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# A LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

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WOW !!! What a journey this has been...

First, we would like to thank everyone who has been involved with the project. Each contribution, whether academic or financial, has been a real help, and we couldn't have done it without them. We are very proud of this year's undergraduate journal, as it represents the variety of approaches that inspire our students. Ranging from film to new media, from tween television to viral videos, every essay addresses a topic that is relevant to today's film and media field. This edition of Focus, visually influenced by the Pop Art movement, aims to survey today's film and media trends by addressing topics related to gender, sexuality, and politics. Some essays also investigate the relationship between traditional mediums (film, TV) and the ever changing new medias, such as social networks. Designed in three sections, the journal progresses from film, to TV, to new media, reflecting the shifts that are occurring in today's society.

We would like to thank the Film & Media Department staff and faculty for all their support and help. A special thanks to Dana Welch for his time and help with layout.

Finally, a huge thank you to Eric Stafford for all his work creating such a "kick-ass" cover. It really does reflect our vision of this year's edition.

With no further ado, we are very proud and excited to present to you Vol. XXXII of the Focus Media Journal.

Yours truly,



Colleen Klinefelter



Darrell Hall

Editors-in-Chief  
2011-2012



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# LIVING IN A MOVIE SCENE







# FLYING BACK IN TIME:

## THE AMERICAN FILM MANUFACTURING COMPANY

by Brenna Osborn

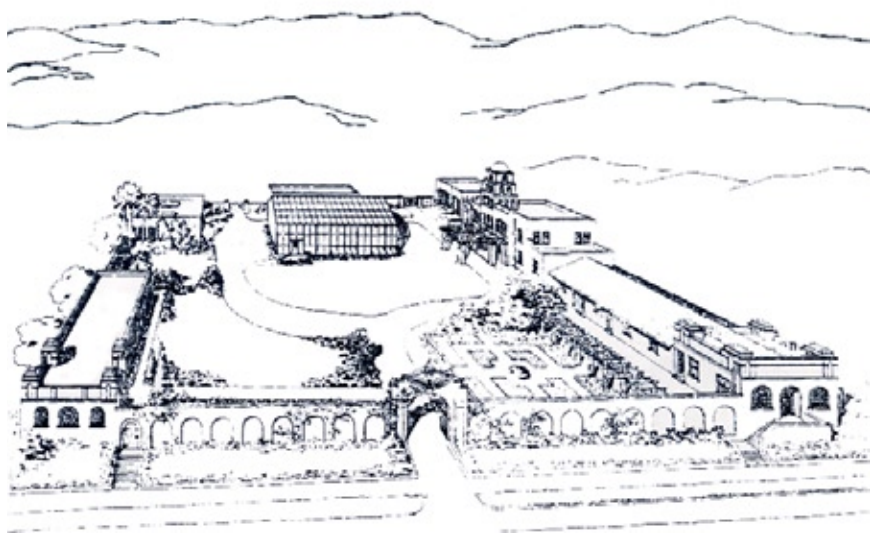
If you ever wander around downtown Santa Barbara and make your way down Mission Street, you would see parking lots and storefronts – the same old fare downtown has to offer. However, if you happened to step through a time warp and ended up in the year 1913, you would come upon a major film studio named the American Film Manufacturing Company located on the block between State and Chapala. Many people, including native Santa Barbarians, don't know about The American Film Manufacturing Company (nicknamed Flying A and later renamed "The American Film Company") and its significance in early motion picture history. The Flying A was a major force in the film industry from 1910 to 1920, competing against licensed manufacturers such as Biograph and Edison as well as new "independent studios like Metro and Universal.<sup>1</sup> The rise and fall of Flying A reflects the many challenges independent film studios at the time faced in trying to maintain a profitable workplace while the early motion picture industry was gaining speed.

The American Film Manufacturing Company was founded by Samuel Hutchinson, John Freuler, Charles Hite and Harry Aitken in Chicago<sup>2</sup>. Production started in 1910 using a system of three companies – "two working on the studio or surrounding locales while the third was sent out to concentrate on westerns"<sup>3</sup>. While production continued in Chicago, the western unit would move more than five times to locations such as San Antonio, Texas and Lakeside, California until they found La Mesa, California. La Mesa, located near San Diego, had preferable weather conditions and access to scenery that would be perfect for westerns. They

were a one-director shop at the La Mesa location, led by director Alan Dwan. Dwan and his company would produce two films a week at this location. This only lasted for about eight or nine months, however. The studio decided its needs would be better filled in beautiful Santa Barbara.

A number of suggestions have been offered for why Flying A moved from La Mesa to Santa Barbara. The ease of access to beach and mountains was definitely a plus, however both were available in the La Mesa location. Dana Driskel, who teaches production at UCSB, believes that social life in Santa Barbara may explain the move. Many Midwestern socialites owned mansions in the city. The wife of Sam Hutchinson, the president of Flying A, was "somewhat of a social climber" who would have probably "much preferred to be in a town that had some significance to it which La Mesa didn't really have"<sup>4</sup>. So, the studio packed its things and headed north. While many individuals took the train, the equipment and livestock had to be cattle driven up, which took around two weeks. During these two weeks, production continued in Chicago – otherwise the studio would have lost too much time in production and would have been idle. After the carefully planned move, production was ready to take off in Santa Barbara on July 6, 1912.

During the next eight years, the studio would take over production entirely from Chicago and rise to success. By 1915, Santa Barbara was producing films at a rate of nearly one per day<sup>5</sup>. The core of their production, especially in the beginning, was short films that would play much like a television show would today. A cast of recurring actors would either act the same



1913 Mission Street Studio Illustration.

or different roles in various short films that would be shown every Tuesday or every second Wednesday, for instance. These shorts were a hit and Flying A focused on them until a shift began to occur throughout the motion picture industry.

In 1915, some leaders in the industry would start to question whether films were merely entertaining “widgets” or a form of “art” that deserved the right to free speech and a higher standing in culture. This change is reflected in the decision to drop of the word “Manufacturing” from The American Film Company’s title. Many film studios made this change as well – indicating that the view of films was shifting from a commercial to an artistic endeavor<sup>6</sup>. This is also about the time when feature films started to appear more frequently. In 1916, Flying A switched from producing shorts to primarily creating feature films. This resulted in a large loss of jobs and many people working out of Flying A were forced either to find a new career or move to Los Angeles<sup>7</sup>. The decline of the American Film Company around 1920 happened as

a result of a number of things, including World War I, the great influenza epidemic of 1918-1919 and the depression of 1921<sup>8</sup>.

Though the life of the American Film Company was a bit short-lived, the studio was also an important training ground for many technical staff who moved on to Los Angeles after a career in Santa Barbara. Many directors and cinematographers advanced to create great things in the industry. Reaves Eason, whose name is relatively unknown today, began his career at Flying A and then afterward became a second unit director on major films in Hollywood. In this role he was in charge of staging action scenes and dramatic spectacles in many films, including the famous chariot race in *Ben Hur* and the burning of Atlanta in *Gone with the Wind*. One of the most well-known directors associated with Flying A is Victor Fleming, who later directed *Gone with the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz*<sup>9</sup>.

By exploring Flying A’s history, we can see that it played a major part of the film industry during the teens – both

by producing and distributing films in Chicago, Santa Barbara and London as well as by training technical talent who went on to highly successful film careers. Today, not many people have delved into the studio's rich history. Timothy Lyons was one of the first to write an academic study of the studio and was the one who inspired Dana Driskel to begin research on the topic. Driskel has been researching Flying A studios for a number of years now, sorting through as many trade magazines and Flying A films as he can find. He currently maintains a website that displays the results of his research on the people, films and company of Flying A. Each person and film has its own page, which results in close to 3000 discrete pages of information available to the public online; and the research just keeps growing.

In addition to the website and his own research, Driskel has given a number of talks about the studio in Santa Barbara as well as in San Diego. Recently he has helped put together a museum exhibit at the Santa Barbara Historical Museum that is solely devoted to Flying A and its history. The exhibit contains many interesting artifacts from the studio's time – including scripts, posters, photographs and even stage money that was used at Flying A either for dummy money on film or for circulation within the studio. A screen has also been set up to play various films from Flying A that are rarely seen anywhere else. This exhibit has been chosen to run this year because the centennial

of The American Film Company is also coming up.

On July 7, 2012 – a day after The American Film Company's official founding – Driskel will be showing a number of films from the studio accompanied by live music in the Pollock Theater. In order to help plan this event, he will also be teaching a class over the summer that allows students to gain hands-on experience researching this historic company and being involved in this major event. There is still a massive amount of research to be done, according



Actors Fischer and Pollard on set:  
lunch break at Montecito mansion.

to Driskel every time he adds an item to his website, “it’s like throwing a pebble into the ocean”<sup>10</sup>. Research on Flying A is somewhat manageable in comparison to a studio such as Universal, which has a much longer history. For one man alone the Flying A project is a daunting task but one that Driskel enjoys. He believes there is always something new to be discovered and it is important to study the waxing and waning of a production company in the past in order to know how a production company operates today. “Understanding how a company could evolve, thrive and

then collapse I believe could be studied over and over again”<sup>11</sup>. This “funny little studio” served to stimulate jobs in Santa Barbara as well as offered another location in which to produce entertaining films. Its decline led to the loss of jobs locally but also fostered the growth of companies in Hollywood. By looking back at The American Film Manufacturing Company, we are able to celebrate its rich history and contributions to the film world as well as apply the lessons of that history to production companies in the present.



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# FLYING A:

AN INTERVIEW WITH DANA DRISKEL

by Brenna Osborn



**Brenna Osborn: Please introduce yourself and how did you get interested in the Flying A?**

**Dana Driskel:** I'm Dana Driskel. I teach at UCSB. My day job is teaching production however I've been interested in film history for a number of years and particularly silent film history. The reason I got involved with the Flying A is that I realized they were here in this town and I didn't understand why. The first time that I took them at all seriously was when I located Tim Lyons' PhD dissertation. Timothy Lyons is still the only person that has done anything of academic note related to the Flying A.

The "Flying A" is simply a nickname established by the film company and refers to the A in the word American because this was the American Film Manufacturing Company. They dropped the word Manufacturing in 1915 and the reason for that was because the motion picture industry was moving from something that was manufacturing widgets to something that could perhaps manufacture "art." Universal dropped the word manufacturing from their studio name the same year. This is also a time when the motion picture industry is being challenged in the courts on the very important question of whether you can grant the motion picture industry the same rights and privileges that we give to the press and argue that its product has more value than simply a widget. As it turned out the Supreme Court said that it didn't have any such value and the motion picture industry suffered under that limitation for decades after that. But that whole change in motion picture history really takes place in those moments midway through the 1910s.

I love the American Film Company because they start in the year 1910 and, for all intents and purposes, are done making films by 1920. But for that decade they were right there as a competitor with the major organizations. Certainly they were a major player in the mid-1910s but lose out in the end. Now we have the survivors, for instance Universal. They were there from the days of Flying A's beginning but many of the others, ones that we think of as the stalwarts of the motion picture industry, really hadn't gotten going when Flying A did. Paramount Studios right now is celebrating themselves as 100 years old but that's not true. Paramount as a producer of motion pictures isn't going to happen for a couple more years - then they can celebrate their centennial. We have a centennial for Flying A here in Santa Barbara happening in July because that's when they came to this town to make films but corporately they were already a major concern in Chicago. They had their primary distribution in Chicago for domestic. For worldwide it was in London. Even in their trademark it said London, Chicago and Santa Barbara. Santa Barbara was the production portion.

**Q: Chicago was distribution and London was worldwide distribution?**

**A:** Chicago made films, particularly in the beginning. Once they got the Santa Barbara studio up and running they stopped making films in Chicago. There was a good two or three years before they said we can get it all done in Santa Barbara.

But getting back to your original question, Tim Lyons dissertation made me think that there might be something more there. The reason Lyons picked the Flying A

was that he was a Gaucho. He had gone here as an undergrad and then went to Iowa to get his PhD. I think Iowa is a pretty big gun in the film criticism realm, it definitely was back then. So he was going to one of the preeminent film schools doing his dissertation on this funny little company. I think his dissertation is online now.

There have been a couple of book attempts. There was someone who fluffed up his Master's thesis and it goes fine as far as he goes but only really consults the newspapers. There is another fellow who has written more of a coffee table picture book about the Flying A. He has a little bit of information about it but some of it's wrong and there's not much of it anyway. It's good for what it is and it's great to be able to leaf through the pictures to see what had happened and what they were. That's why, to an extent, I created the website - as a way of getting the imagery up there. Also starting to slowly but surely to put the puzzle together.

**Q: What are your main sources?**

**A:** First I exhausted the trade magazines. That meant lots of straining my eyes over the microfilm. Many of these things are being scanned now – it's not all there and things that probably won't be put on the internet, especially in my life span, are the things like the *Santa Barbara Newspress* or the *Santa Barbara Morning Press* as it was called then. This is a real resource for understanding the day to day of how the company worked. That's what's somewhat different about my research. This is a research of a company, of a process. I love systems and I love to understand how systems work. And I don't care too much about individual personalities. Some people would spend a lot of time focusing on a particular film star and finding out all they can about that film star. I really don't have much interest in that sort of approach. However understanding how a company could evolve, thrive and then collapse, I believe that could be studied over and over again. Right now there are companies that are growing magnificently and they will eventually tank.

**Q: I saw in the exhibition that on the displayed timeline Flying A had over 200 films produced in 1915 and the next year they had around 50. Why is that?**

**A:** What happens there is they shift from short form to features. Once you are producing features you are producing far less film. Up until then – in the early teens - you have to understand television. It's much more like TV. You create a set of players who people expect to see in the theaters every Tuesday night or every second Wednesday. Not necessarily an episodic that comes back to the same players playing the same roles.

If you looked at the exhibition you saw that I made a distinction between series and serials. They had a character named Calamity Ann and she had a series of films where she continued to be the same character and she had a supporting cast that continued playing their parts. They were Calamity Ann films. But in a lot of the other ones they would play different roles and wouldn't identify a star.

In 1916 the company makes a decision to go all the way with the direction that the motion picture industry was taking – toward feature filmmaking. A lot of people lost their jobs. It was a big tragedy in Santa Barbara because suddenly there were a lot of people out of work. They couldn't go across the street and work for anybody else. They had to leave town. It was either find a new career or head to L.A. And the exodus begins in 1916. The actors are replaced with major contract people, one of whom was somewhat famous – Mary Miles Minter.

If you ask people if they know silent film history they likely won't know any of the film

actors of Flying A but they will know, once it's pointed out to them, a lot of the technical staff. Directors and cinematographers did well. One person that people don't know was here was Reeves Eason. Eason got to direct one-reelers and was doing modern work. He became an important 2<sup>nd</sup> unit director and staged the chariot race in *Ben Hur*. Most people have seen Reeves Eason's work whether they know it or not. He did big dramatic spectacles. A lot of the backbone of Hollywood, behind the scenes, at one point or another worked at Flying A. The most significant one somebody will usually mention is Victor Fleming who directed *Gone with the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz*. They always point to him wherever there's a quick history of Flying A. All he did was assistant camera at Flying A. He learned and got going there but then was off and running. The guy who really learned his trade and became important was Frank Borzage. He truly did learn how to make movies at Flying A.

**Q: For the events, what have you put on and what other events are happening?**

**A:** There was the opening of the museum exhibition and I've given a lot of talks about the Flying A, mostly here in town but also sometimes in places where the studio was significant, or instance in San Diego.

**Q: Why was San Diego significant?**

**A:** Because that's where the production people were before they came to Santa Barbara. They came from a town called La Mesa that is where San Diego State is. They were there for eight or nine months and then they came up here. They made a lot of films down there. Allan Dwan was the director. They were a one-director shop producing two films a week.

**Q: Why did they move?**

**A:** That of course is one of those things that various people have different approaches to. I think that all of the standard things – they could get better scenery and this and that all played a part but I really think that it had to do with the fact that Santa Barbara had a society which was a tangible asset that people in the Midwest appreciated. There were people from the Midwest with mansions here. The company's president – who most people don't know much about - was Samuel Hutchinson. Sam Hutchinson's wife was a social climber and if she was going to be coming out to visit she much preferred to be in a town that had some social significance to it. I really think they thought Santa Barbara would be classier. They did get the use of the mountains and the seashore but to a certain extent they had those things relatively close at hand in San Diego. So I don't think you can argue they came up here exclusively for the terrain.

**Q: What's the next event coming up?**

**A:** That will be the centennial on July 6<sup>th</sup>. That's when they arrived. All of that can be questioned because when do you determine when you arrive? When the first person comes to town or the last person? They trickled in. Took two weeks to take equipment by horseback. Many came up by automobile or train but when it came to hauling the lab equipment and livestock you could ship them all but they just cattle drove them. That took a couple of weeks. So they shut down production and in the interim they were making films back in Chicago.

They didn't have a problem from a distribution standpoint. It would've been a problem if they had shut down and didn't have any distribution because you can't be relied on to put things in the theaters. Then someone else can get that work. Then Universal gets that Thursday night and you don't and you can't get that back. It was carefully planned and orchestrated.

One of the things that has always bothered me about the telling of the motion picture history is that there's this indication that it was all loose with no structure and everyone was running around like chickens and freelancing at the beginning of the teens. It's not the case. And certainly by 1920 it's very much an industry.

**Q: I saw on the website a documentary was made, who made it?**

**A:** I did. I met Tim Lyons later on when I was in graduate school. He came out to USC one time and since I knew his book I wanted to talk to him and I ended up interviewing him and then set that stuff aside. We got to know each other through professional organizations and kept track of each other. Then he passed away – he died relatively young. That was 2002 and I decided that - somewhat in memorial I think - I said, I have to get back on this thing, I should do something. And I was always looking for films to make anyway so I made a one hour documentary and it was premiered here at Campbell Hall and I decided I would just make it available to people.

**Q: Where is it available?**

**A:** By request to a certain extent. I'm putting it up on YouTube -the first ten minutes are up there now. But there is still a lot more to say. So I went back to the archives and went through them not with the eye of a documentarian – like I can't use that shot, that won't work – instead I was looking at how they worked as a process - the stuff that people really saw. Perhaps many people did see *The Birth of a Nation* – I don't really care. A lot of people saw *Star Wars* but to say that all films in the last third of the 20th century looked like *Star Wars* is just a total misreading of history. Nobody thought they were making something really remarkable, which is why I think the company is interesting to study. And it is also manageable. If I were studying Universal I'd have to study from 1909 to 1912 – that's a lot of change and chaos. Flying A is about all one person can handle.

**Q: Is there a lot left to uncover?**

**A:** I have seen over 100 Flying A films. I don't think anybody, outside the people that worked there, has seen that many. It means I've done a lot of travelling. I'll be going back to the Library of Congress in June and will see one of the films that they have recently identified called *The Ranch Girl*. My website helped them to find it. I've helped four or five authors bring books out. There was one who is writing a book on Allan Dwan and to explain him you have to explain his early days.

**Q: Are a lot of the films you saw in the Library of Congress?**

**A:** Library of Congress has perhaps the largest gathering of the films. The British Film Institute has quite a few because of the London office. All the films came out of London that



weren't used here in the States. It's a good thing that other countries are collecting these films because sometimes there are remarkable differences between the American version and the European version. Another place that has a collection is the Netherlands Film Museum. And from that one I've noticed the profound differences between films – scenes that would've been cut out. We didn't have a national censorship over here but various groups pulled things out and there's this one Mary Miles Minter film (*The Innocence of Lizette*), there are some shots in it that I know wouldn't have played in the south. If we found a print that played in Atlanta those shots would not be in it but they were in it for the Dutch audience.

Likewise they made a film called *Purity* which was somewhat of a significant film. The first feature film that they had nudity to a varying degree. People had posed in the nude in films but they hadn't moved and that was a big deal to see the human body moving on motion picture screens. There is one copy of it in Paris, one last known surviving copy. I brought it out here and showed it in Campbell Hall. So that's part of what I do, as much outreach as I can. Find these films and bring them to places where they never get seen under normal circumstances.

**Q: Anything else planned after the centennial?**

**A:** Every time I do anything on the website it's like throwing a pebble into the ocean. There's so much, 1200 some odd films, all that have to be accounted for. I have story summaries for the vast majority and can identify the cast or at least the primary leads for the majority of the films. But every one of the cast has their own page so I have about 1400 staff members – every one of them is a page - all of which could be fleshed out and I could learn more about. And the vast majority we may never see them again. It's only that record that will exist.

I did discover, just earlier this year, a film that was misidentified - which happens all the time - but it turned out that it has a comedian in it named Ben Turpin. Most people don't know who Ben Turpin is but he's an interesting comedian who had crossed eyes and was very distinctive. He was contemporary with Chaplin and funny. But anyway this is an early piece of his work and I didn't know that he had ever worked for Flying A until I saw the film. There's always something new to be discovered.

**Q: Any closing statements?**

**A:** I still keep being intrigued by the process of production during that era. It has also helped stimulate my interest in thinking about production methods of different eras of film history. So in the fall I will be teaching a new course called Historic Production where the class will produce in three different eras. We will study the working method, figure out what the thrust of that era was and produce a scene using that same methodology and technology. One will be the silent film era, one will be big studio production, maybe 40s era, and one to represent the independent movement of the 1970s. Of course the silent era is the one I'm most interested in. I guess what that means is to try to think about production and its place in film history because I think it's underserved.

