Celebrity in China

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1 Celebrity/China*

Elaine Jeffreys and Louise Edwards

Celebrity is a pervasive aspect of everyday life and a growing field of academic inquiry. There is now a substantial body of literature on celebrity culture in Australia, Europe and the Americas. This literature covers a wide variety of fields, including: film, literature, popular music, political, and sports stardom; celebrity CEOs, and the relationship between the media and celebrity.[1] All of these texts seek to understand why the production and consumption of celebrity has become such a common feature of life in recent decades. Some commentators regard celebrity as epitomizing the trivial and deplorable aspects of popular culture (e.g. Boorstin 1972). But increasing numbers of others are concerned to understand the way cultural and economic shifts have helped create a mass-mediated celebrity industry and also to examine the social functions of celebrity, particularly its relation to new forms of individual and community identity (Hartley 2005; Marshall 1997, 2004, 2006; Redmond and Holmes 2007; Turner 2004).

Despite the extent of this scholarship, there is no parallel body of work for the world's most rapidly expanding cultural marketplace — the People's Republic of China (PRC). Celebrity culture is flourishing in China, often in ways that appear to mirror the production and consumption of celebrity in wealthy, industrialized nations. Stories about domestic and international celebrities are now a staple feature of the Chinese media and internationally successful formats for celebrity

* This research was made possible by a grant from the Australian Research Council.

production are adopted with alacrity. The PRC has its own version of *Idol*, the music talent television show, in the form of the hugely successful *Mongolian Cow Yoghurt Super Girl Contest*. The 2006 winner garnered five million text-message votes from domestic and overseas Chinese ('Look-alike' 2006). China's official news service, Xinhua, produces a list of the nation's top ten sports stars. Major web portals, such as Sina.com and Baidu.com, produce lists of the PRC's 100 most influential individuals and the most popular female singers, male singers, 'beautiful girls' (*meinü*) and 'handsome boys' (*shuaige*). PRC celebrities appear in political campaigns in a fashion akin to their counterparts' in the USA. For example, gold medallists from the Chinese Olympics team paraded to adoring crowds in Hong Kong just days prior to the 2008 Hong Kong Legco elections, helping to buttress support for pro-PRC candidates.

The connections between global and Chinese celebrity systems were made manifest when Forbes.com issued its inaugural list of the PRC's top 100 power-ranking celebrities in 2004. As with the USA list, China's celebrities are ranked by combining income from salaries and endorsements with the number of times they appear in various media formats (Forbes China Staff 2008). The case of basketball player Yao Ming, who features in both international and domestic Chinese celebrity lists for his success in the USA National Basketball League, and the case of Hong Kong martial arts film star Jackie Chan, highlight the links between Chinese and global celebrity systems (Fore 1997; Oates and Polumbaum 2004). Both men were the face of Visa and the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and carry recognizable celebrity status inside and outside of China. Yao Ming has topped the Forbes' China celebrity list for the last six years (Forbes China Staff 2008). Similarly, athletics hero and hurdler Liu Xiang secured lucrative deals with Visa, Coca Cola and Nike after winning gold at the Athens Olympics. His huge national profile prompted Nike to dedicate a shoe and apparel line, 'Liu', in advance of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, just as they had for Michael Jordan in the mid-1980s (Lee 2008; Smith 2007).

Although there is extensive scholarship on the PRC's changing media and popular culture scene, this research has rarely explored the specific forms of celebrity that exist in China today and their operation in everyday life.[2] *Celebrity in China* fills this gap by exploring how the PRC's celebrity culture incorporates aspects of global, capitalist practices into local Chinese systems. These local systems draw on traditional notions of fame in fertile interaction with the economic reforms, which began

in December 1978, and the influence of the celebrity systems operating in Hong Kong and Taiwan. From 1978 China shifted from a planned economy to one based on market mechanisms and gradually opened the country to international trade and foreign investment. The PRC's move towards 'market socialism' has proved crucial to the evolution of a celebrity culture, even though that culture remains infused with a socialist consciousness instilled over the course of more than half a century of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rule.

China's adoption of a market-based economy has contributed to the development of a celebrity culture in part through the generalized increase in individual income levels, which in turn gave rise to the emergence of a consumer society. Increasing prosperity heralded a parallel growth in the variety and quality of products available for purchase (Wang 2008; Zhao 1998: 53). The reforms also generated rapid urbanization which, in conjunction with the gradual integration of the PRC into the global community, have combined to produce urban popular culture phenomena such as commercial advertising on public billboards; pop music that fills bars and nightclubs; profit-seeking sports events; and the creation of virtual social networks though digital media such as the Internet (Chu 2007; Link 2002; Liu 2008; Zhao 1998: 54–9).

A further factor contributing to the emergence of a celebrity culture in the PRC is the liberalization of the media that followed the economic reforms and the subsequent growth of large-scale mass media industries and commercial advertising (see Wang 2008). From the establishment of the PRC in 1949 until the early 1990s, China's print and communications media were wholly funded by central or local government and functioned as the 'mouthpiece' of the CCP (Zhao 1998: 4, 52). The CCP drew on the experience of the former Soviet Union and its own revolutionary history to promote a system of 'Party Journalism,' based on the understanding that the role of the media was to contribute to the advancement of socialism in China by accepting and promoting the Party's leadership and guiding ideology and also by propagating its programs, policies and directives (Zhao 1998: 19). This system produced a propagandistic mass media which relayed political information and celebrated exemplary individuals for their heroic efforts to serve the Chinese people and the Chinese nation, either by deifying political leaders such as Chairman Mao Zedong or by holding up idealized representations of socialist citizens (workers, soldiers, and peasants) as role models for public emulation (Chu 2007: 53–92; Geist 1990; Sheridan 1968; Stranahan 1983).

Controls over less official media and the dissemination of non-political information in the PRC became more relaxed throughout the 1990s (Brady 2007; Donald et al. 2002; Keane et al. 2007; Zhao 1998). Then, in 2003, the Chinese government stipulated that state-subsidized newspapers and magazines must earn at least half of their revenue from private subscriptions. It also introduced a series of regulations designed to make China's television stations more competitive and independent, partly in response to the dramatic growth in numbers of television viewers as the purchasing power of individuals increased, which, in turn, stimulated investment in new stations and the extension of broadcasting hours (Zhao 1998: 53). Soft news and entertainment, including celebrity stories and tabloid-style formats have proliferated as a means to attract audiences and advertisers (Hvistendah 2005; Zhao 2002: 111–36). The expansion of private Internet content providers, licensed and unlicensed cable networks, and 'cross-investment by the Chinese media into other commercial enterprises, including joint ventures with international media giants' (Akhavan-Majid 2004: 1; Fung 2006: 72) has further contributed to this trend.

