist labour, from which 'real' royals are considered to be removed. Drawing on key public appearances and work, media coverage and royal biographies, this paper explores the ways in which royal celebrity is both conceptualised and in the 21st century. Reactions to Meghan and Harry's commercial ventures demonstrate a deep unease with the synergy of royal status and capitalism, while simultaneously shining an accidental light on the funding of the royal family through tax payer money, and thus the exploitation of other people's labour.

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"Somehow, Iger Returned": Brand Fandom, Stardom, & Disney's Celebrity CEOs

Fans of Disney are keenly aware of the people in charge of the Company, and fans of the Disney theme parks perhaps even more so. These 'brand fans' (Hutchins and Tindall (2016, p. 6) primarily demonstrate interest in the roles of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Chairman of Parks, Experiences and Products. In 2020 when long-term CEO Bob Iger stood down as CEO, he was

replaced by Bob Chapek who had previously been unpopular with fans as Chairman of Parks. Despite the appointment of his own replacement, Josh D'Amaro, ongoing issues within the Parks (e.g., price increases, poor maintenance, a lack of new attractions) were blamed solely on Chapek and viewed as rare examples of Disney's failures or moments of brand crisis. When Chapek was removed in November 2022, and replaced by the returning Bob Iger, fans were elated, eagerly welcoming back the 'good' CEO and celebrating Chapek's "fall from grace" (Wade et al 2008: 203).

This paper builds on Jo Littler's suggestion that it would be "fruitful to use the tools of media and cultural studies to analyze the role of contemporary CEOs" (2006: 233). It explores the positioning of the Disney CEO, and the Head of Parks, as 'authors' of the theme parks even though these are designed, built, and managed by a range of Disney employees. Following Pringle's argument that good CEOs are "walking talking brand stories that provide their companies with a compelling narrative drive" (2004: 72), the paper argues that Chapek failed to adhere to the appropriate Disney 'brand story'. In response, fans displayed their own values and priorities by negatively highlighting his overt focus on profit and corporate synergy, his lack of understanding and respect for the Parks' history, and his derision towards those who visit these places. Secondly, it explores how Bob Iger was initially framed as a 'returning hero' by many fans, but how this has been complicated and contested by Disney's political conflicts with Florida Governor Ron deSantis (Hester 2023) and Iger's responses to the 2023 Hollywood strikes which contradict his construction as a 'good' celebrity CEO figure.

Dr. **Rebecca Williams** is Associate Professor in Media Audiences and Participatory Cultures at the University of South Wales. Her books include *Theme Park Fandom* (2020) and *Post-object Fandom: Television, Identity and Self-Narrative* (2015) and she has published widely on media fandom, celebrity, theme parks, and media tourism.

Greek Film Production, 1950-1972: The Star System

The phenomenon of stars in cinema has been approached in various fruitful ways. In the Greek case, research has been limited to fragmentary and isolated efforts, focusing on the most popular stars, while in no case has been systematically linked to the production process. My approach concerns the relationship of the star system to production as a process, using aspects of its development or standardization in the period 1950-1972. This is the period when mass production in the film industry brought millions of tickets and audiences to the theatres, establishing and popularizing the legend of 'the stars', through a constant presence in magazines and the press. Their films are still seen by large audiences on television, where they are systematically shown. The stars of that period continue to surprise with their popularity today, fifty years after the end of commercial Greek cinema. In my analysis, I critically used the *culture of production* perspective and *production studies*, the macro-socio-economic theories of *fordism-postfordism*, the sociological aspects of Peterson's *production of culture*, and Becker's *Art worlds*.

Christos Xenos, Ph.D. in Cinema and Cultural Studies and M.A. in Cultural Management (Panteion University, Greece), graduate of European Culture (Hellenic Open University). His dissertation (*The Greek Film Production, 1942-1990*) was recently published by Aigokeros Publications, Athens. He is also active in the cultural field: director and screenwriter of a short film, etc.).

F4: Videographic Criticism and Celebrity: Politics of Gender and Power

This panel prompts contemplation on the interplay of celebrity and feminism. How can screen stars exercise feminist agency and advocate a feminist agenda in an industry often reliant on women's exploitation? How can they safeguard their celebrity while engaging in feminist discourse? Additionally, how do their on-screen portrayals and off-screen activism intersect to challenge patriarchal norms? Through videographic works spotlighting feminist icons—Delphine Seyrig from France, Isabella Rossellini from Italy and the United States, and Aubrey Plaza from Puerto Rico—the three panelists will delve into the intricate relationship among feminism, stardom, and power. Firstly, Catherine Fowler will present a video essay on Seyrig, whose feminist awakening reshaped both her career and on-screen presence. Advocating for women's rights in public campaigns, marches, and her film “Sois belle et tais-toi!”, Seyrig transitioned from an ethereal diva in male auteurs’ films to a fervent feminist, starring in notable works like Chantal Akerman’s “Jeanne Dielman.” Secondly, Maillim Santiago’s video essay will showcase Aubrey Plaza’s skill in portraying antiheroes with radical empathy, encouraging viewers to question normative morals rooted in patriarchal society. Lastly, Barbara Zecchi will address Rossellini’s battle against ageist and sexist stereotypes, arguing that the Italian film star and model positions herself as a formidable advocate against ageism, actively challenging gendered expectations about older women.

Presentation 1: “Delphine Seyrig: Acting Feminist”

The conviction of Harvey Weinstein of ‘sex crimes’ in 2020 affirmed the seedy underside of the film industry; it also exposed to public consciousness enduring feminist insights about gender and power. When it comes to the ‘underside’, campaigns have followed that have brought about legislative and unionized guidelines, designed to keep women working in the film industry safe and to give them rights. Meanwhile when it comes to the ‘face’ of the film industry, what we get to see on screen, scholars have found it necessary to re-visit the entanglement of arthouse cinema and depictions of female sexuality (Moro, 2022; San Filippo, 2021). In this video essay I build on the last five years of scholarship, while heeding the advice of Tania Horeck and Shelley Cobb, who have argued that the mo(ve)ment of mass disclosure following #Metoo demands careful feminist analysis and response (2018). By rewinding to an earlier time – the 1960s and 1970s – and focusing upon the career of French actress Delphine Seyrig we can address both the underside and the face of cinema.

Fifty years before silence-breaker, actress and activist Rose McGowan, Seyrig’s rise to feminist consciousness transformed her career and made her a truth-teller regarding the imbalances of gender and power for women. As well as taking part in public campaigns and marches for abortion rights and contraception for women in France, she formed a video collective and made a film featuring interviews with twenty-four actresses *Sois belle et tais-toi! (Be Pretty and Shut up!).* Meanwhile on screen she metamorphosed from ethereal diva in the films of male auteurs such as Alain Resnais, François Truffaut and Joseph Losey into an ardent feminist, performing in Chantal Akerman’s *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080* Bruxelles (Belgium, 1975), Marguerite Duras’ *India Song* (France, 1975) and later Ulrike Ottinger’s *Johanna d’Arc of*

Mongolia (Germany, 1989). Hence, by focusing on Seyrig we can contemplate the question: what does it mean to *act as a feminist* in an industry built upon the objectification, commodification, and circulation of bodies and dependent upon the foundational exploitation of sexuality?

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Catherine Fowler is a Professor in Film and Media at Otago University, New Zealand. In 2023 she curated a special issue of *[in]Transition* 10.3 'the videographic feminist diptych' including her own contribution, which interrogates representations of sexual harassment and abuse in tv series since 2018: *The Responsive Eye, or, The Morning Show May Destroy You*.
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Presentation 2: "Aubrey Plaza: The Vulnerable Monstrous Feminine"

In 1993, feminist theorist Barbara Creed published her seminal book, *The Monstrous Feminine.* In this book, Creed challenges previous theorizations of women throughout the horror genre as victims. Instead, she details archetypes throughout literature and cinema that present women as monstrous based on their biological functions or societal gender norms. She emphasizes that what makes these women monstrous in tales of patriarchal horror is their connection to their gender and how they challenge their monstrosity through gender. In 2022, Creed revisits her theory in *Return of the Monstrous-Feminine*, this time using examples of feminist new-wave cinema to illustrate how the patriarchal examples of the monstrous-feminine have been re-interpreted and reclaimed through the lens of female filmmakers. In this video essay, I demonstrate many of the nuances of the monstrous-feminine theorization through the work of Aubrey Plaza, particularly focusing on the exhibition of vulnerability from characters society deems as monstrous.

Many of Plaza's collaborators have described her as someone with the energy of being "on the run from the police," an energy that charges all of her screen characters from April Ludgate to Ingrid Thorburn (Driver, 2023). Throughout all her screen work, Plaza has carved a niche for playing antiheroes with radical empathy, influencing spectators to question their own set of normative morals rooted in patriarchal society. This can be attributed to Plaza's intense embodiment as an actor, something she credits to her acting coach's approach (Ivana Chubbuck) that is "all about getting your power back" through the character. This approach makes Plaza express an innate vulnerability to all her antiheroes, whether they are in the middle of robbing a used car dealership or contemplating whether to catalyze the end of all living dimensions. Plaza's work re-interprets the monstrous-feminine as a symbol of power, resistance, and

reclamation in a world made by men and challenged by women. I hope to explore Plaza's radical screen quality by dissecting her work as an exemplar of the monstrous-feminine through vulnerability. Furthermore, I hope to underscore Plaza's work in the realm of feminist new-wave cinema as theorized by Creed.

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Presentation 3: "Isabella Rossellini: Embracing Old Age"

In this video essay, I explore Isabella Rossellini's notable pro-aging stance, framing it as an expression of feminist agency. My analysis encompasses her interviews, performances, and public engagements, elucidating Rossellini's steadfast advocacy for a positive and affirming outlook on the aging process. A central theme in my exploration is her poignant experience with Lancôme, where, at the age of 43, she was removed as the face of their cosmetic brand, citing she looked like an "old woman" only to be reinstated two decades later. The Italian model and actor emerges as a compelling advocate for change, promoting a profound shift in sociocultural attitudes toward aging, particularly highlighting the pronounced ageism faced by women. Rossellini champions the idea that aging brings forth a wealth of richness, depth, and inherent beauty derived from a lifetime of experiences, positioning herself as a powerful proponent against ageism, and by extension, as a figure actively challenging gendered expectations in the realm of aging.

When visible, old age—and women's old age in particular—is portrayed according to narrative of decline, that is a time of decrepitude and loss. In this context, the so-called "successful ageing" effort fostered by cosmetic and pharmaceutical industries and by the neoliberal imperative to maintain the young and sexually active body is nothing more than the other side of the same coin. The alternative between decline and success is indeed a false dichotomy because ageing successfully is the equivalent of not ageing. This video essay consciously avoids succumbing to a dichotomous view of aging as a binary

between decline or success and presents "affirmative aging" as a framework for empowering individuals like Rossellini to embrace their aging process. It also recognizes the importance of focusing on the aging body, which has recently been marginalized by cultural gerontology and by Gullette's argument that culture, rather than biology, shapes the way we age. Through this exploration, I hope to contribute to a broader dialogue that fosters a more enriching and realistic view of the experience of growing older that departs from successful neoliberal models of aging.

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F5: Celebrity Bodies at Risk

Stepping out the 'comfort zone'? Male stars endorsing cosmetics Negotiating masculinity and male stardom in contemporary China

In the past few years, Chinese male stars with good looks have been increasingly seen endorsing cosmetics including skincare products and makeup. While this can be read from an economic perspective where their star power and good looks are employed to sell products, and consequently framed as an exploitation of female fans/consumers that connects to the idea of 'she economy' (cf. Li, 2020), it is also a cultural phenomenon which fits uneasily with what Edwards (2013) observes the gendered celebrity culture (in a Western context), where, regarding product endorsement, male and female stars tend to sell goods that fall into the gender norms and expectations. Moreover, concurrent with this industrial practice was a cultural moment where the Chinese government lifted a ban on 'sissy idols' and 'effeminate men' celebrities and reinstated 'masculine role models' for Chinese men (Conner, 2021; Frater, 2021). As such, Chinese male stars' endorsement of cosmetics, an arena conventionally pertaining to female stars and indicative of feminine practices, can be considered as transgressive and stepping out their 'comfort zone', creating a contestable space within which their star image associated with cosmetics may challenge the normative masculinity and therefore destabilise their established stardom.

This paper examines Chinese male stars' cosmetics endorsement, particularly their ambassadorial relationship to makeup that associates more explicitly with femaleness such as foundation, lipstick, and eyeshadow. It seeks to unpack how these Chinese male stars navigate and reconcile the uneasy relationship between makeup and masculinity. It does so by analysing how these male stars present, and are presented, in cosmetics adverts, within the broader social context where Chinese masculinity and ideals of manhood have been impacted by a neoliberal consumer culture (cf. Louie, 2015). It brings in two specific star examples – Wang Junkai's endorsement for Bobbi Brown's foundation (2022) and Wang Hedi for Maybelline's lipstick (2023) – to showcase how discourses of talent, work, and performance are employed in visual and narrative language to reaffirm their adherence to traditional gender norms, thereby authenticating their maleness. It argues that albeit seemingly boundary-crossing, their representation in these adverts reverts to their 'comfort zone' as male stars, reconnecting them to the normative gender expectations.

