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### NEW MEDIA – NEW SELF The changing power of celebrity

**C**ELEBRITY, IN ITS ELEVATION of particular personalities to public acclaim and recognition, has relied on a relatively stable media system to circulate its images and stories. Thus, even a decade ago one could confidently write about how industries such as film, television and popular music patterned the production of celebrities. To be sure, celebrity, in its focus on the extra-textual dimensions of the public persona, has always had elements that were out of control of an industry, an apparatus or a system of production. Scandals and gossip were part of the highly structured world of Hollywood studio-era celebrities that sometimes were with the consent of the industry, but also were moments where different configurations of power and influence were revealed. Nonetheless, there had developed by the 1980s a maturity in the structure of a celebrity system of promotion: what could be described as a “modern” celebrity in the context of television, film and popular music had emerged: a coherent system of promotion of celebrities was in place that was supported by the industries of print and entertainment television. Audiences were organized carefully and discretely around an array of celebrities and closely connected to cultural commodities. Celebrities themselves were also highly organized as commodities even when they exited the world of cultural commodities and only existed in the tabloid press.

The symbiotic relationship between media and celebrity has been ruptured somewhat in the last decade through the development of new media. The discrete and carefully controlled and distributed structure of the culture industries, where cultural commodities and their promotional extensions are a tightly interwoven tapestry, have been elasticized by the different flows of information that have developed via the Internet and the Web as well as new media forms such as mobile phones, iPods, MP3 players, PDAs, and video and computer games. What follows is an exploration of the intersections between new media and celebrity in an era where media is produced increasingly by the user and the audience. The changing structure of fame has had

repercussions that are evident in the proliferations of blogs and webcams as well as fan web sites, and official celebrity sites that are changing the relationships and mediations between user and public personality.

To identify this change, it is worthwhile backing up and identifying how the celebrity has operated in contemporary culture. First of all, we need to understand how celebrity is a “source of the self” (Taylor, 1991). Individuality is one of the ideological mainstays of consumer capitalism where, through consumption, we as individuals can have the serial frisson of transformation and change *and* the sensation of choice and possibility even when we do not act on that possibility. Individuality is equally one of the ideological mainstays of how democracy is conceived through the plaint and appeal to the individual voter/citizen. To maintain this ideology of individuality, there are powerful support structures, institutions, and discourses that work to make the cultural centrality of individuality concretely real. Celebrity and the celebrity culture it spawns can be thought of as one of these discourses of the self that makes individuality concrete and real. It moves the representation of individuality outside of the film, television, sport, politics, or popular music text into what I would call the *extraordinary everyday* as it maps and explains celebrated individuals’ activities.

Although I am condensing a great deal here, I want to highlight a couple of key concerns. First, celebrity culture as a discourse is a focus on individualism and identity. Second, it is also a discourse of identification or implied identification by an audience. As I have developed elsewhere, the celebrity’s power is its capacity to embody an audience and more specifically the “affective investment” of an audience (Marshall, 1997: 73–75). And third, celebrity is a discourse of becoming and transformation: celebrities’ origins are from the populace, their fame is not necessarily derived from prior social status, and their current status is achieved in a lifetime.

These elements of individuality, identification and transformation have been the cornerstones of the celebrity system that have been developed and really institutionalized in our culture industries for most of the twentieth century. The myriad stories about celebrities have become recognized components of our press and our news as entertainment. Supporting the production of celebrities, where the texts of stars are deepened and made more significant than their film, television, music or sporting roles for example have been the background features in newspapers, the gossip magazines, the celebrity profiles and biographies in book publishing, the television talk shows, the celebrity interview which has populated television production, magazine cover stories and newspaper sections. Each of these forms of the extratextual dimensions of stars that work to transform them into celebrities have developed subgenres and categories as well as extensions of a celebrity system further into the arts, politics, sciences, medicine, business, and the academy. The celebrity system is in some sense ubiquitous.

This elaborate system has always generated remarkable connections to its audiences. Fan mail and fan clubs emerged with and alongside Hollywood, and in a similar way, alongside the development of professional sports. This connection underlined the investment – affective investment – that helped the celebrity system establish its economic power in the production of cultural forms. And in many ways, the celebrity system was part of the feedback system for industries such as the film industry to gauge value, impact, and investment in their films. This idea of investment by an audience takes on a more critical dimension in the era of new media precisely because

investment and engagement in cultural forms is what new media is altering through an intensification of the cultural experience.