China's expanding commercial culture with its dual emphasis on entertainment and advertising has produced new forms of celebrities and created celebrity-watching audiences in the PRC, even as many public individuals continue to be celebrated for their contributions to nation-building in ways that are reminiscent of the Maoist past. With this context in mind, *Celebrity in China* offers a broad coverage of the diverse ways in which celebrity is presented and circulated in the PRC today. This introduction first provides an overview of key conclusions in existing academic literature about the nature of celebrity in Australia, Europe and the USA. It then discusses the implications of these findings for a consideration of the Chinese case. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the key themes emerging within the field of celebrity construction and consumption in the PRC.

Understanding Celebrity and the Celebrity Effect

Celebrity refers in standard definitions to a famous person or the state of being famous and being 'famous' means being 'known about by many people' (Pearsall 2001: 226, 513). However, different conceptions of what

constitutes fame and how it circulates influence how modern celebrity is understood. Celebrities may be positively or negatively compared to older-style heroes, statesmen, luminaries, and personages; upheld as charismatic stars or downgraded as minor television personalities; and be praised or decried for their perceived innate talent or lack of it (Marshall 1997: 3–26). But taken as a whole, they are famous due to their high visibility in media formats and they are celebrities, rather than public personages, because their fans take as much interest, if not more, in the mediatized details of their private lives as in the details of their professional lives (Turner 2004: 3).

Although the precise constitution of celebrity status is debated, there are three recognizable approaches to the study of modern celebrity (Turner 2004: 4–5). First, some columnists and public intellectuals regard celebrity as shallow and apolitical; it trivializes endeavour and commitment and eliminates former useful distinctions between individuals as worthy or undeserving of public attention. Daniel Boorstin (1972: 60) provides a classic example of this position when he denounces contemporary celebrities on the grounds that: 'their chief claim to fame is their fame itself'. Comparing modern-day celebrities in the USA with former 'heroes', he concludes that: 'The hero created himself; the celebrity is created by the media. The hero was a big man; the celebrity is a big name' (Boorstin 1972: 61). Len Sherman reiterates this statement in his discussion on baseball in the USA when he suggests that 'where we once admired people who do great things, now we admire people who play people who do great things' (cited in Cashmore 2006: 50). These arguments suggest that contemporary celebrities deserve derision, not acclaim, because their fame is achieved primarily through the media-fed trivia of lifestyle and personality, rather than through talent or great accomplishments (Redmond and Holmes 2007: 8).

Second, producers and consumers of celebrity materials usually describe celebrity more positively as an innate quality that is possessed by certain extraordinary individuals and 'discovered' by industry talent scouts (Gamson 1994: 15–16; Turner 2004: 4). Thus, we read of star quality and charisma in popular press accounts. Fanzines and the television and movie industries uphold movie stars, pop stars, and popular entertainers, as possessing natural and extraordinary talents, which the media simply acknowledges. Sports stars are routinely upheld as authentic achievers that merit public acclaim for their competitive prowess and being the best in

their field (Andrews and Jackson 2001; Smart 2005). Conversely, in the case of boy bands, girl bands, and reality shows, media commentators and consumers may dismiss such entertainers as 'phonies' whose temporary celebrity is an effect of artificial and commercially motivated media promotion (Turner 2004: 56–8). However, in all of these cases, *real* celebrity is defined as being independent from rather than a product of media processes.

Third, and in contrast to the preceding approaches, recent cultural and media studies scholarship argues that celebrity is a product of complex cultural and economic processes. These processes include: 'the commodification of the individual celebrity through promotion, publicity and advertising; the implication of celebrities in the processes through which cultural identity is negotiated and formed; and most importantly, the representational processes employed by the media in their treatment of prominent individuals' (Turner 2004: 4). Proponents of this approach neither praise nor dismiss celebrity as authentic or inauthentic, uplifting or degrading. Instead, they are concerned to contextualize how the individual-as-celebrity is represented and to examine the roles performed by the celebrity-as-commodity in the construction of contemporary forms of identity and community. While disagreeing over the extent to which modern celebrity may be considered a new phenomenon or related to earlier versions of fame, they concur that contemporary celebrity culture is distinguished by its pervasiveness and integration into daily life, with discourses of fame being variously used to promote pop stars, film stars, sports stars, writers, politicians, religious leaders, CEOs and Internet bloggers, and even infamous or criminal figures (Cashmore 2006; Orth 2004: 21; Redmond and Holmes 2007: 4–9; Turner 2004: 4, 9–23). They also agree that the expansion of celebrity culture is a function of new levels of mass prosperity experienced since World War II and related to technological advances, especially the development of the mass media.

Following from this interest in the integration of celebrity into daily life and its relation to broader social and economic trends, scholars of celebrity have proved keen to articulate the social roles that it performs for consumers. Eschewing the view that it constitutes a form of mass delusion, wherein the 'culture industry' dupes an undifferentiated mass of consumers into believing that the possibility of individual success is universal (e.g. Adorno and Horkheimer 1979), they argue that celebrity culture compensates for the decline of religion and social communities by

enabling people from across the globe to form emotional attachments with figures they know only through their representations in the media (Rojek 2007: 171–80; Turner 2004: 24). Hence Richard Schickel's dismissal of celebrities as 'intimate strangers' who are created by an 'ever tightening, ever more finely spun media mesh' and ultimately offer merely the illusion of intimacy (Schickel 2000: 4), has been replaced by an interest in how celebrity culture contributes to the social processes through which human relationships, identity and cultural norms are constructed and debated (Holmes 2005: 16–17; Marshall 1997: 3–26).

Such analyses suggest that modern celebrity culture functions to promote positive, if often normative, forms of social cohesion. Certainly celebrity promotional campaigns have been used not only to sell brand-name products, but also to promote philanthropy and exemplary citizenship, as well as changes to governmental policies on health, youth, the environment, and multiculturalism (Cashmore 2006: 208–26; Cram et al. 2003: 163; 'Look to the stars' 2008; 'The Giving Back Fund' 2007; Turner et al. 2000: 136, 164–5). These different uses of the celebrity-as-commodity point to an obvious conclusion: celebrity culture is neither inherently bad nor good; it is produced and consumed in multiple contexts, for different reasons and with diverse effects. This suggests that rather than dismissing the existence of celebrity culture as evidence of a media-based conspiracy designed to distract consumers from more serious human achievements and political affairs, it may be more productive to examine the celebrity industry as comprising a new mode of media operation and different ways of informing and shaping a general public.