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Khloe Kardashian's Body Image as Celebrity Brand (Crisis)

In April of 2021, a photograph of reality star Khloe Kardashian standing by the pool in a leopard print string bikini was posted by an assistant to her grandmother's Instagram account. The photo–candid, shot in natural light, with only minor color adjustments–showed Kardashian's toned body without the filters and retouching that she typically uses. After Kardashian's team threatened legal action against multiple social media accounts that had reposted the image, commenters and the media questioned this response, some praising the image for showing a "more realistic" depiction of her body than typically seen in her content (Evans, 2021).

However, Kardashian later defended her photo editing practices in a statement posted to her Instagram account, arguing that they help her "present [herself] the world the way [she wants] to be seen." While she cites "the impossible standards" of the media as justification for her use of retouching, Kardashian's statement fails to acknowledge how her use of "a good filter, good lighting, and an edit here and there" perpetuates said standards (@khloekardashian, 2021).

This presentation uses this incident as an entry point to (re)consider the celebrity body in postfeminist brand culture (Banet-Weiser, 2012; Gill, 2007). First, Kardashian's statement emphasizes the continued media scrutiny of the female celebrity body and its effects on celebrity mental health and body image (Hirdman, 2017). The incident also suggests a tension between her star (body) image and brand (Dyer, 2007). Kardashian's participation in disciplinary bodily regimes is often used to emphasize her struggles with body image, and thereby promote her authenticity and that of her brand(s); however, analysis of (social) media responses to this incident critique her complicity in upholding normative body ideals. I argue that this is intensified due to Kardashian's use of her body as transmitter and subject of her transmedia (fashion) brand (Barron, 2015).

Finally, I consider how this incident reflects continued conflict between celebrities and the media regarding control of both their literal and figurative image, and how social media complicates this dynamic (Jerslev & Mortenson, 2018).

Maureen Lehto Brewster is an Assistant Professor of Fashion Merchandising at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. She has published multiple book chapters and articles exploring the intersection of celebrity culture, social media, and the fashion industry. You can follow her research on TikTok at @culturescholar.

Lady Gaga's *ARTPOP*: When Crises Gets Ugly

Lady Gaga has strategically built her career around the theorization of fame, stardom, and embodiment. Her persistent redefinition of her artistic identity serves as a poignant expression of her humanity, marked by vulnerability, emotion, and unconventional reactions. Each persona she adopts, whether alien, woman, man, mermaid, cyborg, or omniscient computer entity, functions as an extended metaphor, emphasizing her fundamental humanity and contributing to the ongoing discourse on post-human stardom. 2013 introduced a more contemplative character, embracing an even more unconventional aesthetic during the ARTPOP era, challenging societal and stardom norms of embodiment. She intentionally presented herself in a way that deviated from conventional bodily standards – wearing a bracelet made of decaying teeth as a grill in her mouth, for instance -- choosing to "look ugly all the time," a stark contrast to her audacious heroine persona of earlier eras.

Amid label disputes, managerial challenges, personal separations, physical injuries, and the enduring trauma from a past sexual assault, Gaga conceptualized *ARTPOP* as an "art and pop" hybrid to emphasize the humanity in a post-human approach to art. "Making this album was like heart surgery," Gaga has said. "I was desperate, in pain, and poured my heart into electronic music that slammed harder than any drug I could find. I fell apart after I released this album." In retrospect, *ARTPOP* emerges as an unheard cry for help, attempting to be an all-encompassing force while grappling with the challenge of balancing personal struggles with mass market appeal.

Almost a decade later, the album's resurgence invites audiences and critics to look beyond superficialities and discern the deeper theoretical implications of Gaga's work. *ARTPOP* transcends mere therapeutic expression; it epitomizes trauma deserving inquiry. Using theories grounded in Disability Rhetoric, this paper positions Gaga's journey during this time as a compelling case study intersecting with broader academic discussions on fame, expectations of the presentation of trauma, and the evolving dynamics of post-human stardom. Ultimately, this project underscores the intricate and multidimensional approach needed to study celebrity within academic discourse, pulling apart the rhetoric of humanity, art, and the scrutiny of what's considered "appropriate" embodiment amid crisis in the public sphere.

Stephanie K. Wheeler is an Associate Professor and Director of Undergraduate Programs at the University of Central Florida. Her research focuses on disability rhetoric, eugenics, civic engagement, popular culture, and Holocaust studies. She has published works in *Continuum*, *Composition Forum, Business and Professional Communication Quarterly,* and *Reflections.*

F6: Transnational Celebrity Conflicts

Multimedia Platforms and the Transnational Stardom of Ann Hsu

This paper delves into the transformative journey of Taiwanese actress Ann Hsu, who was previously confined to stereotypical roles in Taiwanese idol dramas, portraying characters such as the "wealthy heiress," "the other woman," and "the one without a happy ending," as articulated in her own narrative. A pivotal moment in Hsu's career unfolded when she cut her long hair for a new drama, sparking a distinct evolution in her Instagram posts. Her recent appearances reflect a departure from traditional gender norms, characterized by gender-neutral and sleek aesthetics, featuring monochrome filters, black basic tops, and an emotionally reserved facial expression.

Initiating with Ann Hsu's profound transformation, this essay serves as a case study to scrutinize transnational stardom in the digital realm, particularly investigating the impact of over-the-top (OTT) platforms and social media. By conducting a comparative analysis between her current portrayals in Netflix dramas and her past depictions as a mixed-race "princess-like" figure in Taiwanese idol dramas, the paper argues that Ann Hsu's empowering screen image has gradually evolved through multimedia exposure, revealing both the "authentic" and vulnerable facets of her persona during her earlier years.

Significantly, the study also explores the dissemination of Hsu's recent masculine-feminine images in East Asian countries, particularly through derivative works on platforms like *Bilibili* (a Chinese video-sharing website), where female audiences celebrate her "masculinity." Shifting from being perceived as the "foreign other" to a "handsome" *Jiejie* (older sister in Chinese by literal meaning), Hsu's transnational stardom aligns with Russell Meeuf's assertion that transnational stars act as "cultural agents," offering "access points" to cosmopolitan lifestyles for non-Western female consumers (Meeuf 2016: 198). Consequently, this paper not only illuminates the evolving media landscape in Taiwan over the past two decades but also delves into the localization of the "strong female lead" archetype within Netflix dramas across East Asian countries.

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Yuan Li received her PhD in Film Studies from the University of Southampton in 2023. Her doctoral thesis, titled "Multilingualism in Taiwan New Cinema," explores the cultural identities of Taiwanese represented in this 1980s’ film movement through a sociolinguistic lens. Driven by a passion for understanding the intricate intersections of language and culture, Yuan's current research projects mainly focus on female agency in East Asian screen culture.

Mesut Ozil and Josip Simunic: exploring sports celebrity, hybrid ethnicity and the impact of transnational belonging.

Athletes and sporting celebrities have a long history of becoming embroiled in public conflicts when making political statements. Sporting celebrities, like other celebrities, cannot entirely control the way their public selves will be perceived, or can they control the way fans engage with them as culturally and politically impactful individuals. This paper analyses high profile, international footballers: the Turkish German player, Mesut Ozil, and Croatian Australian, Josip 'Joe' Simunic. I explore the career consequences and media discourse flowing from their highly publicised controversial political conduct. I view Ozil and Simunic's mediated personas as they publicly negotiate complex cross-cultural and generational dynamics of ethnic identification and national belonging. Exploring the limits of acceptable political expression for migrant children in Australian and German wider society, I watch sporting celebrity conflict as it affects individual ethnic subjectivity and national identity in sport (specifically football).

Joe Simunic's mediated persona is considered in a wider frame of Croatian Australians' low social status and exclusion from dominant Anglo-Australian society in the politically contentious time of the 1970s to the 1990s, alongside the perception of Croatians as nationalistic hotheads. Ozil's mediated persona is analysed alongside a broader positioning of stigma connected to Turkish immigrants, relating to religious stereotypes and marginalisation in wider German society. Simunic's political controversy from the early 2010s and onward and Ozil's similar controversy in the late 2010s provide comparative examples of sporting celebrity political dilemmas that contextualise diasporic belonging and transnational ethnic identification. Their political behaviour occurs inside a constellation of private/public identity articulation that includes and complicates celebrated ethnicity.

Natalia Vedric's Bachelor of Communication (Media) Honours Dissertation was awarded First Class Honours at Deakin University in 2019 and led to her co-authored publication, 'True Victims: men's privilege, class, and violence against women in Making a Murderer and The Jinx', in the top-ranked international journal, Feminist Media Studies. That was followed by a co-presentation of related work at the Australian Women's and Gender Studies national conference in November last year.Natalia was awarded an Australian Government postgraduate scholarship in 2022 for doctoral studies at Deakin University, where she is now researching second-generation Australian Croatians' political and cultural identity. Her doctoral thesis 'Communism, Conspiracy and Croatians; An Australian Story', to be completed in 2025, includes fieldwork in both Croatia and Australia.

Dr **Janine Little** is a leading international writer of impactful articles, books, and essays about the role of mediated culture in social justice issues, most recently, its part in perpetuating and disrupting gendered violence. Her publications reach across more than three decades and include: a 2023 article about the Amber Heard and Johnny Depp defamation trial co-authored with Natalia Vedric and P. David Marshall (forthcoming in Hecate: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Women's Liberation), and an earlier article about lethal domestic violence against women, which won the Australian Women's and Gender Studies

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P. David Marshall is Professor of Communication at Charles Sturt University, emeritus professor at Deakin University and Honorary Professor at University of Nottingham - Ningbo China. He has published many books and articles that deal with celebrity, persona and digital media culture - including Celebrity and Power(2014), Celebrity Persona Pandemic (2016), Persona Studies (2020), Contemporary Publics (2015), Advertising and Promotional Culture (2015), Fame Games (2000), A Companion to Celebrity (2015) and many others. He is also the series editor of the six-volume and forthcoming Culture History of Fame (in-press 2024).

Hollywood's Diversity Project: transnational Asian celebrities, fandom and media representation as participatory culture

Michelle Yeoh winning the Oscar for Best Actress in 2023 for her performance in *Everything, Everywhere, All At Once* has often been recorded as a watershed moment for the representation of Asians in Hollywood popular media. Indeed, since the success of *Crazy Rich Asians* in 2018, it appears as if Hollywood's film and television industry has become more inclusive of Asian characters, enabling fans, especially those from Asian backgrounds, to see themselves being reflected on mainstream media screens.

However, in this digital era, media representation is no longer a top-down notion. As much as fans are seeing themselves represented in various fictional characters on film and TV, the transnational Asian celebrities who play these characters are also playing out their celebrity personas on social media platforms. Transnational Asian celebrities like Yeoh, and others such as Henry Golding *(Crazy Rich Asians,* 2018), Natasha Liu Bordizzo (*Ahsoka,* 2023), Maitreyi Ramakrishnan (*Never Have I Ever,* 2020-2023), Ali Wong (*Beef*, 2023) and the cast of CW's *Kung Fu* (2021-2023) frequently post on social media platforms like Instagram, inviting fans into snapshots of their current and future projects, as well as their personal lives. The comment features on social media platforms enable fans to respond as well as construct versions of celebrity persona they want to see and engage with.

This paper proposes to explore the notion that media representation is an extension of participatory culture, in which fans are invited in to construct versions of the transnational Asian celebrity persona that is most ideal to them. It proposes to consider the complexity of the celebrity persona when it fails to live up to fans' reading of the ideal celebrity text, such as Ali Wong's controversial support of her *Beef* co-star's sexual harassment allegations.

Bertha Chin is senior lecturer in Media and Communication at Swinburne University of Technology (Sarawak). She is currently researching the intersections of Hollywood's Asian media representations, transcultural fandoms and celebrity cultures. She is co-editor of *Crowdfunding the Future*(2015, Peter Lang), *Eating Fandom* (2020, Routledge) and editor for *Popular*

Communication.

G1: From Bad Gays to Radical Kindness: The Crisis of Queer Celebrity

For decades now, queer celebrities have functioned as sites where society negotiates tensions between 'acceptable' modes of queerness in heteronormative culture, and access to the power and privilege of celebrity. Although aligned with the glory and glamour of fame, queer celebrities occupy a precarious position – whether affiliated with queerness by design or by the media, they are often expected to speak 'for' and 'to' a heterogenous marginalised group of people while also appeasing and pleasing the mainstream. Queer celebrity thus always already occupies a position of crisis – the possibilities it offers for undoing the imperatives of heternormativity are perpetually marked by tensions around how best to 'do' queerness in culture. This panel explores three distinctly different ways queer celebrities have caused, resisted, and/or addressed the crisis inherent in queer visibility. It considers how through celebrity discourse, queer politics emerges in public life as a site of both profound and productive contradiction.

Presentation 1: Gay Grift: George Santos and Gay Celebrity Villainy

George Santos rose to fame as an out gay Brazilian American Republican who won his New York House of Representatives seat in an upset victory. He quickly became notorious for being embroiled in countless scandals surrounding his lies about his personal and professional backgrounds and family history and mounting allegations of campaign finance violations and fraud. In light of Santos's recent expulsion from the US Congress, I examine the ways that Santos has been represented in social media posts from queer and trans content creators who use queer humor to call attention to Santos's hypocrisy as well as the ways that actors and comedians such as Bowen Yang on *Saturday Night Live* and Harvey Guillén on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* construct Santos as a gay grifter and a contemporary signifier of a "bad gay." This paper extends past work I presented at Celebrity Studies on Roy Cohn as a notorious and infamous queer anti-icon, a blatant target of queer disrespect, and digs deeper into the question of how the definition of bad queerness animates queer politics and queer studies and how the specter of unacceptable, unpalatable, and unethical queerness works to encourage individual queers to perform their queerness in particular ways. I also work to extend ongoing interest in LGBTQ+ history and historiography (e.g., *Bad Gays: A Homosexual History* by Ben Miller and Huw Lemmey) that asks how forms of gay celebrity who are not figures we as queer people can be proud of become meaningful as cautionary tales or bad role models. Yang and Guillén further use their impersonations of Santos to increase their own levels of celebrity as queer performers navigating the creative industries as queer men of color. Santos serves as a case study that illustrates how LGBT anti-icons, infamous figures, and notorious subjects are enlisted in queer political projects as examples of what not to be and simultaneously used by other queer celebrities to garner increased visibility and attention in our contemporary media ecology.