So, the question that I want to answer, but recognize that I can only answer it partially, is whether the elaborate discourse of celebrity – this system as I call it – is challenged by the shifts in the way that we use media in this era of new media cultures? If there are shifts in the sources of the self that new media alter or intensify through experience and use, does this also shift the structure of a celebrity system built on what we would now call traditional media, or is the celebrity discourse impermeable or malleable in its connection to audiences and its expressions of identification?

### **Differences in subjectivity: audience subject and celebrity power**

Traditional media forms such as film, television, and popular music in particular have produced interesting relations between celebrities and their audiences. From film analysis perspectives in the tradition of Christian Metz, the entire cinematic apparatus of film produced larger than life forms of identification for the audience that allowed a kind of projection of the self from the screen icons back into a parallel dream-state for the individual. Film “sutured” a relation between the stars presented and the audience in a powerful form of identification where the audience pleasure is imagining him or herself as the active agent/character on screen.

Television’s form of identification has rarely been analyzed as having the same capacity to transform the viewer into a dream-state and substitute ego-ideals in that condition of watching. Television’s usual point of consumption has meant that its images have been integrated somewhat into the everyday and the domestic flow of life. Even the interruptions of television, whether in the form of commercials or promotions for other programs, frustrate the coherence of identification of the viewer with the characters and personalities presented. I have described this kind of identification as a form of familiar connection with the audience (Marshall, 1997: 131–132, 190–193) in contrast to the aura of identification that film is often able to produce as an apparatus (Marshall, 1997: 187–190).

Popular music has generally relied on a form of identification that makes the star one of the audience. The age of the performer, their sensibility and attitude are often closely aligned with the audience’s and produce a resounding discourse of authenticity. The experience of popular music is one of close relationship to the artist via the concert as the ultimate moment of authentic connection (Marshall, 1997: 193–197).

Collectively, traditional media have produced “audience-subjectivities” that imply the engagement of the audience with particular celebrated personas. The key collective subjectivity developed here is through the category of the audience. Via that category of the audience, the production of our celebrity culture can be characterized as one modalized through an elaborate system of representation. Celebrities in a sense “represent” audiences in various public worlds. In terms of the industry itself, celebrities embody the power of the audience members: the audience’s power – their economic clout – is represented by the celebrity and their capacity to deliver that audience for the industry. Often in the political world, celebrities are agents and proxies around particular issues: for instance, Bono of U2 fame represents a large audience’s emotional connection and translates that emotional investment into

focusing attention on world poverty. Indeed, politicians attempt to produce that same emotional connection to particular issues in order to represent the populace.

Representation, through an elaborate network of public figures, describes the operation and the continued presence and power of our celebrity system and possibly how it has migrated so easily into other realms beyond entertainment. Supporting this organization of representation have been media systems, whether television, radio, print, or film which in their technology are designed to “broadcast” from one to many. In this way, the systemic qualities of the media industry help reinforce the capacity for representation to operate efficiently. The media help focus audiences on particular personae that represent them culturally, politically, and socially.

### **New media subjectivities: the rise of presentation**

In contrast to the traditional media promotion of representational regimes that have supported the organization of a celebrity culture, new media forms help produce a very different subjectivity that advances a *presentational regime*. To understand this difference and its effect on what I would call the very modern and relatively organized world of celebrity culture, it is best to analyze the various new media forms that highlight the presentational over the representational.

The Internet would be difficult to define as a single media form, but it perhaps best embodies the way that a new media subjectivity has emerged. Definitionally, it is simply a network of networks that connect personal and mainframe computers throughout the world for the exchange of information. Nonetheless, this simple description uncovers one of the fundamental changes in which this extensive media form is distinctive from its predecessors, such as television or film. Through sending packets of information in both directions — that is, uploading and downloading from any individual computer — the Internet does not resemble the broadcast model of communication. It permits movement of information in both directions and in many of its forms can be defined as a many-to-many form of communication, in contrast to broadcast technologies’ structure of one-to-many. This difference in the capacity to both receive and send information is the first challenge to the representational regime that has become so familiar to us through celebrities.

Equally significant in defining the different relationship people have to technologies such as the Internet is that the information has been digitalized for its exchange among users. The digitalization process has allowed the conversion and manipulation of that information by the myriad users of the Internet. Thus the digital media form is unstable or what I would describe as indiscrete as opposed to the more discrete and defined forms and commodities — films, television programs, albums — that the media industry has produced in the past. In other words, digital media in combination with the many-to-many distribution of the Internet allows for the dispersion of any unitary message as users manipulate the codes for slightly different objectives and ends.