Also contrary to claims that celebrity culture highlights the media's failure to uphold (true) democratic principles and provide public access to (real) information, many scholars argue that celebrity culture extends these principles in subtle ways. The blurring of former distinctions between celebrity, fame, and other kinds of social and political status is evidence of this trend (Marshall 1997: 3–26). In the nineteenth century, discussions of fame referred in a generic sense to the activities of kings, statesmen, military leaders, explorers, and captains of industry — a biographical discourse of 'great men' and their deeds. This categorization disintegrated over the course of the twentieth century as the mass media expanded and focus shifted to Hollywood film stars and popular music entertainers. Statesmen, scientists and inventors continued to be upheld as public figures that were deservedly famous for their accomplishments. However, the class-

based elitism of previous versions of fame and celebrity was undermined by the growing emphasis on film, music and sports stars as ordinary yet somehow exceptional people who had 'made it' (Cashmore 2006: 56–77; Gamson 1994: 15–39).

The emergence of digital technologies that allow ordinary people to become producers of audio and video files and to distribute them over the Internet without a commercial third-party intervening has, if anything, hastened this trend towards the 'democratization' of celebrity status. In a revised edition of *Intimate Strangers*, Schickel includes a postscript to address the impact of the Internet and kitchen-table production of personal publicity materials that had emerged between the first edition of his book in 1985 and its republication in 2000. He suggests that new technologies that facilitate the creation of 'do-it-yourself' (DIY) celebrity are encouraging anarchy because 'increasingly our emphasis is not on worshipping the stars but on becoming stars ourselves, or enjoying the illusion that we are stars' (Schickel 2000: 310). His unease with public acceptance of DIY celebrity demonstrates the extent to which earlier conceptions of celebrity still inform evaluations as to whether an individual is truly famous and deserving of public attention or not, despite technological and genre changes. But in an era where 'everyday citizens' are able to attain instant fame through reality television, and where politicians feature in both news and entertainment programming (Cashmore 2006: 188–226), the analytical utility of distinguishing between the authentic and inauthentic celebrity on the basis of former discourses of achievement-based fame is becoming increasingly unclear.

A consideration of the case of reality television and DIY celebrities highlights the ambiguous logic that underpins both criticisms and praise of modern celebrity culture. Condemning celebrity culture with reference to earlier conceptions of fame is problematic because it elides the privileges of class, gender and race that enabled many 'great people' to become famous in the first place (Braudy 2007: 181). Such criticisms are profoundly elitist insofar as they valorize certain historically specific forms of human attributes and achievements over others, while simultaneously condemning the modern media for failing to promote and be representative of true participatory democracy. While the level of public interest generated by the 'stars' of reality television programs such as *Big Brother* and the *Biggest Loser* may seem excessive relative to their actual achievements, the appearance of gay and obese individuals on prime-time TV may well promote a broader acceptance of diversity and difference among viewing audiences.

Reality TV and DIY Internet celebrities, precisely because of the seemingly more egalitarian and uncontrollable nature of their production and consumption, do democratize celebrity systems in the twenty-first century in ways unavailable to earlier generations. But blindly affirming the depiction of 'ordinary' people in reality TV or other programming formats as a sign of the benefits of liberal-democratic capitalism in action ignores the complex procedures of screening, editing, promotion, and so on, that are involved in turning them into temporary celebrities in the first place. It also avoids the allocation of any ethical responsibility for the potentially negative, as opposed to positive, personal consequences for a given individual of being managed in such a fashion (Turner 2004: 38). In short, criticisms of the modern celebrity industry often turn on idealized accounts of what the modern mass media should do in theory, whereas praise for that industry typically turns on idealized accounts of what it achieves in practice. The same ambiguous logic informs accounts of celebrity culture in the PRC.

China's Celebrity Culture

The developing nature of China's celebrity culture can be highlighted with reference to the altered fame of Chairman Mao Zedong, founder and former leader of the PRC. From the revolution in 1949 until his death in September 1976, Chairman Mao was reified as a revolutionary hero and as a political leader of world renown. In pre-1978 China, a large statue of Mao Zedong or examples of his calligraphy adorned the gate of every major workplace, and each office and home was decorated with smaller statues or pictures of Mao (Dutton 2005: 151–67). Mao — as a genuinely charismatic leader (Weber 2007: 17–24) — was deified as a revolutionary hero who had produced a fundamental change within the minds and bodies of 'the ruled' by bringing them knowledge of Marxism/socialism.

The pre-1978 deification of Mao, sometimes regarded as a propagandistic cult of personality, existed at the level of both the objective and subjective experience. Small badges displaying his visage ('Mao badges') and collections of his writings were proffered as wedding presents and exchanged as gifts (Dutton 1998: 239–71). Liang Heng's autobiographical account of his experience as a Red Guard during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–76), explains how he sent a

telegram to his parents which stated: 'This evening at 9.15 I became the happiest person in the world' (Heng and Shapiro 1983: 125). Neither his parents nor anyone else in China at the time required an explanation for his exultation. It was obvious that he was one of the millions of youth privileged to see Mao Zedong 'in the flesh' during Red Guard rallies held in Tiananmen Square in 1966.

Mao's status as a charismatic leader of world renown underwent a significant shift in the mid-1980s, flowing from the rejection of late-Maoist politics. In 1981, the CCP endorsed a resolution on Party history, which repudiated the politics of the Cultural Revolution by intimating that although Mao Zedong was initially a great revolutionary he had become 'senile' (*Resolution on CPC History* 1981). This repudiation was accompanied by the release of various biographies from people who had known Mao in person, such as his physician (Li Zhisui 1994), which highlighted the flawed nature of Mao's 'genius' by stressing his everydayness, i.e., his predilection for booze, cigarettes and fast women (Barmé 1996a). Other works presented Mao as a great tactician flawed by a paranoid streak and an obsessive desire for power at any cost (Terrill 1999). Hence, if it can be said that a public figure becomes a celebrity 'when media interest in their activities is transferred from reporting on their public role (such as their specific achievement in politics or sport) to investigating the details of their personality and private lives' (Turner 2004: 8), then Mao became a celebrity after his death.

Mao's new status as a posthumous celebrity-commodity resulted from the emergence of new technologies, new spaces for leisure and tourism, and the so-called Mao Zedong Craze (*Mao Zedong re*) (Barmé 1996b; Hubbert 2006). The celebration of Mao-as-commodity began in 1989, when a taxi-driver on a Guangdong highway reportedly emerged unscathed from a multiple car crash. The driver attributed his extraordinary luck to the 'Mao badge' attached to his rear-view mirror, resulting in divine-like intervention to ensure his personal safety (Dutton 2005: 151–67). Revolutionary nostalgia, combined with new technologies such as the VCR and DVD player, also ensured that revolutionary songs became a popular part of China's emerging karaoke and nightclub scene. Likewise, the expansion of domestic Chinese tourism, often funded by state-owned workplaces, ensured that revolutionary sites become popular tourist attractions for Chinese and international tourists, who felt nostalgic or curious about the not-so-distant Maoist past (Bowerman 2007). By 1993,

the 100th anniversary celebration of Mao's birth, markets all over China were selling T-shirts, watches and cigarette lighters, emblazoned with pictures and iconography of Mao Zedong; and, by 2003, the 110th anniversary of Mao's birth, marketing strategists and advertising executives had ensured that Mao was part of a 'red' commodity industry (Barmé 1996b; Dutton 2005: 151–67). In 2004, an estimated 2.3 million tourists visited Mao's hometown of Shaoshan generating revenue of more than 300 million yuan ('Mao Zedong's hometown' 2005).