The whole goal of these companies - they weren't erected to make art - they were put together with the idea of putting food on the table and to make a profit and that hasn't changed as far as I can tell.

# NEW DECADE, NEW RULES, NEW READINGS:

## FEMALE CHARACTERS AND HOMOSEXUAL UNDERTONES IN *SCREAM 4*

by Corie Anderson

A prominence of female characters and complex sexual relations have always been essential elements of the teen slasher film, whose conventions show “sexually attractive young women being stalked by a knife-wielding, virtually indestructible psychotic serial killer.”<sup>1</sup> Films like *Black Christmas* (dir. B. Clark 1974) and *Halloween* (dir. J. Carpenter 1978) gave birth to the teen slasher film, a subgenre of horror commercially popular with youth (especially female) audiences of the 1970s and 80s. In 1996, *Scream* and its two sequels (dir. W. Craven, 1997, 2000) revived the dormant subgenre by using “postmodern” techniques to call attention to generic conventions.<sup>2</sup> The *Scream* films explicitly reference the familiarity of slasher conventions that made the genre so profitable through characters well versed in horror mythology, dialogical references to classic horror films, and explicit commentary on generic rules (mostly by the character of Randy), in addition to an adherence to slasher standards itself. The films’ young characters who discuss and argue about horror films were relatable to the “media obsessed and, hence, pop-culture literate, extremely self-aware” teen audience of the 1990s, allowing *Scream* to prove how popular slasher films could be again.<sup>3</sup>

Eleven years after *Scream 3* was released, the *Scream* trilogy became a series with *Scream 4* (dr. W. Craven 2011). The fourth film continues *Scream*’s commentary on the slasher genre’s “trend toward spin-offs, sequels, and imitators” and highlights the timely tradition of remakes by placing itself in that category.<sup>4</sup> While many feminist theorists have written on female characters and sexuality in slasher films, including *Scream*, there is limited scholarship about this latest addition to the series. This essay

will show how *Scream 4* continues typical slasher portrayals of gender and sexuality through the generic roles of victim and The Final Girl in the characters of Sidney Prescott and Jill Roberts. However, this essay will also prove that *Scream 4* transcends its series and subgenre by examining Jill as a representation of horror’s Female Psychopath, homosexual undertones in Jill and Sidney’s relationship, and the sexually ambiguous characters Kirby Reed and Robbie Mercer.

*Scream 4* begins when victim-turned-survivor Sidney Prescott returns to her hometown of Woodsboro, California where a ghost-masked killer (nicknamed Ghostface) had stalked her and her friends fifteen years earlier. Sidney’s return triggers a new Ghostface to emerge, once again targeting Sidney and killing those around her. *Scream 4*, like the previous *Scream* films, focuses mainly on Sidney and her friends Gale Weathers and Dewey Riley, but also introduces a younger generation of characters, led by Sidney’s High School cousin Jill Roberts, as targets of the murders. The self-reflexive positioning of *Scream 4* as a horror remake (of *Scream*) allows an interesting interaction between this older and younger generation. Initially, Jill takes on Sidney’s *Scream* role of innocent victim targeted by Ghostface, and in the context of *Scream 4*’s remake status, would go on to lead a new trilogy of films. However, in the end, Jill is revealed as Ghostface, the whole younger generation of characters have been killed off, and Sidney, Gale, and Dewey once again defeat the killer and survive.

From the beginning, the audience is meant to draw a comparison between Jill and Sidney, whose similarities are explicitly announced visually and in dialogue. This parallel is shown with the girls’ matching hairstyles and color, similar-looking high



Sydney's return triggers a new Ghostface to emerge.

school boyfriends, and scenes that re-create moments from *Scream* when Sidney was Jill's age. After getting a threatening call from Ghostface, Jill's ex-boyfriend Trevor climbs through her bedroom window to console her. When Sidney walks in on them, she seems to experience déjà vu (and so does the audience) as Sidney's high school boyfriend Billy had done the same thing after she was attacked in *Scream*. This is helped by the fact Trevor is strikingly similar to Billy, with his short dark hair, good looks, and "popular" status in high school. At this moment, Sidney makes the connection overt when she tells Jill, "You remind me of me." This bedroom scene also introduces the underlying homosexuality of Jill and Sidney's relationship, as Sidney's interruption of the heterosexual couple creates an awkward moment between the three characters. As Sidney enters the room, Jill is startled and suddenly moves away from Trevor, her voice nervously referring to him as her *ex-boyfriend*. Sensing the tension, Trevor moves toward the window to leave, distancing himself from Jill and

coupling Jill and Sidney in close proximity. As Trevor rambles about picking up a copy of Sidney's book, Jill rolls her eyes and sighs in exasperation until he finally leaves. Jill's embarrassment in the company of Sidney hints at this attraction to her cousin and her excitement in recreating an emotional scene from Sidney's past.

Jill seems poised to recreate Sidney's role in *Scream*, as she initially fulfils the slasher conventions associated with The Final Girl character who "tends to stand apart from the others" and is "intelligent, resourceful, and usually not sexually active."<sup>5</sup> As the classic Final Girl, there is absolutely no hint of Sidney's sexuality in *Scream 4* (or even *Scream 3*). And while Jill's character has romantic attention from her cheating ex-boyfriend Trevor, the sexual element of their relationship is in the past and she visually abstains from sexual activity for most of the film. Once Jill is exposed as Ghostface however, she also exposes the more sexual side of herself, contradicting with qualities of The Final Girl and unleashing her repressed female

(bi)sexuality that would threaten the binary-driven, patriarchal society.<sup>6</sup> Jill aggressively kisses her accomplice Charlie, suggesting a sexual relationship, before stabbing him in the heart and taking castrating revenge on Trevor by shooting him in the groin. This much is clear: Jill is not *Scream 4*'s Final Girl.

In the ending scene, Sidney eventually defeats Jill's threat and positions herself as the film's true Final Girl. Jill is thus proven to be the Female Psychopath, who shows that a "woman transforms into a monster when she is sexually and emotionally unfulfilled."<sup>7</sup> After Jill's reveal, she takes revenge on Trevor when she says, "I am not the girl you cheat on" and shoots him in the genitals. She then tells Sidney how it felt growing up in her family with, "all I ever heard was Sidney this and Sidney that" and exposes her motivation for murder when she cries, "well now I'm the special one!" The sexual betrayal of Trevor's infidelity and emotional distress of Sidney's overshadowing victimhood cause Jill to transform into the Female Psychopath. Her reference to a childhood haunted by Sidney's celebrity also reveals the extent of Jill's (possibly lesbian) fixation on Sidney, one that has spanned a lifetime.

Once this change is revealed, the two characters (of Sidney and Jill) are consistent with Deborah Jermyn's reading of dangerous women in horror and noir.<sup>7</sup> One way Jermyn attributes conflict between oppositional females is as an "external representation of the victim/wife's own internal battle."<sup>8</sup> In *Scream 4*, Sidney returns to Woodsboro to promote her book, *Out of Darkness*, in which she ironically writes about transcending the "victim" label to become a survivor. After Ghostface returns to target her however, Sidney reverts to her victim status, something she tries to escape and Jill desperately seeks to steal throughout the film. In scenes between Jill, Sidney, and Ghostface, Jill successfully acts as innocent victim while Sidney

repeatedly tries to protect her, physically fighting Ghostface in Jill's defense. Here it is not Jill's heterosexual partner Trevor who fights for her, but her female role model (and strong Final Girl) Sidney, showing their close, loving relationship. Near the end of *Scream 4*, Jill's accomplice Charlie tells her exactly what she wants to hear with, "You're the perfect victim." Jill is delighted by the compliment, but seconds later she stabs Charlie in the heart and explains, "What the media really loves...is a sole survivor." Her sexual manipulation and rejection of Charlie position Jill as the noir Female Psychopath character (or even *Femme Fatale*), and once again hint at her homosexual connection with Sidney, violently choosing a female over her male partner Charlie and ex-boyfriend Trevor.

Jill's intense desire to become a victim is made explicit when, in the end, she stabs Sidney and says, "This has never been about killing you, it's been about becoming you." Jill's need to "become" Sidney also exemplifies Jermyn's idea of "doubling" and the "female doppelganger."<sup>10</sup> Here, Jill is dually the external representation of Sidney's internal struggle to overcome victimhood and a psychotic woman obsessed with taking over Sidney's life. This idea of the female doppelganger, famously exemplified in *Single White Female* (dir. B. Schroeder 1992) also carries the connotations of lesbianism in the antagonist's eerie physical and sexual obsession with the protagonist. Jill's friend Olivia is killed early in the film, mirroring the murder of Sidney's best friend Tatum in *Scream*. This early death places Jill as a victim of the attacks (aligning her with Sidney) and, once revealed she is the perpetrator, shows just how much Jill is willing to sacrifice, as she tells Sidney, "stay true to the original."

Beginning with the bedroom scene described earlier, *Scream 4* has many instances of Jill and Sidney "merging their identities."<sup>11</sup> Two shots at the end of the film

confirm this “disintegrating of boundaries between the heroine and her female foil.”<sup>12</sup> After stabbing Sidney and presuming she is dead, Jill’s psychotic state is fully exposed when she rips out her own hair, stabs herself in the shoulder, and jumps through a glass table to create realistic injuries. As police sirens approach, Jill lays down next to Sidney’s body. In this close-up two-shot, Sidney is on the left side of the screen and Jill on the right, modelling the position of her face and hand to perfectly match Sidney’s. The shot evokes conventional “doubling” techniques like the use of mirrors and twin imagery. Here, the two women look like sisters, lovers, or as if Jill is seeing her own victim reflection by gazing at Sidney. In Jill’s mind, the replication is complete. She thinks she has become Sidney by making herself physically similar, commenting on her generation’s fixation on looks and crisis of identity. Jill’s pleasure in the resemblance to her seemingly dead cousin also confirms her material fixation with Sidney and completely irrational state.

This same shot recurs once it is revealed that Sidney is not dead by Jill’s hand. The women’s last face-off in the hospital represents a final attempt by Sidney to destroy her victimhood and by Jill to become Sidney at last. Here, Jill and Sidney’s physical similarities are foregrounded in their matching hospital gowns and bloody, bandaged wounds. In the end, Sidney finally kills Jill as The Final Girl, saying, “You forgot the first rule of remakes Jill, don’t fuck with the original.” With this defeat, Sidney wins her internal battle and maintains external individuality. The close-up face-to-face shot returns when Sidney falls to the ground in exhaustion, landing on the left side of the screen facing a dead Jill on the right. This ending reinforces the stereotypical roles, Sidney as The Final Girl who is “rewarded with survival for conforming to gender schemas concerning appropriate female behavior” and Jill as the Female Psychopath, whose brutal

death is punishment for her “deviance from normative behavior accorded to women.”<sup>13</sup>

Jill’s ultimate death stays true to the endings of the first three *Scream* films, where Ghostface is always killed, but also brings in elements of noir and non-slasher horror where the threat of the Monstrous Feminine who represents an excess of femininity must be “defeated or expelled at the end.”<sup>14</sup> Deborah Jermyn writes in relation to the larger category of psychological thrillers that not only is this external risk eradicated, but so is the internal figure that draws attention to seemingly natural “roles society has assigned to other women.”<sup>15</sup> This can be read as both an easing of male anxieties in order to sustain a patriarchy or more positively as illustrating the “precarious nature of the symbolic order” inherent in arbitrary gender roles.<sup>16</sup>

When *Scream* was released in 1996, it challenged familiar conventions of the slasher genre by featuring two killers acting together (as Ghostface) instead of the typical “male acting alone.”<sup>17</sup> *Scream 4* further complicates this reading by revealing Ghostface to be Charlie and Jill, once again showing a partnership instead of a lone killer, but more importantly allowing a woman to be the homicidal instigator. Male and female partners had previously played Ghostface in *Scream 2*, with Sidney’s friend Mickey and Mrs. Loomis, the mother of her ex boyfriend Billy (the original Ghostface). In the final scene of *Scream 2*, Mrs. Loomis murders Mickey and reveals her plan to avenge her son’s death by killing Sidney. This is similar to *Scream 4* when Jill murders Charlie, her male counterpart, in order to kill Sidney herself. Here, the character of Mrs. Loomis can be seen as an early form of the Female Psychopath, but is mainly used postmodernly to refer to classic horror mothers such as Mrs. Voorhees in *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* (dir. S. Cunningham 1980) In *Scream 4*, Jill’s character goes even further than this.

Because of the unique remake quality

of *Scream 4*, where two generations of characters are targeted by Ghostface in the town of the original killings, Jill as protagonist of the younger generation, seems capable of carrying on a trilogy of her own. This makes her reversal even more shocking, allowing *Scream 4* to not only show how women can be the intelligent killers, but that the externality of a person is not necessarily representative of their internal state. Jill's character also contradicts slasher conventions where women usually die by the male antagonist's hand simply "because they are female."<sup>18</sup> In *Scream 4*, the main killer is a female herself, shown attacking male and female victims in even numbers and for specific reasons. Furthermore, the audience is made to intensely identify with Jill before discovering she is a psychotic villain, something rarely done with main characters in slasher films. *Scream 4*'s release in the 2010s also allows commentary on its generation's desensitization and obsession with celebrity, exemplified when Jill validates her motivation for murder with, "I

don't need friends, I need *fans*."

*Scream 4* also breaks from conventional slasher characters and practices of the first three *Scream* films with its sexually vague characters of Kirby Reed and Robbie Mercer. Throughout the film, there are many scenes that suggest Kirby as a lesbian character. When the audience first sees her, Kirby is speeding in her SUV, blasting loud rock music, and sporting a leather jacket and short, cropped hairstyle – reminiscent of the cool style of (also sexually ambiguous) James Dean. This introduction is full of symbolic references to her lack of femininity. Even the name Kirby represents a sexual vagueness, which could easily belong to a male or female. Her sexuality is also called into question in relation to Charlie, who she knows has a romantic interest in her. In their first screen interaction, Kirby ignores Charlie then calls him a "dork," prompting Jill to advise, "you could do a lot worse." Kirby's rejection of Charlie could signal a disinterest in men altogether, especially since Jill's dialogue proves he is a perfectly suitable male mate. Near the end of the film,



Jill (Emma Roberts): protagonist of the younger generation.

Kirby and Charlie's relationship progresses and they share a kiss, cut short by Trevor's interruption. This brief encounter does little to clear up her sexuality though, which is further confused by this sudden interest in men.

The film also presents a mystery about the relationship between Kirby and her friend Olivia, whose few interactions are evocative of romance. Between the three friends (Jill, Kirby, and Olivia), Kirby and Olivia are automatically coupled in their single status and Jill's constant complaining about heterosexual problems with her boyfriend. Additionally, while the friends frequently talk about Jill and Trevor, neither Kirby nor Olivia discusses their own romantic encounters that could hint at sexual preference. Following Olivia's death, Kirby rationalizes her attendance at a scary movie marathon by telling Jill, "I think Olivia would understand...she'd want me to be around other people." Her phrase evokes the idea that Kirby should be grieving Olivia's death instead of enjoying herself, like a lover of the recently deceased would do.

Physically, Robbie Mercer's character does not come across as overly sexual or masculine. He is skinny, not very tall, and seems almost childish, serving only as comic relief in most scenes. When he asks Trevor the same question, "what's your favorite scary movie," he angrily jumps at Robbie, who fearfully (and femininely) cowers and runs off screen. Like Kirby's mysterious connections to Olivia and Charlie, Robbie's character has small moments of romantic interest that further confuse his sexuality. In his opening scene, Robbie records his interaction with Jill, Kirby, and Olivia on his video podcast, looking to Olivia with, "Robbie Mercer here with the luscious Olivia don't look at my tits I have a mind Morris." As he says this, the camera cuts to a POV shot from Robbie's camera that tilts from her face down to her chest then up again. Robbie's statement and camera

movement here are potentially rude or sexist, but don't seem to bother Olivia coming from his non-threatening character. Her casual reaction indicates that their relationship is not significant. Robbie also jokes that Olivia will officially never go out with him while at the crime scene of her murder. This is also said in a casual way, as a joke to make light of the situation instead of actual grief. Furthermore, though Charlie is shown to lust after Kirby, he and Robbie rarely appear on screen without one another, hinting at a gay relationship between the close friends.

In a scene where Charlie and Robbie are leading a Cinema Club meeting, the editing playfully suggests the homosexuality of these characters. Speaking of the remake horror rules, Charlie explains, "the only sure way to survive a modern horror movie, you pretty much gotta be gay." This idea ironically contrasts to classic cinema where queer characters were either easy victims or monstrous villains, as seen in much of Alfred Hitchcock's work.<sup>19</sup> Immediately after he mentions being gay, the film cuts to a shot of Kirby in the club's audience then back to a coupled Charlie and Robbie. Here, the sexually uncertain characters (Kirby and Robbie, and Charlie as well) are shown in context with the idea of homosexuality in horror films, postmodernly referring to their sexual identity and possible survival. In the end however, Kirby and Robbie (and Charlie too) are killed by Ghostface, either proving that neither of the characters is gay or the proclaimed remake horror rules are false.

The most explicit reference to homosexuality is Robbie's death scene. After getting drunk outside by himself, Robbie becomes disoriented and is surprised by Ghostface. As he runs away, pleading for his life, he screams, "you can't, there's rules! I'm gay!" This scene confirms the suspicions about Robbie's sexuality but undermines the commentary on slasher genre conventions, explicitly



defining then breaking them. According to remakes, if Robbie was truly gay, shouldn't he be the one to survive? This is further confounded when Charlie tells Jill, "I got great footage of my Robbie kill," revealing himself as the murderer of the only self-professed gay character, therefore breaking the rule of horror remakes he had explained in the Cinema Club scene. This moment highlights the *Scream* tradition of calling attention to conventions only to break them. It also references horror films of the 1960s and '70s where queer characters were the first to be killed and even sexually confused villains were not safe from punishment, seen in *Dressed to Kill* (dir. B. De Palma 1980).

The ambiguous representation of these two characters and their ultimate deaths suggest the sexual anxieties of *Scream 4*'s cultural context. Lynda Hart writes how lesbian and gay bodies "are less secure, harder to read, and presumably less fixed in a visual economy," essentially that sexuality is harder to physically diagnose than race or ethnicity.<sup>20</sup> This is apparent in Kirby and Robbie, whose sexualities are not clearly visually judged. Furthermore, the idea that homosexuality cannot be seen and thus is "nowhere" can also mean it is "everywhere," explaining why *Scream 4* kills off its two characters with even the slightest homosexual tendencies.<sup>21</sup> Like the need to destroy the monstrous feminine to alleviate male fears about women, a homophobic attitude dictates that these potentially non-normative sexualities, which represent a "constant potential threat," must be disposed of.<sup>22</sup>

In general, each character type of the teen slasher genre offers a complex view of sexuality. As Carol Clover puts it, "we have in the killer a feminine male and in the main character a masculine female," who represent the genre's tendency to "fix on the irregular combinations" of sexuality.<sup>23</sup> These combinations are present in the

characters of Sidney, Jill, Charlie, Dewey, Gale, and most overtly in Kirby and Robbie. Almost every character in *Scream 4* can be argued to represent the ambiguous mixture of masculinity and femininity, what Robin Wood calls a "constitutional bisexuality" and its externality as a patriarchal demand for "surplus repression."<sup>24</sup> By including Kirby and Robbie as characters, *Scream 4* calls attention to horror's (negative) generic practice more explicitly than ever before in the series. However, by ultimately killing both characters, this theme becomes a potentially homophobic comment on the film's 2010s environment.

Just as the original *Scream* films had done in the 1990s, *Scream 4*'s unique context allows it to comment on and reinvent aspects of the teen slasher genre. *Scream 4* not only successfully continues the postmodern and generic aims of the three previous films, but also adds to them by introducing non-slasher horror ideas such as the Female Psychopath and concept of doubling through its female characters of Sidney Prescott and Jill Roberts. *Scream 4* also includes subtle homosexual themes in this female relationship and the intentionally sexually ambiguous characters of Kirby Reed and Robbie Mercer, a topic not breached in the previous *Scream* films. Within the context of a new 2010s audience, *Scream 4* effectively adds to slasher genre conventions, shows increased representation of strong women in horror, and more explicitly comments on homosexuality in the genre.

