Novel Forms and Brand New Relations: Exploring Convergence Culture and Australian Literary Celebrity

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Since the 1970s, there has been a steady increase in proximity between popular entertainment and literary authorship. The phenomenon of literary celebrity and its paradigms of media performance are clear signals of the new entertainment value being exacted by contemporary audiences. However, in the literary arena there is much cultural anxiety concerning the word ‘entertainment.’ This paper explores some of the ideological contestations and current ambivalences surrounding the Australian literary celebrity, and asks, exactly what are the new roles and social functions of these authors? Do they represent a collaboration of new technologies and aesthetics, or do they simply signify a shift towards what Janice Radway calls the declension narrative? I would like to argue they are part of a more complex ‘moment’ in a larger formation questioning the politics of the literary and suggest that they represent the convergence of two previously incompatible discourses: literary authorship and popular celebrity culture. Contemporary expressions such as, participatory culture, literary brand ambassador, mediagenic author, and literary media entertainment are clear indications of this shift in the terrain and logics of literary celebrity.

Introduction

On 15 June 2010, hundreds of people queued outside Oxford’s Sheldonian Theatre waiting for their idol to turn up. Looking at this large gathering, one might have thought they were waiting for a rock star to emerge from a limousine, only to be quickly ushered through the crowds. But no, they were waiting for the softly spoken, grey-haired novelist, J.M. Coetzee. Initially, it seems implausible for large crowds to be waiting around for a writer, and for that matter, for the writer to then ‘perform’ on stage in front of a multitude of adoring fans with them hanging off his every word. This underlying assumption of the social roles and functions of contemporary authors not possibly being idols or performers, nor representing the media or entertainment in any way, shape or form, is, as I hope to prove, a cultural fallacy. Traditionally, the collective consciousness surrounding an author is that he or she is either reclusive by nature, or more than often, is simply someone who shuns publicity by spending days or weeks locked away writing. However, I argue that within the framework of a convergence culture, the two previous and supposedly incompatible discourses of literary authorship and popular celebrity are now the combined elements that construct the subjectivity of a successful writer. I further contend that since modern celebrity authors are the first literary mediagenics, if only by default, they automatically become the representatives of the new paradigm of literary media entertainment. This paper is interested in the institution of the literary, a hallowed domain very often perceived to be lacking in profit and/or funding. A recent case in point here would be Campbell Newman’s decision to abandon the annual Queensland Premier’s Literary Awards. However, despite such worrying events, writers continue to write and remain dedicated to their craft. Perhaps this is the reason why debate arises whenever an author decides to disrupt this anti-economic paradigm and instead chooses to focus on creative aesthetic achievement and material wealth. The West Australian author, Tim Winton

1Pierre Bourdieu’s ‘anti-economic logic’ theory determines the expressive-aesthetic activities of literature and art and is discussed in relation to convergence culture and contemporary authorship on pages 6-8 of this paper. Here, I have changed the word ‘logic’ to ‘paradigm’ as later I argue against its ‘logic’.

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seems to be managing this quite well (or his marketing team are). Winton is what’s known as a mediagenic author. The contemporary semantics of the word ‘mediagenic’ simply define the term as being someone who is constantly in the media.\(^2\) But strangely enough, there is no concrete definition for the phenomenon of literary celebrity.\(^3\) This lack of definition, coupled with the complexity in reception surrounding literary celebrity makes it a difficult terrain to negotiate. Nevertheless, international interest by theorists such as Joe Moran, Lorraine York, Loren Glass, Aaron Jaffe and Faye Hammill is now accompanied by an emergent body of Australian scholarship, led by a small number of theorists such as Graeme Turner, Robert Dixon, Wenche Ommundsen and Anne Galligan. Adding to the modest amount of theory in the field, this paper will explore some of the ideological contestations and ambivalences surrounding Australian literary celebrity, and literary celebrity in general as located within a contemporary media convergence culture. Its aim is to sketch a theory of celebrity authorship, and in doing so, identify some of the major sites of tension and transition currently shaping the literary environment.