As a result of these processes, Mao Zedong is now 'dead famous'. China's most popular website portal, Baidu, reveals that he remains in the top 20 of celebrated figures listed according to number of Internet searches for 'figures' (*renwu*) ('Jinri renwu paihang bang' 2008). Registered at number eight on the Baidu list on 13 August 2008, Mao shares his fame with a wide range of famous people. These include: Huo Qigang, the grandson of a Hong Kong tycoon, and Wendi Deng Murdoch, wife of News Corporation Chairman and CEO, Rupert Murdoch; two Chinese filmmakers, Shao Yifu and Zhang Yimou (the creator of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games opening and closing ceremonies); two Chinese Olympic competitors, gymnast Yang Yun and diver Fu Mingxia; Empress Wu Zetian (624–705) and Bao Zheng (999–1062), a government official and statesman during the Northern Song Dynasty; authors Han Han, Lu Xun, Anni Babe and Jin Yong; martial arts film star, Bruce Lee; and former and current presidents Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao. The eclectic nature of this list is explained by the fact that Baidu produces other 'lists' to cover the fields of popular entertainment and sports. However, the miscellaneous nature of the 'renwu' list provides a useful coverage of celebrated individuals, both living and dead, who may not fit easily into the dominant category of commercial entertainment.

Mao Zedong shared his top 20 status with blogger Furong Jiejie for several years. Furong Jiejie, a 'nobody' from Shaanxi Province, became famous throughout China after posting photographs of herself appearing in 'sexually assertive' poses on various websites. Blogging began in the PRC in August 2002 with the launch of Blogchina.com and reached new levels in 2003 when a Cantonese sex columnist, Muzimei, started publishing a web diary of her casual sexual encounters with numerous men (Yu 2007: 425). Although Muzimei's fame (or notoriety) has since receded, Furong Jiejie's particular style of blogging, which involves the posting of photographs along with narcissistic commentary and stories about her personal

experiences, has proved to be more enduring. Furong Jiejie is frequently among the top 10 celebrated 'figures' on Baidu's list (see Roberts, in this volume).

The fact that an historical figure of the immensity of Mao Zedong can coexist on Internet lists with a DIY-celebrity such as Furong Jiejie underscores the heterogeneous nature of China's developing celebrity culture. The rapidity of socio-economic change in the PRC has ensured that a variety of different forms of fame and celebrity can coexist simultaneously. An individual's consumption of contemporary celebrity culture can exhibit nostalgia for a highly politicized past or curiosity about their positioning as children of the communist revolution, while simultaneously 'buying into' or exploiting the new spaces created for celebrity production and consumption by a commercialized popular culture, new media and more liberal present.

This diversity undermines conventional criticism and praise of China's developing celebrity culture. Critics condemn China's celebrity culture for diverting the media and the general public away from independent journalism and serious politics towards the banality of apolitical entertainment. Li Xiguang, Dean of the School of Journalism at Tsinghua University, one of China's most distinguished higher education institutions, states: 'celebrities are setting the agenda for the general public, which does not have to pay attention to what is happening around them, or care about it, or think about it'. Instead, they watch and listen to 'whatever the celebrities feel like talking about' ('Damsels in distress' 2005). These criticisms highlight a broader perception that the Chinese media has forsaken its traditional and/or potential role as a social educator to provide apolitical entertainment, just when it has the opportunity to offer 'real' news and information flowing from the loosening of former political controls over the media. Other scholars similarly lament the lack of political criticism in contemporary Chinese society and blame the media, defined as the 'market ideological apparatus', for transforming people into aspiring consumers who blindly follow the logic of global capitalism in their daily lives and who are oblivious to its corrosive and depoliticizing effects (Wang 2006: 29–45).

Conversely, supporters of China's celebrity culture praise the rise of the commercial media, along with rapid technological expansion, for accelerating the PRC's perceived inevitable shift towards democratization. Many commentators insist that China's new cyber-celebrity figures

represent rising individualism and resistance to an all-controlling state, primarily through their seeming defiance of media censorship and former restrictions on public expressions of sexuality (e.g. 'Chinese sex blogger Muzi Mei challenges authorities' 2005). Likewise, extensive media speculation about the democratizing impact of text-message voting took place around the *Super Girl* pop music competition. The winning singer, Li Yuchun, had a tomboyish style and resisted pressure to adopt the feminine appearance common to female pop singers in China. Many public commentators attributed her success to her 'rebel' nature and its indirect critique of CCP rule ('Super Girl is *Time* magazine hero' 2005). As these examples suggest, China's rapid technological expansion has generated new spaces wherein formerly marginalized individuals can contribute to new forms of subjectivity and claim an informal political voice in the public sphere.

The diverse nature of China's celebrity constructions undermines both the criticism that celebrity culture is the antithesis of capital 'P' politics and the view that it is the birthplace of new forms of overtly resistant citizenship. Decrying celebrity culture for entailing the 'death of politics' fails to acknowledge that commercial popular culture is as 'constitutive of cultural citizenship for particular social identity groups as are the spaces of formal politics' (Burgess et al. 2006: 2). Cultural citizenship is broadly defined as 'the process of bonding and community building, and reflection on that bonding, that is implied in partaking of the text-related practices of reading, consuming, celebrating and criticizing offered in the realm of (popular) culture' (Hermes 2005: 10). The concept of cultural citizenship counters the pessimistic understanding of commercial popular culture as about brainwashing and exploiting 'those who did not stay in school long enough' (Hermes 2005: 9) by redefining it as a social domain that provides spaces for alternative senses of community. Popular culture creates new communities, ones that are not organized around older social institutions such as political parties, sports clubs and the family, by allowing people previously precluded from speaking in the public domain to express and share their views in public and semi-public spaces about a wide range of issues relating to human experiences and behaviours (Hermes 2005: 1–20).

