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Aims and Scope

Rejecting the dichotomies of 'high' and 'low' cinema, *Film International* embraces debate on how film interacts with the broader culture, history and economy of society. This magazine aims to encourage critical study and public discussion of the role of moving images in our society, bridging the gap between academics and cineastes.

Call for Papers

Film International (*FINT*) welcomes contributions of approximately 4500–13,000 words that deal with any aspect of international film culture and moving images. In addition, *FINT* welcomes reportage and investigative journalism, interviews, festival reports and reviews of recent films, books and DVD releases. Our website also publishes shorter comments, debate articles and alternative reviews.

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Introduction: Why study celebrity and crisis?

The present issue of *Film Fashion & Consumption* emerges from the desire to explore the world of celebrities – and their role – in moments of crisis. It tackles a set of features apparent in prominent personalities and idols of many sorts, found on-screen and off-screen, in photographic reportage or discourse. These features are critical aspects that have traditionally been kept away from celebrities' polished images. Celebrities stand out, in effect, for their being a winning model, capable of conveying an image close to perfection. Exploring how and when celebrities show, narrate and present themselves in a condition of imperfection or in an unconventional, disputable or defective position, is instrumental to understanding a society's conceptualization of a number of critical conditions, such as cultural marginalization, impairment, ageing or death (Andò et al. 2018). Crisis emerges in the following pages as a multifaceted and complex concept. It can be an epoch-shattering flux of media phenomena, a sanitary crisis, or instead a transition in individual self-representational strategies induced by technological overturns. Celebrities manifest themselves in ways that are embedded in economic and social systems. They can therefore express resilience. Their fame's extended lifespan can be inspirational. They can convey the potential to overcome the impact of a crisis showing innovation dynamics and flexible adaptation to an environment where risk and uncertainty is high. Crisis can open up to innovative glimpses, which branch out from the fields of film, media and fashion and become rooted in society. The core question here

KEYWORDS

celebrity crisis
innovation
activism
feminine performance
ageing
affective practices
intellectuals
garments

regards the influence that celebrities' image, media-narrative and behaviour have on the collective perception of crisis, on crisis reaction and intervention models (Roberts 2000). This influence is conveyed in the first place through celebrities' enhanced visibility. This journal issue's privileged point of view is, therefore, celebrities' dress choices and fashion statements, seen in on- and off-screen dynamics. Celebrities' fashion behaviour's impact on audience's affect and media evolution is the common attention focus conveyed through eight different perspectives on crisis – by scholars of film, media, fashion, philosophy and communication.

Celebrities mirror collective crisis; they epitomize crisis through their illustrious bodies and contribute to crisis metabolization. In some cases, crises can generate new kinds of celebrities that are revelatory of the changing makeup of our society. As observed by historians and social scientists from a variety of perspectives, in specific historical moments and social situations, critical circumstances (Koselleck 2006; Kuhn 1999; Masur 1973) can create, in a very short space of time, new experimentation and forms of creativity that reveal internal mechanisms of cultural processes. Crises can therefore become engines of change (Martin 2010). Everett Rogers highlights the advantages of combining innovation with the known and settled values of a social group. Among the factors leading to the adoption of an innovation he identifies the innovation's marked visibility, plus the social prestige and the satisfaction derived from it (Rogers 1983). Experimentation regarding self-construction on the part of established celebrities as a response to crisis can shake cultural fundamentals and shared values as much as the rise of new celebrities in times of crisis. They also bring to the surface, and negotiate with, deep cultural motives. Moreover, they are performed in terms of high visibility, personal and collective satisfaction and enhanced prestige.

In the field of celebrity studies, several authors have underlined how studying celebrities means conducting research at the crossroads of multiple disciplines, schools, theories – using different perspectives and issues that mix the political context with society and entertainment. Graeme Turner (2014) maintains that celebrity's interesting feature is the degree by which it is integrated in the cultural processes of our daily lives. According to P. David Marshall (2006), no one can escape from the cultural and economic rationale of celebrity culture. Richard Dyer (1998) suggests that what we should reflect on is the way in which the current celebrity becomes part of the everyday discourse. But what do we mean by 'everyday discourse'? And how much does this discourse change, depending on the historical period we live in? What kind of responsibility can celebrities have in all of this? And what is the role of the media?

