

THE OLDER, THE BETTER!

AGEING CELEBRITY IN CONTEMPORARY MEDIA AND SPORT CONTEXTS

International Conference

PRIN 2022 PNRR “CELEBR-AGE” FINAL CONFERENCE

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Celebrities occupy a prominent position in contemporary (media) society for several reasons. In addition to being a form of ‘commodity’ used by the media industry (Turner, 2004), they represent devices capable of creating connections between the media world and the audience world, acting as models for inspiration.

For an ever-increasing number of subjects (people, users, audiences), the activities, speeches and performances of celebrities become symbolic materials, forms of cultural mediation through which they elaborate their own interpretations of the world. In the words of Nick Couldry (2009), it seems useful to look at celebrity as ‘a generative centre that explains the social world's functioning and its values’, i.e. a privileged access point for interpreting a set of fundamental phenomena affecting society.

Many studies have been carried out on celebrities, starting with the figures who embody this role and the type of relationship they have with their publics, also highlighting their ‘measure’ (macro, meso and micro measure, Marwick, 2007). However, few analyses have accompanied these reflections regarding ‘elderly’ celebrities, i.e. all those celebrities who have reached a certain age threshold. Their role seems to have changed compared to the past and the media spaces in which they appear are increasingly numerous and differentiated (films, TV series, social networks...) bringing significant novelties not only on a spectacular level, but also - and perhaps most importantly - on a cultural and social ones.

Ageing is increasingly evident in the world's population, with a significant impact on the economy, politics and social life of many countries. As a result, the cultural models referred to over the past three decades have changed rapidly: advertising, cinema, sports and other spheres now propagate conceptions of ageing under the banner of intellectual activism, psycho-physical well-being and social prominence.

Within a vast constellation of phenomena, events and products that, in various ways, shape new and often contradictory conceptions of ageing, the cultural discourses elaborated by celebrities assume a clear centrality in the mediatised public scene.

For this reason, it now appears necessary to analyse in depth the link between celebrity and ageing, from a multidisciplinary and transcultural perspective.

We therefore invite scholars of Film Studies, Media Studies, Sociology of Culture and Communication and, more generally, scholars interested in the study of the social, anthropological and cultural dynamics of ageing, to send in a paper relating to (but not limited to) these issues:

- celebrity ageing and fiction (films, TV series, comics, podcasts, novels, etc.);
- the role of celebrities in promoting active ageing;
- the function of ageing and the conversion of celebrity capital into other forms of capital (political, economic, etc.) in post-career life (especially for sports celebrities);
- gender differences among celebrities in their experience of ageing;
- nostalgia and 'ageing' celebrities;
- ageing celebrity fandom/fans;
- ageing theories in the Celebrity and Media Studies;
- theoretical analyses of the celebrity-ageing nexus from humanities and social science perspectives;
- the social role of celebrities in the evolution of beauty standards, glamour and desirability in old age;
- the role of social media in cultural discourses on celebrity and ageing;
- comparative analyses of celebrity ageing in different historical, cultural, social and geographical contexts.

Abstracts should be up to 300 words, plus key references. Papers must add a short biographical note of the author (max. 150 words). The evaluation will focus on the relevance to the conference topic, the selection of research objects and the clarity of the use of methodology. Only one abstract per author can be submitted. Pre-constituted panels (3 to 5 participants) will be welcomed.

Abstracts must be submitted to: celebrageunibo@gmail.com.

The conference will be held in-person only. Submission should be made by May 15th, 2025. Notification of acceptance will be sent by June 30th, 2025.

The keynote speakers will be announced soon.

No fees will be charged, but individual voluntary contributions for social dinners will be encouraged.

Please also note that conference participants are responsible for their own travel and accommodation arrangements.