What is emerging from the many practices of the Internet is a changed subjectivity: the technology and its various practices or forms of interaction interpellates or hails us quite differently than a television program or film. The social category of the audience is challenged in the uses made of the Internet. Several writers have tried to define this subjectivity with neologisms such as the prosumer (Toffler, 1980), where

the idea of the producer and the consumer are wedded together, or the prod-user, where the user and producer are merged (Bruns, 2005: 23, 315–316). In all these efforts to understand the experience and engagement of new media what is underlined is that the “audience” member has become a producer of their content. In some instances, that action of producing is quite limited to just moving from website to website in a particularly individual and idiosyncratic way; in other cases, the user is actively transforming content for redistribution. New media culture thus is generative of a new type of individualism: a will to produce that formulates a shifted constitution of desire and a different connection to the contemporary moment.

Cultural production in this broad characterization is democratized under new media. In that dispersion of sources of cultural production across the users of the Internet, there is an increasing desire to personalize media. This personalization is enacted further through the use of iPods and MP3 players that allow individuals to download and then program their playlists and thereby eliminate the mediating world of broadcast radio. The rapid expansion of mobile phones, PDAs and Blackberries, with a variety of features including cameras, downloadable ringtones, different skins to accessorize their look, email, note-taking, and Internet capacity further underlines how new media personalizes one’s media use and environment. Text messaging, email, and chat programs also express the personalization of media use.

New media’s democratization of cultural production has also opened the door to not only personal use but also personal expression. Beyond email and other semi-private forms of communication, there has been an explosion in practices of presenting one’s self online in the most public way. For well over 10 years, personal websites have been forms of personal if not intimate expression. One’s interests, photos of home and family members, along with a commentary on what it all means, have become emblematic of the personal web page. For some, the website actually reconstructs “home” into a virtual space that is both public and private, where the web is a place of performance and staging of the self (Zalis, 2003). These website missives via the Internet’s capacity for distribution imply in their own production equivalent status to other media forms.

Andreas Kitzmann has explored these efforts of publicizing the self and has identified these kinds of web sites as a new dimension of what he labels “public privacy” (Kitzmann, 2004: 80–87). For Kitzmann, public privacy developed with the use of the camera and its blending of recording private moments but through the technology allowing for the possibility of these images to be used in the public world. Lalavani explains Kitzmann’s position that “what needs to be understood is that portraiture is always about public display, even if the photography is limited to private consumption” (Lalavani in Kitzmann 2004: 83). Similarly, according to Kitzmann home movies (through the instructions of the Kodak guides) encouraged people to maintain the “entertainment value” (84) of their productions and thereby advance the notion of the public privacy of personal productions where “a version of the private [is made] suitable for public consumption” (85–86).

In the era of webcams, the notion of public display of the private is accentuated and presented. Web log or blogs also present the self in a manner that goes beyond the former diary – even though the diary from previous centuries was similarly designed for public consumption. Not only are individuals revealing a great deal about their innermost thoughts and feelings via their blogs, they are designing those renditions for

others to read *and* respond to. Jennicam, one of the ur-texts of webcams, documented Jennifer Ringley's life, with cameras positioned throughout her apartment. Her webcam site became celebrated and Jenni became a new media form of celebrity (Marshall, 2004: 54–55). There was nothing particularly special about Jenni other than she was willing to display her home life on camera which allowed the possibility of nude or semi-nude depictions of Jenni and partners on occasion. Kitzmann identifies the elaboration of the mediatization of the self through the example of Amandacam, where Amanda, through a web log and camera, presents herself each month in different cover-girl poses "for the home page, which are modeled after fashion magazines" (Kitzmann 2004: 87). Kitzmann concludes his study of public privacy with the following:

Whatever the mechanism, its basic function appears to be the creation of a kind of economy of recognition, which often borrows from the tropes of mainstream media and the embedded discourses of control, categorization, and rationalized order. Private space thus undergoes an important mutation by virtue of being coupled with the very public spaces of performance, celebrity, and commercial media

(Kitzmann, 2004: 87)

The mediatizing of the self through new media forms has a couple of dimensions that begin to challenge the relatively structured and controlled world of celebrity culture. First, when developed from more traditional media sources, celebrity produces an eerily similar discourse to blogs and webcams that can also be labeled "public privacy". Celebrity, as we have explained, is often specifically about the extra-textual dimensions of the public persona. Those extra-textual dimensions are discourses of revelation of the private self and we read these to uncover the "real" and authentic person behind the public display. In magazines, entertainment programs and tabloid journals we are led into a world of gossip and background information on the private trials and tribulations of celebrities. As an audience, we use celebrities to talk about sometimes very intimate and private issues but in a very public way. Blogs and webcams break down this representational layer of dealing with the private self in public via celebrity discourses through the display of many selves who present their private worlds for public consumption and talk. Moreover, through web rings and other means of associating different web logs and web sites, the Internet produces communities where different expressions of the self are discussed by others. In pure media economy terms, the presentation of the self via blogs and webcams has produced an incredible surplus of sources of the self that in effect discounts the value of the many celebrity discourses that now circulate.