An investigative methodology of who is reading what, when, where, and why is of great consequence, as literary tastes are culturally formed and thus intrinsically connected with questions of economic and social power. Accordingly, an exploration of some of the cultural shifts and how they introduce themselves into the accepted social, political and economic framework will inform much of this article. To be sure, one of the most prominent indications of a cultural shift in the literary arena would stem from a change in the image of the author. Traditionally, an author is envisaged as a mature, somewhat conservative individual, who perhaps works well into the small hours bashing away at a typewriter, conceivably typing in a secluded country cottage or beach shack, as respectively David Malouf and Tim Winton have often been depicted. However, in our fast-paced, individualistic world dominated by visual technologies, the identity of the author has indeed gone through a process of transformation. Today, the majority of well-known Australian authors are no longer localised, reclusive, or solely nationalistic figures, but are media author-personalities who maintain a high visibility travelling the world in order to appear at the numerous international writers’ festivals cum book-signing events, authors such as Peter Carey, Kate Grenville, Thomas Keneally, Kim Scott and Brenda Walker to name just a few. These writers also frequently appear in the new media of podcasts, blogs, databases, webpages, and the social media of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. In addition to these junctures, readers in the public sphere now have a heightened desire for more personal contact with authors which, in turn, has done much to transform the way authors communicate with the public. So how might an author transform his or herself into a mediagenic author and enter into a mediatised society? Clearly, an essential element is to develop a strong social media presence. Kate Grenville’s Facebook\(^4\) features the covers of some of her books, photographs of her at various book signings, and to assist in viewer interest, she offers a multimodal style format that contains a few video clips of recent events she has attended, along with other snippets of information on her publications. As a well-established literary


\(^3\)Most theorists in the field discuss the etymology of the two words separately. The O.E.D. offers only one quotation but no definition of ‘literary celebrity’ as such. However, ‘celebrity novelist’ appears under Draft Additions April 2002: ‘celebrity novelist n. (a) a famous public figure who publishes a novel, esp. one expected to sell on the strength of his or her celebrity; (b) a novelist who has become a celebrated public figure.’ (Accessed 3 June 2013).

celebrity one would not expect her to respond to every single reader that posted something on her Facebook. However, any literary celebrity, or for that matter any new writer’s goal must be to maintain a sustainable presence in an audience-centric environment. Additionally, this presence needs to feature a little of their private realm. A clear expression of popular celebrity culture in a literary context is the desire of the reading public to see more images of authors, talk with authors, and very often share more of them and their private lives than the worlds they create in print. It is this audience-desire for knowledge of the private that helps to establish authors as public personalities and is also one of the most contentious issues a contemporary author has to deal with - the juggling of a personal and public life. Thus, an author’s postings on Facebook very often require him or her to offer information of a personal nature, for example a posting relating to a recent trip, or simply a few comments on certain dishes they like to cook, any topic will suffice, as long as it is some sort of discourse on their ‘everydayness.’ This then creates a mix of content that hopefully gets their Facebook friends/fans in the habit of checking to see what the author is writing about. For new authors wishing for more public exposure, the creation of a website that maintains a blog and the use of other social media, such as Twitter will effectively assist them in becoming mediagenic authors.

Furthermore, a clever mediagenic author understands and accepts the aphorism of ‘the death of privacy’ and lives by the paradigm of high visibility. This they know can very often spell the difference between a modestly successful author and one whose book sales skyrocket. A good example of this high visibility in Western Australia is the prolific newspaper coverage of Tim Winton and his extra-literary concerns for the environment of the Swan River and the reef at Ningaloo. A few years ago, when Winton first became involved with Ningaloo, one such piece in the West Australian reported him jumping off a boat in search of whale sharks and quoted him saying:

As in all the best moments in life, I was unprepared for it. Someone on the boat called out. I grabbed what I could by way of gear and went over the side in my undies. Winton’s casual appearance and his constant use of colloquial language along with his passion for the West Australian landscape has been enough to kick start the public sphere’s endearment of him. So much so, that in 1998 the public awarded him the title of an Australian National Living Treasure. This type of extra-literary attention or ‘para-publishing phenomenon’ not only helps to reorientate the identity politics of some authors but also helps generate shifts in the general perception of authorship itself.Richard Flanagan is another celebrity author whose extra-literary pursuits have secured him a literary celebrity status. Flanagan, very proud of being Tasmanian and the descendent of an Irish convict, saw much of his work focus on a discourse of victimisation and/or politics of the anti-authoritarian kind; these being further sharpened during his time as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford. In the 1980s and 1990s Flanagan began questioning corrupt forestry practices which gradually created

