

Huang, Weizi, Lingnan University, Hong Kong

Han Han and the Making of Chinese Alternative Cultural Celebrity

Cultural celebrities here refer to a specific kind of mass mediated intellectuals who attract a large number of fans. Distinct from mainstream Chinese cultural celebrities who are university professors and famous for traditional culture, Han Han, a most prominent alternative cultural celebrity, is a high school dropout. Lack of institutional cultural capital, Han Han accumulates cultural capital through alternative ways, especially the way of “[c]ritiquing China, one blog post at a time” (*TIME*, 2010). He is on the list of *TIME* the 100 most influential people in the world this year. In this paper, I will examine the making of Han Han’s celebrity status and images, focusing on four main forces in the field, i.e. himself, publisher, media and fans. On one hand, Han Han is gradually constructed from rebellious post-’80s writer to public intellectual. And on the other hand he negotiates his identities of most popular blogger (almost 400 million hits in 4 years), best-selling author and champion race-car driver, negotiates his power between China’s censorship which may silence him and Western media representation which pushes him to be an opposite hero, and also negotiates his capitals between commercialization and political resistance.