

McQueen, T. (2007), 'A Window or a Mirror?', *Literary Review of Canada*, 15:4,

pp. 29–31.

Stevenson, N. (ed.) (2001), *Culture and Citizenship*, London: Sage.

Contributor details

Debra M. Clarke is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada and editorial board member of the *Canadian Journal of Communication* and *The Electronic Journal of Communication*. Her research has been directed at media ownership convergence, state regulation of broadcasting, local and network television news production, professional journalistic practices, and news audiences. Contact details: Debra M. Clarke, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada K9J 7B8.

E-mail: dclarke@trentu.ca

Framing Celebrity: New Directions in Celebrity Culture, Su Holmes and Sean Redmond (eds.) (2006)

London: Routledge, 384 pp., ISBN: 0415377099,

\$125.00 (hbk); ISBN: 0415377102, \$33.95 (pbk)

Reviewed by P. David Marshall, University of Wollongong, Australia

Over the last decade, the study of celebrity has become a burgeoning growth area that has rivalled the expansiveness of celebrity culture itself. Academics (including myself) and academic presses have more than dipped their toes in its investigation. Coming from backgrounds including social psychology, media studies, sociology and cultural studies, the analysis of celebrity has provided scholars with a window on the organisation of meaning and significance in contemporary culture. It has allowed a deeper investigation of fame and more nuanced reading of fandom through its close readings of particular case studies and wider theoretical treatises. The study of celebrity has ultimately been a very useful launching point for the investigation of individuality, the body and body-image, the way that media images work on publics, the appropriation/celebration of personalities by audience groups and subcultures, the psychological intersections of fame, narcissism and the self, the study of infamy, the political economy of culture and a host of other intersecting issues and concerns.

Framing Celebrity takes that history of celebrity study as its starting point, making it a very valuable collection. The 20 articles collected by the editors Su Holmes and Sean Redmond are not from re-issues or resurrected from the past, but appear to be commissioned specifically for this collection. The forward-looking quality of the book is given clear evidence in the introduction where they establish the groundwork from which the book emerged. They also establish something that is often more difficult to pull together: a provocative playfulness with the idea of fame couched in the seriousness of an academic discourse that has framed its study. The two editors have drawn very much from a cultural studies and film studies

approach to understanding the pleasures of the (celebrity) text and inhabiting the celebrity 'body'.

The book is divided into four sections with editors' introductions to allow the selections to cohere. 'Fame Now', the first section, deals with a distinct effort to update the impact of celebrity on culture. For instance, Redmond's article identifies fame as a ubiquitous discourse privileged in its pervasive play of intimacy and distance. Su Holmes' chapter on celebrity reality television programs similarly explores the way that these kinds of shows play in the interstices of what draws audiences to celebrity more generally; specifically, that these shows are structured to identify (as Dyer has explained) what celebrities are 'really' like by documenting their everyday trials and extraordinary situations. Deborah Jermyn's study attempts to update the meaning of television stardom as it has been articulated through both the persona of 'Carrie Bradshaw' and Sara Jessica Parker. Implicated in this change is not only the place of television in producing public personalities, but also the circulation of celebrity image and knowledge via the proliferation of celebrity magazines. Philip Drake's and Michael Higgins' work on politics and celebrity outlines the different relationships produced by celebrities in political settings and develops the inside/outside power of the celebrity as they cross into the political world. Matt Hills' study of subcultural celebrity within a niche setting is probably an area that is in need of greater exploration as celebrity culture morphs quite dramatically into the micro-systems of future social networking.

Section Two, perhaps with less coherence, addresses the idea of the famed body and the various ways that the body is deployed in contemporary culture. Articles on jazz age white masculinity abut a very usefully developed article by John Mercer on stardom in gay pornography. Two other articles deal with the magazine trade: the chapter on celebrity skins is particularly interesting about the use of often poor quality nude photos of celebrity to both de-authorise the production of the image and through their poorer quality authenticate that the images are closer to the truth through their revelation of 'skin' of the star herself. *Heat* magazine forms the template for Rebecca Feasey's investigation of the way celebrities are used in the discourse of projection and desire. The final article of the section by Ramona Coleman-Bell is more suggestive of how the black female tennis personality Serena Williams' body and image have represented an often complicated and contradictory challenge to idealisations of blackness and femininity in contemporary culture.

Less successful than the previous sections is the third part of the book entitled 'Fame Simulations'. The editors hoped to capture the changes that new media forms have produced in the meaning of celebrity. Theorisation in this area still needs further development and there is no question that some of the articles begin that process, but this section is not a connected coherent group of readings and has to be understood more clearly as stand-alone articles. There is a uniqueness and value in the history of celebrity portraiture detailed in Adrienne Lai's study of Jurgen Teller's work as celebrity photographer. Likewise, I have often thought that more needs to be written about animation in its relationship to celebrity: Suzanne

Rintoul's piece on mockery and parody in the deployment of celebrities in *The Simpsons* begins that journey. Catherine Fowler's reading of 'how to' view *David*, a film that observes the football star David Beckham sleeping, is as alluring as attending the semi-private screening in the National Portrait Gallery of the film. Fowler's work moves to capture a sense of the power of proximity to celebrity as a way to discover truth – all within an art gallery setting and sensibility. Two other articles that relate celebrity to new expressions of fandom cross into the Internet generation and expand fruitfully from the work pioneered by Henry Jenkins. Popslash is investigated through the denigrated trope of boybands by Kristina Busse. Internet fan communities are explored through a study of 'langsters', those fans of various forms of loyalty to the lesbian music icon k.d. lang.

The final section, entitled 'Fame Damage' captures the negentropy of celebrity culture. Here David Schmid's work on the celebrity quality of serial killers is presented, paralleling his longer book-length publication on the same theme. The second article by Stephen Harper expertly fills in a gap in celebrity studies in perhaps the best article of the collection: through a sophisticated study of madness and fame, Harper talks about how madness has contributed to the aura of the famed as well as providing an entrée for the fans of celebrities to affectively connect to their pain. In 'The Killing Fields of Popular Music', Sheila Whitely develops the destructive elements that have contributed to the many suicides that are part of popular music lore. Sofia Johansson's work on tabloid readership completes the book and echoes the Joke Hermes study of magazine readership: through interviews Johansson analyses the way that celebrities and their often sensationalistic and scandal-ridden stories are used by readers of tabloid papers.

Collectively, the book is a valuable contribution to what can be called celebrity studies, celebrity culture studies, or perhaps persona studies. Given the range of contributions, what is remarkable is that they are all generally strong pieces of research and writing. There is no question that further research needs to be pursued in specific areas that are under-addressed here – I am thinking of how new media forms are changing our relationship to celebrity culture quite profoundly – but on the whole Holmes and Redmond's edited volume provides the groundwork for future investigations in the celebrity subfield and is essential reading for students and researchers looking for insights on the different dimensions of popular culture.

Contributor details

David Marshall is currently Professor and Chair of New Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Wollongong. His most recent publication is the *Celebrity Culture Reader* (Routledge, 2006). Contact: P. David Marshall, Ph.D. Professor and Chair, New Media and Cultural Studies, School of Social Sciences, Media and Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Wollongong, NSW 2522, Australia. Phone: 61 +2 4221 4068.

E-mail: davidm@uow.edu.au