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5The ‘introduction’ to Grenville’s website reads: ‘Since Sarah Thornhill was published, many of you have written to me via my agent on this site - so many that I’m overwhelmed and not always able to answer all of your emails individually. I’m very sorry about this as I very much appreciate responses from readers and in the past I’ve always replied to each one. I’m touched by so much interest in my books, and value the fact that you’ve taken the time and trouble to contact me. If I’m not able to reply, I apologize. A writer’s life can be solitary, and it’s wonderful to hear from readers and know that my work is speaking to others. Thank you all!’  http://kategrenville.com/ (Accessed 30 March 2013).
for him a visual and vocal presence. Then, in 2003 he spoke out publically against the proposed logging of the Tarkine wilderness, and along with his own boycott, also persuaded Peter Carey and Tim Winton to withdraw their entries from Tasmania’s richest literary award: The Tasmanian Pacific Fiction Prize, valued at forty-thousand dollars. In the same year, Flanagan’s publicity increased greatly when a portrait of him won the prestigious Archibald Prize. His political activities have done much to generate a national interest in the regional policies of Tasmania. On World Environment Day in 2004, Flanagan, along with Australian music celebrities Jimmy Barnes and Paul Kelly, spoke at a fifteen-thousand strong environmentalists’ rally. The enormous gathering in Melbourne displayed huge banners that read: ‘Tasmania’s Forests: A Global Treasure. A National Disgrace.’ Both Flanagan and Winton have gained much extra-literary attention in the media from their political and environmental activism, perhaps working to tap into the cultural consciousness of the public sphere. It is feasible that the concept of nostalgia and a return to traditional Australian ideological values, or a return to ideological engagement over the emptiness of postmodernism, has their reading public see them as the heroes of ‘battlers’ or perhaps depicts them both as the modern day Man from Snowy River. In whatever form the public choses to see them, it is especially important to remember that the cultural production of this context is produced within the confines of a converged media landscape. Indeed, it is the extra-literary, the para-publishing phenomenon, or what the French critic, Gerard Genette terms, the ‘epitext’ that provides these authors with a point of entry into the marketplace to capitalise on their craft.

At this point it would be helpful to make clear some of the effects of cultural convergence and elucidate a little on the importance of this culture as an ongoing process. Henry Jenkins, a renowned scholar in the area of media convergence culture, points out that convergence culture is more than just a technological shift in contemporary society. In The Cultural Logic of Media Convergence, he maintains that convergence culture ‘alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres and audiences.’ Jenkins is also cognizant of the jargon used in media and popular culture and for this reason offers a glossary of core terms in his seminal publication, Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide. This fifteen-page glossary helps to create a greater understanding of the new idioms and cultural changes taking place within a contemporary mediatised society. Three of the most important (and helpful) definitions from the glossary are:

**Collective intelligence:** Pierre Levy’s term to refer to the ability of virtual communities to leverage the knowledge and expertise of their members, often through large-scale collaboration and deliberation.

**Convergence:** A word that describes technological, industrial, cultural, and social changes in the ways media circulates within our culture. Some common ideas referenced by the term include the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media

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10 The winning portrait may be viewed on the Art Gallery of New South Wales’ website through this link: http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/prizes/archibald/2003/22978/

11 A useful publication for an in-depth study of Genette’s *paratext, epitext* and *peritext* is: Gerard Genette *Paratext: Thresholds of Interpretations* (Cambridge University Press, 1997).


industries, the search for new structures of media financing that fall at the interstices between old and new media, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who would go almost anywhere in search of the kind of entertainment experiences they want.\textsuperscript{14}

**Participatory culture**: Culture in which fans and other consumers are invited to actively participate in the creation and circulation of new content.\textsuperscript{15}

In a literary context, these practices are generating paradigm shifts which function to modify the modes and perceptions of authorship, and as such are clearly fashioning a contemporary literary culture that locates the literary side-by-side with media and entertainment. A good example of the flow of content across media platforms and the new form of media financing is the Lexus sponsorship of *Cloudstreet* the miniseries, based on the novel by Tim Winton. In the online Lexus advertisement two worlds collide in the design of the ‘collaborative’ image. It shows a picture of Fish’s character hovering spread-eagled in mid-air over the Swan River, and located beneath him, almost floating on the waterline in large bold typeface are the words: ‘Lexus takes a drive down CloudStreet.’\textsuperscript{16} On inspection, the advertisement’s seemingly incompatible content of (canonical) literature and luxury car sales might be disconcerting to some lovers of Australian literature. However, within the framework of convergence culture and a postmodern market-driven milieu, these two traditionally incompatible entities, literary authorship and popular media entertainment are now seen to communicate in a co-operative nature. It is the expert collaboration seen in the design of the advertisement, all be it media-manoeuvring, which skilfully overcomes any cultural problematising in its reception. Indeed, it is the flow of content across multiple media platforms that is transforming the uses of literature. John Hartley, a distinguished media and cultural studies theorist points out that