Ben Aslinger is a Professor of Media Studies at Bentley University (Waltham, MA, USA). He serves on the international advisory editorial board of the journal Sexualities (Sage) and for Consoleing Passions. He is co-editor of *Gaming*

Globally: Production, Play and Place (Palgrave 2013) and *Locating Emerging Media* (Routledge 2015). His work appears in *How to Watch Television: Media Criticism in Practice* and the *Routledge Companion to Media and Gender*.

Presentation 2: George Michael, Public Sex, and Crises of Heteronormativity

In a 2001 discussion, Joshua Gamson argues that "sex scandal narratives are, generally speaking, carriers of social attitudes toward sexual morality" ("Normal Sins" 186). They tend to reveal a momentary rupture in the fabric of shared social values, only to ultimately reaffirm familiar normativities. Pop star George Michael's 1998 arrest in a Los Angeles public toilet for the "lewd" propositioning of a male undercover police officer seemed to follow the usual contours of the sex scandal script. Michael was forced out of the closet, and media coverage was marked by a tacit "acceptance" of his sexuality that was greatly tempered by a narrative of shame at the manner at which it had been revealed. This was repeated in 2006 when Michael was photographed emerging from the bushes of a well-known gay cruising area in London's Hampstead Heath. Yet while a *News of The World* headline described the latter as "George's New Sex Shame" what is remarkable about both incidents was Michael's refusal to apologise for the "act" that positioned either as an incontrovertible scandal. While he described his 1998 arrest as "stupid" and reckless he also refused to accept the requisite public shame, noting in relation to both incidents that anonymous sex in public places is part of gay culture, and something he would continue to do.

This paper asks whether Michael's refusal to follow the sex scandal script of contrition is the kind of "sex in public" that Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner argue is a critical part of the means by which queer sexual and social practices "try to unsettle… the project of normalization that has made heterosexuality hegemonic" ("Sex in Public" 548). It examines coverage in both the mainstream and the queer press to consider whether Michael's refusal of shame speaks back to heteronormative culture in ways that it cannot make sense of, and whether, as a consequence, these events carry or disrupt the "social attitudes toward sexual morality" that Gamson connects to sex scandal narratives. The paper situates this within a broader consideration of the relationship between sex scandals and the normative work of the closet around which they so often emerge.

Anita Brady is a Senior Lecturer in Media and Communication at Te Herenga Waka (Wellington, New Zealand). They work in the field of celebrity and media studies, and have published articles on Miley Cyrus, Sinead O'Connor, Caitlyn Jenner, Adam Lambert, and Clementine Ford. Anita is currently working on a book about queer celebrity and the politics of outness.

Presentation 3: "We're in the same fight, we should all work together against the gender binary": Alok Vaid-Menon, Trans Activism, and Internet Celebrity

Alok Vaid-Menon is a US transfeminine performance artist, trans activist, poet, and author whose international celebrity has gained fast momentum in recent

years – largely via their significant and carefully curated presence on social media platforms, augmented with international speaking tours, live performances, media appearances, and book publications. Vaid-Menon is also a fashion designer and model, known for collections and styling that confront binary gender norms. Not discounting the appeal of their provocative, alluring, and also carefully curated "fashionista" aesthetic, Vaid-Menon is a celebrity whose renown is primarily founded upon their trans non-binary activism, notably a unique mode of internet celebrity activism. This paper examines the nascent form of celebrity Vaid-Menon embodies in relation to the cultural crises of trans and non-binary discrimination they face head on, and also the ways this activism has brought their celebrity into being.

Vaid-Menon's celebrity presence on social media is anchored to their repeatedly stated commitment to challenging gender binaries, fighting discrimination against trans and non-binary people, and using digital technologies to create intimacy and connection and thus resist what they identify as "the international crisis of loneliness." For example, a common post on Vaid-Menon's Instagram account includes sharing an abusive online message they have received and responding with a video in which they "speak to" the sender and offer them compassion and love.

Without conflating feminism and trans activism, I utilise Anthea Taylor's (2016, 2020) pivotal work on celebrity feminism to establish that because Vaid-Menon is famous precisely for gender-related activism, their purposefully political offering of celebrity is distinct from other forms of celebrity and does important socio-cultural work. I draw on Crystal Abidin's (2018, 2020) work on internet celebrities and influencers in arguing that Vaid-Menon's distinctiveness as a celebrity is also due to the ways they actively manufacture and manage their public persona on digital platforms. I contend Vaid-Menon's celebrified digitally disseminated messages of love, kindness and connection are a relatively radical response not only to venomous online cultures hate, conflict and abuse – so often targeting women, trans and non-binary people – but also to broader socio-political contexts that devalue gender diversity and threaten trans and non-binary people's lives.

Joanna McIntyre is a Senior Lecturer in Media Studies at Swinburne University (Melbourne, Australia). Joanna's research focuses on celebrity, queer and trans representations, children's media, and Australian screen cultures. She is co-editor of *Gender and Australian Celebrity Culture* (Routledge, 2021) and *The Routledge Companion to Gender and Celebrity* (forthcoming 2024), and author of *Transgender Celebrity* (Routledge, forthcoming 2024).

G2: Reputational Risks: Politics and Celebrity in an Era of Revolution and Reform, 1830-1870.

When celebrity meets politics, conflict is inevitable. Celebrities might hazard their reputations by political interventions, or risk having their images hijacked by competing factions. Conversely, popular celebrity can smooth the edges of political reputations or bring political ideas to new audiences, though at the risk of polarising audiences. This panel, comprising three leading authors on the history of celebrity and politics, explores these issues in relation to Europe and the United States in the period 1830 to 1870: a time when these regions faced social and political conflicts which themselves intersected with international fame culture. In these circumstances political interventions brought reputational risks and even physical hazards, whether considering transformations in the political meanings of 'popularity' as a concept in the fraught circumstances of revolutionary Poland; Harriet Martineau's controversial interventions in debates over US slavery; or the competition over Giuseppe Garibaldi's promotion as democratic hero and celebrity in the United Kingdom.

Presentation 1: The Politics of Popularity in the November Uprising (1830-31)

In the wake of the November 1830 uprising against the Russian Empire, the concept of "popularity" underwent a radical transformation within the Polish discourse. What was once a benign measure of public appeal turned into a powerful instrument of accusation and indictment. Simultaneously, popularity came to symbolise the people's will and a quest for alternative forms of political legitimacy. This shift heralded a new approach to self-presentation in the public sphere, underpinned by the contemporaneous celebrity culture.

This paper seeks to explore the cultural politics of the November Uprising through the lens of popularity. It investigates both the idea of popularity that pervaded the discourse of the time and the social practice of using popular reputations to shape the politics of the uprising. Instead of treating popularity as just another manifestation of the ideological conflicts typical of the age of revolutions, this paper posits that the discourse surrounding popularity became a crucial axis of conceptualising public individuality during the uprising. The debates surrounding popularity, including those concerning the dangers of hasty political ambitions, the increasing importance of personality in public life, and the search for alternative sources of legitimacy, fostered an evolving political landscape in which it became possible to reconsider the tools available for shaping public opinion and to envision a different way of being a public figure.

Through this analysis, the paper brings a new lens into our perception of the relationship between celebrity and politics in the age of revolutions. Focusing on the concept of popularity, it shows to what extents the changing attitudes towards public figures as explored by historians interested in the idea of celebrity found an alternative, yet related expression in the political arena. In doing so, it illustrates how the liberal democratic idea of political popularity has been intricately interwoven with the cultural transformations ushered in by the rise of celebrity between 1750 and 1850.

Adrian Wesołowski is a Research Fellow at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. He studies cultural and social history of Europe, history of communication, and history of ideas, and is particularly interested in the new forms of sociability and reputation management in the Enlightenment and early nineteenth-century.

Presentation 2: "Things were pressing to be said; and […] I was the person to say them": Harriet Martineau, Celebrity Activism, and Authorial Autobiomyths

Celebrity diplomacy and humanitarianism have long been a familiar presence in the sphere of politics, ostensibly demonstrating the convertibility of 'celebrity capital' into political influence, discursive power, and symbolic capital (Driessens 2013), but also triggering conflict, adversity, and criticism. Long before the rise of celebrity activism in the Western world, however, literary authors made use of their 'attention capital' (Van Krieken 2012) to stage powerful political interventions outside their literary work and to promote socio-political causes from abolition and gender equality to free speech and human rights. Then, as now, the nexus of literary authorship, celebrity, and political agency was complicated, if not contentious, and writers could find it challenging to negotiate the costs and benefits of embodied visibility beyond the literary medium. The activist interventions of prominent nineteenth-century women writers, in particular, often necessitated precarious balancing acts between self-assertion and self-effacement against the background of Victorian gender norms.

This paper zooms in on the often ambivalent negotiations of female authorship, activism, and agency performed by Harriet Martineau (1802-1876), one of the most prolific Victorian women of letters, both within, and beyond, her writing. Martineau's experience as politically engaged writer and social commentator highlights the tension and anxiety around female public performances of both their authorial identity and their political activism. Taking as a starting point her abolitionist activism and the intense hostility it triggered during her two-year trip to the United States (1834-1836), this paper aims to show that while celebrity status could be usefully employed to gain agency and empowerment, it also exposed publicly visible and politically outspoken middle-class women to considerable risks and dangers.

Speaking out on politically controversial subjects could erode, rather than affirm, the already tenuous cultural authority claimed by female authors and required some careful strategic manoeuvring, which we find reflected, for instance, in Martineau's autobiographical writing. Works such as "The Martyr Age of the United States" (1838) and her posthumously published *Autobiography* (1876) not only served as important vehicles of socio-political activism but as platforms of authorial self-fashioning through what I call 'autobiomyths': modes of self-presentation which lend themselves to performative acts of self-expression, self-making, and self-affirmation to mitigate the potentially adverse effects of high-profile activist intervention.

Sandra Mayer is a literary and cultural historian at the Austrian Centre for Digital Humanities and Cultural Heritage (Austrian Academy of Sciences).

Together with Ruth Scobie, she has recently edited *Authorship, Activism and Celebrity* (Bloomsbury, 2023). In her current book project, she explores the intersections of literary celebrity and political activism in and through autobiographical narrative.

Presentation 3: The Struggle over Garibaldi in Great Britain and Ireland, 1860-1870

The emergence of Garibaldi as an international celebrity and hero of the Italian Risorgimento during the 1860s has been well documented, most notably by Lucy Riall (2007). As shown in my recent monograph *Celebrities, Heroes and Champions* (2021), his celebrity in the UK reached fever pitch around the time of his visit in 1864. Building on this work, my paper explores the conflicts that arose between Garibaldi's various supporters. These included aristocratic Whigs like the Duke of Sutherland, bourgeois independent Liberals such as Richard Cobden, and working-class ultra-radicals such as George Jacob Holyoake, all of whom sought to capitalise on Garibaldi's fame and reputation for varying political purposes. The paper will argue that there was a disconnect between these political disputes and the great popular reception of Garibaldi among the British public, most of whom were probably more interested in the romantic myth surrounding his revolutionary exploits or the craze for fashion accessories such as 'Garibaldi jackets' than invested in the nuances of his attitudes towards democratic reform or republicanism. Arguably, these tensions played a key role in Garibaldi's decision to cut short his visit – ostensibly for medical reasons, though Garibaldi allowed his radical supporters to believe it was the result of government pressure.

Drawing on newspaper reports, collections of street ballads and the little-used collection of papers relating to Garibaldi's stay with Sutherland at the Staffordshire Record Office, the paper also evaluates the role of Garibaldi's reputation as a stalwart opponent of the Pope's temporal power in heightening ethnic tensions within the United Kingdom. Protestant British enthusiasm for Garibaldi was not mirrored in Catholic Ireland, where street ballads celebrated his defeats and setbacks. Moreover, the rise of his reputation coincided with the more militant turn of Irish nationalism since the foundation of the Irish Republican Brotherhood in 1858, and the significantly enlarged Irish-born or descended populations in British towns and cities following the Great Famine of the late 1840s. The name of Garibaldi therefore became a useful tool with which Protestant English working men could goad their Catholic Irish counterparts.

Simon Morgan is Professor of Modern British History at Leeds Beckett University. His monograph *Celebrities, Heroes and Champions: Popular Politicians in the Age of Reform* (MUP, 2021) was runner up for the 2023 Social History Society book prize. He is Principal Investigator on *The Letters of Richard Cobden Online* www.cobdenletters.org

G3: Taylor Swift at Risk

A closet full of cardigans: Taylor Swift's political 'coming out' in *Miss Americana* (Wilson, 2020)

This paper looks at the aesthetics of Taylor Swift's political 'coming out': how did Swift's social media posts and all-access documentary Miss Americana (Wilson, 2020) 'visualize' her foray into politics, and how did these inflections (re)shape her star-text?