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# NOTIONS OF SURVEILLANCE:

AN IDEOLOGICAL PERPETUATION IN

*THE HUNGER GAMES* AND *THE CABIN IN THE WOODS*

by Ian Barling

According to media scholar, Keith Booker, the rise of capitalism brought with it various psychological manifestations among individuals, such as “supernatural” and “utopian longings,”<sup>1</sup> as well as senses of “uneasiness about the emptiness of life,” that naturally developed as a response to the economic system’s “homogenizing,” depersonalizing effects.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, these very effects seem to be fundamental and necessary for the continuation of the system. Booker writes:

“Supernatural narratives in American culture tend to be dominated by a desire that is structurally similar to the consumerist desires that drive contemporary capitalism... American life... is so devoted to a rationalist pursuit of longing for material gain that it is indeed stripped almost entirely of magic, resulting in a widespread longing to believe in something greater and spiritually richer than the mere quest for money.”<sup>3</sup>

Beginning in the 1970s, partly as a result of youth culture’s growing lack of trust in domestic governmental affairs (namely in relation to Watergate and the Vietnam War), and supplemented by the rise of capitalism and the technological age, “the conspiratorial forces that threaten[ed] America... [became] increasingly shadowy and nebulous, us-versus-them narratives [became] blurred by the increasing difficulty of distinguishing between us and them.”<sup>4</sup> Consequently, it is not surprising that horror and conspiracy thriller films saw a marked increase in popularity and demand during this time. Examples include *Klute* (Pakula, 1971), *Chinatown* (Polanski, 1974), and *All the President’s Men* (Pakula, 1976).

Collective notions of anxiety were exacerbated and spread to new cultural arenas as the turn of the century approached.

With the “Y2k” scare, in addition to the popularization of societal theories concerning the unsustainability of American consumerist production and consumption practices, films dealing with “apocalyptic visions” became increasingly prevalent.<sup>5</sup> More recently, notions of surveillance and privacy have come to the fore of cultural discourse, working as a phenomenon of hybrid paranoia in terms of governmental jurisdiction and technological advance. For example, the passing of the Patriot Act in 2001 by the Bush administration was met with public hostility regarding the potential violation of fundamental human privacy rights.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, much debate has ensued concerning the abilities of large business corporations, such as Google, to freely access individuals’ personal information, as well as record and disseminate imagery via satellite with applications such as Google Earth. Films dealing with such concerns include *Fight Club* (Fincher, 1999), *eXistenZ* (Cronenberg, 1999), and *The Truman Show* (Weir, 1998).

On a personal level, one symptom associated with such postmodern cultural paranoia, according to Frederic Jameson, in *Postmodernism* (1991), is the diminishing ability of people to execute “cognitive mapping.”<sup>7</sup> Due to the inexplicable sociopolitical and technological complexities associated with postmodern globalization, it becomes “virtually impossible for individual people to have a sense of how the system works or what their place in it might be.”<sup>8</sup> For Elizabeth Rosen, this explains the current popularity of the apocalyptic myth among both filmmakers and audiences that actually works to “challenge, explode, or undermine

the belief system or assumptions underlying this particular grand narrative.”<sup>9</sup>

Directed at younger audiences, contemporary horror and apocalyptic films are often “designed to inject a new note of postmodern hip, generic self-consciousness that appeals to sophisticated teen audiences who have seen and heard it all before.”<sup>10</sup> An archetypal example is the *Scream* trilogy, released in 1996, 1997, and 2000. These films’ primary focus is not to merely deconstruct and parody characteristic tropes of particular horror genres in isolation, but to do so by incorporating references to current events, issues, and trends. Thus, by taking the logic of Booker, Jameson and Rosen into consideration, it seems that watching films which expose capitalistic and societal underpinnings can enable audiences to find their metaphoric “place” in the increasingly postmodern world. But are these very films not a product and reflection of the capitalist system itself? Is not the majority of media that people consume a product and reflection of this system’s continued proliferation, in the literal sense?

With such questions in mind, the following text attempts to theorize the means by which two contemporary films, *The Hunger Games* (Ross, 2012) and *The Cabin in the Woods* (Goddard, 2011), establish symbolic and ideological relationships with their audiences in order to expose the dangers associated with sociopolitical hegemony. Furthermore, I will briefly explore the films’ seemingly contradictory positioning within a capitalistic framework which seeks to exploit the very processes of ideological interpellation that these narratives aim to confront.

Both *Hunger Games* and *The Cabin in the Woods* expose and deconstruct the hegemonic, ideological apparatuses of postmodern society through a multilayered, metaphorically reflexive association of two sets of media-related audiences – those existing in the diegesis of the films and those existing in reality. Such audience-to-audience relationships reveal the cyclical nature of the sociopolitical process of belief perpetuation that Guy Debord aptly deems “the guardian of sleep.”<sup>11</sup> Debord explains,



*The Hunger Games* functions as a controlled arena where power structures are able to efficiently disseminate ideology.

in his *Society of the Spectacle* (1967), that the “spectacle,” the representation of the real, mediated to audiences “in all its specific manifestations - news or propaganda, advertising or the actual consumption of entertainment - ... epitomizes the prevailing mode of social life. It is the omnipresent celebration of a choice *already made* in the sphere of production, and the consummate result of that choice.”<sup>12</sup> For Dubord, along with other political theoreticians of the Marxist tradition, such as Bram Ieven, postmodern society is inundated with media to such an extent that the mediated image in fact *becomes* reality and thus “its means and ends are identical. It is the sun that never sets over the empire of modern passivity.”<sup>13</sup>

In both *Hunger Games* and *Cabin*, the (virtual) community-related notion of “event-ization”<sup>14</sup> is emphasized in exposing the complex psychological formations that manifest from a ubiquity of ideological media, and *into* a ubiquity of passive interpellation. However, the films’ revelatory approaches are somewhat distinct. Through different uses of the concept of “event-ization,” I argue, *Cabin* and *Hunger Games* prescribe associative audience-to-audience connections in two separate ways as synecdoches, which when juxtaposed, clearly reveal the self-perpetuating components of dogmatic power structures. Whereas *Hunger Games* exemplifies the processes of ideological interpellation from power structure to individual, *Cabin* aims to associate the propagation of ideological enforcement with the masses that are subject to it.

As Clemens and Pettman explain in *Avoiding the Subject* (2004), the postmodern subject has taken on a type of “second-order passivity: rootless, fragmentary, deprived of any stable identity or ends.”<sup>15</sup> Yet, at the same time, he/she does have a different form of activeness: controlled activeness. The finding of place, belonging, and worth

comes from his/her submission and affinity to the system and its offerings. Because of such (often unconscious) compulsory cooperation, “there is a different understanding of the relation between the individual and the group, between the past and present, between memory and forgetting, between materiality and the ideal, between communications and the architecture of its archives.”<sup>16</sup>

In this new global environment, fragmented “event-ization” becomes a process that has two characteristic components – not only does the event become a communal space in which the masses (often, electronically) unite and share the pleasure of fulfilling mutual affinities and desires, it also serves as a controlled arena where power structures are able to efficiently disseminate ideology, thus perpetuating control. Clemens and Pettman relate such Marxist-inspired concepts to the increasingly popular trend of reality television, suggesting that the programs’ frameworks serve as ideal platforms for audience subjugation by supplying a “voyeurism of being.”<sup>17</sup> They write: “*Big Brother* directs itself towards bringing out personality by ensuring a commonality of interest. Precisely because the processes and goal of the show are open, transparent, objectively set – the last person standing gets the money – it is the tactics of personality that *Big Brother* is calibrated to reveal. This “personality” is not that of professional performers who still conform to minimal conditions of media acceptability... and even beyond those celebrities “famous for being famous” (the contestants are famous precisely for *not* being famous). *Big Brother* is concerned, rather, with im-personalities and de-personalization...”<sup>18</sup>

Here, the act of looking, as the contestants are quite literally “growing famous before our eyes,” becomes not merely an identifying process of “survivalist fame” by which the audiences relate to the characters’ generic personalities and successes; it also

serves a psychologically Freudian role in unconsciously compelling the audiences to believe they have omniscience within an otherwise meager existence.<sup>19</sup> The authors aptly remark, “We are all Big Brother.”<sup>20</sup>

Conversely, the competitors must acknowledge their identity-oriented position within the game in order to attempt to appeal to both their fellow contestants as well as the viewing audiences. A game in which you “literally *play* at making a spectacle of yourself,” though, is usually carried out in accordance with the aims of the producers of the show.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the invisible hand of the producers facilitates illusory conceptions of power amongst both competitors and audience. Because of this, “*Big Brother* is... a utopian show: it presents people trying to overcome and transfigure the realm of (paranoid) necessity” which, as mentioned above, invariably exists in postmodern society.<sup>22</sup>

These elements of community and surveillance undoubtedly exist in the narrative of *Hunger Games* to depict a false sense of autonomy among the crowds of the

working classes. Conversely, *Cabin* works to pick up where the former left off; rather than a blatant depiction of the oppression imposed upon the masses, *Cabin* self-referentially exposes the continuation of ideological interpellation as being devoid of any tangible power structure. As Robert Horing explains, “In the *Hunger Games* the state makes that entertainment. In our world (as well as *Cabin*’s), the culture industry alone...turn[s] that stuff out — ironically enough, *The Hunger Games* phenomenon is exactly this sort of entertainment that everyone is simply supposed to know about.”<sup>23</sup> Both films’ narratives mirror the contemporary dynamics of the internal maintenance of decentralized socioeconomic systems which, according to Horing, “...happens when omnipresent mediatization turns our ‘friends’ into simultaneous competitors for attention and adulation from unseen others.”<sup>24</sup> He explains: “So the reality TV-like, value-making surveillance of contemporary life is obvious to all, only now it’s not something anyone volunteers for exactly; our ‘friends’



The act of looking becomes an identifying process of ‘survivalist fame’ as the contestants are growing famous before our eyes.

are the spies for Facebook. How do you escape from that system without discarding all your friends...? Especially when you are doing the same thing to them?"<sup>25</sup>

Hence Marty's (Fran Kranz) line of dialogue near the end of *Cabin* just before he and Dana (Kristen Connolly) decide to end all humanity instead of having Dana kill Marty to appease the "Old Gods" who demand the execution of the standard tropes of the horror genre: "Maybe that's the way it should be, if you've got to kill all my *friends* to survive. Maybe it's time for a change" (emphasis added).<sup>26</sup>

*Hunger Games* takes place in the post-apocalyptic world of "Panem," where the working-class masses are divided into twelve districts, all subject to the inhumane, oppressive governance of the elite class who live in an isolated city called "The Capitol." Though set in a futuristic dystopia bordering on the supernatural, a barbaric tradition of human sacrifice is held annually in which two youths from each district fight to the death in an enclosed and controlled, *Battle Royale*-type setting. Relating the contestants' constructed identities to the formal aspects of the media coverage of the Games, Thomas Caldwell underscores their psychological connection not only with the diegetic audience but also those of the film itself, claiming, "They are constantly being looked at and scrutinised and the very tight cinematography often creates a claustrophobic effect by only shooting in close up and medium close up."<sup>27</sup> In contrast, when the protagonists are preparing for the Games in the Capitol, wide and long shots "are often filmed from the corner of a room so that it unconsciously gives the impression of closed-circuit television surveillance."<sup>28</sup>

*Cabin's* formal qualities also work to underscore the narrative's focus on a constructed and organized space in which contestants are forced to play the game of death for the gratification of the audience(s). Consistently throughout the film, the non-

diegetic viewer is presented with the same shots that the "agents" are filming for the diegetic audience, referred to as the "Old Gods". Yet, in *Cabin*, the diegetic audience is not shown. Rather, the Old Gods for whom the agents are working are said to exist below their control center, which itself is positioned under the contestant's arena. Thus, as Connor Habib contends, "In *The Hunger Games* the contestants are forced to fight to create a sort of mini-war that will stave off widespread societal chaos. In *Cabin* this is literalized..."<sup>29</sup> Whereas the diegetic masses are ideologically subjugated in *Hunger Games*, Goddard, in *Cabin*, cleverly inserts the non-diegetic audience into a position of absolute control, especially in relation to the agents (one of whom is tellingly referred to as "Director" in the credits) and contestants. As Paul Bollock claims, "The kids in the cabin are the actors, playing out a scenario. The agents in the bunker are the behind-the-scenes crew... The ancient evils below are we, the audience, enjoying it."<sup>30</sup>

As *Hunger Games* proceeds, it becomes apparent that the Games serve as the means by which the working class is kept psychologically, yet unconsciously, subjugated. Required to watch the entirety of the Games either on personal television sets or large screens which are forcibly implemented in various locations throughout the districts, the people of Panem's infatuation with the apparently brutal youth-on-youth death-match exemplifies what Walter Benjamin refers to as the societal normalization of "heightened graphicness" that results from the pervasive presentation of violence through the media.<sup>31</sup> The same inference can be made in relation to the unswerving demands of the Old Gods in *Cabin*. But again, it must be remembered that the demands of the audience for specific narrative progressions are merely cultural manifestations of the Althusserian notion of the "always already" interpellated subject. As Bullock explains,



"*The Cabin in the Woods* not only condemns us for enjoying violent imagery, but also understands why we enjoy it. We watch horror... to experience trauma in safety and comfort."<sup>32</sup> In relation to the cultural framework of contemporary society's predilection for violent events, *Cabin* is a specifically designed edifice that critiques itself as such; Goddard uses the film's time and space (as well as the audience's act of movie-going) to confront viewers directly about postmodern anxiety and the oppressive ideological dangers associated with it.

Drawing parallels between increasingly desensitized audiences and the formal qualities of *Hunger Games*, Georgia Roberts suggests, "The lack of long takes and diegetic sounds allow us as viewers to enjoy the film and feel decent about watching children fight to the death."<sup>33</sup> Additionally, tight, handheld shots of Katniss foster identification with the spectator. "This connection," she writes, "also allows us to watch the spectacle and take pleasure in it."<sup>34</sup> By inventing such an event, in which contestants are themselves fabricated to feed into the notion of audience identification as well as ideological interpellation, "the state works...by forcing people to do what they already at some level enjoy... to extract power by taking on the responsibility for providing a kind of pleasure that people can't pursue for themselves."<sup>35</sup>

*Cabin*, in contrast, frequently implements the motif of vision or looking in scenes of violence and/or eroticism to foster a psychological identification between the non-diegetic audience and the omniscient Old Gods. Bullock explains, "The pleasure we take from those deaths is one of *The Cabin in the Wood*'s primary thematic concerns. This is a dissection of the horror genre, screen violence and our obsession with both."<sup>36</sup> The more obvious references to vision and voyeurism include

the incorporation of a number of screens, windows, and mirrors throughout the film. A rather complex allusion, though, takes place during a scene in which the five teenagers arrive at the lakeside cabin and begin to unpack their things. In one of the bedrooms, Holden (Jesse Williams) discovers a one-way mirror that allows him to see into the adjacent room where Dana is undressing. In another scene, all five protagonists huddle around a collection of mystical relics, Goddard intercutting close-ups of their eyes gazing at the items in amazement. "We know they shouldn't look (genre convention has taught us that), but we don't want them to look away. There wouldn't be a film, and we wouldn't be able to enjoy the images of horror it will provide, if they did."<sup>37</sup>

The particular framework, or rules, of the *Hunger Games* also reinforce ideological maintenance as well as class immobility. In the film, President Snow (Donald Sutherland), explains how the concept of proportional "hope" provides the masses with a reason for their continued suppression. In a conversation with another elite, he says, "Why do we have a winner? Hope. It is the only thing stronger than fear. A little hope is effective. A lot of hope is dangerous. A spark is fine – as long as it's contained."<sup>38</sup> Labinger relates this aspect of the Games to the notion of the "American Dream," as well as reality television shows, such as *American Idol*. Such ideologically constructed arenas, she explains, imply that "the odds may seem against you, but if you have the right stuff and play by the rules, you, little individual, can... be rewarded by the system... The winner takes all, but any one can be a winner: this is what 'opportunity' means."<sup>39</sup> As mentioned above, the effectiveness of such a system lies, in part, in its insistence on a sense of individuality. For without physically fragmented masses, revelations onto the inner-workings of the system are more able to manifest and normalize amongst them. Labinger notes, "The bigger sin is solidarity.

The ultimate sin is exposing the Capitol's weakness: the gamers can be gamed."<sup>40</sup> In *Hunger Games* the audience is the gamed; in *Cabin*, they are the gamers. With either case, the spectacular event is all the more *real* when presented through technological media to a physically separated, yet ideologically cohesive, audience.

Supplementing the "compulsive and... compulsory"<sup>41</sup> notions of audience autonomy and fulfillment of desire are the metaphorically telling processes of physical, personality, and thus, image-related training, which the contestants in *Hunger Games* receive upon their arrival to the Capitol as they await the commencement of the Games. The contestants must present themselves as "desirable" to wealthy Capitol patrons, who have the ability to send supply packages that are used to assist in the struggle for survival. Taking into account Clemens and Pettman's theories concerning reality TV contestant-audience dynamics, it seems these wealthy audience patrons serve to highlight not only the processes of dissemination of false senses of power among mass audiences,

but also the ways in which even those who recognize the workings of oppressive systems are seemingly helpless in their fight for autonomy (and life). Horing describes this system of identity construction as "the value in being watched," claiming it to be no surprise that the most influential mentor for the protagonist, Katniss (Jennifer Lawrence), is her stylist, Cinna (Lenny Kravitz).<sup>42</sup> He writes:

"...Figuring out the vicarious needs of the audience and catering to them... [is] the affective labor the contestants perform... Reenacting the conventional stories at once gratifies the viewers and reinforces the "common sense" ideological "truths" above love, gender, etc., that are supposed to compensate for the miseries of life and give reliable order to it."<sup>43</sup>

Similarly, in *Cabin*, the contestants are constructed in accordance with traditional clichés of the genre "to comment on the way horror cinema allows the audience to distance themselves from the death on-screen and further enjoy the horror."<sup>44</sup> Initially, all five protagonists are relatively



The more obvious references to vision and voyeurism include the incorporation of a number of screens, windows, and mirrors throughout *The Cabin in the Woods*.

relatable individuals who do not fall victim to the generic features usually assigned to similar characters of such films. Curt (Chris Hemsworth), for example, is an intelligent student-athlete whose witty dialogue and warm personality replace the “jock” persona frequently associated with characters of his appearance. Yet, upon entering the cabin, the “agents” expose him to chemicals which apparently increase his testosterone levels and transform him into the classic “meathead” stereotype. Jules (Anna Hutchison) is an equally unconventional personality in the beginning of the film. Though she is an attractive blonde throughout, she does not embody the sexually driven “dumb blonde” trope until she enters the cabin, after the agents inject chemicals into her hair.

The audiences of both films, then, seem to be caught in a type of self-perpetuating ideological whirlpool, in which desires are normalized to such an extent that representational violence and voyeurism works as a means of literal self-subjugation. In effect, as Noam Chomsky explains in reference to the spectator sport, this fulfilling of the audiences’ synthetic *hunger* for seemingly contained, “eventized” violence fosters ignorance in relation to real-life sociopolitical issues; it is such ignorance which allows power structures to further perpetuate ideology and inequality without resistance.<sup>45</sup> Labinger writes, “Flipping channels between a pop competition and coverage of the war in Iraq, [author and screenwriter of *Hunger Games*, Suzanne Collins,] was struck by the unnerving similarity between the two spectacles.”<sup>46</sup> She implies that it was Collins’ precise intent to comment on the degree to which event-related media has become a fundamental means of indoctrination and thus, ethical concern. *Cabin*, on the other hand, exemplifies the completion of the ideological cycle. And as Marty and Dana

put an end to all of humanity, they come to represent the potential for rebellion against a capitalistic dogma that *nearly* has become the essence of their very being.

Yet Horing brings up an interesting point concerning the “meta-ness of Katniss’s strategizing,” in terms of her conscious decision to romantically involve herself with Peeta (Josh Hutcherson). The screenwriter incorporates and, in effect, “problematizes... the emotional manipulation of the story,” which works, through self-reference, to promote a relationship between the non-diegetic and diegetic audiences. He asks (a question that is equally relevant to the audience dynamics operating within *Cabin*), “Would we really want the Hunger Games put to a stop? Doesn’t our compulsion to keep [watching] betray us in that regard?”<sup>47</sup> Here, this concept of the paranoid interpretation appears to be quite insightful as it relates to the psychology of our current “media surveillance” society. In this postmodern age, Horing writes: “Everything we do is always understood as someone else’s entertainment, and the degree to which others are entertained or edified determines the “meaning” of what we are experiencing. Evaluating the authenticity of a response relative to our “real” feelings is no longer a meaningful way of analyzing events. We don’t know who to trust; we think everyone might be playing us if they are not merely consuming us as spectacle... The pure audience that shapes everyone’s behavior doesn’t exist; or rather, it is capital itself, it is the value form being called into being as a mode of visibility.”<sup>48</sup>

As previously mentioned, *Hunger Games*, *Cabin*, and any popular film devoted to exposing “inadequacies in the current capitalist system and to its inability to fulfill certain basic human psychic needs”<sup>49</sup> for that matter, seem to be a manifestation

of the capitalistic order itself. Kristen Lawler explains that media's seemingly paradoxical ability to take advantage of such concerns "tells us that American fantasy is, at least in one enormous respect, quite countercultural."<sup>50</sup> Capitalistic forces, aware of the increasingly "sophisticated consumers of... messages," are forced to create products and foster consumerist trends in more delicate and complex ways than ever.<sup>51</sup> Hence the "Capitol Couture" section of *Hunger Games*'s official website, which reportedly sells high-end clothing

that resembles the outfits of the elite in the film. On the audience's end, according to Booker, Jameson's assertion for the necessity of "a double – critical and utopian – hermeneutic when discussing those products," becomes all the more relevant.<sup>52</sup> Yet a consideration onto the sociopolitical processes required to actually dismantle the oppressive foundations of our current ideologically driven society, as well as the empirical effects likely to ensue as a result, is the object of a different study.