we have historically been more comfortable collaborating with state institutions than private corporations. But, in an era of privatization, cultural policy is increasingly being set not by governmental bodies, but by media companies.\textsuperscript{17}

Moreover, Hartley offers a timely warning, stressing that ‘we lose the ability to have any real influence over the directions that our culture takes if we do not find ways to engage in active dialogue with media industries.’\textsuperscript{18} Therefore, an understanding of the effects of these changes in the postmodern public sphere and an acceptance of them is particularly important, as they may equate to the very existence of literary studies in the twenty-first century.

**Convergence Culture, Transmedia Storytelling and Bourdieu’s Anti-Economic Logic**

Literary celebrity and how it is practiced and negotiated is a form of representation/re-articulation of literary culture. With this in mind, I now wish to discuss Pierre Bourdieu’s ‘anti-economic logic,’ a theory that determines the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14}ibid., p.282.
\item \textsuperscript{15}ibid., p.290.
\item \textsuperscript{18}ibid., p.42.
\end{itemize}
expressive-aesthetic activities of literature and art, in which the creative process identifies a charismatic ideology. This theory, very much a part of the conventional discourse on authorship, which sees the author as a charismatic genius, is, I argue, disrupted by convergence culture’s changing modes of audience involvement and participation. According to Bourdieu, after the collapse of the hegemonic forms of aristocratic and ecclesiastical patronage, culture gradually transformed itself into ‘a field of relations governed by specific logic: [the] competition for cultural legitimacy.’ The term ‘field’ in a Bourdieuan sense, can be described as a semi-autonomous, structured system with its own internal logic, rules of operation and inherently hierarchical relationship created by the struggle between agents for which form of capital is appropriate to that field – the principal forms being symbolic, economic and cultural.

In addition to the above account of the ‘field,’ the structured system of Bourdieu’s field of cultural production can roughly be divided into two subfields: the ‘pure’ subfield of restricted production, that when in relation to literary celebrity, focuses on the individualisation and the aesthetic genius of the author, and the other, the ‘extended’ subfield of large-scale economic production, including commercial marketing and mass media. Bourdieu calls attention to the dynamic nature of these two subfields and their constant interaction and engagement, so that the field of cultural production as a whole, is not only ‘a field of forces, but is also a field of struggles tending to transform or conserve this field of forces.’ However, my point is, what if the two opposite poles or subfields were not ‘transformed’ or ‘conserved’ but fundamentally disrupted to produce a new cultural space? Since the 1970s, so profound have been the cultural changes in relation to mass media, and so extensive have been the shifts in the image and activities of the author, that I want to now argue a new space be acknowledged, a ‘liminal’ and convergence space, where the flow of content produces more of an opportunity for audience participation and co-creational activities. On the whole, large-scale co-creational activities are a relatively new paradigm in Australia, therefore, I wish to offer as an example an established enterprise such as Campfire in North America, a media company that uses multiple media platforms to engage the fans of particular novels, television series or video games to participate in the promotion of other media sites. One of Campfire’s major successes was helping to build buzz for the premier of the miniseries Game of Thrones based on George R.R. Martin’s series of historical fiction and high fantasy novels. The audience participation aspect entailed the readers of the novels be immersed in a fan engagement program based around the five senses. For instance, the strategy surrounding the sense of ‘taste’ involved a top chef creating a collection of dishes from the Seven Kingdoms of Westeros and distributing them in trucks around New York and Los Angeles.

