

Celebrities - as Advocates and Activists

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Ian McKellen

- Advocate for L.G.B.T.Q.I.A.+ rights
- Using his celebrity status to shine light on human rights abuses
- Coming out in Context of Section 28, 1988
- Tackling masculinity standards of the time and the acting industry
- Since 1988: Active in a variety of pro L.G.B.T.Q.+ organisations (McKellen, Webpage)
 - Co-founder „Stonewall“
 - visiting schools to tackle homophobic bullying
 - GLAAD Media Awards
 - FFLAG
 - Gay & Lesbian Friend Helpline Gloucestershire
 - The Albert Kennedy Trust
 - UK Lesbian & Gay Immigration Group
 - Writings to the press, at events or to the parliament

“Half of Hollywood is gay, yet in movies gay men don’t exist.”
(McKellen, Shoard)

1) Topics of Analysis

1. The Concept of *Celantrophy*
2. Heterosexuality dominating Homosexuality (film industry)
3. Celebrities and Social Media
4. Ian McKellen’s self-representation as an L.G.B.T.Q+ activist on

- on Instagram
- his Webpage
- Interviews

Context and Pictures



„No young person should have to choose between a safe space and who they are.“
(McKellen, Instagram)

2) Findings

Celebrities and *Celantrophy*

- Celebrities are widely idolized and “offer parables for the life of others” (Rojek 3)
- They have higher privileges than non-celebrities (Rojek 7): can make up for this inequality through activism -> McKellen
 - Celantrophy = “Migration of celebrities from entertainment into charity investment and humanitarian work” (Rojek 9)

Film Industry and Homosexuality

- Conservative hyper-masculinities dominate movies (Kellner 147)
- Major male biopics now start to critique hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy and renegotiate masculinity; however, still often homophobic and politically incorrect (Kellner 169)
- More gay sensibility through gay-themed movies (Kellner 171): McKellen as James Whale
 - Art imitates life: activists (as McKellen) demonstrate → News → Documentaries → Movies

2) Findings

Social Media

- Digital explosion of mass communication systems (Instagram) made direct connection to celebrities possible (Giles 3)
- Instagram = “tremendous cultural influence” (Mundy and Harry 100)
- Private/easy access to sexual diversity (Mundy and Harry 96)
- “Access to social media relatively democratic and diverse” (Mundy and Harry 105)
- Contemporary celebrities no longer entirely dependent on traditional media (Giles)
 - McKellen: embraces new way to communicate with (younger, more diverse) audience
 - Having role models makes coming out easier (Mundy and Harry 102)

Self-representation

- Webpage:
 - created and written by McKellen; presents pictures, organisations, writings on important causes and his own story (acting, coming out)
- Instagram:
 - created and edited by McKellen; shows pictures of his life and movies; shows pictures relating to activism (pride parade, aids awareness, etc.) → rainbow flag very often visible
- Interviews:
 - often gives interview regarding the topic of L.G.B.T.Q.+ rights/is presented in a positive manner (BBC America); stands up for his opinion e.g. against Hollywood (Shoard)

3) Conclusion

- McKellen uses his celebrity status to fight for L.G.B.T.Q.+ rights
- He uses his Instagram Account (pictures), his Webpage (pictures and writings) and interviews to present himself as an activist and to shine light on causes he is active in
- By outing himself and being an activist, he challenges masculinity standards in the industry and becomes a role model for his audience

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