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# WRITTEN IN INK:

## THE SOCIAL NETWORK'S ADAPTATION OF REAL-LIFE DOCUMENTS

by Celeste Wong

"The internet's not written in pencil, Mark. It's written in ink." Those are the biting words Erica Albright throws at Mark Zuckerberg about midway through David Fincher's *The Social Network* (2010)<sup>1</sup>. That line may very well be the lesson to take away from the film's entire adaptation process. It seems almost *too* appropriate that a film about a social networking website adapted most of its most intriguing content from documents that, perhaps unfortunately for those involved, were indeed "written in ink." The film is known for being adapted from Ben Mezrich's book *The Accidental Billionaires*, about the creation of Facebook. However, it is lesser known that the screenwriter, Aaron Sorkin, was far more inspired by his own research than Mezrich's book, to write the screenplay. He stated in an interview, "I don't remember getting written material and didn't get a look at any of the book until the screenplay was almost finished"<sup>2</sup>. His research consisted of sifting through thousands of pages of court documents, e-mails, blog entries, newspaper articles, and interviews from which he was able to piece together a story of friendship, trust, and young adulthood through the creation of and conflict over Facebook. When one thinks of film adaptations, the first thing that comes to mind is a book or play, not hundreds and hundreds of pages of court documents. So how exactly does one adapt those into a feature film? The key issue is taking these documents that are stale, formal, and impersonal and using them to create compelling, multi-dimensional characters. Furthermore, the personal testimonies in the court documents bring up the central themes of the film: reliability, friendship, and trust.

We live in an age where privacy is

a big concern; the rise and significance of the internet in our day-to-day lives is astounding and it seems that people are either paranoid about keeping their privacy or far too oblivious when it comes to sharing private information online. One has to assume that whatever can be found online is not only very personal, but also rather unreliable. That is why the research for a film such as *The Social Network* had to be done meticulously and had to be supported by concrete evidence. The clever and fascinating thing about the material that was adapted from online resources is that most of it was directly from Mark Zuckerberg, the now famous creator of Facebook, himself. For example, the second scene of the film shows Zuckerberg (played by Jesse Eisenberg) writing a blog post. Of course, Zuckerberg himself never intended the blog post to be something widely seen by the public – these days blog posts are often used as personal online diaries. However, even after he became a public figure and the head of the biggest social networking site in the world, that blog post from when he was nineteen and drunk was still around. The blog post in the screenplay is taken almost word-for-word from the actual blog post, with a couple of key changes<sup>3</sup>. It is important to note that this scene comes right after the opening scene of the film, which shows Mark and his girlfriend, Erica Albright (played by Rooney Mara), while she is in the process of breaking up with him. The scene itself is completely fabricated; in fact, the character of Erica is mostly made up as well (somewhat inspired by a line from Mark's blog, which will be examined in more detail later). Erica Albright is one of the few names that have been changed for the film. The opening scene, while completely invented by Sorkin, provides

excellent exposition: it establishes Mark's obsessions with getting into a final club, and with setting himself apart in a sea full of geniuses, but perhaps most importantly, it sets up the next scene, in which Mark essentially creates the stepping stone to Facebook. The breakup, which ends with Erica calling Mark an asshole, can be seen as a motivator for Mark's new creative endeavor.

The next words that the audience hears are in Mark's voice-over reading of his blog post, beginning with: "Erica Albright is a bitch." That line is taken directly from the blog post (the only difference being the name), but it is the only mention of her in the entire post. For storytelling purposes, it was a sharp decision on Aaron Sorkin's part to take that line and create a backstory for it so that the audience can further understand what led Zuckerberg to call someone a bitch on the internet. Sorkin added in a few lines at the beginning of the post about Erica, demonstrating the bitterness Mark is feeling directly after being dumped, as well as his new-found motivation to create something that would both "take his mind off her" and serve as a sort of revenge. The rest of the blog, read in the voice-over, is taken almost word-for-word from the actual document and goes on to show Zuckerberg's train of thought, leading up to his idea to create a website comparing female Harvard students' pictures to one another, called "Facemash," going into great detail about his hacking and coding process.

The scene in the film is carefully edited together with shots of other Harvard students, mostly final club members, partying and socializing. The cross-cutting of the scene showcases the difference between Mark Zuckerberg and the final club members' college experiences. Without explicitly stating anything, the editing of the scene conveys that Zuckerberg, while desperate to be a member of that elite social society, is on the outside – he is different. Interestingly

enough, however, they are actually not that different. The juxtaposition of these two lifestyles can essentially be boiled down to two different representations of male college students comparing and objectifying female students. The editing of this scene provides the background for Mark's later idea of Facebook, as he states in the film, "taking the entire social experience of college and putting it online."

Similar to the blog post, several e-mails that the real Mark Zuckerberg sent out were adapted into the screenplay as well, and used verbatim. The e-mails were ones that Mark had sent to the Winklevoss twins (played by Armie Hammer) and Divya Narendra (played by Max Minghella) regarding the website they had asked him to help them with, "HarvardConnection." The content of the e-mails is not dramatic in any way; they all consist of Mark telling the Winklevoss' and Narendra that he is too busy to meet with them and postponing all of their meetings. Their incorporation into the film, however, is key because those e-mails themselves played a big role in the Winklevoss' and Narendra's court case against Zuckerberg. The real documents' incorporation into the film is done through a voice-over of the Winklevoss' lawyer reading them, over images of Zuckerberg slaving away, mostly alone, on his own website idea, Facebook. Again, without explicitly saying anything, the editing of this particular scene, on top of its use of real documents, cues the audience to question Zuckerberg's intentions while writing those e-mails and working on his own site. Did he really steal their idea? The question is never really answered and the film doesn't attempt to answer it, but it certainly attempts to address it and explore it: "This isn't the movie that's going to tell you 'Mark Zuckerberg stole Facebook,' or that he didn't. But," Aaron Sorkin says, "we would sure love for those arguments to happen in the parking lot"<sup>74</sup>.

The deposition scenes themselves are



extremely important both in the telling of the story and in the exploration of the film's adaptation process. The scenes depict two separate depositions and are scattered throughout the film in short segments, woven together with the college scenes from 2003 that are referred to frequently in the testimonies. Not only do these scenes work to explore the complex evolution of Zuckerberg's relationship with former best friend and business partner, Eduardo Saverin (played by Andrew Garfield), these sequences also work to bring the issue of unreliability to the forefront; the viewer can never be sure who is telling the truth or who is in the right. The deposition scenes are made up of everyone telling their side of the story and are therefore full of conflicting emotions and opinions: as Sorkin puts it, "Several different – and sometimes contradictory – versions of the story were told. I didn't choose one and decide that it was the truth. I dramatized the fact that there were conflicting stories"<sup>5</sup>. That notion of unreliability is relevant when working with an adaptation that is based on true events and real people, and the ways in which unreliability comes up in the deposition scenes work as a sort of justification to the adaptation process itself. For example, in reference to the previously mentioned fabricated first scene of the film in which Erica and Mark break up, later in the film Mark is shown at a deposition responding to Erica's testimony by saying, "That's not what happened. She said all that?" When the lawyer assures Mark that Erica recounted the events of that night at the bar while she was under oath, Mark responds sarcastically with: "Well, I guess that would be the first time someone's lied under oath." That exchange is a direct acknowledgment on Sorkin's part that even though the film was adapted from real, existing court documents, there really is no way of knowing what exactly was one hundred percent true. Furthermore, the testimonies in the actual documents do not

need to provide a clear answer as to who is right and who is wrong because they do something that is far more valuable in a film: the conflicting and often contradictory testimonies provide dramatic material for the conflicts that unfolds between the characters.

Another component of adapting real documents, court depositions or otherwise, is the sensitive issue of dealing with real people. In the case of *The Social Network*, the true events represented had occurred less than ten years prior to the making of the film. The company and the social networking movement of Facebook had only grown exponentially bigger and its founders, mostly Mark Zuckerberg, were now famous public figures. As the character of Marilyn Delpy (played by Rashida Jones), one of Zuckerberg's lawyers, explains in the last scene, those involved in the court cases against him, upon reaching a settlement, had to sign a non-disclosure agreement, meaning that those involved were not available to provide Aaron Sorkin and the makers of the film with information that wasn't part of the documents open to the public.

The reaction to the film by those portrayed in it was mixed, to say the least. It is fair to say that much of the fabricated dialogue and action that Sorkin added to the film was based on what he had read in the real documents in order to give the film more of a story arc. As previously explained, the character of Erica Albright was expanded based on one or two lines from Zuckerberg's blog post. While the character only physically appears in two relatively short scenes, her name is strategically brought up throughout the film. Again, the film never states that the reason Facebook was invented was because of a bad breakup – that would clearly be a bit of an overgeneralization and perhaps a stretch – the film does, however, provide Zuckerberg with a human experience that many viewers can relate to. In order for

these characters to become well-rounded individuals, Aaron Sorkin added these human elements so that the characters became more than simply plaintiffs and defendants in a lawsuit. Sorkin insists that he did not add anything in the film in order to make it more dramatic: "There was nothing in the movie that was invented for the sake of making it sensational. There was nothing in the movie that was Hollywood-ized"<sup>6</sup>.

Dealing with real people and real events that have occurred so recently raises difficult ethical questions. That is why, if this film adaptation had not been done so carefully and creatively, it could have generated a much greater controversy. When the film first came out, there was a lot of talk about it possibly tarnishing Facebook's image or Zuckerberg's reputation. The fact that it has done neither of those things, yet still remains an honest and intriguing story and film, is a true testament to the power of adaptation when it is done well. Perhaps it is in fact a good thing that the internet is not written in pencil, but rather in ink. To create a film based on the biggest social networking site and the world's youngest billionaire that is accessible to a wide and diverse audience and comments on the universal and human themes of friendship, betrayal, and ambition is an incredible feat. The internet documents used as the basic starting point of the film's creation came from real, everyday human beings, and at the end of the day, through *The Social Network*, their story reached and touched real, everyday human beings.

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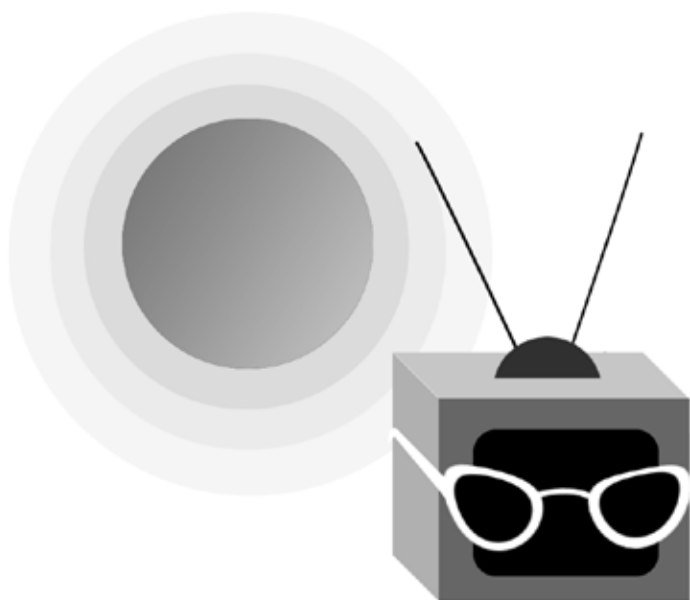
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THE SUN ALWAYS SHINES ON TV





# TELEVISION FOR TWEENS:

AN EMPHASIS ON FAME IN YOUTH PROGRAMMING

by Ariel Campos

“Tween” is a relatively new term in discussion of adolescent culture, yet what it lacks in longevity it makes up for in prominence. Tweens, or nine-to twelve-year-olds, have made their presence known. Their furor isn’t surprising, however. Until recently they have been stuck between the categories of “child” and “teen”, and they have been lumped into one demographic or the other, lacking a culture specific to their needs and wants. Yet the typical tween now has a personality very distinct from these two age groups. Two networks that have gone to great lengths recently to capitalize on this demographic are Nickelodeon and The Disney Channel.

It is important, however, not to mistake the youth of this new demographic for innocence. It must be explored and analyzed as thoroughly as the others, if not with a more harsh eye. Falling between the child and teen years means that the tween is still impressionable, yet the parent is naturally more willing to refrain from strict regulation of what is being watched by the tween. One person who knows what’s being watched is Dan Schneider, creator of several hit shows for Nickelodeon. “If there is anything I’ve learned about kids today,” he states, “...it’s that they all want to be stars”<sup>1</sup>, and Schneider’s creations have acted on that.

Nickelodeon and Disney are fueling this desire for fame, as are such channels as CBS and FOX. With the use of convergence media, these channels are bringing in not only more tween viewers, but loyal and active tween viewers, whose values are founded heavily on fame and celebrity.

A study conducted by UCLA professors Greenfield and Uhls, entitled “The Rise of Fame: An Historical Content Analysis” explores the recent tween obsession with fame. The professors took the two highest

rating shows for tweens every ten years for the past forty years, and compiled a list of values that could possibly be found in those shows, such as spirituality, self acceptance, and of course, fame. A group of randomly chosen individuals were asked to read synopses of those shows, as well as synopses of specific episodes, and rate how apparent they found each of these values. These shows were separated into two surveys, the first containing *The Andy Griffith Show* (Arthur Stander, 1960-1968), *Lavern and Shirley* (Gary Marshall, 1976-1983), *Growing Pains* (Neal Marlens, 1985-1992), and *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (Nell, Scovell, 1996-2003), and the second, *The Lucy Show* (Bob Carroll Jr., 1962-1968), *Happy Days* (Gary Marshall, 1974-1984), *ALF* (Paul Fusco, 1986-1990), *Boy Meets World* (Michael Jacobs, 1993-2000), and *Hannah Montana* (Richard Correll, 2006-2011).<sup>2</sup> Even without an evaluation of values present, it is easy to see that fame has come to the forefront in teen viewing simply by looking at the four most highly rated shows in this demographic from 1997 to 2007. The preferred anonymity of *Sabrina*, otherwise known as the teenage witch, is replaced by Miley ‘Hannah Montana’ Stewart, who has millions of fans. *Boy Meets World*, a show where normal characters have reasonable, everyday aspirations is replaced by a reality show whose contestants are strictly in attendance to get famous. Digging deeper than the highest rated shows, Disney Channel’s website currently advertises its hosting of eleven shows currently on air, four of which contain a plot line in which tweens or kids are either already famous, or hoping to become so.<sup>3</sup> This means that 37% percent of their programming has heavy themes of fame. Nickelodeon currently airs nine shows directed at tweens, five of which, or 55%, contain similar themes of

fame and celebrity.<sup>4</sup>

At the height of the tween show genre has unquestionably been Disney's *Hannah Montana*. Premiering in 2006, *Hannah Montana* became a phenomenon generating a clothing line, several blockbuster movies, albums, and a global audience of over 200 million. It centered around a girl with two identities: Miley Stewart, a teenager, and Hannah Montana, a pop star whom she turns into with the switch of a wig. The construction of this show was intelligent in many ways, one of them being that when tweens tuned in for the first time and saw the main character performing on stage in front of a crowd, it was easy to assume she was already famous, and they were already behind the times by not knowing of this celebrity. 'Hannah Montana' further manipulated the minds of its viewers by using the tactic of the alter ego. Miley was theoretically able to live a normal life when she was simply Miley, but could enjoy the perks of being famous by changing her clothes and hair and transforming into Hannah. The confusion lies in the fact that her two "worlds" overlapped, and the advantages of being famous seeped into her normal life.

In the episode, 'New Kid in School', Miley gets jealous when Jake, a movie star, transfers to her school and gets attention for being famous. Miley, who is also famous, albeit secretly, gets jealous of him when she sees that his celebrity status gets him popularity, an extra large locker, and a lavish breakfast in class. She decides to reveal that she's a pop star to cash in on these perks she also feels she deserves. This desire for special attention and benefits isn't only expressed in this singular episode. The theme song, sung by Miley, starts out with the lines, "You pull the limo 'round front/ hottest styles, every shoe, every color/ being famous can be kinda fun". The message this is sending out to Disney's tween viewers is that life is better when

you're famous. Even when Miley changes her mind about revealing her identity and tries to mend the situation, Greenfield and Uhls claim this isn't effective because sometimes characters' decisions are vague, and don't come across for young viewers very clearly. They write, "...it would be rare for a character in a television show to declare, 'I value such and such' or 'I aspire to this'...", which may lead to messages of the show being misinterpreted by the viewer.<sup>5</sup> This is especially true when the main character's problem is solved, or their temporary main desire is fulfilled by the end of the episode, despite the fact that they have gone about the situation in the wrong way. In most cases, having learned their lesson, everything turns out fine, or even better than how things started. In this episode, Miley gets what she originally wished, which was for Jake to act more human, and less like a celebrity. Miley's impulsive actions are quickly solved and generously rewarded, which can be easily construed by the young viewer as a result of her famous lifestyle.

We enter into another realm when we add the element of convergence to the show. For *Hannah Montana*, the strategies in convergence media rested primarily in the music aspect. The fact that Miley/Hannah was a singer meant Disney had numerous options to release products across different platforms. The show generated eight albums, including five soundtracks from the show and movies. Five 'Hannah Montana' video games were created, spanning across multiple gaming platforms such as Nintendo DS, Playstation 2, and the Wii. The fans were able to feel as if they were participating more actively in the show when Miley/Hannah went on tour. Fans could watch her on TV performing on stage in front of a large crowd one day, and had the opportunity to be a part of that crowd the next. Some performances were even recorded for a movie made about her and

her concert tour. Looking at the show this way, it is easy to view it as less of a show and more of a brand, or content potential to which viewers will be loyal. In Henry Jenkins' article, "Buying Into American Idol", this very way of thinking is discussed. No longer is brand loyalty strictly for material products bought off the shelf, such as Nike shoes, or Apple computers. It also applies to the less tangible; the content being broadcast on television, and furthermore, the content being broadcast to our tweens, which is even more powerful. Jenkins explores what this means in regards to the media/consumer relationship when he quotes, "... we will use a diverse array of entertainment assets to break into people's hearts and minds..."<sup>6</sup> This information, taken in conjunction with 'Hannah Montana' begs the question, what is being *left* in the viewers' hearts and minds? With a show that emphasizes fame so heavily, it is easy to see how Greenfield and Uhls' value of 'Fame' can be the answer.

Jenkins' article focuses primarily on *American Idol*'s use of convergence media, which ranked along side 'Hannah Montana' as 2007's most popular show for tweens in the Greenfield and Uhls study. The tie between the value of fame and convergence media could not be more clear in this case. The premise of 'American Idol' is normal, everyday people can sing in front of judges in hopes to advance further in the competition and be named the best singer, or the next "american idol". The viewer is



The show generated eight albums, including five soundtracks from the show and movies.

brought into the action by voting for their top choice contestant. Votes can be placed by calling in, or sending a text. Not only is this good for the show ratings, as voters are provoked to tune in for the next episode to see if their favorite contestant gets to move on in the competition, but it also fairs well for the phone companies, who saw an increase in the use of text messaging at the shows beginning. AT&T claimed that over a third of those texting their votes in hadn't previously used text messaging as a form of communication. A spokesperson for the phone company claimed that the awareness and growth of text messaging due to 'American Idol' had been more influential than any other venture they had attempted.

All of this brought the average, modern-day tween viewer closer to fame than ever before. They suddenly had an effect on the rise to fame of a singer that they could regularly see on their TV screen. They could participate by voting in a direct way,



and claim to their friends that they voted multiple times for Carrie Underwood or Chris Daughtry, after which they could buy the album of the winner, or the compilation CD of all the top contestants. The fact that the judges go to “hometowns” across America to audition unknown singers means that you, too, could one day be up on the stage, singing on primetime TV, and have people text in their vote for you.

Another reality contest show – *Big Brother* (Phil Proctor, 2000-) has similar elements. In this case, a group is placed in a house, and one contestant is voted out every week. Despite having no access to the outside world, the outside world, or the viewers, have every access to view them. The contestants are filmed virtually every second of the day, and fans of the show can watch in multiple ways. According to the article “Finding the Interactive Television Audience: *Big Brother*”, written by Janet Jones, only 41% of the viewers watch the show on the channel it airs, whereas 59% use the internet or other means to view the content. Jones writes, “Access to the house was possible 24 hours a day, seven days a week and this allowed the audience to feel a sense of control over their viewing”.<sup>7</sup> The contestants become high celebrities of sorts, being watched constantly, and the audience become paparazzi-like.

Each week a contestant is voted out of the house and no longer in the running for the prize money by the participating public. Like *American Idol*, this is done by phone call or texts. Add the ability for constant viewing, this furthered the sense that the audience participated in the success of their favorite player, and the outcome of the show. And it has worked, too. Several people have emerged from the program relatively famous, such as Mike Malin, who appeared twice on the show, as well as in other popular sitcoms, and the UK contestant Jade Goody, who followed the show with several of her own, as well as a line of perfume products.