In the contemporary mediascape, celebrities have a relevant impact on community life, as they can convey and gather groups of audiences around them. Already in 1963 Edgard Morin considered celebrity a sort of 'bridge', creating new relationships between the real and the imaginary. The audiences' attention is thus guided towards the present or to a hypothetical future or else to a revisit of the past. In a few successful TV series showcasing long-established Hollywood stars, we can see how these temporal layers composing the narrative act specifically on the construction of the celebrities' narrative and variations of their roles. This is an aspect that we (Sara Pesce and Antonella Mascio) have investigated in *The Kominsky Method* (Netflix) and *Feud: Joan and Bette* (FX), respectively. These series, where the effort of self-preservation and perpetuation of the star's charisma clashes with body decay

1. and financial collapse, stimulate and mould an audience that is required to
 2. be knowledgeable of Hollywood history. These shows play with the contam-
 3. ination between real and imaginary, present and past, as well as with the
 4. clash between ideal and faulty or malfunctioning. From a male perspective
 5. (as in *Kominsky*) and a female one (as in *Feud*), celebrity culture's concern for
 6. ageing generates an increasing number of narratives and off-screen behav-
 7. iours coping with the crisis of public appearance. Film and television indus-
 8. tries preserve a leading position in setting desirable or disputable models of
 9. old age. They achieve this goal through a renovated alliance with fashion.
 10. Many instances problematize the notion of fashion as a site of fantasy and
 11. youthfulness, as other scholars have underlined (Twigg 2013; Jermyn 2014;
 12. Jermyn and Holmes 2015).

13. Sara Pesce pinpoints how a self-reflexive narrative testifies Hollywood's
 14. ability to unveil the shame of old age while glamorizing it, searching for inno-
 15. vative strategies of self-representation that praise personal flexibility. Amid the
 16. decline of their image and influence, Michael Douglas and Alan Arkin develop
 17. a new adaptability, variously demonstrated in terms of masculine aesthet-
 18. ics. This includes fashion statements that stratify and blend fashion trends
 19. of diverse epochs and cultural meaning, such as dandyism and hipster style.
 20. Antonella Mascio analyses the structures of a complex narrative (Mittell 2015)
 21. recalling the issues of sexism and misogyny circulating in the film industry of
 22. the early 1960s, when age undermined the very aura of celebrity. Her analy-
 23. sis of temporal layers shows that the advancing of age, highlighted in *Feud*
 24. as a source of crisis, can create a path of lonely struggles and becomes in
 25. the contemporary off-screen scenario an opportunity for confrontation and
 26. complicity between actresses and women.

27. If we consider the central issues referring to the crisis of our contempora-
 28. neity, it seems natural to reflect on the role of celebrities in relation to gender
 29. positions and socio-political actions, from climate change to the pandemic,
 30. to the vindication of minority rights. As for the entanglements of personal
 31. crisis with gender bias, a point of attention is, as Maegan Stracy suggests,
 32. the proliferation of sources for media networking and the increased vari-
 33. ety of digital tools that mediate stories about the self. In such a context, the
 34. increased visibility of a certain celebrity becomes critical, because it creates
 35. more space for the subject to break from (her) their affixed public identity.
 36. In particular, Stracy tackles the double bind that female defendants face in
 37. media portrayals when facing criminal charges or scandals; they are simul-
 38. taneously judged for their crimes and for breaching socially defined bounda-
 39. ries of femininity. A fact most evident in the case of high-profile celebrities,
 40. such as, Alexis Neiers, Patty Hearst, Winona Ryder and Anna Delvey, as the
 41. defendant is measured against her public persona and measurable in terms
 42. of attire and dress.