It is important to realize that not everyone that uses new media forms produces or even peruses blogs and webcam sites; but it is equally important to realize that there is a general expansion in placing one's personal self for public display on the Web. For instance, among American university students the pervasive use of Facebook.com and Myspace.com is remarkable. These sites are organized to connect friends, but also provide techniques for checking out others. In a vague sense, it may be used for Internet dating, but it is also a quasi-public site. These kinds of sites describe the wider proliferation of the presentation of the self. With photos and other

personal details, Facebook and Myspace generate public privacy into a new form of narcissism. This narcissism is actualized through new media and it is specifically modalized around a mediatized version of the self: the representations of celebrity have now been liberated to become the basis for the potential public presentation of the self.

Added on to these shifts in identity that have been produced through the practices of the Internet are the identities and relationships to representation produced by video and computer games. Electronic game playing should be understood as a subjectivity that depends on two interrelated components: the structure of interactivity and the capacity to become the protagonist. The electronic game has grown in sophistication in its true-to-life depiction of game characters. Players are involved in choosing their player and customizing their look as they conjoin the game identity with their own. The play of representation is articulated through the actions of the individual, elevating the individual into a kind of DIY subjectivity (McKay, 1998). In electronic games, the shift is that the individual is the agent, the actor, the avatar. His skin may be different and may be the hyperversion of self in its capacity to superherodom or in its ability to have many lives. Nonetheless, the becoming quality of the player where the player and its image are unified through action and choice is enacted through play and not the representational field. A 2005 *New York Times* article indicated that while there has been a decline in youth watching professional basketball on television, there has been a notable increase among the same demographic of playing of Playstation versions of professional basketball (*New York Times*, 2005: A1). Both are mediated representations of the game, but in Playstation games one becomes the player and/or the team and is involved in the outcome of the game itself. What makes this practice of even greater significance is that this decline in watching basketball was occurring during the televised championship series.

New media forms have also allowed the meaning of celebrities produced by traditional media to be altered and engaged with differently: in other words, the representational gap is narrowing. On one level, the many fan websites for particular stars indicate a continuity to the past fan-celebrity relationship that developed around film and television stars. On another level, there is clear evidence that the gap between fan and celebrity is narrowing quite dramatically. For instance, particular celebrities have their own websites where they post information and occasionally more personal details and responses to fans. There have also been countless instances where the actual celebrity responded to comments on a fan's blog. Although this is not a pervasive phenomenon, there are enough examples to indicate that a changed relationship between celebrity and fan is developing and, in some popular music and sport circles, is an expected component of the fan-celebrity relationship. For instance, the Association of Tennis Professionals website has a blog posted by a different popular player for each tournament: the technique draws the fan closer on a more regular and everyday fashion to the tennis celebrity.

The closeness to celebrities is further manifested by the manipulation of celebrity images throughout the web. Countless images of major celebrities are transformed using basic photoshop alterations and video cut and paste. For instance, a Liza Minelli television interview was reconstructed into a series of bizarre outbursts that in the editing transformed the original interview into something designed to question the sanity of Ms Minelli (lfilm.com 2006). The famous 2005 interview of Tom Cruise