Jones’ article also highlights a study done asking viewers what they value most in the contestants they vote for. It concluded that some common reasons for liking a character were that they were “normal seeming”, “genuine” and that they “seemed real”.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the audience like the players that are most like them, suggesting that what they found appealing in the show was that they saw in it a possibility for themselves to become famous, too.

*Hannah Montana*, *American Idol* and *Big Brother* may have been the forerunners of using convergence methods to promote fame, but Nickelodeon’s *iCarly* has displayed mastery of the craft. Having discovered the perfect cross section between the popular theme of fame and the interactive benefits of convergence media, *iCarly* uses several different tactics to draw in tween viewers.

*iCarly* is about a tweenage girl who, along with her two friends and help from her older brother, makes a comedy web show that becomes an overnight hit. Carly and her friends have fans, and an apparent abundance of money to produce and put together their show-within-a-show, which one can assume comes from being viral video internet stars. What *iCarly*, which often surpassed the phenomenon of *Hannah Montana* in ratings, has seemingly understood from its conception is the presence of technology in the life of the average tween. Technology therefore plays a large role in the show. In the article, ‘I Want My Tween TV: *iCarly*, Sitcom 2.0’, Ethan Thompson emphasizes the shows plethora of screens. Carly and her friends are able to film their live web show to their computer screen as they film it, stream from a secondary screen in their studio, and transfer over to a webcam they have other places. In the episode Thompson discusses, for example, they perform their show while simultaneously uploading it to their website, show a video from a screen that pops out of the wall, which shows Carly’s brother

downstairs where he, in turn, is watching their web show online as it happens. The audience will also often view parts of the show through the camera they use to shoot their web show, or a webcam they have set up, so even though it is still only a two-camera production, it is as if we are seeing it through many different types of screens.<sup>9</sup>

This use of technology at play in *iCarly* is employed on a larger level when its position in the world of web 2.0 is discussed, especially in regards to its practical uses of convergence media that aid towards tweens' highly regarded values of fame. Viewers are encouraged to upload their own videos, just as the *iCarly* team does, that may get featured on one of their upcoming web shows. By going on to their website, which is accessible both within the world of the show and for those watching at home, tweens everywhere can record themselves doing tasks that are asked of them. The assignment on *iCarly.com* right now is to make a video of yourself doing a silly dance, after which the silly dancer can tune in to see if they have been featured in a segment of the web show. If a simple tweenage girl can become famous over night by posting a video on the web, why can't you? *Big Brother* promoted this type of logic, as well. The contestants on *Big Brother* needed no special talent or unique beauty to be on the show, just willingness, an audition tape, and luck. For many viewers at home, the difference between themselves and the contestants they see on the show is minimal.

The use of convergence media doesn't stop at *iCarly*, however. There are seemingly endless ways this show gets tweens to jump from simple spectator status to active viewership. You can find Dan Schneider's (the previously mentioned show creator) Twitter page and get in touch with him easily – he leaves his Twitter handle somewhere in every episode, either spoken by a character or written on a prop or tee shirt. As per what seems to be essential for tween leads since

the success of 'Hannah Montana', Miranda Cosgrove, who plays Carly, has released an album under Nickelodeon Records. The show has also generated two soundtrack albums, mostly compiled of songs sung by Cosgrove. A few of those songs can be played on video games like *Rockband*, a game designed to make you feel like a famous singer or guitarist. Despite the fact that Cosgrove (and Carly, albeit in a fictitious way) is actually world-famous, the show succeeds in making its viewers feel very connected to her. Given the ease of Carly's rise to celebrity status, the show also gives the impression that it would be very easy to *become* her, and achieve her level of fame, using tools such as Youtube.com. *iCarly* making fame seem so attainable may be dangerous. Greenfield and Uhls state that one implication of the tween valuing fame over any other characteristic is that they lose insight of themselves. They claim that in a study of high schoolers over the course of twenty-five years "senior students' ambitions outpaced what they were likely to achieve... fame may be one of those ambitions". Furthermore, fame as an ambition could distract from academic achievements, and cause "dissatisfaction" when older.<sup>10</sup>

However, shows such as *iCarly* wouldn't have become so influential to teens' views of fame if it weren't for successful promotion tactics. One company that informs tweens and teens about such programming is the perfect example of the effect the value has on tweens and teens: FAME Media Company. The FAME Media Company promote awareness for new and upcoming shows. Their website home page states that they are a "...youth marketing agency that specializes in reaching 12-24 year olds...". They do so "...through [their] proprietary network of over 10,000 motivated student influencers nationwide".<sup>11</sup> They describe their network of motivated student influencers as well liked, with significant social networking presence. The



Nathan Kress, Jerry Trainor, Miranda Cosgrove, Noah Munck, and Jennett McCurdy in *iCarly* on Nickelodeon. Photo: Williams + Hirakawa/ Nickelodeon. (c)2010 Viacom, International, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

strategies the company employs rely solely on these popular tween and teenagers, who they recruit and train to be effective spokespersons. Hundreds of pictures can be seen on their website of students holding posters for shows like Nickelodeon's 'Victorious' and 'Big Time Rush', which are supposedly representative of those converted from the status of simple 'tween' to 'tween fan.' FAME Media has even gone so far as to calculate the monetary value of a fan they can harness for you: \$136.38.

What is most shocking about this isn't that channels like Nickelodeon are using an advertising company specifically aimed at the tween/teen demographic, it is *how* the company is using the teen/ tween demographic. Instead of advertising to the potential viewer, its turning some potential viewers into advertisers. Giving already popular students insight on some upcoming, probable hit TV show or band gives those students a sense of connection with the product. A company called FAME supplying them with information about a product that's overall message is fame has to produce a perception of the topic in their minds. Greenfield and Uhls state that the

media for the youths "...are an important source of information for their developing concepts of what the social world outside their immediate environment is all about".<sup>12</sup> Companies like FAME Media are therefore infiltrating the minds of those they reach the ideology that celebrity is widely valued the world, a world that they will soon active members of, which will then effect what they value and how they act.

A rise in themes of fame on television and in the minds of its viewers naturally means a downfall in other aspirations, such as self-acceptance, spiritualism and benevolence. The study results of Greenfield and Uhls show that the emphasis of the feeling of community has been directly replaced with that of fame. Where in 1967 it ranked first to fame's fifteenth, the numbers have now almost exactly reversed, leaving 'Community Feeling' at eleventh. With viewers participating in what they are watching more than ever due to networks' use of convergence media, these networks have an outstanding platform to promote ideologies about society that focus on beneficial areas, like the importance of community, or academia. The ease of access

of technology, however, and popular shows encouraging their viewers to rush to it has caused an overwhelming obsession with the idea of fame.

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# THE THRONES EFFECT:

PAVING THE WAY FOR THIRD-WAVE FEMINISM IN TELEVISION

by Colleen Klinefelter

From Ripley to Katniss, from Buffy to Starbuck, the science-fiction and fantasy genres have given popular culture some of the most heroic figures imaginable. These fictional heroes battle aliens, vampires, and whatever other monstrous beings writers can conjure up in their imaginations, and they do all of this while fighting to maintain strong moral compasses. But what do all of these heroes have in common? The answer to this question is simple: an extra X-chromosome. These imaginative genres have provided an outlet for female characters, especially in television, to blossom into heroic beings that so perfectly capture the essence of modern feminism, particularly third-wave feminism. HBO's latest hit show *Game of Thrones* (2011), an adaptation of author George R.R. Martin's series *A Song of Ice and Fire*, has been thrown into the mix with such perfect timing, and it brings to television what the feminist movement needs: some female characters who are good, some who are evil, power-hungry, sexually skilled, oppressed, forceful, fearful, strong, weak, and some who fit just about all of those categories.

Science-fiction and fantasy genres are crucial to the issue of feminist representation in media because they have the distinct ability to create their own histories and mythologies for female characters. HBO's recent hit *Game of Thrones* has become a heated topic of debate within the world of feminist discussion, as people seem to view it as either an ideal feminist show because of its strong lead female characters, or backwardly sexist and just another HBO-ified extended camera shot of whorehouses and breasts flailing to and fro. To a modern-day television viewer, however, *Game of Thrones* utilizes its numerous and vastly diverse female characters to work as a collective to represent the third-wave

feminism. We live in an era of television that still puts heavy emphasis on dominant male characters (*Breaking Bad* and *The Walking Dead* do little to fully expand on their few female characters) and relationship-crazed young female leads (*Gray's Anatomy*, *The Vampire Diaries* and essentially every other show aired on The CW give us victimized female "heroines" defined by their will-they/won't they relationships with men). *Thrones* then can be viewed as extremely feminist to a modern audience, even in spite of its constant breast-shots, because it shows through its numerous richly written female characters how science-fiction and fantasy genres are paving the way for equal gender representation in television. It is significant to the third-wave movement of feminism because it moves past making bold statements about women as a whole, and instead makes statements about women as individuals. Even while the show may often appear to objectify women through its gratuitous female nudity and thus set the feminist movement back, some of the central characters' nude scenes are shot in an artistic manner that, through a third-wave generational perspective, can enhance the show's feminist imagery.

First, it is important to have an understanding of what third-wave feminism is. According to Feminist Theorist Claire Snyder of the University of Chicago, it is a departure from second-wave feminism in a generational sense, as today's generation has "different issues, different solutions," and responds to a collapse of generalizing all women under the "Women" category by foregrounding "personal narratives that illustrate an intersectional and multiperspectival version of feminism"<sup>1</sup>. Essentially, if second-wave feminism equated to bra-burning, then the third-wave of feminism works to regain the power of

the bra. As opposed to the second-wave generalized abandonment of femininity in order to be seen on a more level playing field with men, the third-wave seeks to regain and embrace individuality of women, and show that it is instead their differences from men that level the playing field. In a nutshell, a woman can be just as empowered by her push-up bra and floral skirt as a woman empowered by her cropped hair and flannel shirt. Each woman can essentially embrace their preferences and whatever qualities make them unique as a woman and use them as tools to be seen as equally strongwomen.

Television shows have a longstanding history of neglecting to portray women in power in favor of portraying women who prefer domestic life. Even within the past two decades, we have seen the supposedly strong and independent Rachel Green on *Friends* give up her dream job in Paris in favor of domestic life with her child and the love of her life. However, television has made a major shift toward feminist progression within the past two decades in two particular genres: science-fiction and fantasy. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997) brought to television a story with a female hero at its core, who dealt with the everyday issues that teenagers face while fighting evil. *Battlestar Gallactica* (2004) made ultra-feminist statements by placing women in major power positions: the character Laura Roslin was the senior survivor of the former Colonial government and became President of the Twelve Colonies. Jane Espenson, writer for both *Buffy* and *Battlestar*, attributes the feminist qualities of both shows to the imaginative nature of the genres; in an interview, she claimed that “science-fiction and fantasy are so important to this transition towards strong female characters because when you create new worlds, you can establish a history like *Battlestar Gallactica*. You don’t have to address why the men and women are equal, they just are.”<sup>2</sup>

The world that *Game of Thrones* is

built around does exactly what Espenson theorizes in order to benefit its female characters. The world, originally penned by Martin in the series *A Song of Ice and Fire*, is entirely fictional, and serves almost as an alternative Earth, with storylines revolving around the massive continent Westeros. And with this new world comes new rules, new mythologies and historical backgrounds that can give women natural power. While the major leadership roles are bestowed upon male characters (with the king holding ultimate power, and inheritance of the throne being patrilineal) the show is full of women in leadership positions who are fighting for the throne. Unlike so many television shows that base male-female storylines around romantic relationship dynamics, the majority of the male-female dynamics in *Thrones* revolve around quests for power. And in true third-wave form, *Thrones* addresses the women as individuals, which in turn helps advance them as a group; as Deborah Siegel argues in *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism*, “We must recognize that there can be no single representative subject of feminism, while, at the same time, we must speak in a collective voice that articulates demands on behalf of a group called ‘women.’”<sup>3</sup> The show never reduces its female characters to types or generalizations; each character, whether she is innately evil, submissive, or vain, is portrayed with strength and weakness in the most human of ways.

The first case example of *Thrones*’ third-wave ideals is the vastly juxtaposed Stark daughters, Arya and Sansa. While the two characters starkly contrast each other in the ways in which they choose to grow up (Arya is a tomboy while Sansa is refined and ladylike), they are both given powerful individual voices that make them equally strong characters. Arya, younger sister, is less skilled at needlepoint and etiquette lessons, and prefers to romp around with her brothers. At only eleven, Arya stands as

an equal with her brothers, as evidenced by her first scene in the show's pilot. As her young brother Bran is attempting and failing miserably to shoot a bow and arrow as his older brothers try to teach him, a shot captures finally what we assume to be an arrow that Bran shoots, directly at the bullseye on the practice target. It is then revealed that Bran did not shoot the arrow, as everyone turns around, jaws dropped, and the viewer catches a shot of Arya standing with a bow in her hands. She lets out a giggle, and she curtsies. This character introduction immediately lets the audience know that she is one of the boys, and will not be reduced to a life of etiquette classes, billowy dresses or arranged marriages. Arya's appearance is mousy and scrappy, and she sums up her tomboyish character simply in the second episode "The Kingsroad" when she says bluntly to her father, "I don't want to be a lady." This concept of Arya abandoning her femininity is often played with throughout the show, as evidenced by her frequently being called "Boy" by her sword-fighting teacher Syrio, and ultimately, the fact that she must pretend to be a boy in order to escape King's Landing when her father dies. In an incredibly bold move, the Nights' Watchman Yoren cuts off her long raven locks of hair for a short, messy hair. This scene provides yet another symbolic shot of Arya's womanhood being stripped from her, and her being forced to lose her sense of self. However, Arya adapts, and in turn, she becomes a stronger figure within the show.

Sansa, on the other hand, is Arya's polar opposite. If Arya may naturally be seen as strong because she is boyish, it would be easy to dismiss Sansa as a weakling. However, as Espenson said, "Feminism is about advancing all women, the strong and the weak."<sup>4</sup> Sansa embraces her etiquette teachings and the societal rules of what proper ladies should be. She has a sense of refinery and grace about her that often becomes stiff and tense; scenes involving

Sansa seldom lack a shot of her pursed lips, arched eyebrows and straight-as-an-arrow posture. However, she carries that tenseness like the adolescent she is, revealing to the viewer her secret fear of unknowing what it actually means to be an adult, and the dread that she could make a single clumsy adolescent mistake and lose everything her family has worked so hard for. As the story arc of the first season progresses into the second season, Sansa's storyline shifts drastically. After the beheading of her father when her betrothed, childish Joffrey is named king, she is forced to state that she disowns her "traitorous" father and brothers and is loyal to her betrothed Joffrey in order to save her own life. She is trapped in King's Landing, engaged to Joffrey, without any of her family near. She remains betrothed to what can easily be classified as the fiancé from Hell, and in doing so she becomes a prisoner, claustrophobically trapped within the role of the young woman she once so eagerly dreamt of becoming. In this sense, it would be easy to simplistically deem Sansa a victim. But with every horrendous misfortune that is thrust upon her at the young age of thirteen, be it attempted gang rape, spousal abuse, or witnessing her father's beheading, comes another shot of Sansa, lips pursed, eyebrows arched, posture in perfect place. She can cry alone in the confines of her bedroom like the teenaged girl she truly is, but, forced into adulthood entirely too soon, she adapts to the rules of this "game" and her hellish new life. The shots of her body language then shift in meaning, from a pre-adolescent sense of standoffishness to a newfound sense of stoicism. Through its depiction of Sansa, *Thrones* shows that feminism and femininity are not mutually exclusive; though initially perceived as dainty and weak, Sansa uses her ladylike etiquette strategically to move forward in the game.

The two Stark sisters greatly contrast each other on the screen, both in appearance and in personality. However, this

juxtaposition of character traits does not work to portray one sister as a stronger female character than the other. Espenson even stated that “femininity is what is seen as weak to us, not femaleness. Suddenly you’re seen as less-than because you carry feminine traits, even in today’s culture.”<sup>5</sup> In a sense, then, Arya would serve to represent second-wave feminism, because she must abandon her womanhood in order to gain power. However, because she serves as an intentional character parallel to Sansa, she can become a generational go-between for the second- and third-wave feminist image. The show works to dismiss this misogynistic concept, and portrays them as equally yet oppositely strong. In this, though in completely different ways, both girls are able to use their wits, their words, and their stoicism to empower themselves and make themselves far more than pawns on the proverbial chess board of the *Thrones* world.

In keeping with the third-wave mentality, *Thrones* provides just as much female insight to diabolically evil characters, none more power-hungry than the incestuous Queen Cersei Lannister. Cersei’s persona, not unlike Sansa’s, can easily be read through her body language. She is most often shot with her nose raised to whomever she is speaking, so that she is always looking down on them, letting them and the audience know that they are beneath her. She raises her eyebrows and smirks, often indicating to the viewer that she knows something that we do not. It is clear simply through shots of her that she is a powerful woman who can stand alone in verbal battles and power struggles if need be. Though often painted as a villain, she displays senses of humanity and vulnerability when dealing with her complicated, incestuous relationship with her twin brother Jaime, which is to her a secret comforting alternative to spending loveless nights with her husband, King Robert. Cersei is arguably one of the most

complex characters in *Thrones* because she holds an interesting power position: as Queen, she holds the second highest title in the entire realm, but even as the second-most powerful person in the realm, she is often reduced by her male counterpart to nothing more than a birthing vehicle for potential male heirs. In “A Golden Crown,” she defends her brothers against Ned Stark to her husband and is responded to with a slap across her cheek. As her cheek begins to swell, however, instead of playing the submissive spouse, she stands tall against her abusive husband and merely states, “I shall wear it like a badge of honor.” Her husband is dumbfounded, and cannot respond before she walks away. This scene so perfectly shows how strangely powerless the most powerful woman on Earth actually is, but rather than turning Cersei into a victim, the scene shows how Cersei refuses to let her male counterparts strip her of her dignity.

Lastly, perhaps the female character most symbolic of feminism in its rawest form is Daenerys Targaryen. In the entire first episode of the series, Daenerys spoke only about two sentences. Her brother Viserys spoke for her to everyone, namely Khal Drogo, the nomadic warlord and Dothraki king that she would be married off to. Daenerys was perhaps the most unfortunate character in the pilot episode: we saw her brother disrobe her and examine her to make sure she would look womanly enough for her new husband, and we watched her be forced into marriage with a foreign tribal king who would rape her within hours of their reception. Every aspect of her story only added up to a massive sign above her snowy white head that read “VICTIM.” However, as the episodes progressed, Daenerys did as all the most powerful female figures in the show did: she adapted. She learned her husband’s native language so that she could communicate him and his people, she abandoned her lavender silk gowns for the



hardened woven leather clothing of the Dothraki (oddly reminiscent of Xena: Warrior Princess fashions), and learned commanding sexual prowess to gain respect from her husband. Perhaps even more powerful than her relationship with Drogo is her relationship with her brother. In the episode "Cripples, Bastards, and Broken Things," Daenerys displays just how much newfound power she has acquired after her brother strikes her, claiming he does not take orders from her, and attempts to wrestle her onto the ground. She grabs a golden chain, strikes Viserys across the face, stands tall over him as he crouches in pain, and proclaims, "The next time you lay a hand on me will be the last time you have hands." Adding to this, not only does she learn to assert the power herself, she gains followers, through her otherwise kindhearted nature, that will assert power for her. This is so perfectly evidenced by the final scene in "A Golden Crown," when Drogo kills Viserys by pouring a pot of molten gold on his head in defense of Daenerys' honor.

The sexual nature of Daenerys' character, and of the show as a whole, is a topic of much heated discussion, as many may argue that the excessive female nudity (scattered within every episode to date) hinders the show's portrayals of feminism. Some may argue that the whorehouse scenes become pornographic in nature, with the idea of fifty cameramen standing around a naked actress as she pretends to be penetrated hanging heavily over the scenes, thus becoming innately sexist on the level of production because it becomes more demeaning for the actress at hand. However, several of the actresses who portray whores and work in full-frontal nudity, most notably Esme Bianco who plays the whore Ros, are not struggling actresses reduced to showing their bodies to pay rent, but are in fact former burlesque performers, approached by the show-runners to act on *Thrones*<sup>6</sup>. The fact that burlesque performance was her career by choice then enhances the feminist

perspective of the show because the actresses themselves are nude by choice, not by subjugation. In spite of the fact that the secondary female character nudity can at times become gratuitous and degrading to some viewers, portraying women as little more than sexual objects, the scenes involving nudity with its main female characters are intricately crafted in order to empower the female characters. This can be evidenced by three episodes involving Daenerys that, added together, display her progression as a strong, independent female. In the first scene that Daenerys is introduced, her brother disrobes her and traces the outline of her womanly figure with his fingertips in a highly sexualized manner. She is submissive, saying nothing as he admits that he would have a thousand men rape her if it meant he could reclaim his crown. By showing excessive shots of her nude, the camera intentionally paints her as an object; she has no courage, no conviction, no power. She is merely a puppet for her brother. The next scene, that of her wedding night, mirrors the first scene with her brother, as Khal Drogo plucks away at the strings of her dress and she begins to silently sob. This only further intensifies the notion that she is objectified by every man in her life. Her body is not hers; it is at the disposal of the dominant male figures surrounding her, and the shots of nudity only enhance this notion. However, the next nude scene comes as she is learning to take control of her body, and provides a much more positive image. She learns how to not only sexually please but sexually command Drogo, and how to lead in their sexual dance of sorts. She refuses to take the positions he pushes her into, and instead takes control and commands his attention with her sexual confidence. The nudity here enhances the idea that while her body may still be an object in these men's eyes, it is a very particular type of object: a weapon. More importantly, it is a weapon that belongs to her and no one else. This aligns

with the third-wave ideal of taking control of the body and using one's natural tools to empower the self.