In my previous work on Taylor Swift (Wilkinson, 2019), I argued that Swift managed her transition from country music into pop stardom by taking on an image of the 'zany'; an image that cuts through potential threats of 'pop music artifice' by presenting Swift's character as one that is goofy, hapless, and perpetually defined by hard work. In this paper, I look at another construction of authenticity: Swift navigated the crisis surrounding her political 'coming out' by framing it as one rooted in deep self-reflection, intimacy, and personal choice (as opposed to one motivated by business / career interests).

Declaring a political position – especially a Democratic one – is notoriously tricky terrain for stars in country music: Dolly Parton has never revealed her politics, while The Chicks' political stance against Bush famously led to their 'cancelling' (see also Driessen, 2022). Following the collapse of Swift's authenticity by means of the 'zany' (cq. controversies Hiddleston and West, feuds with Spotify, Apple Music, Big Machine Records and David Mueller), and Swift's subsequent extended hiatus, renewed media scrutiny began to build around her continued silence on the American political landscape, and the Trump presidency. This paper argues that by using the form of an 'all-access' documentary (a 'discourse of sobriety' with a specific relation to truth-telling) - made by documentary *auteur* Wilson - Swift was able to do three things:

- 1) she could further conceal the commercial and business interests involved with the management of her celebrity, including Netflix's backing, through the artistic aesthetics / merits of the documentary 'form',
- 2) she transposed the intimacy of the 'behind the scenes' selfies / videos she was known for onto the 'all-access' documentary, again blurring the lines between the personally motivated and the 'carefully constructed / mediated',
- 3) and, by celebrating a political 'coming out' as a personal choice rooted in discourses of intimacy, confession, and truth-telling, Swift paved the way for her successful return to authenticity with indie-folk albums *Folklore* and *Evermore* – a genre known for its honest storytelling and political reflection, and its ability to (re)unite (alternative) country fans with pop.

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Maryn Wilkinson is an Assistant Professor in Film Studies for the Department of Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam. Her research focuses on popular culture, politics, and aesthetics, with a special interest in issues of representation, feminist film theory, labour, and youth.

Female Friend or Fo: Swift and Beyoncé

Celebrity interactions are often the focus of media attention, especially the dynamics of pairing such acting or sporting bromances. Media accounts emphasize the positive or interesting aspects of such relationships and help to reinforce ongoing narratives of association between male celebrities. However, media accounts of female celebrities have skewed towards an emphasis on conflict, from reports of a decades-long feud between Joan Crawford vs Bette Davis originating in the 1930s to more contemporary accounts of Taylor Swift's feuds with Katy Perry, Kim Kardashian and Kayne West.

Drawing from a notion of the commodification of celebrity dynamics we have previously termed comradery capital, this presentation explores the way that Taylor Swift and Beyoncé adopted comradery capital as a means to counteract media accounts that positioned them as rivals. From the moment Kanye West interrupted Swift's awards speech to speak about Beyonce, the two singers have been perceived as in competition. In the past year, they have both been touring and releasing documentaries, resulting in the media reporting on their various success and who was making more money. In reaction to this, Swift and Beyonce attended one another's premieres as evidence of solidarity and comradery. Their individual brands strengthened from this, while also battling media rumors and utilizing their individual capital to endorse one another's work. Their physical interactions and online posts were not only evidence of comradery capital, but also gave them direct control of their joint persona. Thus, this presentation explores how Swift and Beyoncé were able to generate a sustained counter narrative about their relationship and examines the broader issues around female friendships and how they are represented globally.

Jackie Raphael-Luu is a Senior Lecturer in Communications and Media (Advertising) at the London College of Communication, University of Arts London, UK. Her research focuses on celebrity culture, endorsements, branding, iconic status, activism, persona, social media and bromances.

Celia Lam is an Associate Professor in Media and Cultural Studies, at the School of International Communications, University of Nottingham Ningbo China. Her research focuses on popular culture with an interest in the area of celebrity culture, bromances, fan fiction and fandoms. Together, they have published on the topic of celebrity bromances and intersections between fame and fandom. Their latest books include the monograph Celebrity Bromances: Constructing, Interpreting and Utilising Personas (Routledge, 2022), and co-edited volume Fame and Fandom (Iowa, 2022).

The Pressure to 'Speak Now': Parasocial Relationships, Fan Activism and Celebrity Silence

In a time of global geopolitical conflict and social unrest, celebrities have found themselves under increasing pressure to publicly address controversial topics, from vaccine mandates to war in the Middle East. As social media has empowered fans to engage in participatory culture and interact with their favourite musical artists online, this has also been a site of growing conflict, with many fans applying pressure on artists to publicly comment on current affairs. This paper will examine the current state of fan-artist relationships online, with the aim of answering the following research questions: to what extent do celebrities have a responsibility to 'speak up' about social and political issues? How does this impact their relationships with their fanbase? And what does this tell us about the nature of celebrity today? To answer these questions, I will conduct textual analysis of social media content posted by Taylor Swift fans on X (formerly Twitter) under the hashtag #SwiftiesForPalestine, exploring the growing fan activism movement and its impact on Swift's public image. To date, Taylor Swift has not publicly commented on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, which has troubled many fans as she has previously utilised her platform to advocate for change, supporting LGBTQ+ causes and denouncing Republican candidates ahead of the 2020 presidential election. Drawing on Horton and Whol's research on parasocial relationships (1956), this research will argue that social media has cultivated a sense of intimacy between fans and artists, which can result in feelings of betrayal when celebrities neglect to comment on complex and/or controversial social and political issues and events. This moral quandary is intensified by a messy media landscape in which the line between celebrity and politician has become blurred. To contextualise this research, I seek to explore the aftermath of Donald Trump's presidential term and its impact on popular culture and examine how far Swift embodies John Street's concept of the 'celebrity politician' (2004).

Lauren Johnson is a PhD researcher in the school of Communications and Media at Ulster University, investigating online pop music fandom. With a keen focus on the transformative potential of social media, she examines how fans employ digital platforms to shape their identities and challenge prevailing hegemonic power structures.

G4: The Perils of AI

The Scandalous Speculative: Stardom and the AI-ification of Posthumous Performance

In November 2019, Magic City Films announced that in conjunction with CMG Worldwide, which claims to have been "the business agent for over 200 legends," they were set to digitally resurrect actor James Dean for a significant role in their motion picture *Finding Jack*. The response was swift and chilly. Actor Chris Evans acerbically captured the prevailing mix of bemusement and antagonism, proposing that “[m]aybe we can get a computer to paint us a new Picasso.” Despite the coordinated publicity campaign for Dean’s digital resurrection, popular reception was overwhelmingly skeptical, with Evans characterizing the producers’ endeavor as “shameful” in its lack of understanding of the performer. Four years later, the announcement that another long-deceased CMG client Jimmy Stewart had been revivified through AI to narrate the holiday bedtime story "It's a Wonderful Sleep Story" for the Calm sleep and meditation app met with similar backlash.

This paper explores the evolving ecosystem of AI-ified performance and posthumous stardom emerging through and around CMG Worldwide. While the firm's work has historically entailed licensing their clients' likenesses for advertising, this paper examines CMG's shift in recent years toward the new frontier of posthumous AI-constructed performances. As was the case with *Finding Jack* and "It's a Wonderful Sleep Story," this turn has entailed brokering deals with third party production companies to employ AI to digitally revive their deceased clients for posthumous performances across varied media platforms. CMG's promotional rhetoric, and the often-oppositional responses from critics and the public, are part of a broader interpretive landscape that I argue participates in speculation that may in fact inform the very AI-ification of acting that many deem scandalous and a harbinger of an ominous future for acting and actors.

Justin Owen Rawlins is assistant professor of media studies and film studies at the University of Tulsa. His book, *Imagining the Method* (University of Texas Press, 2024), explores the intersections of performance, stardom, and reception to elucidate the assumptions that underwrite how we talk about performance and performers.

Somebodies and Nobodies: the impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) on star labour and image

The use of AI in the entertainment industry is constructed as both an economic and existential crisis for performers at every level – from stars to extras – with the recent SAG-AFTRA strike bringing this to wide public attention. Actors may perform, but without full knowledge of or control over *what* the job or role may be, *when* it will be, or even for *whom*. In the ability of AI systems to disconnect performance from job, the integration of performance and identity become further intertwined, where ideas of individual control, image and value come to the fore – elements we associate with star performance (and brand).

Media outputs that combine AI computing with actor activity and/or identity may be defined in two ways. First, an output *defined* through the credible or licensed replication of recognisable star performance centred around a well-defined and valuable self, from a posthumous live performance of Elvis to de-aging Tom Hanks in real time. Second, an output *derived* from the data of less-well known performers (from voice artists like Greg Marston to character actors like Edward Herrmann) who contribute to the construction of new media content only in how their work is used to build an AI data set – with or without appropriate consent and re-numeration.

I suggest that the mechanics of stardom and celebrity - or the ability to maintain a unique individualised public presence characterised through fame and personality branding - have the potential to become significant tools for actors (regardless of where they may sit in the performer hierarchy) in negotiating the perceived threat of AI tools, because of the inherent value placed on a person as individual property in the system of celebrity capital. Through looking at how a range of current AI-derived performances by a range of performer types have been produced and discursively circulated, I argue that fame - in the form of a public, visible, recognisable identity - rather than economic standing may become the distinguishing feature between how generative AI systems approach the curation or the elimination of performer labour, whereby those who can stand as 'somebodies' (valuable brand images ripe for circulation) are treated differently than those who can only be determined as 'nobodies' (whose labour predominantly serves only the growth of the data set).

Sarah Thomas is Senior Lecturer in Communication and Media at the University of Liverpool. Specialising in research on the Hollywood film industry, stardom, and immersive media, her publications include the forthcoming *Stars and Franchises* (Edinburgh University Press), *James Mason* for the BFI Film Stars series (BFI Bloomsbury 2018), and 'The Star in VR' (*Celebrity Studies* 2019).

Anna Indiana, AI Singer-Songwriters, and the Conflict of Gendered Value Judgements in Pop Music Discourse

On 24 November 2023, Anna Indiana posted her debut track to Twitter/X. The accompanying video shows a young woman singing into the camera, microphone to hand in the typical style of YouTube singers; however, both the song and image are auto-generated using AI, marking Anna Indiana as the first iteration of AI singer-songwriter working towards fully autonomous pop star.

Reactions across social media platforms to Anna Indiana have so far been predominantly negative, focusing on the perceived lack of 'soul', the poor quality of the song itself, and the uncanny nature of her facial gestures. As Anna Indiana continues to evolve from synthetic celebrity to automaton, the crisis of not only the sociocultural role of the celebrity singer-songwriter, but also computational musicality, will become amplified.

While the mainstream press' response has thus far centred the novelty of Anna Indiana, this paper engages with the underlying gendered conflicts within the

music industry, combined with wider concerns of bias in AI generations. Critical technocultural discourse analysis (CTDA) is used to examine the Twitter and Reddit responses to Anna Indiana, analysing the discourse and how the affordances and cultures of the social media platforms create spaces for particular types of engagement.

As if often the case with landmark moments within the technological and creative industries, the mainstream press draws from social media in establishing a common narrative and/or response to a media event. It is therefore important to document the response to Anna Indiana at this crucial stage of development, to see how value judgements tied to problematic gender conventions are being perpetuated. In this case, bias is found not only in the generated outputs, but more importantly, in the way that historical distinctions between pop/rock are mapped onto and acquire value through gender norms. Pop music is 'acceptable' for AI production because it is feminized and therefore seen as less valuable; lack of 'soul' is not just a critique of Anna Indiana, but a historical description of Top 40 pop. As such, this paper offers a critical framework for engaging with the emergence of AI singer-songwriters and wider virtual influencers.

Melissa Avdeeff is a Lecturer in Digital Media at the University of Stirling. Her research uses multimodal approaches in the examination of popular culture texts and digital/emerging technologies exploring areas such as: social media and discourse analysis; AI and computational creativity; critical approaches to digital media and technology.

G5: (Un)Professional Celebrities

Discursive Celebrity Practices in Artist's Professional Relationships in the Music Industry

Artists must gain well-knowness to succeed in the music industry. Artist celebrification is pursued, constructed, and maintained in strategical artist branding and promotion, which this study approaches as celebrity practices. From the sociocultural communication perspective, celebrity practices are seen as interactions that manifest not only in the media and fan relationships but also in interpersonal relationships, which are scarcely examined in celebrity studies. In the music industry, artist celebrification is negotiated in professional relationships, for example between artists and managers, to accumulate the artist's celebrity capital. As fame is connected to interpersonal and intrapersonal turmoil, such as increased social and emotional distance and ambiguity of the self, it is necessary to examine celebrity practices beyond their economic value by giving voice to competing and possibly muted celebrity discourses.

The objective of the study is to gain more knowledge on celebrity practices in artists' professional interactions, how artists perceive them, and how they are connected to fame-related challenges in artist's social life. Celebrity practices are examined in the theoretical framework of relational dialectics, which considers all social life constructed and constituted in the interplay of competing discourses. Contrapuntal analysis is employed to detect celebrity discourses and make sense of discursive celebrity practices in artist's interactions with their team members. The data is collected with 30 semi-structured interviews with Finnish music celebrities.