with Oprah Winfrey was transformed into the vignette entitled by its maker "Tom Cruise kills Oprah" and made to appear that when Tom grabbed Oprah he actually electrocuted her with massive arcs of lightning (Ifilm.com, 2005). In another video, an animated parody of Tom Cruise's and Katie Holmes' romance is presented with the two actors singing to 50 Cent's *Candyshop* with transformed lyrics that openly suggest that their declarations of love may have been designed for publicity reasons (Liquidgeneration 2005). A more common and mundane reconstruction of celebrities is the fabricated "nude" photos of particular personalities designed to draw the web surfer into particular mildly pornographic sites. Political personalities such as Arnold Schwarzenegger have been reconstructed as dance club stars raving on the beach with fluorescent namchucks (Ifilm, 2003). Moveon.org sponsored a campaign for political advertisements called "Bush in 30 seconds" that generated thousands of entries that reconstructed, edited, dubbed and sometimes animated George Bush for their own often humorous and parodic ends. One video produced by Johan Soderberg for Swedish television in 2003 has circulated widely on the Web: to the Diana Ross and Lionel Ritchie ballad "Endless Love", Tony Blair and George Bush declare their clear devotion to each other (Soderberg 2003). Much of this content has been labeled by the industry as consumer generated media when it is relatively innocuous, and viral video when it is seen as something subcultural. With the success of these various videos migrating from personal computer to computer for viewing, there have been many efforts to reinscribe the creativity and production desires of these internet users back into the consumer culture. Indeed, fame and celebrity sometimes emerge from video on websites and blogs that, because of the idiosyncrasy of a particular individual's performance on a web cam or fabricated video, become downloaded and passed on via email throughout cyberculture. User generated media is a further example of the breakdown in control of mediated culture by the major players in the entertainment industry. The implications for the meaning of celebrity in contemporary culture who represent and embody the entertainment industry are equally far-reaching.

### Reactions and repercussions in celebrity culture

The shift to a more presentational and personal mediation of culture from its more representational structure reverberates throughout celebrity culture. The media entertainment industries are now reacting to this less discretely controlled cultural world. In contrast to traditional media, it is less clear where a product begins and where it ends as this new system of production implies multiple forms produced by users. Songs are transformed and mutated ad infinitum. For instance, Bananarama's 1980s kitsch pop hit *Venus* has multiple mixes and add-on versions that rely on the core of the song's beat and singing but alter its flow in countless ways. This is in obvious contrast to the generally discrete and structured quality of past film, television, and popular music. Perhaps what is even more interesting is that these indiscretions of reproduction and remaking have legal implications related to when a user actually possesses and makes a cultural form his/her own. This challenge to ownership and the commodity status of cultural forms is in contrast to the discrete quality of past film, television, and popular music. The digitalization and the reduction of cultural forms to



code produces an open source environment. The traditional media industries are now circling and recircling to stop the bleeding of their formerly discrete commodities.

Celebrity as a discourse in some ways dovetails into this indiscrete new media culture. Where the discrete product and narrative of, say, a film or popular song ends is exactly where celebrity culture begins and proliferates. Its presence in the public world or its presentation of the private world of celebrities for public consumption parallels the breakdown of the discrete cultural commodity of new media. However, the originary texts and industries – the commercial products that are the source of celebrity status and that at least begin the play of representation in an audience – have been shaken and their economic models have been challenged.

The audience-subject, what I have indicated is produced by the celebrity system and services the various cultural industries by demonstrating the economic value of a personality in a cultural production, no longer works as smoothly. Celebrities are a kind of guarantee of economic value as audiences are bought and sold throughout the entertainment industry. The advertising industry is at the center of this exchange process and it is here that one can see the greatest upheaval. For instance, advertisers now have a “crisis of confidence” in the spot advertisement which has been the cornerstone of commercial radio and television (Klaassen, 2006). Agencies are now emerging to serve advertisers in new ways. Product placement, whether in electronic games, films, popular music, or television is expanding rapidly. Word-of-mouth marketing and communication both via the Internet and direct face-to-face efforts is also growing as advertisers begin to disconnect the relationship of entertainment forms to the selling of their products. Complete branding of television programs, where the producers are the advertisers in the tradition of 1930s and 1940s American soap operas, are on the rise.

Although the fluctuations in the economic models of the various culture industries are now easy to discern, it is harder to identify the effects these changes have had on celebrity culture. The recording industry, which had depended on products such as CDs, is now fundamentally organized around downloads and the uses made of music through a variety of venues and formats, such as the personal computer, MP3 players and iPods. The former powerhouses of the music industry are not as well positioned to produce the musical stars that feed into the celebrity system and structure the range of performers who are promoted heavily. There is a dispersion of cultural power into the new technologies of distribution that break down the capacity of the industry to produce the iconic and celebrated representations of contemporary music. There is simply less coherence in popular music generally as their music stars tend to embody smaller audiences that can be geographically dispersed.