Finally, the first season ends with arguably the most powerful nude scene in the entire show, and what makes it even more powerful is that it is entirely nonsexual. After Daenerys, descendant of dragons, suffered a miscarriage and lost her husband to an infected wound, the only followers she was left with were refugees who had no leader left to turn to. She promised them a new dawn as she walked into a funeral pyre where she had laid her petrified dragons' eggs with her dead husband. This makes the audience think initially that she is retrogressing back to a submissive female state, dependant on dominant men, because initially it seems as though she wants to die and be with her husband if he cannot be with her in the living world. The morning came and the refugees reemerged to see what remained of their Khaleesi. What we witness is a crisp shot of morning sunlight beaming down on Daenerys, sitting on the ground, her clothes long since burnt away.

Proving that she is a true descendant of dragons, her skin is unscathed by the flames that would have killed any other human. She sits alone, as three baby dragons come into view, one crawling up her leg, one cradled in her arms, and one perched on her shoulder. This image of Daenerys creates the most powerful image of feminism in the entire show, as it displays her as a woman stripped down to her purest form, not in a sexual manner, but in a maternal manner. She cradles the babies that symbolize her potential as a leader who stands alone, with no need for a father figure to her dragons, no men to give her guidance. It is this image of the female stripped down to nothing but herself and her instincts that sums up in mere minutes why *Thrones* is so important to the movement of equal representation of genders, with characters both weak and strong.



Daenerys Targaryen (Emilia Clarke), descendant of dragons.

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# THE WEAK & THE STRONG:

AN INTERVIEW WITH JANE ESPENSON

by Colleen Klinefelter

**Jane Espenson is an acclaimed television writer and producer. She has worked on such science-fiction and fantasy shows as *Buffy*, *The Vampire Slayer*, *Battlestar Gallactica*, *Game of Thrones*, and *Once Upon a Time*. After guest-lecturing for a media course at UCSB, she was kind enough to sit down for an interview.**

**Colleen Klinefelter: How long have you been writing?**

**Jane Espenson:** I have been a professional writer for twenty years.

**Q: Do you think there has been more of a push in Hollywood for female-driven films and TV shows within the past few years?**

**A:** I am not certain that Hollywood set out to make a bunch of female-driven movies. The surge sort of happened because those stories were successful. I mean, a female-centered movie is a hit, and Hollywood sort of fails to recognize that maybe people want more female characters. They sort of go, “Oh, that was an aberration.” Because we all know that there is this asymmetry, where both men and women will go see a male hero, but only women will go see a female hero. So why should we make movies that only appeal to half the population? So they keep making male-centered movies and they don’t realize that they have this great audience for female leads. And as far as television goes, there have been strong female characters from the beginning of TV. *I Love Lucy* may have been about this woman who kept trying to rise above her domestic status, but kept being put back in her place, but the show was run by Lucille Ball, a female. She was a producer of the show. *The Goldbergs* is another example of that.

**Q: So many of the shows you write for are sci-fi or fantasy and there’s a huge list of strong women on those shows. Do you think that there’s a correlation with the genre and gender?**

**A:** Well, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* was really important because it wasn’t a story about a girl trying to do something, she wasn’t trying to be a hero, she just *was* a hero. Science fiction is so important to this transition towards strong female characters because when you create new worlds, you can establish a history like [*Battlestar Gallactica*] where you don’t have to address why the men and women are equal, they just are.

**Q: But Is there a stigma to giving a woman a gun? Will it edge away viewers and moviegoers?**

**A:** I think most TV execs think it’s really hot to have a gun, actually. But I think there’s something really interesting about the sexualization of women in power that should be looked at because sometimes the kickass woman is seen by us as progress but is being leered at by the men, like “Oh look, a woman in power, how hot, I’d like to own her!” but when that happens, it makes you wonder if giving a woman a gun is really progress, or is it just sexualization of violence? And femininity is what is seen as weak, not femaleness. Suddenly you’re seen as less-than because you carry feminine traits. I think it’s built into

our culture to believe that more masculine means stronger.

**Q: Then do you think it's more important to portray the women as human than as physically strong?**

**A:** Giving characters flaws is so important. Buffy was very flawed, Starbuck was incredibly damaged, and I think some women objected to that. Some people misinterpret it as, "She's in power, so you had to make her damaged," and I think, "No, we had to make her human." it's just more affective.

**Q: Given the surge of shows with female leads over the past two decades, like Buffy or Battlestar, do you think that progress is being made for women being represented?**

**A:** Things have changed so much over the past twenty years. When I started out in comedy, the female characters were given conflicts that revolved more around their relationships and less about their jobs. The male character was usually more active in the story. And even the writers would [write it that way] unconsciously because that's how you tell stories. Definitely things have changed in the last twenty years, but when you look at aspects like employment numbers for women in television, they've gone up over the last twenty years but they've gone down over the last ten. Only some 19 percent of TV writers are women now. It was a higher number before. Are we going to slip back then to the way women were portrayed before? We have to keep an eye on this, and we can't always assume that it'll just get better. And going back to the issue of "strong women," someone tweeted something very profound, about "Why is there all this talk about strong women? Feminism is about advancing all women, the weak *and* the strong." and that's kind of interesting, because in order to portray women realistically, as part of the human tapestry, do we have to portray *strong* women? Shouldn't we portray all women, including weak women? Let's stop thinking about how to portray strong women, and think about how women really are. I think that the new HBO show *Girls* is a big step forward in that way.

**Q: Speaking of *Girls*, why do you think it even is a question that women can't dominate comedy?**

**A:** Oh, every few years, someone puts out an article, I think the most recent one was Christopher Hitchens, saying that women aren't funny. I mean what more does Tina Fey have to do to prove that she's funny? Modern television, *SNL*, it's all about funny women. However, we also tend to think that the only way to make advancements for women is if women cause those advancements. But who created Buffy? Joss Whedon. Who created Starbuck? Ron Moore. Who created *Bridesmaids*? Judd Apatow. So we shouldn't forget that there are righteous males out there as well. Feminist men are a huge part of what's going to change this, because there aren't enough women like me that are in the business position to give a hand up to young women, so the men have to do it too, and good men want to see television reflect our world, which includes women.

# THIS IS YOUR BRAIN ON ADS:

## HIDDEN CORPORATE IDEOLOGIES IN ANTI-DRUG PSAs

by Eric Stark

What drives a capitalist economy forward is the constant perpetuation of commodity consumption, and advertisements are the vehicle through which commodities are pushed to the public; placed in this all-important economic position, the role advertisements play in reinforcing dominant social ideologies cannot be ignored. Ideologies that look to group the masses into oversimplified categories, cater heavily to the interests of those with purchasing power, and effectively blur the line between citizen and consumer. In his article “Advertising as Religion,” Sut Jhally asserts that the notion that advertising is a communication form that works to communicate marketplace information about goods to the consumer who is in turn better equipped with this knowledge to make informed decisions about what to spend time and money on, is absurd. In reality, advertising is not about informing but about persuading, and, in a society based on materialism, advertisers tap into viewers emotions by working to naturalize the connection between consumer products and personal identities.

But what about advertisements that, at least on the surface, do not work to push a single commodity but instead attempt to enact social change? Public service announcements (PSAs) fit this category, anti-drug television ads in particular: their saturation of American popular media culture makes them an important subject of study in relation to how advertising works in our culture. A contextual analysis of these anti-drug ads reveals that some of them, though seeming to exist outside the economic interests of capitalism, actually do work to appease the economic interest of large corporations. When analyzed textually, these “anti-ads” are surprisingly similar to commodity based advertisements

in their strategies of persuasion and their reinforcement of dominant ideologies. Also, there exist a form of self-regulated public service announcements, mainly alcohol companies and their drink responsibly campaigns including Miller High-Life and Captain Morgan, that claim to work toward the public good. These campaigns seem to act as a hybrid between pushing a product and attempting to convey a social message, and are a prime example of how advertisements work on multiple levels to persuade the public in the interest of big business. These self-regulated PSAs are far more prevalent on television than any non-profit or government funded PSA because they are created by some of the biggest advertisers in the word: beer and liquor companies.

When thinking of anti-drug campaigns since the 80’s, you’d be hard pressed to find someone who doesn’t conjure up the 1987 “This is Your Brain on Drugs” commercial. It is one of the most recognizable commercials of the last 30 years and has been parodied and appropriated within American culture a thousand times over. Because of its iconic cultural status, this advertisement is the perfect place to start when examining the true message, or lack thereof, in anti-drug PSAs, and what the money trail has to say about their dual motives. The first question to ask, before analyzing what the ad itself is doing, is who funds it? The campaign, at the time the most expensive public-service campaign in history, was created by the Partnership For a Drug Free America (the Partnership), a non-profit organization started in the mid 1980’s by a small group of advertising professionals who thought if advertising could be used to sell products, couldn’t it be used to unsell them as well. According to the Partnership site, the nonprofit receives most of its funding from government grants and corporations. But

what are the corporations that make up the 25% of overall funding for the nonprofit? In 1992, it was revealed by *The Nation* reporter Cynthia Cotts that, at the time, the Partnership “had accepted \$5.4 million from legal drug manufacturers, including alcohol and tobacco kings Anheuser-Busch, Phillip Morris, and RJ Reynolds”<sup>1</sup>. This is problematic because alcohol and tobacco companies have a vested interest in separating consumption of their products as much as possible from that of illegal drugs, even though their products constitute some of the most addictive and deadly on the market – legal or illegal. For these ads to truly fit the public-service guise, they cannot be funded by private corporations who have private interests in mind. The public resounded this sentiment, and as a result of the backlash that followed, the Partnership has since changed its policies. Their website now states: “the Partnership at Drugfree.org accepts no funding nor in-kind services from alcohol or tobacco manufacturers.” Although they have stopped accepting money from these two major producers of legal drugs, they continue to accept large funds from major Pharmaceutical companies including Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundations, Johnson & Johnson, Du Pont, Hoffmann-LaRoche and the Pfizer Foundation<sup>2</sup>.

The Partnership asserts that they are accepting funding from the big pharmaceutical companies, who manufacture some of today’s most abused and deadly drugs, only to work in unison with them “to educate parents about what they can do to prevent or get help for their children’s abuse of medicine that was not prescribed for them”, this according to the Partnership website. This explanation falls flat for two reasons: one, it is not explicitly clear that the money the Partnership receives from pharmaceutical companies goes toward anti-prescription abuse efforts. It is very likely that their sponsorship money is being used to create anti-marijuana ads,

to use one example. This is a problem because it is undeniable that big pharma has the same vested economical interest in keeping illegal drugs off the market as alcohol and tobacco companies, and their funding money should not be used to serve their own interests in anyway. Two, how is their current sponsorship in any way different to the funding of the Partnership by alcohol and tobacco companies in the 1990’s that drew such scathing criticisms? They could just as easily accept funds from tobacco companies and claim that the money is going toward anti-smoking ads, or from beer companies for anti-drinking ads. But clearly, when it comes to alcohol and tobacco, the public stigma is too great to overcome. Abuse of pharmaceuticals, it seems, has not embedded itself deep enough into the public’s psyche to garner significant backlash against this problematic funding relationship, even though it is equally as dangerous to society. Why this is the case is unclear, what is evident is that although the Partnership campaign appears to be wholly disconnected from the economic interests of capitalism, in reality its ads work, whether directly intentional or not, to serve the economic interests of legal drug companies.

But what about the famous “Your Brain on Drugs” ad itself? What does a textual analysis of the advertisement reveal about advertising techniques and how a very specific set of ideals are constantly portrayed through popular media texts – even ones we commonly view to be outside the commodity system like PSAs? The ad depicts an egg being cracked in a pan with a voice over narrator stating: “This is your brain on drugs. Any questions?” There are actually many, many questions. Though this ad has a visceral charge in its shocking simplicity, it is that very feature, its total simplicity, that makes it deficient in tackling any real issue. My brain on drugs is a delicious looking fried egg? At its most fundamental level the ad is a gross

oversimplification of an extremely complex socio-economical problem. And the use of the word “drugs” is vague with thousands of possible connotations and absolutely no specification is made. Is that my brain on two Asprin after a headache? This ad not only does nothing to address the issues surrounding drugs and drug use in America, but it fails to in any way educate the public on what harms different drugs will actually do to their bodies if abused. What the ad does do is reinforce suppressive notions about the individual and his/her role in society. “Prevention programs are a function of their ideological assumptions and often represent the prevailing hegemony. Drug prevention efforts are no exception”<sup>3</sup>. By making it seem obvious that drugs are bad for you, and condescendingly and rhetorically asking “any questions?” this ad assumes that drug use in America is a wholly individual problem, that drug use is simply the result of people making stupid decisions. Though this is certainly the case in some instances, this view on the issue is economically biased, only addressing a middle to higher class of potential drug users. These ads do little to address the marginalized section of America and the issue of drugs as not just an individual’s problem, but a larger societal problem that stems from our social and economic system that suffocates the poor and their pursuit of happiness. The content of this ad provides just one example of the many anti-drug PSAs that have run in the past, and are still running today, that assume this hegemonic position. The money behind this ad reveals that some ads we assume exist apart from the norm of pushing consumerism, are in one way or another integrated into the system of corporate interests.

Brewing and distilling companies are the prime example of the corporate interests at play in the effort to keep illegal drugs illegal, and their advertising techniques reflect their conscious ignorance of public safety in the name of profit. The fact that

alcohol companies were funding anti-drug PSAs until they were essentially forced to stop via the exposing tactics of journalism, shows that they have a vested interest in keeping the use of their product seen as wholly separate from that of illegal drugs, when its negative effects on society are clearly comparable. Besides funding anti-illegal drug efforts, another way they attempt to solidify the detachment from illegal drugs is by making their own forms of PSAs that send a message of safer consumption – alcohol brewers and distillers urging their consumers to drink, but to drink “responsibly”. Although these ads appear to convey a positive social message, their creation and their purpose is to first and foremost benefit the interests of the alcohol companies that produce them. The first thing to realize contextually about these self created PSAs is just that, that they are self created. The major alcohol companies are *not* forced by the government to run these types of advertisements, they do them voluntarily in an attempt to prevent the sort of regulatory litigation on advertising that has plagued the tobacco industry. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, excessive drinking cost the US 223.5 billion dollars in 2006, and, according to the same source, alcohol is the third leading cause of preventable death in the United States. Clearly alcohol companies are well aware of the dangers of their products, and the last thing they want is to be stigmatized, and their marketing power heavily regulated, like the tobacco industry. The downfall of the cultural acceptance of tobacco was aided by strong government regulation of advertising and media campaigns that employed the same tactics as the big tobacco companies themselves in an attempt to reverse the notion they created through advertisements that smoking will transform you into someone more interesting and cool. Alcohol companies don’t want to fall victim to the same fate, and are taking preemptive



measures to take blame off their dangerous product and heavily criticized marketing tactics. "A beer company may seek to enhance its corporate image and reputation by displaying sensitivity and concern about the well-being of its customers and by projecting the company as respectable, prosocial, and community-minded"<sup>4</sup>. It is clear that these types of ads shows that the economic interest of the corporations is reasoning behind their creation, not the public's well-being. But how does analyzing the ads themselves support the claim that any real social message that they may seem to be expressing takes a back seat to the corporate and ideological interests at play?

Two contemporary advertisements that provide examples of alcohol companies working to push their product, while simultaneously attempting to enact a kind of self-regulation, are the Miller High Life "Drink Responsibly" and the Captain Morgan "Ride Home" commercials. The Miller High Life commercial, made by filmmaker Errol Morris, depicts a man working in his front yard drinking a Miller High Life. A deep voiced narrator says, "There are many times to crack open a cold one, and we expect any man worthy of the High Life to take full advantage of them," the man then looks up at a satellite dish on his roof and the narrator continues, "a broken back, though, is a high price to pay for improved reception. Stay off the man juice, or stay off the roof. Beer tastes better when you don't have to suck it through a straw, it tastes better when you enjoy it responsibly." Though this ad is suppose to be a PSA version of a Miller High Life advertisement, it feels just the same as any other High Life ad from this campaign. The ad works to reinforce gender stereotypes and backwards notions of "what it means to be a man" in this culture. Jhally would say the ad displays an example of totemism, where the product "becomes a badge of group membership"<sup>5</sup>. True men mow their lawn, work on the roof, and of course, drink Miller

High Life. The ad equates consumption of its product to the personal identities of those that drink it. For guys who already fit this constructed gender mold it reinforces their identities as true men and tells them that Miller High Life is for them. But more importantly, for those that are insecure about fully living up to the dominant and constantly reinforced standard of manliness in society (most men) it provides them the promise of transformation through consumption of Miller's "man juice."

Besides the explicit gender constructions that are being reinforced, the public service aspect of this ad is highly problematic. For one, the ad doesn't discourage drinking in anyway, it doesn't even discourage heavy drinking – instead it says if you are going to get drunk don't do anything dangerous. The vagueness of the term "drink responsibly," used in most of all these alcohol safety ads, even the ones created by outside organizations, does nothing to warn about the true physical and mental dangers of overconsumption of alcohol and sets absolutely no precedent on how many drinks is considered responsible. In the end, though Miller can use this ad as an example of how it is working to be a socially responsible company, this ad does more to encourage drinking habits that may be unsafe than it does to help educate about the dangers of excess alcohol consumption.

The Captain Morgan "Ride Home" PSA is also problematic in its attempt to convey a message of alcohol safety. The ad begins with women and men dressed as pirates partying loud and drunk on a small boat. The camera pans over to another boat tied to the first, with the same type of party happening on it. Attached to that boat is a smaller third row boat with a man struggling to row both packed boats into shore, the words "DESIGNATE A DRIVER. CAPTAIN'S ORDERS" appear over the image. The social and personal benefits of drinking alcohol suggested by this advertisement far outweigh the possible negative

consequences, even though it is supposed to be an ad preventing drunk driving. The ad, first and foremost, maintains the notion that alcohol consumption is an attractive and rewarding endeavor. Though Captain Morgan wants to discourage the practice of drinking and driving, the very last thing they want to do is undermine popular forms of alcohol consumption, though it is these such forms – going out to clubs and parties – where most drunk drivers are coming from.

In a study conducted by Sandi W. Smith and Charles K. Atki from the Michigan State University Communications department teenagers and young adults “were shown a series of television spots from two leading alcohol companies.” The purpose was to prove that “responsible drinking” campaigns were made strategically ambiguous to engender different interpretations from different audience segments, with the different perceptions translating into “a relatively uniform positive corporate image.” The findings state: “The ambiguity in the ‘drink responsibly’ advertisements enables the audience to draw primarily reinforcing implications that will not substantially reform improper drinking patterns”<sup>6</sup>. It goes on to state that the false appearance of addressing the issue that these ads create may prevent “more persuasive campaign efforts from [the government] and prevention organizations”<sup>7</sup>. It is clear that these self-regulated ads work on multiple strategic levels for brewers and distillers. At once they help appease public pressure for government regulation of their advertising methods that glamorize a proven dangerous product, they work to create a more positive brand image to the public and to shareholders by appearing to be community-minded, they work like any other alcohol ad in rendering consumption of their product an attractive and rewarding endeavor, and very lastly if at all do they attempt to actually address the social problems associated with their product in any real way.

When consumed passively, these ads engender a positive response for both the alcohol brands themselves and the toxic products they create. When closely analyzed in earnest, however, just the opposite is the case, and the alcohol producers’ supreme self-service at the expense of the public’s well being is exposed. It would seem that government and externally funded nonprofit anti-drug PSAs would provide the much needed answer to the deception of these highly problematic self-regulated alcohol ads in our culture. Instead they too avoid directly addressing the issues at hand, containing their own forms of ideologically based assumptions about drugs and the individual, and their simplified, less than subtle messages of how to achieve positive social change should be read with the same critical analysis and skepticism as any other media text.

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# DIAL M FOR MURDER:

LADY GAGA'S *TELEPHONE* LEAVES A MESSAGE ABOUT FEMINISM

By Darrell Hall



Music videos became increasingly in fashion with the launch of MTV in 1981. They were mainly used as promotion materials for the songs. However, they rapidly evolved in content and narrative styles, but all respected the same format : a short video not exceeding more than a few minutes.