The study fills the gap in research on celebrity practices as interpersonal communication and broadens the understanding of the relational production of fame. The findings shed light on the role of artist's professional relationships in the mechanisms that underpin celebrity and the interpersonal and intrapersonal challenges linked to it. Practical implications of the study include utilizing the findings to better prepare and support artists and other public figures for the unique challenges fame poses. The research adds to celebrity studies by further developing the interpersonal communication perspective on fame.

Katariina Kakko is a PhD Researcher in the Faculty of Information Technology and Communication Sciences at the Tampere University in Finland. Her research examines celebrity discourses, celebrification practices and celebrity persona in music celebrity's interpersonal relationships. Kakko's dissertation aims to develop an introduction to interpersonal communication perspective on fame.

Liza Leaves Her Love Team: Stardom, Agency and the Studio in Contemporary Philippine Cinema

In February 2023, Liza Soberano, a young Filipino-American mixed-race star of Philippine cinema spoke out against a fundamental aspect of film stardom in the Philippines – the love team, or the recurring film couple. Rejecting the love team as limiting to her career and dangerous for the mental health of female stars,

Soberano's comments launched a debate on the love team and mainstream cinema in the Philippines, as well as the role of the studios in moulding young stars for success. Soberano comments inspired wider conversations about the sustainability and pitfalls of love teams as a path to stardom in Philippine cinema. In the process, Soberano also broke away from Star Magic, the talent management arm of ABS-CBN, her home studio of 10 years, rejecting a Philippine star-making powerhouse that had redefined the last 30 years of Philippine stardom and the film industry.

In the aftermath of the public conflict between Soberano and her talent manager of 11 years, Soberano joined an independent talent agency run by another mixed-race star newly departed from Star Magic in a bid to work outside of the hold that major television studios have on the Philippine film industry. Rebranding herself as 'Hope Soberano' in a departure from the image and the stage name bestowed upon her by the mainstream industry, she sought to demonstrate a new authenticity and agency by using her birth name. Soberano also shifted towards achieving Hollywood success in her native US, due to the limitations of her Philippine love team. Faced with the dual WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes in 2023, Soberano pivoted instead to an attempt at South Korean stardom.

Soberano's stardom and subsequent conflict with the mainstream Philippine film industry demonstrates the tension between studios, stars, the wider media industry, and fans. This paper explores the conflicts highlighted in her departure from Star Magic, which includes star agency, the mainstream studios, race, gender, nationality, and the 'shipping' wars waged by fans of rival love teams that often translates to demands made of stars' offscreen romances – conflicts that reach back to the earliest stars and love teams of Philippine cinema.

Chrishandra Sebastiampillai is Lecturer in Film, Television and Screen Studies at Monash University Malaysia. Her research interests include stardom and celebrity, the romance genre, film couples, and Southeast Asian cinema. Recent publications include works on Henry Golding's Eurasian stardom, and the 'love teams' or film couples of popular Philippine cinema.

The Inside Story of a Celebrity: the Diaries of Alan Rickman

Alan Rickman (1946-2016) was a British theatre actor who through his successful career in cinema was transformed into a celebrity. He initially found Hollywood fame in *Die Hard* (1988), consolidated it for a different audience in *Truly Madly Deeply* (1991) and *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), and gained the status of a celebrity through taking the role of Severus Snape in the eight *Harry Potter* films (2001-2010). His diaries, which consist largely of notes and jottings, were published posthumously in 2022 to much acclaim. They give insight into the literally extraordinary life of an actor as celebrity and of a world in which participation in a protest march about theatre cuts involves a car to Piccadilly Circus and tea at the Dorchester Hotel. Rickman consistently comments on his working practices; he records his feeling that film directors disregard the skills and talents of actors, vents his fury that actors come second to 'effects' and expresses fears that he is considered 'difficult' because he argues on set. At the same time, he fully participates in the jet-setting lifestyle opened up by his

success, namedrops on every page, and worries about not winning awards he professes to despise. ‘Only our profession would put itself so mercilessly under the microscope’ he lamented after a PR event but his diaries now put himself and many others under scrutiny. Full of gossip and bitching, the diaries can nevertheless be read as a record of how Rickman continually negotiated the roles of actor, performer and star during his career and how much he enjoyed and railed against the celebrity that came with it. In this paper, I plan to explore these contradictions, what Rickman called ‘the tightrope walking’, using extracts from the diaries.

Christine Geraghty is Emeritus Professor (Glasgow) and Research Fellow (Birkbeck). She has a long-standing interest in stars and performance and was among the first to analyze diverse casting in period drama. She is on the advisory boards of several journals and is Book Reviews editor for *Critical Studies in Television.*

G6: Political Conflicts and Crises

Political conflicts and crises created by directly elected celebrity mayors: the case of Geelong, Australia

This research investigates celebrity politics in Australia's local government by examining an inaugural short directly elected mayoral (DEM) model experiment undertaken in Geelong, the second-largest city in the federated state of Victoria, Australia, which elicited two celebrity mayors and created political conflict and a crisis. The single case study is undertaken by a participant-observer-researcher who has utilised their prior occupational participation in Geelong's government and business community to establish a type of opportunistic complete member researcher (OCMR) status, drawn from a range of research work developed over the last thirty years. This unique OCMR status has created reflexive participant observation insights into an Australian local government DEM model experiment, which is melded with a longitudinal, narrative, descriptive and archival research design methodological approach to elucidate how celebrity contributed to the political conflicts that arose during the experiment. With the increased likelihood that DEM models are more susceptible than other government systems to attracting and creating celebrities, this research seeks to understand what can be learned from the Geelong experiment. The case study builds a foundation by amalgamating celebrity politics and local government literature to inform the debate on DEM models, DEMs and directly elected celebrity mayors (DECMs) and reveals how celebrity and political conflicts contributed to the crisis that ultimately reversed the experiment. It includes timely insights into micro and macro governance structures, political and economic circumstances, councillor cooperation, local government administration and how DECMs align the divergent requirements of politics and celebrity. The case study also offers advice on how future DECMs with no previous local government experience or understanding can be better supported to learn how local government works and minimise political conflict.

Rebecca Casson is a senior executive with experience spanning government, industry, and the not-for-profit sector in Australia, the UK, Europe, and the USA. She is the President of Australia's construction worker entitlement body, Incolink. Rebecca holds a Masters degree in Politics and Government and has published work in various journals.

The Celebrity of Crisis: Santos, Trump and the Perilous Fun of Camp

Although celebrity studies has long paid attention to processes of celebrification, performance and parasociality in entertainment and interactive media, the global conditions of precarity and polarisation increasingly mean that celebrity is caught in the crosshairs of political crisis. Indeed, it might not be an exaggeration to say that there is now no politics of crisis without celebrity, whether this be the reluctant celebrification of Greta Thunberg at the UN or the smooth politicking of TV star-turned-wartime president Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the Oscars. But focusing on celebrity as both terrain and medium of crisis surely takes the 'fun' out of celebrity – or does it? If celebrity is traditionally positioned

as a mechanism of distraction from the difficult conditions of life, then what happens when fun and difficulty, which I frame in this paper as camp and crisis, *colesce* under the umbrella of celebrity?

This paper begins with the most overtly camp figure to sit in the U.S. Congress, George Santos, whose own crisis as an elected Republican representative indicted for multiple counts of conspiracy and fraud saw him expelled by a majority House vote. The campy confidence with which Santos continued to deliver his denials to the press has led late-night satirists to bemoan his departure as the only 'fun' member of the Republican far-right, yet his personal crisis gains political weight once we note that Santos is a direct product of the post-truth and big-lie politics of the Trump era. As a baby-faced Trump, Santos' camp celebrity thus takes on more perilous overtones, drawing attention to the way that Trump himself mobilises a camp persona to deliver statements that at best smack of authoritarianism and, at worst, presage fascism. Updating an article I wrote about the 'new camp' of Trump in the heady days of the 2016 campaign (Kavka 2018), this paper examines what happens when the enjoyment which, I will argue, continues to stick to celebrity is conscripted to serve anti-democratic and even fascistic ends. If camp is political, then so is the celebrity of crisis, but not in the ways we might wish.

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Misha Kavka is Professor of Cross-Media Culture at the University of Amsterdam and co-founder of the research group Queer Analysis at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis. She has published widely on gender, sexuality, celebrity and affect in relation to television, film and media technologies.

Celebrity populist politician as an influencer: A qualitative analysis of Marin Miletić's TikTok communication

While celebrities might have found themselves in crises, celebrity style stands as an important aspect of how politicians successfully fight with the crisis of representation (Street, 2004). When celebrity style is utilized and performed by populist politicians (Mudde, 2004), it becomes particularly appealing. This combination has recently been conceptualized as celebrity populism (Grbeša and Šalaj, 2023; Vuković, 2022), perfectly describing attractive political figures from across political specter such as Donald Trump, Javier Milei, Volodymyr Zelenksy, Beppe Grillo.

This study delves into the concept of celebrity populism, focusing on what Grbeša and Šalaj (2023) identify as *populist celebrity* - populist politicians who utilize popular formats and celebrity techniques in their communication. Our aim is to explore a particular performance of *celebrity* - influencer (politician) - in combination with populist messages.

The empirical part centers on Marin Miletić, member of the populist party Most (The Bridge) whose communication on social media, notably TikTok, reminds of

influencer style. Miletić is a member of the Croatian parliament, who also ran for the major of Rijeka in local elections in 2021. Miletić, a former religious teacher turned politician, authentically and expertly combines his political, religious and personal persona on social media.

Research has already shown that politicians who know how to communicate on social media may appear more authentic than those who do not (Enli, 2017). When politicians are particularly skillful on social media platforms, especially in creating the perception of authenticity, they can easily promote to celebrities in the social media environment, engaging and influencing their online audiences. Therefore, for their audiences, they become influencers. Thus, we conduct qualitative content analysis of Miletić's TikTok videos to unravel how he performs the role of celebrity/influencer, utilizing it to emphasize populist messages.

Studying the influencer-populist mixture exemplified by Marin Miletić helps to better understand the evolving landscape of contemporary political communication, but also sheds light on the blurred lines between entertainment, politics, and populism, crucial in shaping contemporary socio-political discourses.

Silvija Vuković is a PhD student of Media and Communication at Charles University. Her main research focus is on celebrity populism, as well as fictional populism. However, her research interest spreads all over the popular politics area, as well as AI (and social media) relevance for political communication.

Nina Krapić is a PhD student of Social Communication at Pontifical Gregorian University. Her main research focus is celebrity populism, religion and authenticity in popular politics, and the role of celebrity Catholics in social media.

H1: Reassessing Celebrity in Techno-Cultural Infrastructures: Digital Scrapbooks, Documentaries, and Holograms

This panel explores the intersection of politics, technology, and popular culture in contemporary techno-cultural infrastructures in North America. Each of the papers engages with user-generated and industry images of stars and celebrities that critically deconstruct notions of fame, authenticity, and corporeality. The first paper examines the demystification of Hollywood stardom on TikTok, arguing that the videos of the channel *Hollywood History* serve as an "audiovisual scrapbook" to document and disseminate information about the discriminatory structures during the "golden era" of the studio system. The second paper examines Paris Hilton's reinvention through a widely discussed YouTube documentary, exploring conceptions of the "real voice" while highlighting a broader trend towards the celebrity "redemption documentary." The final paper discusses celebrity holograms in the context of reality TV, demonstrating how holograms discursively oscillate between positive techno-solutionism and a threat to the future of reality celebrities. As such, each paper examines a phenomenon that reimagines stardom associated with analog media culture through digital technologies and platforms.

Presentation 1: Is this Paris? Documenting the voice of Paris Hilton

The YouTube documentary *This is Paris* (2020) starts with a sound check. Paris Hilton is standing in an audio booth, testing the technical equipment, and trying out her voice – or voices. Indeed, a central revelation of *This is Paris* is that what we used to know as Hilton's voice is actually "not real"; it is a fabrication, "just a character" she had been playing for decades. Through the documentary, Hilton comes forward with her history of childhood abuse, and becomes involved in an awareness campaign. Both revelations thus become linked: the successful celebrity as a victim-turned-activist, and the two voices of Paris Hilton as a fake and a real one. The question of authenticity becomes entangled with questions of public and not-so-public suffering. In talk show interviews accompanying the release, Hilton is praised for finally being able to reveal her "true self", finally not being "just famous for being famous" (Sunrise 2020); online comments respond to her newfound authenticity. Paris Hilton's new voice, it seems, resonates.

In this paper, I explore Hilton's vocal reinvention within and through *This is Paris.* I engage with "voice" both on a literal and a conceptual level, exploring how questions of the "true" and "real" Paris Hilton are negotiated, especially how the "documentary voice" (Nichols 1988) of *This is Paris* (re)produces the voice of Paris Hilton. As has been argued, her "signature baby voice" has not been completely abandoned but rather emerges in specific contexts (see Overholt and Gomez 2023). Building on these findings, I examine how *This is Paris* centers audibility, and how this ties in with popular feminist rhetoric of "visibility" (Banet-Weiser 2018) and now-canonical #MeToo language of "speaking up" and "making your voice heard" (Chandra and Erlingsdóttir 2021). I am especially interested in the way the documentary format constructs and deconstructs aspects of Hilton's fluctuating star persona. I want to highlight how Paris Hilton enters a dialogue with other celebrity voices, like Whitney Houston (see Kooijman 2014), Britney Spears, Elizabeth Holmes, or Marilyn Monroe,

and argue that this emerging chorus of unreliable voices hints at a broader trend towards redemption manifesting through documentary formats.