In the PRC context, new media such as the Internet and mobile phones can create new venues for individuals to exercise cultural citizenship, but neither primarily nor necessarily through acts of overt resistance to the Party-state. Instead, new media formats enable individuals

to exercise cultural and sexual citizenship 'through a process of re-subjectification via mediated expression, social interaction, and circulation of their own media stories' (Yu 2007: 424). The process of actively sharing and debating these stories allows for collective social action and community building by justifying certain conceptions of 'rights'. For example, Internet discussions of Muzimei's sexblogs have been used to condemn the perceived excesses of western-style sexual liberation in China and also to promote the rights of women to sexual autonomy and free artistic expression (Farrer 2006: 103–4). While the emergence of these kinds of debates vis-à-vis the activities of cyber-celebrities are unlikely to realize any immediate and radical transformation of the nature of government in China, they contain implications for political and social change nevertheless.

Celebrity in China consequently highlights the heterogeneous nature of celebrity and the celebrity effect in contemporary China. It includes case studies of celebrities produced by the publicity-machinery of the Communist Party-state such as military heroes (Louise Edwards) and celebrity mothers (Yingjie Guo), as well as studies of celebrities produced through a mixture of governmental and non-governmental processes, such as 'chastity heroines' (Elaine Jeffreys) and celebrity HIV/AIDS activists (Johanna Hood). It also presents studies of celebrities in popular cultural spheres such as film and sports (Mary Farquhar), literature (Shuyu Kong), and music (Louisa Schein). Last, but not least, *Celebrity in China* incorporates studies of celebrities who have achieved their status in alternative domains, such as a celebrated transsexual dancer (Gloria Davies and M. E. Davies), celebrity entrepreneurs (David Davies) and celebrity bloggers (I. D. Roberts).

The contributions to *Celebrity in China* provide evidence of the diversity of possible ways of producing and consuming fame and celebrity. This diversity is often overlooked due to the predominant focus of the media on commercial entertainment and sports and, in turn, the predominant focus of cultural and celebrity studies on media structures. However, celebrity and the celebrity effect are heterogenous and mobile constructions, as demonstrated by the wide range of people whose lives and achievements are celebrated both in China and in other parts of the globe.

Celebrity in China

China's celebrity culture is marked by the influence of the Party-state and a fusion of culturally embedded and socialist values, while also mirroring some aspects of global celebrity culture. During the Maoist period (1949–76), the CCP's propaganda machinery expended a considerable amount of time, effort and money in crafting and promoting exemplary socialist citizens with the aim of eliciting certain desired behaviours among the general population. In the changed era of economic reform, the CCP continues to create and promote exemplary individuals as models for public emulation, but it now does so by relying on commercial promotional culture (Barmé 1999) and the celebrity effect. At the same time, the liberalization of China's economy and society has ensured that many public individuals now garner international and national media attention flowing from their perceived alterity, understood as a sign of resistance to the hegemonic communist state and a relatively conservative, albeit increasingly cosmopolitan, society.

The contributions to *Celebrity in China* highlight the diverse interactions between the Party-state and the commercial celebration of public individuals in China today. Louise Edwards' chapter on military celebrities examines the Party-state's use of commercial promotional culture, rather than overt propaganda, to promote army general-heroes as models of 'good citizenship', not 'exemplary comradeship'. Yingjie Guo's study of government-sponsored and media-led campaigns to find and promote China's 'Outstanding Mothers' details the Party-state's efforts to capitalize on the celebrity effect in order to generate social cohesion. Elaine Jeffreys highlights the interactions between the Party-state and the uses of commercial promotional culture in her discussion of China's 'chastity heroines' — women who attained fame and became sites for the promotion of public charity after being crippled by leaping from high-storey buildings to escape forced prostitution. Johanna Hood further explores the interactions between the Party-state and celebrity mechanisms by focusing on the role of actor Pu Cunxin. Pu has been actively enlisted in the CCP's policy goal of halting the spread of HIV/AIDS through appearances in educational movies and commercial TV series and Hood argues that his participation provides space for subtle critique of government health policies.

Even celebrities mediated through the new media, creative industries and business world are often indebted to the support or presence of the

Party-state. Mary Farquhar's discussion of transnational film star, Jet Li, ranked third on the *Forbes'* China celebrity list in 2008, reveals that he first rose to prominence in the late Maoist period as a state-sponsored martial arts champion and that role informs his international success as a movie star. Shuyu Kong details how literary celebrities such as Wang Meng garnered popular support in the 1980s due to their perceived willingness to speak out against instances of Maoist-era political oppression, even as they remained connected and indebted to Party-state structures. Louisa Schein's study of ethnic minority pop stars shows that Luo Xiuying was trained and promoted by the Maoist state and that A You Duo has moved from musical to political fame with her recent election as a representative to the National People's Congress. Gloria and M. E. Davies' chapter on China's transsexual star of modern dance, Jin Xing, reveals how the young dancer underwent training with state-sponsored military dance troupes, including the People's Liberation Army, before obtaining a prestigious scholarship to study overseas in the 1980s. David Davies describes how celebrity entrepreneurs are paradoxically presented as Maoist-style exemplars and modern-day entertainers who can lead China to global success. And I. D. Roberts explains that the cyber-celebrity Furong Jiejie achieved national and international media attention when she claimed to be a victim of censorship — she accused the Party-state of trying to 'shut her down'.

Not surprisingly, given that 'loving the nation' (*aiguo*) is scripted in 'mainland public discourse as the "natural attitude" of any Chinese person' (Davies 2008), celebrity culture in the PRC is embedded within a CCP-led nationalist project that encourages public pronouncements of unabashed patriotism, irrespective of whether such statements are made genuinely, ironically or with a pragmatic eye on sales. Louise Edwards' study of military celebrity highlights the links between patriotism and the CCP's concern for ordinary people, by detailing the involvement of contemporary military celebrities in fighting everyday social problems such as crime and poverty. Yingjie Guo's discussion of China's 'Outstanding Mothers' campaign shows that winners are selected on the basis of their demonstrated patriotism, support for the CCP, entrepreneurial spirit, and capacity as voluntary social workers to extend their motherly love to society as a whole.

Mary Farquhar also notes the links between expressions of patriotism and the celebrity effect in her chapter on Jet Li. Jet Li's early celebrity in China flowed from his prowess as a national sports champion and

from his youthful rejection of President Nixon's suggestion that Li should become his bodyguard. According to biographer Christy Marx (2002: 33), Li became a national hero by stating: 'No, I don't want to protect any individual. When I grow up, I want to defend my one billion Chinese countrymen!' Gloria and M. E. Davies' chapter on Jin Xing, relates how the transsexual star of dance is portrayed as a patriotic and heroic individual who came home to China after receiving a scholarship to study abroad in order to be 'reborn' as a woman and as a success story. Louisa Schein's discussion of Miao singers from south-western China explains that these celebrity musicians must negotiate a triple call on their national loyalties — to the PRC and the Miao ethnic group in China and Laos, as well as to the Chinese and Miao communities in the USA.