Each day, a recipe video featuring Colicchio was released, and clues to the truck’s locations were posted on Facebook and Twitter. This resulted in long lines of fans waiting in anticipation and garnered widespread, mainstream press interest. These types of events are literary entertainment to fans as they want to be a part of the whole experience, either by involvement and participation, as Campfire

provided with its immersive fan engagement program based around the five senses, or through a co-creational literary experience that lets individuals create sections of the plot or build a character. In 2012, the Sydney Morning Herald did just this. It launched a collaborative writing project that allowed everyday Sydneysiders interested in writing, the opportunity to co-create a novel. The project was called ‘The Necklace: Sydney Writes Itself.’ The project team, supervised by Rose Powell, published the first chapter in the Summer Reading section of the newspaper and on the website set up for the project. After the initial set up, Powell said

everyone is welcome to write a chapter for the book provided it includes the necklace described in chapter one. Every chapter needs to be 1,500 to 2,000 words long, set in a different Sydney suburb and strongly described.  

If a member of the public’s chapter was not selected, he or she could still contribute to the project, submitting written information about a suburb, or by sending in pictures, or even by creating a short video clip. These could then be published with each chapter as the co-creational online novel developed. These types of literary projects are also currently taking place in schools’ libraries and English classrooms, sometimes between four or five schools with a shared Wiki enabling them to piece together their stories. Jenkins points out that ‘younger consumers have become information hunters and gatherers, taking pleasure in tracking down character backgrounds and plot points and making connections between different texts.’ If Jenkins’ acuity is correct, and I believe it is, in contemporary cultural practices where cultural convergence is occurring in the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others, it means that the subfield of restricted cultural production, the one that favours the myth of the author as a charismatic genius, would no longer function as one half of the field. Moreover, since participatory culture and collective intelligence now allow audiences to take part in the creative process, artistic value, then, could not solely be accredited to individual authors. A further example of how convergence culture is fracturing Bourdieu’s ‘anti-economic logic’ is through transmedia storytelling, which at its most basic level is described by Jenkins as

stories that unfold across multiple media platforms, with each medium making distinctive contributions. A story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics, and its world might be explored and experienced through game play.

Similar to Game of Thrones, a good example of transmedia storytelling in Australia is Tim Winton’s Cloudstreet. The novel is studied in the New South Wales’ Higher School Certificate Advanced English Course, and is enjoyed in other states’ secondary English curricula as an important literary text. The novel then was adapted as a television miniseries for Showcase, a subscription television channel only available on Foxtel, Optus and Austar television platforms. Also, ascribing yet another level to the text, is its advertising and marketing uses, as previously mentioned in the introductory section of this article. The figure of Winton is an

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interesting one in respect of media convergence, as his rise to fame mainly consisted of support from non-commercial national institutions. Nevertheless, his current transnational celebrity status now allows for funding from numerous commercial interests and recent media deals brokered with one of the world’s largest media entertainment conglomerates, Foxtel. Speaking on the subject of the Foxtel miniseries, Matt Tannock, from Marketing Acquisition of Lexus Australia, said that Cloudstreet was

perfectly aligned with Lexus’ target market who tend to be quite culturally minded. Among many of the leisure and pastime activities, the Lexus driver enjoys the simple pleasure of reading a good novel.26

Therefore, within a transmedia convergence culture, Cloudstreet clearly becomes an example of literary media storytelling. Its content unfolds across multiple media platforms, in the shape of online advertising, a television miniseries, and the novel itself is consumed by both the reading public and students as an educational resource. Thus, the core of my argument is, according to Bourdieu, ‘cultural capital is only gained when direct economic interests are either absent or concealed,’27 but if authors are now prepared to explicitly market their creative texts and join forces with commercial entertainment interests, effectively blending cultural and economic capital, then in respect to the literary, this undermines the binary of the cultural field in Bourdieu’s anti-economic logic. Adding weight to this argument is the audience participatory aspect of convergence culture, which as previously stated, fractures Bourdieu’s anti-economic logic through an author no longer completely functioning as one half of the restricted field of cultural production.

The Writers’ Festival as Literary Media Entertainment

Another clear expression of a literary media entertainment paradigm is the writers’ festival. In this setting, a postmodern popular culture tends to dissolve the boundaries between the ‘private’ and ‘public’ when generating its public media personas and fandom. Literary celebrity, now an intrinsic part of writers’ festivals, has created certain expectations around authors and their ability to entertain audiences at these cultural gatherings. With this in mind, one might start to speculate which is the most important – the writing or the performance? It is these ideological contestations and the current ambivalences surrounding the Australian literary celebrity that prompt the question, exactly what are the new roles and social functions of the celebrity author? I would like to argue that he or she is part of a more complex moment in a larger development questioning the politics of the literary, for example the struggles between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture and/or the blurring of boundaries between public and private. The public-private accordance is openly witnessed at writers’ festivals where attendees desire more knowledge of the private side of celebrity authors. A number of scholars have suggested that these actions are a search, or quest to find the ‘real’ author behind the star image. In Chris Rojek’s Celebrity he draws on George Herbert Mead’s theory of the ‘Veridical self’ (a split between public self and private self – ‘veridical’ being one’s true self, not one’s star persona).28 This quest for the ‘real’ undeniably helps to establish many authors as