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Marie Malina is a PhD candidate within the graduate research program “Configurations of Film” at Goethe University, Frankfurt. In her dissertation project, she investigates celebrity documentaries through the framework of the *redemption documentary.* Her research interests include digital media, feminist and queer theory, fan studies, and documentary studies.

Presentation 2: Holograms on Reality TV: How to negotiate the Crisis of Celebrity Authenticity

Days after the 2020 US election, Tucker Carlson asked “Who exactly is Joe Biden, this man who claims to be our president?” His answer was rooted in a deep crisis: “There is no Joe Biden. … He no longer exists. What remains is a projection of sorts, a hologram...” (Fox News 2020) With Donald Trump’s presidency, reality TV and politics were officially one. Against Trump’s effective performance associated with the authentic, rival Joe Biden had to be mocked as inauthentic, automated, and agency-less. Leaning into such a radical take was no news on Fox News. Invoking the image of the hologram was – and as I want to argue in my paper when the hologram enters reality celebrity feuds it is never trivial.

Holograms can be considered both old and new at once – a vintage concept and a futuristic image. While holography is an imaging process popularized

since the 1960s (Johnston 2016), for decades the hologram has been conjured as a metaphor for capitalism's illusions and simulated worlds (Eco 1973, Baudrillard 1981). More recently, holograms became increasingly visible as celebrity vehicles, be it star musicians brought back to life, such as Tupac or Whitney Houston, or political stars like Narendra Modi and Julian Assange rallying supporters via hologram.

Celebrated as cutting-edge spectacles and criticized as unethical transgressions, holograms unlock new potentials for celebrity expression and reinforce old techno-anxieties from automation to cloning (Stadler 2019, Kemp-Wilcox 2021). Following the assertion that Joe Biden is a hologram, I will discuss how the hologram is utilized in the context of reality TV as a marker of celebrity crisis. *The Kardashians* and *The Real Housewives of Salt Lake City* recently included holograms to negotiate the future of reality stardom and its tenacious yet elusive qualities. In my paper, I will focus on the connection between discourses on celebrity and technological developments, a certain paranoia that finds holograms, and in extension, AI, to be a positive techno-solutionism on the one hand and a threat to the future of reality celebrity on the other.

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Clara Podlesnigg is a doctoral candidate in Media Studies at Philipps-Universität Marburg and a research fellow in the research training group "Configurations of Film" at Goethe-Universität Frankfurt. Her doctoral project deals with dimensions of practice and performance in relation to holograms in online popular culture.

H2: Videographic Criticism and Celebrity: Politics of the Personal

Videographic criticism provides an effective mode to combine a personal and scholarly approach to the study of stardom and celebrity. Audiovisual essays not only allow to show – rather than merely describe – the affective workings of star images, but also enable scholars to be more overtly present within their argumentation. The three presentations in this panel each, in their own way, start from a personal perspective to discuss specific stars (Beyoncé, Rita Moreno, and Diana Ross, respectively) and to show how these stars help us to address broader political questions about gender and ethnic identities. As Richard Dyer has famously argued in *Stars* (1979), stars function as "embodiments of the social categories in which people are placed and through which they have to make sense of their lives, and indeed through which we make our lives." These three presentations use the audiovisual form to make this function of stardom explicitly visible.

Presentation 1: "Beyoncé: On Mothers, Muvvas, and Icons,"

In 2019, Beyoncé released her documentary, *Homecoming* (2019), on Netflix. It chronicled not only her now infamous "Beychella" performances at Coachella, but also provided a glimpse into her personal life following the birth of her twin children. The performance and documentary were themed around the history of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and their homecoming celebrations. Back in 2020, I eagerly began crafting a video essay around the idea of *Homecoming* as a documentary film and Beyoncé as a director. Now, in 2023, Beyoncé is the credited director of five films, including the most recent theatrical release of *Renaissance: A Film by Beyoncé* (2023). I want to analyze the filmography of Beyoncé through the lens of auteur theory. The conversation of Beyoncé as director has only recently made its way to the mainstream, and I will discuss why it has taken so long for the general public to accept this global pop star as a reputable filmmaker, specifically given the history of pop star directors, as well as the factors of race and gender.

I will also discuss the place of politics within Beyoncé's filmography. As a global icon, Beyoncé has been very careful in crafting her public-facing identity. Control is central to her identity, and thus I will interrogate Beyoncé's self-defined politics, how she infuses them into her work, and how they are received. I want to understand the function of politics within Beyoncé's work, the politics of Beyoncé the director, and the politics of Beyoncé the pop star. I am actively trying to reconcile the art, the artist, and commerce, and how all three could be cohesive and at odds simultaneously. In this way, I will interrogate Beyonce's filmography to square her identity as an icon, and as an object of fan culture.

Cydnii Wilde Harris (she/her) is a film scholar and video essayist, whose work largely concerns the representation of marginalized communities. She is particularly concerned with the depiction of BIack women and femmes in film and television. Cydniiwildeharris@gmail.com

Presentation 2: "My Mother Is Rita Moreno"

There is a picture of my parents taken in the 1960s where they both look like movie stars – particularly my mother, complete with coquettish smile, short dark hair and a dress that makes her look…well, like Rita Moreno. Is there something about movie stars where we can see our own parents in them – or is there something about memory and nostalgia, and how movies and television hold those images in amber, that allows us to project the best of our parents onto these movie stars?

The connection between my mother and my own fascination with Rita Moreno comes from more than simple nostalgia borne out of the fact that I am losing my mother to Alzheimer's: it is because Rita Moreno is one of the only movie stars that I knew of growing up who was Latina. It did not matter than my family is Peruvian and Moreno is Puerto Rican: she was ours, just the same. As one of the only Latinos growing up in a suburban community in the 1970s, my ethnicity was something that was both exotic and challenging, both hidden and fully on display. Moreno's chameleon-like ability to be foreign and American on screen has over the years matched what I considered to be my own mother's journey as an immigrant in the United States, one of the few whose accented English (when she wanted it to be accented) sounded like my mother's. More recently on the Netflix series *One Day at a Time*, Moreno's outsized grandmother character of Lydia – a woman who was loud, loving, colorful, and talked to her dead husband – matched my own mother.

This video essay will examine the stardom and iconicity of Rita Moreno both as a Latina icon on a large scale, and a personal touchstone on a personal scale. The piece weaves together moving images from throughout Moreno's career (*Singin' in the Rain*, *West Side Story*, *Carnal Knowledge*, *The Electric Company*, *The Muppet Show*, *I Like It Like That*, *One Day at a Time*) with still images of my own mother Alicia to present the complex responses of spectatorship and fandom.

Jeffrey Romero Middents is Associate Professor of Literature at American University in Washington, DC, where he teaches and studies film and world literature. He writes about directors, stars, television and landscape, often with a transnational Latin American perspective. He is currently working on a monograph on auteurism and Alfonso Cuarón. middents@american.edu

Presentation 3: "Diana & Me: On Fandom and Scholarship"

"Who am I – a middle-aged, white, gay, male, European academic – to write about an African American female superstar?" I asked in "Why I too write about Beyoncé," published in *Celebrity Studies* (10:3, 2019). In this presentation, which includes an audiovisual essay, I explore this question further by examining my own positionality in relation to the study of Black American female stars in general, and Diana Ross in particular. Two possibly conflicting issues are foregrounded through this rather personal, yet politically inspired exploration: 1) the tension between being a scholar as well as a fan of the "object" of study (so-called aca-fandom), thereby rendering visible the different issues that are at stake when one's scholarly interests and personal investment

in popular culture confront each other; 2) the tension between being my white gay cis-male European perspective and the Black American female star I study, thereby questioning the white European male gaze and its long historical tradition of objectifying and exoticizing Black American female performers.

As form, the audiovisual essay enables such a personal exploration into the political implications of both fandom as well as a white European cis-male perspective on Black American female stardom. By combining footage from different media sources (including concert performances and music videos by Diana Ross, as well as the 1995 Oscar-winning short film *Trevor* about a gay white male teenage Diana Ross fan in the early 1980s, a fictional mirroring of my own childhood experience) with images from my personal archive (including my own appearance in a recent Diana Ross music video), "Diana & Me" examines the star image of Diana Ross as a "total star text" (Richard Dyer), covering seven decades of material. Moreover, the audiovisual essay explicitly connects to the academic literature on the Diana Ross star image by scholars as Nicole Fleetwood (*On Racial Icons*, 2015) and Jane Gaines ("White Privilege and Looking Relations," 1988), among others. "Diana & Me" is an example of how the total star text can be analyzed in an audiovisual manner, through using the personal to address broader political questions about fandom, racial power relations in media, and commodified stardom.

Jaap Kooijman is Associate Professor in Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam, author of *Fabricating the Absolute Fake* (AUP, 2013), and co-editor, with Glyn Davis, of *The Richard Dyer Reader* (BFI, 2023). His audiovisual essays have been published in *[in]Transition*, *NECSUS*, *16:9*, *Collateral*, *Tecmerin*, and *ZfM: Zeitschrift für Medienwissenschaft*.
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H3: Celebrity Sexism

Live through this: The social functions of the young celebrity widow

In the television series *Sorry for Your Loss*, protagonist Leigh meets another young widow at a support group. This new connection makes Leigh feel insecure about how she has been processing her grief. She explains the differences between them thus: 'you're Jackie O, and I'm Courtney Love.'

This interaction is indicative of a broader observation about the social functions a celebrity widow performs in public discourse. In the aftermath of President John F. Kennedy's assassination, his widow's dignified and quiet grief helped to unite a mourning public. That was, until she married Aristotle Onassis and her popularity nosedived. By contrast, Love provided an immediate scapegoat for a hurting fanbase in the wake of her husband Kurt Cobain's death by suicide. Conspiracy theories speculated that Love was heavily involved in Cobain's demise, with some outright suggesting that she murdered him. A loud, outspoken, ambitious, drug-using, scantily-clad, and arguably 'unlikeable' woman, Love was the perfect target for the anger of heartbroken Nirvana devotees.

Taking Love as the primary case study, this paper exposes limiting ideals of womanhood operating in press coverage of young, widowed celebrities. Existing research demonstrates how young widows feel the pressures of external expectations around how they should behave (Levinson 1997). For a woman in the public eye, these expectations are exaggerated and multiplied. In public discourse, assumptions concerning their behaviour become frozen at the point of their spouse's death. This paper thus takes a longitudinal approach, covering significant dates in Cobain's posthumous career in order to uncover how discussion of Love's widowhood has developed and what these discourses can tell us about the social functions of the young celebrity widow. It argues that the judgements inherent in these commentaries have harmful implications not just for the celebrity widow herself, but for young widows everywhere.

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Alice Masterson is Associate Lecturer in Music at the University of York. She completed her PhD at the University of York in 2022 across the departments of music and sociology, supported by the Sir Jack Lyons Research Scholarship and the Humanities Research Centre Doctoral Fellowship.

Nancy Kwan: Model Minority and Racialized Sexuality

In both her personal life and professional career, Nancy Kwan (1939-) navigated the intricate interplay between systemic biasese and her individual agency in the portrayal of Asian (Chinese) Americans in American cinema from the 1960s to the 1980s. Her perspectives on race, gender, and sexuality were

primarily shaped by her experience in the film industry. As the most successful Asian American star in Hollywood cinema during the 1960s, she was uniquely positioned to critically examine the pervasive issues of racial and gender biases within the industry. This examination becomes particulary pronounced following her transition to independent cinema in the 1970s and her subsequent shift to working behind the camera in the 1980s. Her trajectory exemplified the transformative power of growing self-awareness as an Asian American and a member of a racial minority. This profound experience also shaped her individual agency in navigating not only her own representation but also the portrayal of Asian Americans as a whole.

From the perspective of intersectionality, this paper offers an in-depth examination of Nancy Kwan's transformative journey and the dynamics of her star image within the Hollywood film industry from the 1960s to the 1980s. Kwan's initial success in Hollywood, marked by potraying sexually and racially exoticized characters, presented her with critical acclaim and scrutiny for reinforcing stereotypes. However, her growing self-awareness as an Asian (Chinese) American actor empowered her to actively challenge these biases. By delving into the socio-cultural context of her era and anaylzing her evolving image during the 1960s, as well as her transition to independent cinema in the 1970s and 1980s, this study argues that Kwan's journey serves as a compelling case study. It not only sheds light on the changing dynamics of Hollywood but also underscores the role of self-awareness and individual agency in confronting systemic biases and advocating for a more accurate and inclusive representation of Asian Americans in the film industry.

Yao Cheng is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Communication and Media at the University of Liverpool, where she is affiliated with Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University. She presently serves as a Research Assistant for The Heritage and Communication Research Group within the XJTLU Centre for Culture, Communication, and Society.

Doing celebrity as a martial art: Cynthia Rothrock's creative struggle with sexism

The long and varied career of the U.S. martial arts champion and actress Cynthia Rothrock presents a complex case for discussion of the uses of self-invention for handling sexism in media-intensive cultural industries. Born in 1957, Rothrock has negotiated several different modes of celebrity as her fame has fluctuated with audience uptakes of technological change. Renowned in live performance in 1981-85, she retired as five times undefeated World Karate Champion in Forms and Weapons competition. After featuring in a Kentucky Fried Chicken commercial in 1983, she starred through the late 1980s in some of the most famous Hong Kong action films of the period (*Yes, Madam!*, *Righting Wrongs*) when a film export drive made lead roles for a foreign white woman acceptable. She then worked in the transnational direct to video industry based in Asia as well as the USA in the 1990s, and when that collapsed she built new fame through the burgeoning martial arts 'event' industry with its lavish awards and Halls of Fame inductions. These activities have generated a fifth, cyber-based phase of celebrity thanks to her exuberant participation in social

media platforms and on-line martial arts sites, even as her films are being re-issued in boutique Blu-Ray series.