Another feature of China's celebrity culture is the high value placed on attributes such as public propriety, group orientation, academic achievement, resilience and thrift. The most obvious examples of this moral economy of virtue are found in the chapters about state-sponsored celebrities such as the military celebrities discussed by Louise Edwards and the 'Outstanding Mothers' examined by Yingjie Guo. Edwards demonstrates that willingness to risk personal safety for public good is central to the military celebrity. Guo shows that to reach the apex of a state-sponsored motherhood competition, women must be 'be of high moral character and personal integrity, and have considerable influence and a good reputation'. Johanna Hood's chapter indicates that actor Pu Cunxin uses his personal finances to fund education campaigns to increase public understanding of HIV/AIDS. However, even outside of the official sphere, celebrities perform didactic roles. David Davies' discussion of celebrity CEOs explains how leading businessmen are elevated as national celebrity-heroes for their willingness to share business acumen and philosophies for success.

The preoccupation with moral virtue in China encourages the public celebration of individuals that are perceived to have overcome extraordinary odds to survive or achieve success. Elaine Jeffreys' chapter on the temporary celebrity status achieved by women that escaped forced prostitution and who sustained and then overcame horrific injuries in the process are classic examples of this trend. Gloria and M. E. Davies' contribution shows that public affection for Jin Xing in part derives from her story of overcoming the hardships associated with gender dysphoria. Furong Jiejie, the DIY Internet celebrity discussed in I. D. Roberts' chapter, also makes strong

appeals to conceptions of personal resilience in descriptions of her recovery from a traffic accident and her repeated attempts to pass the university entrance exams for Beijing's top universities. One of these attempts reportedly included sitting for an exam shortly after the accident, dressed in bandages and being carried into the examination hall on a stretcher.

As in other parts of the world, the PRC's celebrities are admired not only for their perseverance, accomplishments and good deeds, but also for their affluent lifestyles and status-giving consumption of luxury brand products. Shuyu Kong's contribution includes a discussion of the literary celebrity, Wei Hui (1999), whose novel *Shanghai Baby* is a sex-and-shopping romp through China's contemporary youth culture, although the sex is with European men and the shopping is for European elite brand products. Gloria and M. E. Davies' discussion of Jin Xing similarly relates that the dancer's lifestyle is routinely featured in any media descriptions of her, such as her penchant for designer label fashion, or married life with her German husband. David Davies notes that celebrity entrepreneur, Wang Shi, is famous not only for his business acumen, but also for his global jet-setting and 'adventure man' lifestyle — such as climbing the world's highest mountains and trekking to the North and South Poles.

While celebrities in China as elsewhere increasingly are 'idols of consumption as opposed to the former idols of production' (Marshall 1997: 10), the emphasis in Chinese culture on attributes such as thrift and group orientation has ensured that wealth holds community responsibilities in the PRC. In Australia, Europe and the USA, the establishment of major international development agencies has encouraged a rapid increase in celebrity advocacy on issues relating to democracy, human rights, health, and poverty alleviation. Celebrity 'aid' is presented as help from those who 'care' about humanity and community and who enjoy the act of 'giving back' even though their elevated position does not oblige them to do so. China's integration with the global economy has similarly ensured that philanthropic endeavours have become a part of celebrity activism in the PRC. In June 2008, Yao Ming announced the launch of the 'Yao Ming Foundation', under the auspices of the international Giving Back Fund, to raise funds and awareness of children's wellness and welfare issues in the PRC and the USA.

Celebrity philanthropy in the PRC is further informed by Buddhist notions of compassion and the Confucian virtue of humaneness, whereby the privileged bear responsibility for the less fortunate. In addition,

celebrity philanthropy balances widespread public resentment of those who appear to have come by their wealth too easily in the reform period flowing from the former socialist emphasis on egalitarianism and the growing existence of socio-economic inequalities (Jeffreys 2008; Zang 2008). Wealth is therefore legitimized in the PRC by presenting it as the result of hard work and ingenuity and by ensuring that parts of it are shared with those less fortunate.

The contributions to *Celebrity in China* highlight the complex interactions between the Party-state and celebrity mechanisms in the realms of philanthropy, public health and corporate social responsibility. Louise Edwards shows that military celebrity general, Ye Aiqun, was awarded a prize and promoted as a model of the People's Liberation Army for his bravery in stopping a robbery. Ye further demonstrated his humanitarianism by promptly donating the prize money to a poverty alleviation scheme. David Davies' chapter describes celebrity CEOs generously spending time and effort to educate ordinary citizens on how to achieve their level of wealth. Louisa Schein's study of ethnic pop stars explains that A You Duo is not particularly concerned about protecting the copyright on her CDs because she sees her role as promoting Miao culture and her home region as sufficient additional rewards to her comfortable, but not excessive, lifestyle. Elaine Jeffreys' chapter demonstrates how 'chastity heroines' are presented in the media as accidental celebrities in order to promote charity and create charitable citizens. Johanna Hood's chapter suggests that actor Pu Cunxin epitomizes the contemporary 'aid celebrity' through his HIV/AIDS activism, which aims to help the socially vulnerable and alleviate the consequences of privatization and insufficient state provisions in the health sector in the reform period. Mary Farquhar notes that Jet Li established a philanthropic organization under the auspices of the Red Cross called the 'Jet Li One Foundation'. Both the Jet Li and the Yao Ming foundations provided major relief to victims of a devastating earthquake in Sichuan Province during May 2008 ('Jet Li' 2008; 'Yao Ming' 2008).

Last, but not least, the preoccupation in Chinese culture with the moral virtue of prominent individuals necessarily generates interest in and scope for notoriety through non-conformity and immorality. Exploiting non-conformist and scandalous behaviour as a means to generate media publicity and enhance the celebrity of a given individual is commonplace in Europe and the USA (Cashmore 2006: 140–64; Lull and Hinerman 1997). This practice is becoming more prevalent in the PRC, although it

has yet to rival the apparent capacity of the global media to use sex and other scandals as a means to create an international celebrity on the scale of Paris Hilton.

Shuyu Kong's chapter on literary celebrity explains the popularity of Wei Hui's and Wang Shuo's works on sexual adventurism and the 'underbelly' of Chinese society in terms of a claim to embody 'entertainment for entertainment's sake' and as a reaction against Confucian/socialist expectations that writers must create morally uplifting materials. Gloria and M. E. Davies note that while Jin Xing's fame as a dancer is clearly tied to her artistry, Jin also uses her transsexuality to publicize and promote herself, claiming that: 'sixty percent of the audience comes to see Jin Xing, not what she is doing' (Kimbrough 2004: 118). I. D. Roberts similarly demonstrates that Internet celebrity, Furong Jiejie, achieved her rapid and dramatic fame by exploiting the new spaces created by the audio-visual-textual media of blogging and ambiguously presenting herself through a combination of poetic writings and immodest photographs as a thoroughly traditional *and* modern Chinese girl.