Michael Jackson's 1984 video for *Thriller* (dir. John Landis) became a landmark in music video history. It is a thirteen minutes long short film. This new form was not

viable for TV as it was expensive to make, and too long for the music video programs, and so it was never institutionalized. Over twenty years later however, Lady Gaga reuses this short film / long video format. It starts with her 2008 video *Paparazzi* (dir. Jonas Akerlund), in which she is shown killing her boyfriend. The concept is reused in *Telephone* (dir. Jonas Akerlund), the 2010 sequel. The song is a duet with famed R&B singer Beyoncé Knowles.

The video has the production values of a short film, including opening and closing credits. This puts an emphasis on Lady Gaga's work as a songwriter, but also credits her as the co-writer and co-producer of the video. Not only is she the product, she is also the producer.

This shift in the conception of the music video, from promotional tool to art form has led other pop artists to do the same, using longer narratives, and short film qualities. Amongst many changes, this mostly benefits the video director, who now gets recognition within the medium. A decade ago, the audience would probably not have acknowledged the director, but with the presence of credits in the video, the entire production crew gets the recognition they deserve. Once considered as a career start up, many film directors, such as Michel Gondry began directing music videos. With this "revival" of sorts, music videos no longer have to be considered as inferior to film.

As it was the case in cinema, the visual is a way to build a star persona. In our day and age this is probably the most important aspect for the artist, and Lady Gaga is no exception. She seems fully aware that in this

new century, having a voice is not enough. What is important is the overall image, and the way the artist is marketed. Thus, her every public appearance is a spectacle in itself, as she “changes her style almost daily from baroque ballet to futuristic domina and back into 80s disco queen.”<sup>21</sup> Sometimes deemed as excessive, sometimes as artificial, “Lady Gaga increasingly performs an outrageous femininity.”<sup>22</sup> This theatricality is a crucial element in the construction of her persona and is found in her public appearances (wearing a meat dress at the 2010 MTV Video Music Awards), in her onstage numbers (faking a suicide while performing at the 2009 VMAs), and in her music videos.

*Telephone* is a sexually and politically charged video, that triggers many interpretations. The focus of this essay will revolve around the problematic portrayal of female sexuality and the contradictory readings that can be drawn from it. Presenting the female body as both demeaning and empowering, we will try to make sense of the feminist discourse that is expressed.

At first glance, the lyrics and the video have no immediate relationship. The song is a conversation that Lady Gaga has with her lover, telling him to stop calling her, as she is out with her friends and doesn't want to be disturbed.

The video shows Lady Gaga in prison (after killing her boyfriend in *Paparazzi*). She is later bailed out by Beyoncé. The two women drive out to a diner in the middle of nowhere, and commit a mass killing, including Beyoncé's boyfriend, played by Tyrese Gibson. The song hints about female independence, as the two artists sing about not wanting to answer their boyfriend's call as they are having a good time with their friends (“Boy, the way you blowin’ up my phone won’t make me leave no faster. Put my coat on faster, leave my girls no faster”). The video also portrays the two divas finding this independence, by killing the boyfriends. This is a violent act that

creates a strong statement, negating the need to rely on the male presence. This display of violence can be seen as problematic as the medium is directed towards teenagers. Although *Telephone* doesn't display the killings in a gory, extremely graphic way, the violence almost seems normalized to a certain extent. The explicit link that is made between the will of independence and this type of violence can be seen as inappropriate, and demeaning for women as they go to these lengths to free themselves from the male domination.

The relationship between the two divas projects a homoerotic undertone, especially during the ambiguous car scene. As Lady Gaga leaves jail, she meets her friend in a car. After telling her that she has been « a very very bad bad girl », Beyoncé bites fiercely in a bun, and then lets Gaga take a bite. This way of feeding her, and the lustful look that sparkles in Lady Gaga's eyes is enough to set this homoerotic subtext. Homosexuality is not a new theme for Lady Gaga, as she has already lyrically explored it, as in her hit *Poker Face*, in which she states she's often « bluffin’ with (her) muffin ». The car scene reflects a camp aesthetic, as it tends to “undermine the heterosexual normativity through enacting outrageous inversions of aesthetic and gender codes.”<sup>23</sup> This “inversion” can be noted in the role played by Beyoncé. She is seen taking on the masculine part of the relationship as she is the one driving, and hand-feeding Gaga. This can also be read as a maternal gesture. This creates an opposition between the masculine figure and the feminine mother figure. She is also the one who bails the pop star out of jail, depicting her as the one with the money. The camp also operates as a “mode for rejecting middle-class values.”<sup>24</sup> The homosexual dynamic associated with the violent act of female liberation, depicts this rejection of the traditional values based on the patriarchal, male dominated society. Originating in the gay community, “camp offers a model for critiques of gender and

sex roles.”<sup>5</sup> Camp can be reinvested by women, if rearticulated into the “theoretical framework of feminism”, as done here in *Telephone*.

The video contains a certain number of references to movies, which creates a network of signs that all work together towards building strong connotations in the music video. The most striking is the Pussy Wagon from Quentin Tarantino’s *Kill Bill vol.1* (2003). In the movie, this ostentatious car belongs to a repulsive male nurse who turns out to be a rapist. The use that is implied for the Pussy Wagon is an orgy truck. The character clearly enjoys crudely exposing his (presumed) sex life. This phallic symbol doesn’t go unnoticed in the music video, as it is reappropriated by the duo.

Another direct reference to a cinematic hypotext is *Thelma and Louise* (dir. Ridley Scott, 1991). The similarities can be found in the plot : two women are on the run after killing a man. But there are also visual references in *Telephone*, such as the Polaroid pictures, and the holding of hands in the car, in the last scene.

While the Pussy Wagon is an element of parody, the reference to *Thelma and Louise* results from pastiche. As “parody is transformative in its relationship to other texts, pastiche is imitative.”<sup>6</sup> The Pussy Wagon is reused as an act of reappropriation. It is taken out of its context. In Tarantino’s movie, it is firstly used by the male sexual predator, who loses it to the Bride who kills him. She then uses the vehicle to get around on her vengeful killing spree. The reappropriation by the two singers of the truck places it in this more feminist oriented statement, as they are now in control of the phallic symbol, and in control of their sexuality. The various references to Ridley Scott’s film don’t seem to take on any specific symbolism, they just seem to work as narrative imitation, or visual details (the Polaroid pictures).

This chain of cinematic intertextuality

appears to be building a feminist discourse, and leads to the end of the video, which closes with the succession of two universal symbols, added in the editing phase : a heart and the female symbol.

These signs have a somewhat “girlie” aspect to them. Associated with the theme of female “mateship”/solidarity, within the commercialized pop video tends to place the discourse within a “Girl Power” attitude. This refers to “girls or women supporting each other or choosing not to put a man first.”<sup>7</sup> This movement was largely spread in the 1990s through popular music with acts such as the Spice Girls, who became fervent defenders of Girl Power, which was all about “being able to do things just as well as the boys – if not better – and being who you wannabe.”<sup>8</sup> It was a more commercialized take on gender inequality. It was less theorized than it was lived and put into practice by these girlie, cheeky pop singers. In this respect, it could be seen as a teenage version of the feminist movement.

Although some of the elements seen previously can be interpreted as building a feminist discourse, the depiction of female sexuality, especially the exposed female body and its objectification, is a contradictory and problematic point in *Telephone*.

Both singers are heavily sexualized throughout the video. During the first chorus, Lady Gaga is shown wearing only underwear as she dances down the prison hallway. This bikini attire and objectified female body is a recurring motif in music videos, as women are “more likely than male characters to exhibit behaviors meant to elicit sexual arousal.”<sup>9</sup> This over sexualized and often demeaning portrayal of women is mostly found in rap and R&B music, as part of the genres iconography. Nelly’s video *E.I. (Tip Drill Remix)* featuring St. Lunatics (2003) is one example amongst many. Lyrically and visually offensive, the video depicts a pool side party where the four rappers are surrounded by hundreds

of nearly naked women. All of them are depicted as sexual objects, one of them happily letting the singer slide his credit card between her buttocks. The framing and editing play an important part in the demeaning portrayal of female sexuality as “sexual objectification entails the representation of a woman as a collection of body parts, which might be contrasted with a visual portrayal of a woman as a total person.”<sup>10</sup> Coming back to Lady Gaga’s prison scene, although she is lightly clothed, she is not in a position of sexual objectification. Also, as already stated, Lady Gaga is both the product and the producer of the video. This takes the sexual objectification (imposed by the male) and turns it into self-objectification, thus the artist uses it as part of her message.

Her collaboration with Beyoncé is interesting, as the latter is a figure of female independence in the field of R&B. Some of her songs such as *Single Ladies* (2008) and *Run The World (Girls)* (2011) have greatly reflected her personal convictions about gender equality. However, in *Telephone* her appearance comes across as highly sexualized, especially in her first scene in the Pussy Wagon. As Lady Gaga enters, we don’t see Beyoncé at first, because of the huge hat Gaga is wearing. As the latter slowly lifts her head up, Beyoncé is slowly revealed, the first thing we see is her breasts. This is a recurring motif of her dress style throughout the video. However, this is associated with her masculine traits of character. As we saw she is the one driving, she feeds Gaga, and once she has taken a bite of the bun, she squashes it in her fist, as if parodying a male instinct to assert his strength. This fusion of the display of feminine attributes with the reappropriation of male behavior emphasizes the “Girl Power” statement of “being able to do things just as well as the boys – if not better”.

An important distinction between the portrayal of the female body in *Telephone* and in rap videos such as *E.I. (Tip Drill*

*Remix*) is the fact that Lady Gaga and Beyoncé are proactive protagonists, as they take matters into their own hands by killing their boyfriends. In Nelly’s video, the women assume passive roles, and are simply displayed as sexual objects. The way in which the singers display their bodies (symbol of their femininity) is associated with the will to take their independence from men.

In the essay « Rock and sexuality », Frith and McRobbie explain how rock music became a male dominated genre, and how women had very little place to establish themselves. The authors outline four options that were possible for female performers : “turn into family entertainers (...) become the singer / songwriter / folkie lady (...) become one of the boys”, or simply be the glamorous women whose “instruments are their ‘natural’ voices and bodies”<sup>11</sup>, in other words, become a sexualized object for the benefit of the male gaze. Although many female pop artists have taken one of these roads, Lady Gaga’s persona is based on a mix of all these aspects, especially the singer/songwriter, the “one of the boys” trait, and the sexualized performer. As we saw in the opening of the video, she takes credit for being the songwriter and producer of her own work. In her live performances she often has a “one of the boys” attitude, such as swearing, shouting and sweating. Her persona was based for a while on the claim that she was a transsexual. Playing with this idea, she would often, during her performances, reference that, by grabbing her crotch or mimicking male masturbation. Although Frith and McRobbie’s essay was written in 1978, the aspects they underline are still present in today’s music industry. Many female artists embody more than one option, but many others still only exist within a single framework, often the last one. This is the case of Britney Spears, who through songs such as *I’m a Slave 4 U* (2001) exposes her over-sexualized body to

the heterosexual male gaze.

Frith and McRobbie carry on by defining “cock rock”, which is when the performance is an “explicit, crude, and often aggressive expression of male sexuality.”<sup>12</sup> It can be agreed that a shift has been made from the rock genre to Rap and R&B, which is a highly exclusively male dominated music field. But it is a similar pattern that has taken place. To say it more simply : these guys just want to assert their manhood. This is the case of the Boyfriend in the diner scene. Beyoncé is late, so to show her that he is unhappy, he ignores her and goes to the bar. He nearly gets in a fight with a man, and on his way back to his booth, the boyfriend spansks a woman as he walks past.

What we can conclude from the *Telephone* video is that these female artists are symbolically killing the men who rule the industry, and proving that within their own genre they can renegotiate gender dynamics.

The gender inversion and the camp aesthetic are found also in the dance scene at the diner, after the killing. Singing along to the chorus, Lady Gaga and Beyoncé are joined by a group of punk looking dancers.

The style these dancers are dressed in explicitly refers to a punk aesthetic (leather jackets, ripped jeans...). However, these

elements are put together to connote a group of punks. It is a simplified representation. What is interesting in the scene is how this group of “rebels” has come together around Lady Gaga and Beyoncé. Both artists represent mainstream popular culture. But this alliance is another element that goes against the values of the traditional patriarchal/male dominated middle-class. A subculture is a group that comes together around a certain belief, that diverges from the majority of the society (the dominating ideology). These groups are often seen as marginalized in a society. These groups often distinguish themselves from the ordinary citizen (dress style, hair style...). According to Dick Hebdige, subcultures represent “violations of the authorized codes through which the social world is organized.”<sup>13</sup> *Telephone* contains at a certain level a discourse that can be related to that of a subculture. It is important to make clear that the emergence of the punk subculture happened in a totally different context to *Telephone*’s context. This paper does not claim Lady Gaga to be of the punk movement. However, the similarity

can be drawn from the transgression. “Subcultures express forbidden contents (consciousness of difference) in forbidden forms (transgressions of sartorial and



Joined by a punk influenced group, the singers dance in the diner, after the killing.



behavioral codes, law breaking, etc.).”<sup>14</sup> The murder is a narrative device that expresses transgression, as it is a law breaking act.

Visually, the “forbidden form” can be seen in Lady Gaga’s sartorial transgression, to go against the figure of authority, while she is prison. One of the jail scenes shows her posing in her cell, wearing only strips of crime scene tape. This is an object that belongs to the police, a figure of utmost authority. The fact that she uses it to cover her body could imply her body as a crime scene, strongly evoking rape, and domestic violence (a theme already used in *Paparazzi*).

Just as Hebdige questioned the appropriation of the swastika by the punk

In the diner/dance scene, both singers are wearing American flags, which can be read as a symbol of liberty. However, associating it with murder to obtain independence can be a controversial statement, as it can imply the increasing violence present in the USA.

Creating such a video resulted in Lady Gaga being once again attacked on various levels, such as the portrayal of her sexuality, and the depiction of her body as being anti-feminist. Another type of accusation was seen on Fox News when Sandy Rios, president of Culture Campaign (a faith-based organization) stated that “Lady Gaga and Beyoncé as lesbian lovers... It’s disgusting!” and adding that



Lady Gaga wearing crime scene tape, thus transgressing sartorial codes.

subculture, we can question this dress choice for Lady Gaga. In everyone’s mind, the swastika will forever be associated with Nazism. However, taken out of that context, the sign loses its meaning, thus Hebdige concludes that it was “worn because it was guaranteed to shock [...] but was exploited as an empty effect.”<sup>15</sup> The use of the crime scene tape can be argued to be just a sartorial transgression used to shock, as it fits into the overall prison theme at the beginning of the video.

“this is just poison for the minds of our kids.”<sup>16</sup> Deemed immoral because of the iconography of her music videos, this paper demonstrated how the portrayal of sexuality was problematic, but how it could fit into a feminist framework. The shock value is just that : shock. It is a way of getting attention from the media.

Influenced by pop culture, Lady Gaga reuses elements such as the Girl Power discourse, or the shock value often attributed to Madonna. Connecting them all together

creates an interesting reading that addresses gender inequalities. As Beyoncé embodies both a motherly and masculine figure, and Lady Gaga's body seems both demeaning and empowering, the video portrays these women trying to assert their femininity by reconciling contradictory characteristics that have been present throughout the different waves of feminism.

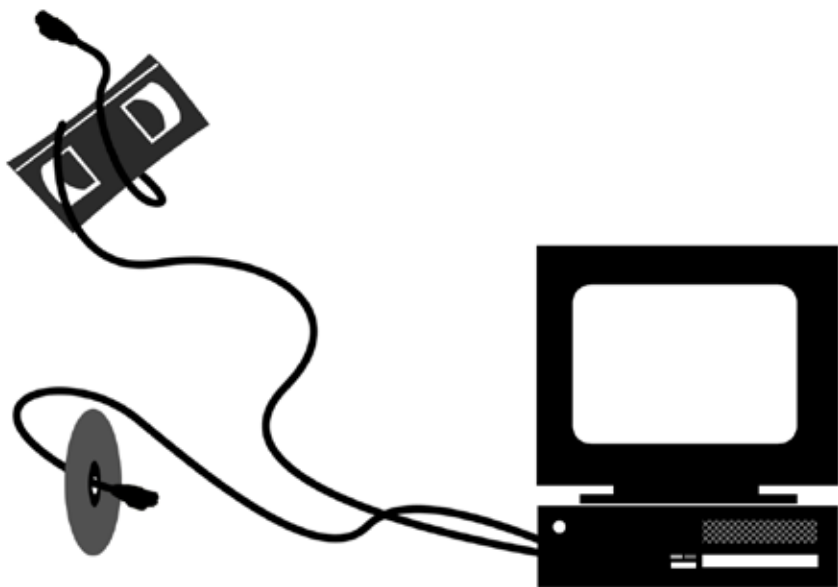
By addressing these issues within a music video, mainstream culture might just be slowly setting a basis for a new social movement.

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INTERNET KILLED THE VIDEO STAR ?





# TWITTER AND TELEVISION:

## THE FUTURE OF TV OR AN IMMINENT FAIL WHALE?

by Derek Boeckelmann



Since the 1970s, television's days as a medium that provided the nation with shared-experiences has appeared to be on the decline. As scholar Amanda Lotz notes in *The Television Will Be Revolutionized*, "Although once the norm, society-wide viewing of particular programs is now an uncommon experience."<sup>1</sup> Within the past decade, live viewership has diminished greatly and the idea of water cooler television has seemingly died with the advent of DVRs and online viewing, essentially giving viewers the option to postpone the viewing of a program. Yet, remarkably, the past two years has seen a slight shift back towards these seemingly dying concepts. Social-networking sites have begun to slowly attempt to reinvigorate live viewership and have given audiences a new, metaphysical water cooler around which television can be discussed. Of all the social-networking platforms currently available, Twitter has emerged as one of the most compatible with live television viewing. In the past three years, Twitter-integrated broadcasts have become more and more popular with the broadcast networks. The results of these integrated broadcasts have varied. Yet an entry on the Twitter marketing team's blog boldly states, that Twitter is "driving viewership", implying that Twitter, when implemented within a televised broadcast, is capable of producing stronger ratings

for that program. In researching the ways in which the various broadcast networks have utilized Twitter within their traditional broadcasting methods, one might be able to determine how Twitter is changing the television industry by attempting to put the premium back into live television viewing.

In September 2009, in the build-up to their Fall 2009 television season, FOX debuted its first experimentation with Twitter-integrated television broadcasts. "Tweet-peats", as FOX called them, were a fusion of live Twitter feeds, a DVD commentary, and a television repeat. Live Twitter feeds from several members of a show's creative team would appear on-screen during a repeat of an episode from a previous season. These tweets would provide insight on the episode's production process, reveal spoilers for the show's forthcoming season, and answer fan-tweeted questions. The idea behind tweet-peats was that these Twitter feeds would add value to past episodes and thus, fans would be more inclined to watch a tweet-peat than a regular repeat. The pilot of *Glee* (Brennan, Falchuk, Murphy 2009) and the penultimate episode of *Fringe*'s first season were selected to become the network's first tweet-peats. Ultimately, however, tweet-peats proved to be an unsuccessful approach to utilizing Twitter on network television. The *Fringe* (Abrams, Kurtzman, Orci 2008) tweet-peat was heavily criticized because the tweets would frequently block what was happening in the episode, making the episode's narrative increasingly difficult to follow. Whereas the *Glee* tweet-peat was modified to avoid this problem, technical difficulties prevented the Twitter feed from starting until fourteen minutes into the broadcast and the fan response was still far from enthusiastic. Throughout the 2010-2011 television season, FOX included

watermarks of a show's Twitter hash-tag during original broadcasts of its prime-time series. These hash-tags acted to serve as a constant reminder to fans to tweet about the episode while it was airing.

CBS' biggest trial with twitter-integration to date has been its tweet week strategy. Learning from FOX's disastrous tweet-peak experiment, CBS chose to keep the two screens separate. Commencing on the third of April 2011, members of each program's creative team were selected to tweet live commentary and answer questions during the program's first-run broadcast. Interestingly, of the eight series selected, only two managed to become trending topics on Twitter the evening of the program's broadcast. Even more telling is that the two broadcasts that produced the trending topics were the non-scripted, one-time event shows of the eight participating programs, the *2011 Academy of Country Music Awards* (ACMAs) and the *2011 NCAA Division I Men's Basketball National Championship Game*. None of the weekly scripted series managed to generate enough buzz on Twitter to become trending topics.

In fact, none of the scripted shows that participated in tweet week increased in the much-coveted adults 18-49 demographic. *Hawaii Five-O* (Kurtzman, Lenkov & Orci 2010) was down 17% in the demos (hitting a "series low"<sup>2</sup>) and down in overall viewership. *The Big Bang Theory* (Lorre & Prady 2007) saw a decrease of 0.516 million in overall viewership and no increase or decrease in the demos<sup>3</sup>. *Blue Bloods* (Burgess & Green 2010) saw decreases of 0.2 in the demos and 0.1 in overall viewership<sup>4</sup>. *NCIS* (Bellisario & Gill 2003) was the only participating series to see a growth in viewership (0.667 increase), but it declined 0.1 in the demos<sup>5</sup>. While none of these are dramatic decreases, collectively, they act to discredit Twitter's claim that it is "driving viewership."