In a similar vein, the film industry is transforming. Film is losing its centrality and its cultural cachet as the first window of the cultural commodities’ series of exhibitions. Over successive years there has been a decline in the theatrical box office as audiences disperse (Jaworoski, 2006: C3). The gap between the theatrical release of a film and the release of its DVD version has consistently narrowed. The film industry continues to try and produce event films to attract massive audiences, organized around simple films and a cluster of A-list stars. In order to maximize and concentrate the expenditure on advertising and promotion and its effect as well as circumvent the possibility of piracy and Internet distribution, event films’ theatrical releases are now much shorter.

In this transformed industry, there is a correlated downgrade in the significance in the film celebrities produced. The immediate repercussion of this change has been an intensification of film celebrity stories and publicity. In the summer of 2005, we witnessed a publicity fight-back more or less articulated, not through the rather discrete promotions of the films but through the bizarre publicity-hungry behaviour of Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes (which obliquely connected to the release of *War of the Worlds* (2005) in which Cruise starred and *Batman Begins* (2005) where Holmes headlined) (Waxman, 2005: B1) and the equally operatic love triangle of Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt, and Jennifer Aniston (which related in a major way to the action-comedy *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*). Cruise's tour was populated regularly with stunts that produced extensive news coverage. From his couch-jumping on Oprah's talk show and his attacks on Brooke Shields to his Eiffel Tower marriage declaration, Cruise ensured that cameras, commentators, and bloggers were regularly talking about his brazen public actions. We are seeing an acceleration of scandal not between acting assignments for major stars but during the release of films to generate parallel publicity. The film star's aura of distance and distinction is breaking down as the film commodity's capacity to generate unique cultural capital dissolves. For actors, this is a new level of publicizing to strengthen their own presence and capital – but it betrays a decline in overall significance of the industry and their stars. It also underlines the dispersal of information about celebrities as it proliferates via the Web and its blogs, via fan websites and through the new mediascape more rapidly and with less possibility for industry control.

Television's reaction to the new subjectivity of the user and its play with its own construction of personalities and celebrities is perhaps even more complex and interesting. Television, via the proliferation of cable channels, had already gone through a dispersion of its audience and partial breakdown of its coherent production of celebrity. But more recently, there has been a massive move to reality television. Reality television represents commercial television's efforts to react to new media. Like the game show and the talk show that predate it, reality television makes the audience the show itself. Although it is through the elaborate construction of television production, reality television is television's effort to make the user more central and more engaged with the experience. Despite the many incarnations, a dominant trope of reality programs is that the "cast" is derived from supposed everyday people. The show's content – whether *Big Brother*, *Survivor*, or the various versions of *Pop Idol* shows around the world, provide techniques for engagement by the audience beyond the usual fan sites (Marshall, 2004: 96–100). These programs themselves are very controlled and contrived constructions of celebrity discourse in and of themselves. Television, through these programs, has dispensed with the originary text that defines and makes the star and has begun constructing "celebrities" through its narratives of the intimate via a plethora of strategically placed cameras and microphones. It should also be noted here that this construction of celebrities of the moment by television has demanded the development of contracts that resemble the old film studio era in their control of their talent (Mole, 2004).

## Conclusion

What we are witnessing is a frenzy of celebrity stories and an incredible discourse that proliferates in a variety of venues. What we are missing is why this is occurring now. Celebrity has defined in many senses our profound interest to reveal the self, sometimes the intimate self, in the most public of ways. Its 100-year past has been very much tied and wedded to identification and representation where audiences use celebrities to be their conduit between themselves and contemporary culture. Something has shifted and is continuing to shift, and I have called it a user-subjectivity that now informs the production of the self that doesn't necessarily replace the way that celebrities operate, are deployed and engaged with by people, but has begun to modify the sources of our celebrity. We are in an era of a new narcissism with the production of the self at its centre that allows for the migration via new media forms of presentation over representation. We are also at the zenith of older media industries attempting to hold on to their forms of cultural power and influence in conveying the enduring ideology of individualism. The outcome of this attempt to attach is in fact an expansion of celebrity discourse as new constitutions of cultural value and cultural capital are developed. What I have argued here is that we are seeing reactions by older media such as television (the development of a celebrity system organized through reality television where the audience is made "famous"), film (where increasingly established stars are clamouring for attention), and popular music (where distribution of the form and the background information on stars is paralleling the music's own movement through downloading, podcasting, and websites).

We are in the era of the new indiscretions of public personalities where the hold on public identity as a property right of the entertainment industry is under threat and there are intense reactions to maintain the brand identities system of celebrity - what I have called the "modern" celebrity - by that same industry. New media has modified the sources of the self as we move from a representational culture epitomized by celebrity to a presentational culture where celebrities are being reworked and reformed in terms of their value and utility by audiences and users.