Cynthia Rothrock has made over sixty films, most recently crowd-funding her first film as a director, *Black Creek*. Yet in academic studies her career is often framed as one of failure to become a 'real' star, i.e. to get a big screen role in Hollywood. I have previously discussed the difficulty that Western critics have with an American woman's role in an Asian popular cinema, and how her own creative response to changing reception conditions has transcended the ups and downs of a cyclical popularity. This paper develops the latter approach to focus on her production of a social media persona and how she uses this to refute the expectation that an aged woman in martial arts (too expendable for *The Expendables*) no longer has a role to play.

Meaghan Morris is Professor Emeritus of Gender and Cultural Studies, University of Sydney. Her books include *Too Soon Too Late: History in Popular Culture* (1998), *Hong Kong Connections: Transnational Imagination in Action Cinema* (co-ed., 2005), *Identity Anecdotes: Translation and Media Culture* (2006) and *The Year's Work in* Showgirls *Studies* (co-ed., 2024).

H4: Crises & Celebrity Activism

Living to Tell: Madonna, Celebrity Activism, and the AIDS Crisis

Two new celebrity biographies appeared in 2023: one of Elizabeth Taylor and another of Madonna. Both were notable for their colossal length, exhaustive detail, separately published endnotes, *and* 'new information' about their activism during the AIDS crisis. But why these revisions and additions now? In the first decade of the crisis, among the most prominent voices speaking out about AIDS were female celebrities. From Joan Rivers to Zelda Rubenstein (the medium from *Poltergeist* [1982]), these women were speaking out at a time when most governments were silent and activist groups such as ACT-UP had yet to form. Flash-forward to 2023. On her recent *Celebration* tour, Madonna's forty-year career retrospective, the performance of her 1986 song 'Live to Tell' is now re-contextualized as a moment of AIDS memorialization as many famous and less famous faces, all lost to AIDS, appear on multiple screens. This spectacular moment—in which Madonna floats in the air, still 'living to tell'—acknowledges her history in relation to the AIDS crisis, the friends she lost, and the artists not to be forgotten, but 'Live to Tell' also responds to later revelations. In the documentary *Strike a Pose* (2016), her 1990 *Blonde Ambition* tour dancers, who also featured heavily in *Truth or Dare*/*In Bed with Madonna* (1991), felt compelled at the time to keep their HIV status closeted from Madonna, each other, and us. Why? *Strike a Pose* tries to answer this as one of HIV/AIDS stigma that was beyond Madonna's celebrity agency despite her previous efforts including her 1987 *Who's That Girl* tour program which doubled as an AIDS/safe sex comic and she included AIDS/safe-sex advice on the inner sleeve for the *Like a Prayer* album.

As usual, Madonna is a multiplicity of contradictions and her narrative around HIV/AIDS, and the way it has been documented, is among them. However, in an era that has been erroneously dubbed 'post-AIDS,' with contemporary activists like *PosterVirus* declaring that 'nostalgia' is 'still killing us,' what is Madonna asking us to remember, celebrate, or feel in 2023? In thinking through Madonna's self-positioning concerning her activism during and after the AIDS crisis, especially in the context of a career retrospective tour, we are prompted to reconsider the difficult historical and contemporary relationships and conflicts between celebrity and HIV/AIDS.

Gary Needham is senior lecturer in film and media and the University of Liverpool. He is the author and/or co-editor of several books including *Queer TV* (2009), *Brokeback Mountain* (2010), and *Warhol in Ten Takes* (2013). He is currently writing a book about AIDS and American Independent Cinema and another forthcoming book on Edie Sedgwick and the films of Andy Warhol.

Teaching the refugee crisis through celebrity authorship

In our media-saturated public sphere it is difficult to distinguish between fake and facts, between fiction and reality. Democracy is in peril because politicians and voters don't agree on what the shared reality is (Heynders, 2023). In this time of fake news and alternative facts, lessons in fiction can help us to become

more aware of the experiences of reality and truth (ibid.). To help students gain an understanding of our contemporary media culture, literature education can be enriched with insights on celebrity authorship. In literary studies, the focus on the author as a public figure, as a public intellectual or as a literary celebrity, has increased greatly. The discourses of authorship and celebrity are strongly linked, although there are some clear differences between the author and the celebrity. The celebrity author is faced with several dilemmas to reconcile contradictory conditions and expectations (Franssen, 2010; Franssen & Honings, 2017).

In the Dutch context, Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer is a widely recognized celebrity author. He manages to combine authorial models from the 20th century (the bohemian and the dandy) with the star image that complies with the laws of 21st century media culture. In addition to the mediagenic game that revolves around image and self-promotion, Pfeijffer displays a strong explicit social commitment as a public intellectual, which is particularly evident in his attention to the 'refugee crisis'. Pfeijffer reflects on various issues within the migration debate in his novels and poems, and speaks out about this issue in the public sphere by writing columns, appearing in talk shows and using the presentation of a literary prize to make a political statement about the fate of refugees on live television.

In my paper, I will reflect on the performances of Pfeijffer as a literary celebrity and on the different ways readers 'read' these performances of a celebrity author. Furthermore, I will address how to design educational interventions in which students learn to reason about celebrity authorship. These interventions not only aim to increase students' (media) literacy, they also engage students with current (political) issues, such as the 'refugee crisis' and de decline of democracy.

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Eline Peeters works as a PhD candidate (Tilburg University) studying the effects of intermedial literature didactics on the literary reading skills and media literacy of secondary school students. As a teacher, she has designed several lesson series on public authorship and the author as a media figure.

From Celebrity Culture to Consent Culture: How Consent Education can be made Sustainable through Pop Culture and #metoo

Celebrity culture and viral moments offer a potential way to make consent education sustainable by real time responses in person and online. This presentation explores how pop culture can be used to highlight the spectrum of sexual violence, particularly image based sexual abuse, formerly known as

‘revenge porn’.

Earlier this year, British reality TV star Stephan Bear was found guilty of leaking a tape of his and his ex-girlfriend having sex. His swaggering about outside the courtroom before he learnt of his sentence was roundly condemned not just by women's rights groups, but politicians and social media users called out his behaviour for being unacceptable. This presentation explores some of the responses, how they were used to enhance understandings of image based sexual abuse, and how this learning can be applied to consent education resources.

This infamous moment was also an opportunity to discuss how language is important when talking about sexual violence and can be a barrier victims from finding support. The move to rename ‘revenge porn’ as image based sexual abuse will be contrasted with the reactions to the #fappening in 2014 and Disney actress Vanessa Hudgens having to apologise for her nudes being leaked without her consent in 2007.

Irish celebrity Vogue Williams has spoken out about being subjected to deep fake porn featuring her face edited onto the body of porn stars, and journalist/influencer Alexandra Ryan has shared her story of being filmed having sex without her consent. These personal experiences provided another way to expand on cultural understandings of sexual violence and language, and this presentation shows how these disclosures resulted in changes in legal frameworks on sexual violence and consent education in Ireland.

By analysing the impact of these examples, consent education can be expanded to include online sexual violence. This presentation will discuss how more inclusive language can be developed through pop culture moments, and how consent education can increase efficacy through exploring how consent, sexual violence, and relationships are depicted in and shaped by pop culture.

Dr. **Caroline West** is the Sexual Violence and Harassment Prevention and Response Manager at University College Cork, Ireland. She holds an MA and PhD in Sexuality Studies. Caroline hosts the sexual wellness podcast Glow West and she is also the sex and relationship expert for Bumble Ireland and UK.

H5: Repression and Resistance

Interwar Celebrity: Negotiating Tradition and Modernity Through Feminine Role Models

The interwar period in Britain was experiencing significant shifts in traditional gender roles and hierarchy. These shifts necessitated a negotiation with the increasingly popular ideas of feminine modernity with more traditional and familiar behaviour that favoured old-fashioned gender roles. While the interest and excitement in film exploded around young women, numerous film magazines such as The Picture Show, Picturegoer, and Girls' Cinema harnessed the allure of celebrity. They utilised audiences' desire to emulate the stars, to manipulate their young readers into being influenced by modest celebrity images of femininity.

These magazines cleverly presented celebrities as icons but utilised them as vessels to propagate ideas of ideal British femininity that navigated the clash of traditional domestic gender roles with glamourous modern desires. While the films themselves portrayed fantasy versions and often unattainable images of the stars, the fan magazines brought them back down within reach by providing glimpses into their off-screen reality, which flaunted their relatable and achievable everyday lives.

The interplay of celebrity worship, editorial content, and targeted advertisements within these magazines guided readers in emulating their favourite stars. The combination of celebrity interviews, style guides, and insight into their home lives strategically blended unattainable glamour with relatable everyday experiences. These magazines served as cultural agents, moulding and shaping perceptions of ideal British femininity. Celebrities were portrayed as symbols of the negotiation of modern and traditional femininity, representing the right combination of old and new that readers could embody. In essence, celebrities were weaponized in these publications, not just as entertainment figures but as influential agents driving the evolution of societal expectations and norms surrounding gender and femininity.

This paper will explore the presentations of domesticity, motherhood and beauty, while also demonstrating the contradictory ideas of women’s work and appropriate leisure. I argue that rather than these celebrities holding up a mirror to their eager female audiences, they instead held up a window. This window allowed readers to peek at their idealised feminine lives and images and take their lead in reproducing this in their lives in a conservative negotiation of modernity.

Rachel Bogush is a PhD student studying at the University of Leeds. My research has focused on changing ideas of femininity in early modern to modern British society through the lens of popular media such as film and women’s magazines. I completed my BA and Masters at the University of Sheffield where my research explored post-war British film presentations of femininity.

Framing Celebrity Culture in Romania: From State Socialist Television to Private Channels Television

In the last decade, celebrity discourse and discursive processes of creating celebrities became a key concern for scholars around the world. However, few studies talk about manufacturing of celebrities and celebrity culture in Eastern European countries. In this regard, the purpose of this work is to frame a theoretical background of celebrity culture in a local context.

Socio-political changes led to a major evolution in television content, and this made the public constantly reconfigure the idea of celebrity in their collective mind. In Romania, the emergence of state socialist television as well as the emergence of private television channels contributed to the creation of "celebrities"; however, there are major differences in their function and elaboration. In this work, the presentation of celebrity culture in Romania is based on the historical incursion into the evolution of television, television content and television consumption. All these aspects are outlined from the side of the national cultural identity that generates a new dimension of celebrity terminology.

This works aims to make a critical contribution to the discussion of television celebrity in the post socialist countries, focusing on the constant television evolution in Romania.

Mara Mihaela Panaite holds a PhD in Radio, Television and Cinema from Ankara University. She is currently an Associate Lecturer at Transylvania University of Brasov, Faculty of Communication and Sociology, Department of Social Science. Her research focuses on television adaptation studies, cinema, and media cultural identity studies.

Becoming a Proud Taiwanese Celebrity: Akio Chen and the Struggle for Taiwan Independence

As a 67-year-old actor and scriptwriter, Akio Chen won the Golden Horse supporting actor in 2023. Unlike other supporting actors and actress who usually get passed media coverage, Chen's reward speech that "I insist on believing that Taiwan is an independent country," speaking in the context of poking fun at pro-China Foxconn's Terry Kuo, put him under media spotlight and has since won him more fame than ever before. As a Taigi-speaking figure who have worked in the culture industries for 40 year under the regime of the Republic of China (ROC), Chen's career can be characterized as "always jumping through different shows to play the minor stock character" as he fluently articulates. As a Taiwanese working in the ROC entertainment industry, a field that exemplifies colonial ruling through the stratification and elimination of the local languages (in particular, Tai-gi), Chen's imperfect Mandarin with Taiwanese accent puts him in the stock character image. The only role he could get was "the impotent man" stereotype—the superstitious, vulgar, uneducated, lowly life with no career success. This cultural archive is the colonial imprint of ROC on Taiwan. Despite the negative image of the minor Taiwanese character, in an interview, he proudly makes the claim that, "for the all characters I play, they represent the faces of Taiwan." Moreover, in off-stage "real" life, he also

dresses and performs in a way that fits into the stereotypical image from the colonial cultural archive, also called “Tai-ker.” This paper aims to unpack Akio Chen’s sudden fame in this historical conjuncture: Why is it that claiming Taiwaneseness become cool NOW while only a few years ago celebrities from Taiwan were forced to confess to be “Chinese” ? What was his fame about in the context of national/colonial dynamics and changing geopolitics between China and the U.S.? What are the (shifting) meanings of Taiwaneseness that Akio embodies throughout his career? How does he negotiate the negative colonial archive that was forced upon him while claiming its positivity?

Fang-chih Yang is a professor teaching in the Department of Taiwanese Literature, National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan. She works on popular culture in Taiwan and East Asia. Her publications can be seen in English journals and books. Her most recent book is Taiwan’s Television Culture in the Era of Chinese Hegemony, National Taiwan University Press, 2023.