Taken as a whole, the contributions to *Celebrity in China* provide evidence of the diversity of possible ways of constructing and consuming fame and celebrity in the world today. One of the Chinese terms for celebrity, '*mingliu*' (literally 'name-flowing'), encapsulates the mobility of the celebrity and the celebrity effect. China has moved from a closed, internationally isolated nation, suspicious of the spiritually polluting effects of foreign capitalism, to a more open country that drives global economic growth. More importantly, the PRC is beginning to demonstrate its cultural power and influence as well. Chinese cultural products are spreading internationally and accompanying this expansion we are likely to see new ways of making, marketing and consuming celebrity. With this context in mind, *Celebrity in China* opens the space for further discussions of the heterogeneity of celebrity and its effects in contemporary China and in comparative contexts.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. Andrews and Jackson 2001; Braudy 1997; Cashmore 2006; De Cordova 1990; Dyer 1998; Elton 2001; Evans and Hesmondhalgh 2001; Gamson 1994; Giles 2000; Glass 2004; Hartley 2005; Holmes and Redmond 2006; Jaffe 2005; Khurana 2002; Marshall 2006; Moran 2000; Orth 2004; Ponce de Leon 2002; Redmond and Holmes 2007; Rein 1997; Rojek 2004; Schickel 2000; Shuker 2001; Smart 2005; Turner 2004; Turner et al. 2000; West and Orman 2003.
2. For scholarship on the media and popular culture in the PRC, see Chu 2007; Curtin 2007; Donald et al. 2002; Huot 2000; Jones 1992; Louie 2008; Stokes 2001; Wang 2008; Zha 1995; Zhao 1998, 2002; Zhu 2008. For scholarship that touches on issues of celebrity in China, see Chan and Zhang 2007; Xiao and Cheung 2000.

Chapter 2

1. A state of war exists between China and Taiwan but this stalemate of inaction does not appear to have any direct bearing on the production of celebrity soldiers.
2. 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics' emerged in a 1984 speech by then-President Deng Xiaoping. It theorized a connection between the market and the state to explain the government's retreat from total control of the economy.
3. The Publicity Department was originally translated into English as the Propaganda Department. The name change occurred in 1998 and affected only the foreign translations of the title. It was designed to enhance the CCP's interactions with the (non-socialist) international community (Brady 2007: 73).

Chapter 3

1. The eleven additional media organizations that comprised the Organizing Committee for China's 10 Outstanding Mothers campaign were: 1) *Jingji ribao* [Economic Daily], 2) *Jiefangjun bao* [the People's Liberation Army Daily], 3) *Keji ribao* [Science and Technology Daily], 4) *Gongren ribao* [Workers' Daily], 5) *Nongmin ribao* [Peasants' Daily], 6) *Zhongguo qingnian bao* [China Youth Daily], 7) *Zhongguo funü bao* [China Women's Daily], 8) *Zhongguo jiaoyu bao* [Chinese

Education Daily], 9) *Zhongguo laonian bao* [China Elderly's Daily], 10) *Zhongguo shaonian bao* [China Children's Daily], and 11) *Zhonghua gongshang shibao* [China Industrial and Commercial Times] (see http:///www.chinamama.com.cn).

2. It is not accidental that several of the 100 Excellent Mothers are widows, as most of the legendary Chinese mothers, e.g. the mothers of Confucius, Mencius and Yue Fei, were all widows. Raising children single-handedly is obviously a greater challenge for widows; on the other hand, they are entitled to take full credit for their children's achievements.
3. The New Culture Period, and the Movement of the same name, refers to the era in which intellectuals criticized many aspects of Chinese culture and traditional values and promoted Western-style concepts of science, individual liberty and equality.
4. HSBC recently conducted a survey on saving and spending patterns among the middle classes in Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Shanghai, Seoul, Taipei and Tokyo. The survey found that Shanghai's middle classes had the highest propensity to spend. Forty-seven percent of the respondents saved what was left at the end of the month while about one out of three did not save at all. These results seem to suggest that scrimping and delayed gratification are becoming outmoded traits of an older generation. It is probable that a similar trend has emerged in other major Chinese cities (Wong 2007).
5. For a discussion of the ideological function of celebrity in Western societies, see Richard Dyer (1979: 3); John Langer (1998: 45); and P. David Marshall (1997: x, 72–3). As Marshall (1997: 65) explains, the celebrity is 'an embodiment of a discursive battleground on the norms of individuality and personality within a culture'. Langer (1998: 45) argues that 'celebrity can operate as a site from which key ideological themes can be reiterated and played out'.

Chapter 4

1. Wang Yueguo (2003) refers to 22 cases of women jumping from buildings to escape forced prostitution by 2003. For more recent cases see Chen Fang et al. 2006; Chen Jiesheng et al. 2006; 'Fanzui tuanhuo' 2005; Feng and Li 2005a, 2005b; Geng and Su 2005; Huang 2006; Jiang and Yang 2006; 'Jiangxi dagongmei' 2005; Li and Li 2004; Lin 2004; 'Liang ming fandian' 2005; 'Lienü shisi' 2005; Lin 2004; 'Nüzi beibi maiyin' 2005; Pu 2004; Ran and He 2004; 'Shaonü jubu' 2006; Su 2001; Wan and Liu 2004; and Zhang Xiao 2004.
2. For a different discussion of Tang Shengli see Elaine Jeffreys (2006) 'Over my dead body! Media constructions of forced prostitution in the People's Republic of China'. I would like to thank the journal, *Portal* for permission to replicate parts of that discussion here.
3. In Australian and British usage, Tang jumped from the first floor.
4. The Chinese system of administrative sanctions came into being during the Maoist period (1949–76) when the formal legal system fell into disrepute as a tool

of class-based oppression. It continued to be used following the introduction of China's first criminal code in January 1980, and the revised criminal code of 1997, as a means to penalize those who had committed offences but whose offence was not deemed serious enough to warrant criminal sanctions. Such penalties could include fines and physical detention for a period of up to two years on the basis of decisions determined by the Chinese police. The administrative system was revised and codified as law in March 2006. Articles 66 and 67 of the 2006 *Public Security Administrative Punishment Law of the People's Republic of China* (PRC) give policing officials the authority to keep prostitution offenders for between five to 15 days' administrative detention, with the possible addition of a fine, for health checks for sexually transmitted disease (Quanguo renda 2006).