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28 The American social psychologist, George Herbert Mead, makes a case in Mind, Self and Society (1934), that the split between the ‘I’ (the ‘veridical’ self) and the ‘Me’ (the self as seen by others) is the
public personalities, with the desire to extract confessional information from authors also working to produce continued interest in the writer. Undoubtedly, in a culture that values high visibility, just how much an author allows the public to see and know of them is likely to be a key factor in their success. Anne Galligan, after interviewing many writers, concluded that most authors 'believe that they need to be visible in the marketplace if they want to sell books' and echoing this sentiment is Kerryn Goldsworthy’s somewhat frank remark on writer visibility, saying that if they want to improve their sales, then they should get out there more and be a dancing bear. Although this comment is quite unseemly, it is accurate in regards to the necessity of high visibility in the life of a celebrity author. Moreover, it clearly points towards a new entertainment value being exacted by the public sphere. Goldsworthy is not the only literary critic to comment on the growing culture of authors required to be entertainers. Robert Dessaix, reluctant to adopt the role of author-entertainer spoke dismissively about the topic in his opening address at an Adelaide Writers’ Week, saying ‘writers now have to tap dance as well as write books.’

His disapproval of an intersecting cultural space between the paradigms of literature and entertainment is noteworthy and confirms Moran’s claims that, ‘The negotiation between pure profit making and ‘higher’ cultural values has produced intense debates and conflicted meanings around literary celebrity in contemporary culture.’

Wenche Ommundsen, author and academic, has examined the social and cultural dynamics of Australian writers’ festivals and maintains that a writer whose performance is too flippant or overbearing at a writers’ festival will be attributed with not taking their audience or the event seriously. From Ommundsen’s detailed analysis of literary festivals, it is clear that performance and entertainment are very much a part of these cultural gatherings. However, she also stresses that they are not without their tensions. In ‘Sex, Soap and Sainthood: Beginning to Theorise Literary Celebrity’ Ommundsen highlights these tensions in relation to globalisation and the small size of Australia’s literary market:

In Australia, for reasons undoubtedly related to the size of the literary market and the short history of the national literature, writers on the whole enjoy a relatively modest variety of fame … One might argue that globalisation of the literary marketplace if anything diminishes their status: overseas celebrity writers get star billing in bookshop displays and festival programs, the locals reduced to the role of warm-up or support artists.

The relegation of local writers in this instance, communicates that local or national literary events are not immune to the effects and consequences of global economics. Another relatively new site of convergence which feeds into the global economics and literary entertainment paradigms is the literary themed walking tour. In a sense,
this parallels the writers’ festival as participants take great pleasure in uncovering the touchstones of a writer’s life. This time, not by verbally extracting personal information, but by simply walking the same streets as a writer did, or staying at the same hotel or residence where a particular writer penned their most famous books. A literary walking tour operates in Melbourne, a city that has been awarded the honorary title of UNESCO City of Literature. This tour takes place four times a week and runs for approximately two and a half hours. An online advertisement for the tour states that:

The tour examines various literary styles from yesteryear right up to what is hip and happening right now. All located in the city and an easy walk between each stop ... Your tour will snake through the laneways, alleys and arcades to find out how writers first started to highlight our famous laneways, the fictional stories around the Gold Rush and 19th Century land speculation to stops where you, the participant, may be involved in our tour commentary!  

Yet another participatory activity is the self-drive literary tour, which is less restrictive time wise, as participants can choose the attractions they wish to visit and on which particular days. The eight-night self-drive literary tour of Ireland is a popular choice with participants able to visit the William Butler Yeats Exhibition and James Joyce Museum. Indeed, this is a type of literary entertainment to fans, as they don’t want to just read the books, but want to be a part of the whole experience, even if it simply constitutes a nostalgic visit to certain literary locales.