H6: Crises of Authenticity

Authentically abject: the star-creator as messy millennial woman

The 'messy millennial woman' of 'precarious-girl comedy' (Wanzo) is now a fixture of contemporary television. Globally successful series like *Fleabag, I May Destroy You* and *I Hate Suzie*, as well as regionally popular shows like *Alma's Not Normal, Get Krack'n* and *Creamerie*, all showcase protagonists who are in 'crisis': emotionally vulnerable, anxious, cynical, self-destructive, hetero-pessimistic and, by their own frequent confession, failing to present a composed and 'perfect' self. As series that use comic abjection to reflect the precarity of once dominant neoliberal and postfeminist fantasies for women (Wanzo, Lagerwey and Nygaard), these figures all centre the concept of authenticity and a promise of emotional transparency as qualities that distinguish the series from 'feminist' television of earlier historical periods. Notably, the character is very frequently created and performed by women with a recognisable star and/or authorial image that explicitly informs the narrative. In this paper I will consider how this autofictional presence of the creator as star shapes the crisis image of precarious-girl comedy. In a digital era where authenticity operates not simply as 'truth' but as a performative, parasocial strategy (Abidin), these figures charismatically overshare details of their emotional lives and their 'worst' qualities to create an affective, relatable persona, where the values and markers of imperfection onscreen are explicitly linked to their self-presentation offscreen. Drawing on Angela McRobbie's concept of the perfect-imperfect-resilience *dispositif* (2020), I will discuss how this persona offers a rich text for exploring strategies of neoliberal social reproduction in a time of crisis.

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Claire Perkins is Director of the Bachelor of Media Communication in the School of Media, Film and Journalism at Monash University, Australia. She researches in feminist screen studies, with a particular interest in independent and 'indie' screen cultures, post-network television, and serial media formats. She is the author of *American Smart Cinema* (2012) and co-editor of seven collections, including *Independent Women: From Film to Television* (2021) and *Indie Reframed: Women's Filmmaking and Contemporary American Independent Cinema* (2016).

Discursive self-cleaving: Fame, authenticity, and post-truth media

This paper considers a trend in celebrity discourse, which I call self-cleaving, defined as a strategic approach to image management in which the speaker crafts a rhetorical distinction between one's "real" self and one's public persona, character, or image. Notably, this technique is only available to those who are already famous; as such, self-cleaving allows those with established visibility to capitalize on their existing renown and guard themselves against public scrutiny by claiming two distinct and, often, opposite, selves. Over the past ten years, a growing cohort of celebrity men have successfully used self-cleaving to defend against allegations of sexual misconduct in the courtroom and in the court of public opinion.

For much of the 20th century, answering the question, "who are you *really*?" required celebrities to construct and maintain a public image that could be perceived as authentic (Dyer, 1991; Higgins, 2018; Lai, 2006; Marshall, 1997; Meyers, 2009, etc.). In the 2000s, the notion of authenticity has been destabilized by a heightened level of audience sophistication and by the diffusion of media discourse due to the proliferation of digital and social media outlets, which have upended the gatekeeping hierarchies upon which mainstream celebrity media once enjoyed an influential perch. This destabilization of audiences' perceptions of authenticity has coincided with broader developments in media and U.S. politics, which have seen a rise in conspiracy theory, speculation, 'fake news,' deep fakes, and outright lies, which characterize our current post-truth era (Ball, 2017).

Since 2015, Terry Bollea, Jonny Depp, Robert Kelly, Donald Trump, and Brian Warner, have engaged in discursive self-cleaving to defend against accusations of sexual misconduct. This talk analyzes their use of this rhetorical strategy, its emergence within and effects on the #MeToo movement, and the ways in which this discourse reflects and contributes to a post-truth media economy. While much scholarship has rightly focused on the critical topic of victim-survivors' mediated speech, this talk attends to the discourse of alleged perpetrators in order to consider the role of fame in protecting the credibility of celebrity men and thereby undermining the speech of survivors (Tuerkheimer, 2021).

Andrea McDonnell is Associate Professor and Director of the Communication program at Providence College, RI USA. She is the author of *Reading Celebrity Gossip Magazines* (Polity, 2014) and co-author, with Susan Douglas, of *Celebrity: A History of Fame* (NYU, 2019). Her forthcoming book (Routledge, 2024), *Celebrity Rhetoric and Sexual Misconduct Cases*, considers the role of fame in bolstering the credibility of celebrity men accused of sexual misconduct.

Nancy Risol: Depicting Andean communal authenticity through the lens of mediated self

Much of the recent scholarship on social media and participatory culture has polemicised vlogs as being an authentic form of expression. While some scholars claim simulating intimacy and face to face interactions as signs of authenticity (Burgess and Green 2018), just as many have question the credibility of influencer online personas, pointing to their dependence on the

trends and audiences' demand (Haimson et al. 2021). Our study looks at the self-presentation of Nancy Risol, an Ecuadorian influencer, across different social media platforms where she is often perceived to be an authentic representation of an Andean culture. Her audiences pay particular attention to the ways of being and gaining knowledge in an indigenous society, which implores the search for authenticity not only on the side of the audiences who provide constant feedback loops, but also the producers of content. This can be stressful for a young influencer whose stories are always subjected to authenticity perceptions despite having originally gained popularity due to her apparent sincerity and humor.

Using Moeller and D'Ambros's post-modern concept of profilicity (2021), we examine how Risol's self-mediated Andean narratives grapple with the conflicting demands of social media's celebrity profiling – needing consistency while continuously reinventing herself – and the commercialisation of her origins as an authentic indigenous youth serving her community. This analysis scrutinizes how her public image is crafted within the confines of media norms, often depicting a romantic, playful, and nostalgic rural life, tailored for audiences within Ecuador, especially the Andean diaspora. Such portrayal aims to represent the otherwise overlooked segments of Ecuadorian society, highlighting Nancy's indigenous identity and the ethical beauty of her natural environment. We claim that these elements are packaged to evoke recognition and identification with an imagined Andean pre-modern community, preserved as a public memory and historical record as well as to cater to what some of her audiences consider a lack of authenticity in the modern world.

(315 words)

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Agata Ewa Wrochna is a Lecturer in Communication Studies at Wenzhou-Kean University. She has a wide range of academic interests within media and communications, which include topics of celebrity, authenticity and identity (trans)formation in visual media, in particular those present in East and Southeast Asia. Her latest publication explores online fandoms of Chinese queer visual media. awrochna@kean.edu

Day 1 July 1st OMHP = Oudemanhuispoort, conference venue					All day: luggage room OMHP C205	
900-1000	**Registration, coffee/tea** OMHP D018					
1000-1015	**Welcome** OMHP					
1015-1130	**Key note 1:** **BRENDA R. WEBER: That JLo Glow™: Aging Celebrity and the Transatlantic Rise of Imperative Culture; chair: Alice Leppert** OMHP D008					
1130-1145	Room change					
1145-1315	**Panels A**					
Session	A1 The Britney Crisis	A2 Celebrity Housewives 1	A3 Watching Gerard Butler in the Pandemic	A4 Fans and Anti-Fans 1	A5 (Anti)Social Media	A6 Conflicts in Celebrity Media and Communication
Room	OMHP C023	OMHP C105	OMHP C117	OMHP C123	OMHP C217	OMHP C223
Chairs	Alice Leppert	Tjalling Valdés Olmos	Erin A. Meyers	Jessica Martin	Neil Ewen	Celia Lam
1315-1415	**Lunch** OMHP Hall/D018					
1415-1600	**Panels B**					
Session	B1 Videographic Criticism and Celebrity (Spanish Film & TV)	B2 Celebrity Housewives 2	B3 Celebrity Girlhood in Crisis	B4 Celebrity Crises and Media Coverage	B5 Contesting the Female	B6 Queering Celebrity
Room	OMHP C023	OMHP C105	OMHP C117	OMHP C123	OMHP C217	OMHP C223
Chairs	Jorge Perez	Rhys Jones	Celia Lam	Bethany Usher	Berta Chin	Hannah Hamad
1600-1615	Room change					
1615-1700	**Masterclasses**					
Session	M1 Manufacturing Britney Spears	M2 Femme Fatale in Spanish Francoist Cinema	M3 Celebrity Feminism and Jameela Jamil	M4 Loyal Fans of Problematic Favs	M5 Unwelcome Celebrities and Indie Film Festivals in China	
Room	OMHP C023	OMHP C105	OMHP C117	OMHP C123	OMHP C217	OMHP C223
Chairs	Celia Lam	Shelley Cobb	Misha Kavka	Alice Leppert	Hannah Hamad	
1730-1900 Amsterdam Celebrity City Canal Cruise						

Day 2 July 2nd OMHP = Oudemanhuispoort, conference venue	All day: luggage room OMHP C205
900-930	**Registration** OMHP D018
930-1045	**Key note 2:** **ERIN A. MEYERS: Celebrity, Crisis, and Reality Television: Extraordinarily Ordinary Celebrity in the Early 21st Century; chair: Brandy Monk-Payton** OMHP D008
1045-1100	**Coffee/tea** OMHP Hall/D018
1100-1245	**Panels C**

Session	C1 Celebrity Scandals	C2 #MeToo 1	C3 Celebrity and Legal Crises	C4 Crises of Influence	C5 Fans and Anti-Fans 2	C6 Virtual Celebrity
Room	OMHP C023	OMHP C105	OMHP C117	OMHP C123	OMHP C217	OMHP C223
Chairs	Helle Kannik Haastrup	Hannah Hamad	Alice Leppert	Annelot Prins	Anne Jerslev	Justin Rawlins
1245-1330	**Lunch** OMHP Hall/D018					
1330-1500	**Panels D**					
Session	D1 Aging Celebrity	D2 #MeToo 2	D3 Brands in Crisis/Conflicts	D4 Affective Crises 1	D5 Celebrity Documentary & Scandal	D6 Celebrity Masculinities and Populist Affect in Times of Crisis
Room	OMHP C023	OMHP C105	OMHP C117	OMHP C123	OMHP C217	OMHP C223
Chairs	Erin A. Meyers	Shelley Cobb	Milly Williamson	Viraj Suparsad	Hannah Unwin	Neil Ewen
1500-1515	Room change					
1515-1645	**Panels E**					
Session	E1 Affective Crises 2	E2 Celebrity Branding and the Tensions of Gender, Race and Nation	E3 Remaking and Remediating Generation X	E4 Star and Celebrity Cultures in Tamil/Indian Cinema	E5 Artistic Genius: Celebrity Auteurs-Directors after #MeToo	E6 The Responsibilities of Fans and Celebrities
Room	OMHP C023	OMHP C105	OMHP C117	OMHP C123	OMHP C217	OMHP C223
Chairs	Bethan Jones	Brandy Monk-Payton	Shelley Cobb	Annelot Prins	Neil Ewen	Celia Lam
1645-1800	**Key note 3:** **MILLY WILLIAMSON: Online Celebrity and Influencer Culture: The Triumph of Neoliberalism?; chair: Neil Ewen** OMHP D008					
1830 Conference dinner (by registration only) Restaurant Tolhuistuin						

Day 3 July 3rd OMHP = Oudemanhuispoort, conference venue	All day: luggage room OMHP C205
900-930	**Registration** OMHP D0.18
930-1045	**Key note 4:** **ANTHEA TAYLOR: Consuming Germaine Greer: Celebrity Feminism, Audiences, and The Archive; chair: Erin A. Meyers** OMHP D008
1045-1100	**Coffee/tea** OMHP OMHP Hall/D018
1100-1230	**Panels F**

Session	F1 Celebrity Capitals: From Elite to Ordinary Struggles	F2 Masculinity at War	F3 The Conflicted Production of Stardom	F4 Videographic Criticism and Celebrity (Politics of Gender and Power)	F5 Celebrity Bodies at Risk	F6 Transnational Celebrity Conflicts	
Room	OMHP C023	OMHP C105	OMHP C117	OMHP C123	OMHP C217	OMHP C223	
Chairs	Gaston Franssen	Annelot Prins	Alice Leppert	Hannah Hamad	Hunter Hargraves	Neil Ewen	
1230-1345	**Key note 5:** **NANDANA BOSE: The Celebritisation of Politics/The Politics of Celebrification, Digital Media, and Permacrisis in New India; chair: Celia Lam** OMHP D008						
1345-1430	**Lunch** OMHP Hall/D018						
1430-1600	**Panels G**						
Session	G1 The Crisis of Queer Celebrity	G2 Politics and Celebrity in an Era of Revolution and Reform, 1830-1870	G3 Taylor Swift at Risk	G4 The Perils of AI	G5 (Un)Professional Celebrities	G6 Political Conflicts and Crises	
Room	OMHP C023	OMHP C105	OMHP C117	OMHP C123	OMHP C217	OMHP C223	
Chairs	Erin A. Meyers	Eline Peeters	Harriet Fletcher	Brandy Monk-Payton	Shelley Cobb	Neil Ewen	
1600-1615	Room change						
1615-1745	**Panels H**						
Session	H1 Reassessing Celebrity in Techno-Cultural Infrastructures	H2 Videographic Criticism and Celebrity (Politics of the Personal)	H3 Celebrity Sexism	H4 Crises and Celebrity Activism	H5 Repression and Resistance	H6 Crises of Authenticity	
Room	OMHP C023	OMHP C105	OMHP C117	OMHP C123	OMHP C217	OMHP C223	
Chairs	Gaston Franssen	Jaap Kooijman	Annelot Prins	Lauren Johnson	TBA	Alice Leppert	
1745-1815	**Closing words** OMHP D008						
1815-1900 Farewell drinks OMHP BuzzHouse + with any luck, outside in the lovely OMHP court yard							