5. The PRC started the nationwide practice in 1990 of selecting '10 Outstanding Youths' as exemplary models to motivate other young Chinese to be patriotic, support the Chinese Communist Party, and to help strengthen China's economic reforms and Open Door policy. Candidates aged between 18 and 39 years of age are chosen after a process of rigorous public selection for their diligent study practices, hard work, and contributions to society. Major cities also select their own '10 Outstanding Youths'. For example, the city of Beijing starting selecting such models on a biannual basis in 1993, with the Communist Party Youth League, and all of the city's major newspapers and broadcasting stations being involved in the process ('Beijing shida' 2005). For a discussion of China's '10 Outstanding Mothers' see Guo, in this volume.

Chapter 5

1. GONGOS are NGOs with Chinese state characteristics and governance, for example, the Beijing-based China HIV/AIDS Information Network (CHAIN). CHAIN maintains a public library of HIV/AIDS resources, manages a daily press release in both Chinese and English that summarizes HIV/AIDS reportage or major non-controversial developments, and it employs several positive staff ('Zhongguo hongse' 2007).
2. China's most well-known AIDS heroes are: 1) Wu Yi, the first Vice Premier to enter the epidemic area of Henan province's Wenlou village; 2) Ma Shenyi, HIV-positive superdad; 3) Du Zong, a Columbia and Harvard graduate who gave up a successful career to dedicate himself to the fight against AIDS (he also is a self-identified homosexual who often speaks out about discrimination, a consideration which local media often ignores); 4) Dr. Gui Xi'en of Wuhan University South Central Hospital, one of the first to identify HIV in Henan's AIDS villages; 5) Yu Jian, a reporter who exposed the blood-selling scandal; 6) Dr. Gao Yaojie, who although retired, works tirelessly to treat and educate people about HIV/AIDS; 7) Dr. Gao Yanning, a Fudan University Professor who has recorded thousands of narratives of HIV-positive farmers and works to increase social and academic involvement in the issue; 8) Pu Cunxin; 9) Dr. He Dayi, a Taiwanese researcher

who discovered the HIV cocktail therapy; and 10) Ma Shiwen, a public health worker who leaked confidential documents about the condition of HIV in Henan. Slideshows and brief biographies of eight of the AIDS heroes can be found online, see '2006 shijie Aizibingri' 2006.

3. Pu's efforts are rewarded at the local level in part because his activist actions are non-confrontational ('Pu Cunxin: yao zuo yibeizi' 2007; 'Xuanchuanyuan Pu Cunxin' 2005; Zhang and Wang 2006). This contrasts with the actions of Dr. Gao Yaojie, the 'people's AIDS hero' (*minjian kang'ai yingxiong*), who is presented as more of a caring yet confrontational activist in the media and as such receives considerably less state support for her activities and accolades (Hu 2007; Li Jianhong 2007).
4. Pu's remarks about the importance of donating to support the less fortunate also fall within 'safe' state-endorsed boundaries ('Aizi fangzhi' 2006; Hao 2005; Xu 2007; Zhang Xueli 2005). Officially endorsed courses on the cultivation of a philanthropic culture are now available for business enterprises. These typically employ a 'deficit approach' that assumes that the shape of contemporary philanthropy should follow that of donation and corporate social responsibility (Cui 2005; 'Qiye shehui' 2007; Tang 2006). These reports make no comment on how philanthropy was differently expressed in China in the past.

Chapter 7

1. Liu Suola gained a reputation for her inventive style and attention to issues of the urban, educated middle-class youth. Her works include *Chaos and All That* (1995) and *Blue Sky Green Sky and Other Stories* (1993). Mo Yan gained international fame as a result of a 1987 film derived from his novel *Red Sorghum,* directed by Zhang Yimou. Translations of his works include *Red Sorghum* (1993) and *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* (2004).
2. The 'Fifth Generation' refers to the generation of directors who emerged immediately after the 1978 reforms, with their first films appearing in the mid-1980s. Chen Kaige's *Huang tudi* [Yellow Earth] (1984) began the trend, then Zhang Yimou's *Hong gaoliang* [Red Sorghum] (1987) won the Golden Bear at the Berlin film festival and his *Ju Dou* (1989) won Best Film at the Chicago Film festival.

Chapter 8

1. The reference to the Hollywood actress is probably to half-Hmong half-Thai Brenda Song, who is widely claimed in the Hmong American community as the first mainstream crossover actress. She typically plays a Chinese or a generic and unmarked Asian American and is best known for her supporting role on the serial

'Suite Life of Zach and Cody' and for her debut starring role in Disney's 2006 'Wendy Wu: Homecoming Warrior'.

Chapter 9

1. Yin Hui is a well-known freelance writer who rose to fame in the late 1990s as the editor of the (now-defunct) once highly popular website *Gaogenxie* (*High heels*) and the Beijing-based LOOK magazine. She is also a personal friend of Jin Xing's.
2. We focus on accounts of and interviews with Jin Xing (rather than her autobiographies) as such texts more amply reflect how Jin has been constructed as a celebrity.
3. Unlike most transsexuals who undergo hormonal treatment *and* surgery, Jin is quoted as saying that she refused hormonal treatment as she feared it would make her fat (Faison 1999).
4. These reports all cite and draw on excerpts from Jin's autobiography that have been posted at numerous Chinese websites, including the highly popular *Sina* site which maintains a Jin Xing page at http://book.sina.com.cn/nzt/cha/jinxingzizhuan/index.shtml (accessed 1 June 2007).
5. *Khatooey* is the Thai term for people who transition from the male gender to a female third gender. Many *khatooey* are sex workers and are known in English as 'ladyboys'.

Chapter 10

1. For photographs of Wang Shi, see http://www.vanke.com/main/piclibwangshi.aspx.

Chapter 11

1. Owing to its repeated use, the term 'Internet' will be used without capitalization in this chapter.
2. To see the daily list of top ten names used in internet searches for public figures (*renwu*), go to http://top.baidu.com/renwu.html/.
3. Although Baidu may be China's most popular search engine, the Baidu list is without question a poor measure of celebrity. After all, the majority of people in China would be expected to know who Mao Zedong was and something of what he had achieved in his lifetime, and relatively few would feel the need to conduct a web search using his name as a keyword. In fact, Mao Zedong's rating on the list, like Furong Jiejie's, fluctuates according to what news about his life and works is circulating online. For example he was ranked first for a brief period in September 2006 due to the appearance of materials concerning the thirtieth

anniversary of his death. Moreover, a moderately sophisticated internet user may create a list of 'favourites' — that is, frequently visited web sites — reducing the need to use a search engine every time information is sought about an individual of interest. But it remains significant that Furong Jiejie can be found in such company at all.

4. Furong Jiejie's use of the character *ou* ('lotus root') to describe herself could be interpreted as a deliberate or accidental misuse of colloquial language. Another character with identical pronunciation, *ou*, is sometimes used online in humorous fashion in place of *wo*, the first person pronoun in modern standard Chinese (Mandarin).

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