Literary Media Entertainment – The New Paradigm

The term literary media entertainment is a relatively new term in Australian literary circles, but its usage in North America is fast spreading. The David Black Literary Agency in Brooklyn, New York is a well-known literary agency which employs the term. An excerpt from their website’s ‘What we Do’ tab posted by Susan Raihofer, a literary media entertainment agent (her actual title), clearly shows how the publishing industry is interwoven with media entertainment:

Our mission is to bring quality books that will have an impact, move people, or entertain into the universe. We act as creative and business partners, managing authors’ literary careers and building their brand across all media. We work with co-agents throughout the world to negotiate foreign and film deals … Our in-house team is seeking out digital publishing opportunities as well as online marketing and social media strategies to further partner with our authors in this ever-changing marketplace.

Raihofer indicates that literary success is built across all media, and in essence, this is what convergence culture is all about, the flow of content across multiple media platforms. Besides the public relations and marketing work of literary agents, literary acolytes also work to raise the profile of their favourite authors... These fans are known as ‘literary brand ambassadors’ and are readers that have become intimately familiar with all the texts a writer has produced. They attend all the literary events such as writers’ festivals and writers’ book launches and; wish to

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discuss things, literary or otherwise on Facebook and other platforms of social media. They also wish to generate a buzz around an author’s texts creating excitement and awareness, thus building a positive atmosphere so that readers attach themselves to that particular author brand. In addition to literary brand ambassadors, literary celebrities are now very often finding themselves labelled as author brand-personalities. This classification happens when readers expect a certain style of writing from an author, otherwise known as the author’s ‘brand’. Readers worldwide recognise Stephen King’s popular style and this is what makes his name a brand. In Australia, Tim Winton is a literary brand, as his readers expect to find certain features in his novels, such as dominant female characters, a love of the ocean, and a book written in an easy-to-read language. So, for authors their names eventually become their brands. In fact, an author cannot be a literary celebrity if he or she does not have a brand, or at least be in the developmental stages of creating one. Therefore, apart from an author’s style of writing and social media activities, one might ask what other ingredients are necessary to transform the author into a literary brand-personality? Jennifer Aaker suggests the “big five” help to expound the symbolic and self-expressive function of a brand, and they are: sincerity, competence, excitement, sophistication, and ruggedness. Whereas Mrugank Thakor and Chiranjeev Kohli indicate that a brand’s origins should also be taken into consideration, for instance, in relation to this paper, Winton counterparts Western Australia, and Flanagan, Tasmania. Another, possibly even more important ingredient is what Marc Gobe labels as ‘emotional branding.’ He believes that people are interested in buying emotional experiences and states that:

Today, consumers do not want to be romanced by brands, but want to establish multifaceted, holistic relationships with them. People’s emotional bond with brands is influenced by knowing if brands behave well and are actively involved in making the world a better place.36

The extra-literary and philanthropically-focused environmental activities of Winton and Flanagan clearly emulate Gobe’s ideals of emotional branding in ‘making the world a better place.’ Like the author Kate Grenville, for many years Winton and Flanagan have ruffled political feathers and challenged prevailing hegemonic structures, and through their treatment of palpable political issues—whether penned or physically embarked upon—their exploits have created for each of them a strong and distinctive image in the public sphere. An image created predominantly by a media landscape and within the confines of a mediatised society.

Conclusion

As I have hopefully illustrated, literary celebrity is an ambivalent and ideologically contentious arena. That, when discussed within the emergent field of literary media entertainment, produces anxieties associated with ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture, absent boundaries between the public and private, and questions surrounding the ‘real’ or authentic image of the author, otherwise known as ‘veridical’ self. I suggested that ‘performance’ within a literary setting is a clear signal of the new entertainment value being exacted by contemporary audiences and offered writers’ festivals as an instance of this. The author Tim Winton was given as an example of an Australian

mediagenic author embracing the new paradigm of literary media entertainment and *Cloudstreet* was given as an illustration of transmedia storytelling and how the flow of content (canonical novel, educational resource, television miniseries, and advertiser of luxury cars) works within a convergence culture. Following this, I argued that the appearance of new participatory and co-creational modes of authorship and audience within a convergence culture fractures Bourdieu’s concept of anti-economic logic, thus shifting the terrain and logics of the perception of authorship. Moreover, authors’ extra-literary pursuits which are subsequently recorded, produced and disseminated by the media, all point toward contemporary literary celebrities, or literary mediagenics to be more precise, as being the first representatives of the new paradigm of literary media entertainment.