43. In many instances we see celebrities standing on the front line, showing
 44. their closeness to collective critical issues, putting their face to it, speaking
 45. up or acting through donations. At the same time, it is precisely the constant
 46. and continuous adherence to issues of global relevance that produces noto-
 47. riety – and therefore celebrity – as we can see for Greta Thunberg, who has
 48. become the subject of a docufilm (*I am Greta*, directed by Nathan Grossman,
 49. 2020).

50. The current evolution of the media system is also facilitating the process
 51. of 'celebrification' for ordinary people: recognition as a niche or 'micro'
 52. celebrity is achieved firstly by following the rationale envisaged by new

spaces and new languages. In particular, in the world of social networks, the figure of the celebrity is studied precisely for the type of practices they adopt. These are modes of connection that apparently allow users easy (illusory) access to famous people's backstage, thus producing 'a sense of intimacy between participant and follower', as emphasized by Marwick and Boyd (2011). According to the two researchers, 'networked media is changing celebrity culture [...] how celebrities are produced [...] and how celebrity is practiced – celebrity "management"' (Marwick and boyd 2011: 139).

Three of the issue's contributors tackle these aspects: Maria Elena D'Amelio, Lucia Tralli and Chiara Checcaglini. D'Amelio deals with the topic of *Fashion Moms*, namely those mothers who are placed mid-way between the roles of celebrities and influencers. These are mostly young mothers (@divaioilaria, @disperatementemamma and @saralunacanola) especially active in social media. They use their own motherhood as a discursive macro-topic and build some performances around it, calling into question principles also partly referring to body positivity, within a framework of presumed authenticity. In effect, what emerges from the analysis is a form of 'commodification' of motherhood not used so much as a moment of real exchange between women, but as a useful experience specifically designed to attract notoriety. This type of discursive mode is contrasted with forms of counter-narratives, such as those celebrated in the blog 'Mammadimerda', where the daily crises linked to mothers' role are shared with the audiences in an ironic style.

The topic of body positivity is also the focus of the article by Tralli. The author analyses two social profiles of young women, with a significant number of followers (Muriel and Denise D'Angelilli), so much so that they can be considered real micro-celebrities. Female empowerment is expressed in these cases through the proposal of forms of beauty countering the standards linked to the 'male gaze', which are actually undermined by the exposure of one's body. Checcaglini offers a reflection on body positivity by analysing the communication strategies of two female micro-celebrities, professional make-up artists. Challenging current stereotypical models means, once again, running the gauntlet in a challenge that these women describe with confidence and pride. This framework also includes the fashion choices that underline each micro-celebrity's specific lifestyle and the practices linked to it, as it contributes to endow the narrative with authenticity, besides expressing a variety of points of view on body positivity.

In other cases, celebrities are those well-known figures to whom we turn especially in times of personal or general crisis. Such is the case of prominent intellectual celebrities, as Monica Sassatelli suggests. Not only their narratives or discourse, but also their style while coping with crisis can propagate through time. Diderot famously underwent a personal crisis because of a beautiful new silk dressing gown, and Marx repeatedly pawned his coat, this impacting on his opportunity to go and study in the British Museum. These two cases draw directly on the importance of the philosophers' clothed body, a struggle of mind and body, private and public spheres, that led them to theory, through the means of practice.

Finally, the article by Flavia Piancazzo tries to explain the variations of two social phenomena found in the appropriation and spectacularization of religious garments. In some cases, in fact, the celebrity is represented as a divinity, or as a cult figure, mystifying or profaning the sacred meaning of the divinity itself. In others it is precisely the wearing of sacred clothes that becomes the 'spectacularization' of a more personal identity crisis.

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1. Celebrity does not appear, therefore, only as a category of media texts.
 2. It also takes the form of a discourse that impacts on society. How much, for
 3. example, can the exposure of imperfect bodies help some audiences? And to
 4. what extent can the crises that celebrities face and resolve become models for
 5. audience groups? The following articles' investigations revolve around these
 6. general questions. In many of the cases under scrutiny celebrities seem to be
 7. reassuring models, because they show and even embody critical – and ulti-
 8. mately ordinary – situations on-screen or off-screen, not so dissimilar to what
 9. happens in our ordinary lives.

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