On the other hand, the Twitter-integrated broadcasts of the two event programs, the

*2011 ACMAs* and the *NCAA Championship Game* had more mixed results. The *2011 ACMAs* saw increases of 3% in the adults 18-49 demographic, 19% in the adults 18-34 demographic, and saw a small rise in overall viewership (an additional 30,000 viewers)<sup>6</sup>. However, the ratings for the *NCAA Championship Game* dropped 3.88 million in viewership from last year's game<sup>7</sup> and saw slight declines in its adult male demographics<sup>8</sup>. Whereas it is impossible to determine the correlation between the integration of Twitter with the declines or rises in these ratings, some interesting hypotheses can be drawn from the results.

NBC's foray into twitter-integrated broadcasting is a little more complicated. Despite having Twitter accounts for its programs (and in some cases, in an attempt at transmedia storytelling, Twitter accounts for a program's fictional characters), NBC has thus far elected to forgo a partnership with Twitter in favor of its *NBC Live* app – it's own Twitter alternative. Rather than encouraging audience engagement through a third-party such as Twitter (as all the other broadcast networks have done), NBC will soon encourage audience engagement through the "moderated social stream" on *NBC Live* (currently only available in beta modes, as the application awaits real-world testing). Exploring the beta version of the application and watching videos of NBC actors walk future users through it, *NBC Live* appears to adopt similar strategies used by FOX and CBS in their types of integration. Logging into *NBC Live* on either an iPad or computer during a real-time broadcast of a series, a viewer can participate in live polls with other fans, read ongoing commentary from the show's creative team synchronized to the episode airing (labeled "insider insights" on the program's interface), engage in a Q&A session with some of the actors, and read what other fans have to say about the episode. In NBC's online description of the application, it's labeled as a "moderated

social stream". In actor Rainn Wilson's video walk-through of the application (available for viewing on the beta version of the application), he claims that the stream "automatically features the best posts from fans". What's troubling in these descriptions is the implication that only certain posts from fans will be highlighted in these social streams. If this is the case, one must wonder who will be moderating the social stream and who will be selecting the "best" posts from the fan base. Signing in to *NBC Live*, users are given the option to additionally link their Twitter or Facebook account with the application so a user can also post their *NBC Live* comments to their Facebook wall or Twitter feed. In many ways, *NBC Live* can be seen as an extension of USA's *Chatter* application – not surprising considering USA and NBC share the same parent company. However, it should be noted that *Chatter* incorporates Twitter to a greater degree than it seems *NBC Live* plans to. *Chatter* appears to act more as an aggregator, republishing feeds from other social-networking sites (such as Twitter and Facebook) alongside its own *Chatter* feeds. According to media consultant Betsy Scolnik, who used *Chatter* to boost the social media presence of the *Law & Order* (Wolf 1990) franchise, the correlation between the Twitter presence of a program and a program's ratings comes down to the velocity of the program-centric tweets, instead of the sheer number of tweets. From her experience with *Chatter*, Scolnik concludes that, "If [a show] only trends for a short period of time, that doesn't necessarily translate into ratings, [but] if you trend for the entire length of the show and after, that almost always means that ratings are going to be higher."<sup>9</sup>

Oddly, despite establishing itself as the leading network for youth-oriented programming, the CW has yet to considerably venture into Twitter-integration with their programs. Currently, the CW's most forward step into integration

is an app available on its website that acts as an aggregator – republishing tweets from a program's talent or from fans using the appropriate hash tag. Yet according to recent data, Twitter surprisingly has a much older user-base than other social-networking sites like MySpace and Facebook<sup>10</sup>. This data might serve as a possible justification for the CW's slow uptake and integration of the medium.

Adopting a less rigorous and less extensive strategy, ABC has yet to make an attempt beyond what has become the standard implementation of Twitter (e.g. creation of Twitter-specific show pages), with its weekly television offerings. ABC's biggest foray into the Twitter-integration was with its coverage of the 83<sup>rd</sup> *Annual Academy Awards*. Oscar co-host, James Franco, tweeted live throughout the event, publishing photos and videos in addition to ongoing commentary. In posting videos and photos from his vantage point (during rehearsals, on stage, backstage, etc.), Franco and Twitter allowed followers to experience the Oscars like never before. Like FOX, ABC deployed on-screen hash-tag reminders to viewers to tweet about the event. Twice during the broadcast, the event's official hash-tag (#oscarevent) appeared to not only encourage viewers to tweet about the event but to make sure that every viewer's tweets were using the event's official label, which in turn both increases the likelihood of the event becoming a trending topic and the online awareness of the broadcast. However, despite its substantial online presence, the event's broadcast decreased significantly from the year prior. Overall viewership for the event fell 9% and the 18-49 year-old demographics saw a decrease of 12%<sup>11</sup>.

Looking at these results across the networks, one might conclude that Twitter integration is better suited to live, event television than it is for weekly, scripted programs. Whereas all of CBS' weekly series failed to rise in the 18-49 year-old



demographics, one of its two live, event programs (the *ACMAs*) did. Yet as we can see from the disappointing results of ABC's 83<sup>rd</sup> *Annual Academy Awards* broadcast and the decline in viewership for CBS' *NCAA Championship Game*, the results might largely depend on the type of integration used and the strategies implemented during the event's airing.

Currently, the form of integration that has proven to be the most successful is that of the Twitter tracker, as implemented by cable channels such as MTV and CNN. What the Twitter tracker does differently than most of the aforementioned strategies is that it combines the two separate screens, but it does so in a different (and considerably less frustrating) manner than FOX attempted in its tweet-peats. The Twitter tracker is designed to incite a competition amongst fans, as such the two biggest broadcasts to utilize this strategy were competition-focused event programs: the 2010 *MTV Video Music Awards* and the 2010 *FIFA World Cup*. Twitter tracks are an on-screen visualization that keeps track of what subjects are being tweeted about the most at a given time and over the course of a broadcast. Typically the format of the tracker is that the more tweets a subject is given, the larger their image becomes in comparison to their competitors. In the case of the *MTV Video Music Awards* (VMAs), the Twitter tracker was promoted as a competition to see what performer had the biggest following. While the twitter tracker had been used in the 2009 *MTV Video Music Awards*, its onscreen and online presence was increased for the 2010 broadcast. The 2010 VMAs drew record ratings, up 27% in overall viewership and 33% in the 12-34 year-old demographics from last year<sup>12</sup>. During the 2010 VMAs, approximately 2.3 million tweets were sent from viewers over the course of the broadcast<sup>13</sup>.

Unlike the creative commentary or Q&A sessions implemented in other broadcasts, the Twitter tracker on MTV's

VMAs gave fans the chance to actively shape an outcome of the event. As very few programs have had Twitter-integrated broadcasts to this degree, it might be too early to claim that Twitter-integration that frames the viewers as active participants in a program's content generates the greatest results, but given the phenomenal success MTV has had with this integration format, this conclusion seems plausible.

So if Twitter integration doesn't always generate better ratings for a program, why are broadcast networks and cable channels working so diligently to accommodate television to Twitter? The answer seemingly lies in one of television's primary sources of revenue: advertisers. Viewers that engage with content through social-networking sites appeal to advertisers because it assures advertisers and networks that the viewers of a specific program are actively engaging with the content on-screen and are not passively taking in the broadcast while involved in other activities. Their attention is likely to split only between the broadcast and the social-networking site they are using to engage with. These viewers are also appealing to advertisers and networks because these viewers are providing a program with real-time promotion, introducing hundreds (or potentially thousands) of their followers to the program they are tweeting about.

Marketing research firm Bluefin Labs has recognized the value in this new type of audience and has created a business of providing audience data to networks and advertisers based on user activity from the social-networks. Bluefin Labs Founder and CEO Deb Roy believes that the data they provide advertisers and networks can help them "understand how their audiences are responding to ads and shows on TV"<sup>14</sup>. The Bluefin Labs website markets themselves to television networks in the way their research data can provide a network with justification to "command premium CPMs based on audience engagement, not just

simple viewership”<sup>15</sup>.

The vast ramifications of this proposed change in audience measurement (a shift from overall viewership to audience engagement) might best be articulated in a 2005 *New York Times* article by business journalist, Jon Gertner: “Change the way you count, for instance, and you can change where the advertising dollars go, which in turn determines what shows are made and what shows then are renewed. Change the way you count, and potentially you change the comparative value of entire genres (news versus sports, dramas versus comedies) as well as entire demographic segments (young versus old, men versus women, Hispanic versus black). Change the way you count, and you might revalue the worth of sitcom stars, news anchors... Change the way you measure America’s culture consumption, in other words, and you change America’s cultural business. And maybe even the culture itself.”<sup>16</sup>

If Bluefin Labs were to gain prominence over Nielsen in the industry as the primary method of audience measurement, the entire industry would likely experience some drastic adjustments. As Gertner claims, one potential and likely ramification would be a dramatic shift in the types of programs on-air and the types of programs being commissioned by the networks. Value would also potentially be radically rearranged within the television industry.

The relationships that comprise the industry today would be irrevocably altered. An increased importance placed on Twitter accounts and live-feeds may lead to questions of financial compensation for the participating talent. How much are live-feeds worth? What kind of labor is involved in live-feeds? Just as the rise of iTunes and Hulu distribution led to the 2007-2008 WGA Writer’s Strike, such questions surrounding talent-based Twitter-integration might lead to future contractual disputes, financial compensation disagreements, and strikes from the talent guilds.

Currently, more and more television celebrities are hosting live-tweets during their program’s broadcasts. *Survivor* (Parsons 2000) host Jeff Probst, in an April 2011 interview with New Zealand newspaper *Stuff*, offered his forecast for the Twitter-TV future: “I feel like it’s not going to be very long before all the stars of TV shows will have it written into their contracts by the network, ‘You have to tweet during your episode’, because it’s one of the few ways we try to entice viewers to stay watching us live and not TiVo us.”<sup>17</sup>

Negotiations between network executives and talent might also change due to an increased importance placed on Twitter. When news broke of Ashton Kutcher replacing Charlie Sheen on the CBS sitcom *Two and a Half Men* (Aronsohn & Lorre 2003), television news website *Lost Remote* brought up the possibility that Kutcher’s enormous social networking presence contributed to his employment<sup>18</sup>. With Kutcher having almost 6.9 million followers on Twitter and given the high frequency of his tweets, *Two and a Half Men* stands to gain a much greater online presence – something that, journalist Cory Bergman of *Lost Remote* argues, “could be a key driver in [the show’s] continued success”<sup>19</sup> despite the loss of one of its main stars. For the show’s 2011-12 television season, in which Kutcher joined the cast, ratings increased substantially, hitting a season average of 14.90 million viewers<sup>20</sup> (compared to the previous season’s 12.73 average<sup>21</sup>).

Additionally, Twitter has opened up an unprecedented dialectic between a show’s fans and its creative team. In May 2012, the popular medical-drama *Grey’s Anatomy* (Rhimes 2005) killed off a beloved series regular in its eighth season finale. Infuriated fans wanting to express their frustration to the show’s writing staff, took to Twitter. During the episode’s broadcast on May 17<sup>th</sup>, the character’s name became one of Twitter’s trending topics. Attempting to

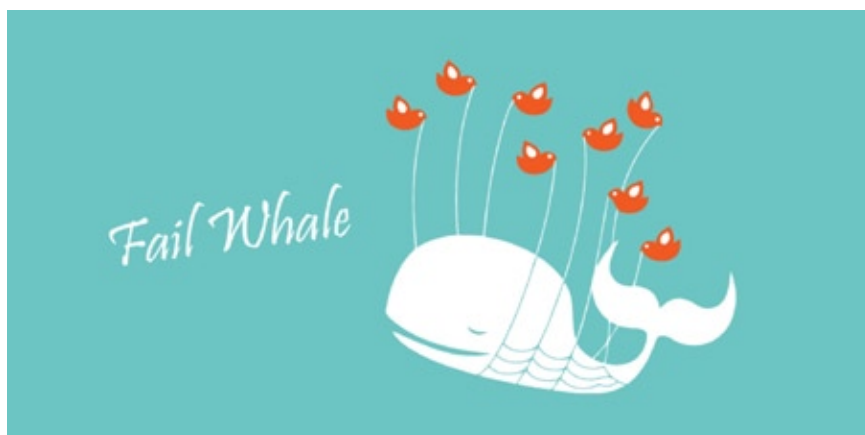
soothe the backlash, *Grey's* showrunner, Shonda Rhimes quickly released a statement through Twitter, justifying the creative decision to kill the character off<sup>22</sup>. In the statement, which was tweeted in conjunction with *TwitLonger* (a program that allows a Twitter user to send a longer tweet to their Twitter followers), Rhimes explained the reasons the character was written off and also confirmed the exit of a second series regular whose fate was left hanging in the finale<sup>23</sup>. Twitter allowed Rhimes to take part in real-time damage control as the controversial episode aired across the country, and Rhimes is just one of several showrunners who have begun to utilize Twitter in this way. Twitter holds the creative staff of shows accountable in a way they have never been subject to in the past. Tweets and trending topics provide a show's writing team with knowledge on how their audience is receiving certain characters and plotlines. *Community* (Harmon 2009) executive producer, Garrett Donovan recently told *WIRED* magazine that, "The fans on Twitter are keeping us honest"<sup>24</sup>. When news leaked of a character's father being cast, fans of the NBC sitcom sent tweets to the show's writing team, reminding them that, according to earlier established continuity, the character's father had died many years prior. In cases like this, Donovan explained that, "The audience is doing the work for us"<sup>25</sup>.

Twitter has recently also been used to establish a talkback between a show's sponsors and a show's audience, regarding product-integration within a show's narrative. For example, the car manufacturer Jaguar was recently featured within "The Other Woman" (Chellas & Weiner 2012) episode of AMC's *Mad Men* (Weiner 2007), in a storyline where one of the female characters had sex with a Jaguar executive to ensure the company would stay with the advertising firm she works for. Through it's Twitter account, during the episode's original broadcast on May 27<sup>th</sup> 2012,

Jaguar responded to its depiction within the episode<sup>26</sup>. In a tweet, Jaguar expressed dissatisfaction with how the show's fictional advertising firm (Sterling-Cooper-Draper-Pryce) landed Jaguar as clients and applauded the decision of another female character to leave the firm. "Loved the pitch, didn't love the process. We applaud Peggy leaving SCDP. #MadMen"<sup>27</sup>. In hash-tagging *Mad Men* at the end of their tweet, Jaguar ensures that its tweet is linked to other tweets about *Mad Men* and remains visible to fans of the show.

It should be acknowledged that television is not the only medium radically changing and profiting from this growing partnership between Twitter. Twitter, itself, is also the threshold of undergoing major changes as it explores new business models. In mid-2010, the first form of Twitter sponsorship began in the form of promoted tweets. Promoted tweets, currently the closest thing Twitter has to traditional advertising, are tweets advertisers have paid Twitter to be prominently featured on the site. Within the past year, the ability to promote Twitter accounts, and even trends, have also become options for advertisers. Ultimately it would appear that the relationship between Twitter and television is mutually beneficial, as both mediums stand to make money off their partnership with the other.

Currently, social networking is able to provide a strong incentive for viewers to watch live, event television through concepts such as the Twitter Tracker. However a viable method for increasing the live viewership of scripted content remains undiscovered. At this point in time, there is no proof to suggest that social networking is driving viewership – despite what some sources claim. What social networking does provide us with, however, is an interesting new method of audience measurement and testing of audience engagement. Additionally, Twitter has gifted television audiences with much greater agency and influence than they've held in the past.



Like nothing else before it, Twitter has established direct flows of communication between previously isolated factions of the television industry, and opened up a dialectic between a show's sponsors, writers, producers, networks, actors, and fans. It should also be noted that television and Twitter are still in the early stages of their union. More substantial conclusions

about the effects of their partnership cannot yet be formed. There is still not sufficient evidence to make such bold statements declaring their union, the future of television or alternatively, a dead-end partnership, but the aforementioned discussions should make this union something to closely monitor as Twitter gains more prominence in the social sphere.

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# ENGAGING THE EPHEMERAL:

TOWARDS AN ARCHIVE OF THE PRESENT IN THE DIGITAL AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

By Nick Alford

In our 21<sup>st</sup> century lives, at once sprawling and yet somehow tightly connected, digital media pervade in an unprecedented manner. Perhaps the most illustrative case regarding this phenomenon is the social networking giant, Facebook. At least for the current college-aged generation and increasingly in the population at large, Facebook transcends the digital realm and becomes a virtual extension of our mental capabilities. We constantly check it for updates, use it to plan social events, and archive our daily lives through photographs, status updates, “check-ins”, and lists of interests and activities. It is how we express ourselves and what we use to develop ideas of who our friends really are. Facebook *is* the public sphere, and we are increasingly filling that sphere with ever more private and intimate details. More importantly, these details create an expanding archive of the present as they are saved on servers and databases around the globe.

What is it about our culture that has facilitated such an explosion in the ubiquity of these digital façades? And what problems are associated with this unavoidable new conception of social life and quasi-archival preservation? In this paper I will use Erkki Huhtamo’s appropriation of topos theory to argue that the boom in digital social media is symptomatic of deeper cultural phenomena, and that Facebook demonstrates an interesting new twist on the proliferation of various topoi. I will also apply these concepts to Wendy Hui Kyong Chun’s discussion of ephemerality and memory in order to demonstrate that Facebook’s archiving of the present is highly contradictory and volatile—that is, it is suspended in a state of tension between permanence and transience, and it establishes a new paradigm of digital preservation that must be studied and

understood more fully if it is to have any benefit.

As a part of cultural theory, the idea of topos study has been appropriated through multiple lenses and employed in an attempt to draw retrospective conclusions about particular populations. In a chapter on some of the potential uses for media archaeology, Erkki Huhtamo traces a few of the traditional understandings of how topos theory functions and then departs from tradition in order to apply these understandings to contemporary media theory. Huhtamo defines topoi as “stereotypical formula[s] evoked over and over again in different guises and for varying purposes” and asserts that “[c]ultural desires are expressed by being embedded . . . within topoi.”<sup>1</sup> Traditionally, examples of topos in literature could be recurring character archetypes, plot devices, or motifs that signal various cultural states.<sup>1</sup> Huhtamo discusses the German literary scholar Ernst Robert Curtius in order to establish a groundwork for the orthodox understanding of how topoi function, but departs from this understanding, heavily criticizing Curtius’ insistence on confining these ideas to the literary tradition and ostensibly neglecting larger cultural implications divorced from this specific institution.<sup>2</sup>

At this point it becomes necessary to move away from such a limited approach to topos study. Huhtamo highlights work from the German art historian Aby Warburg in order to emphasize the function of topoi in visual arts, and in doing so demonstrates the interdisciplinary nature of topos theory. Whereas Curtius saw topos theory only in literary study, “Warburg understood that numerous topoi had manifested themselves *both* in literary texts *and* in visual artworks. Tracing their coexistence and interrelationships was a logical way

of breaking boundaries between academic disciplines.<sup>73</sup> Warburg is not only saying that recurring images and formulas apply to the visual arts in addition to literature, but also that *the same* topoi emerge across media and disciplines. This recharacterizes the ways that we can understand topoi, extending them more into the realm of a collective cultural consciousness. Warburg refers to these ideas as pathos formulas (*pathosformeln*), and, according to Georges Didi-Huberman, these formulas “are meant to be considered as visible expressions of *psychic* states that had become fossilized, so to speak, in the images.”<sup>74</sup> ii The invocation of fossils here suggests a psychological archaeology through visual media, at once uniting three academic disciplines and vastly expanding the uses and implications of topoi in academic thought.

Didi-Huberman also references Warburg’s understanding of time’s effect on these formulas with regard to their meaning, noting that the pathos formulas’ “temporalities, their clusters of instants and durations, their mysterious survivals, presuppose something like an *unconscious memory*.”<sup>75</sup> Though the element of time is also crucial to Huhtamo’s argument, we must first take care not to let the notions of psychological exposition move our understanding away from *cultural* factors. Huhtamo brings in a cautionary discussion of C.G. Jung’s archetypes and warns that “[t]he continued usefulness of the notion of the topos for media archaeology must rely on the assumption that its origins and manifestations are both created and conditioned by cultural forces.”<sup>76</sup> Jung’s archetypes are very similar to topoi or pathos formulas, but rely on “deep psychology” as opposed to cultural influence. The basic distinction being made here is that topoi should not be considered inherent to the nature of human thought or brain function. Though they are still often subconscious, they are not inherently lodged in deep human psychology. If that were the case,

topoi would retain the same meaning in each subsequent occurrence, effectively eliminating their archaeological function in understanding cultural phenomenon. Didi-Huberman’s assessment of Warburg’s attention to temporality, then, reminds us that symptoms/symbols do not remain static over time, but rather serve as instants that should be both isolated to their historical moment *and* seen as fixtures in a nexus of topoi and cultural ideas.

It then becomes the scholar’s job to examine these networks archaeologically and figure out ways to apply their implications to conceptions of both the present and future states of media and culture. In the introduction to their book on media archaeology as a field, Huhtamo and Parikka note that “[b]y demonstrating how the media’s past(s) lives on in the present, guiding and informing people’s attitudes in their daily lives, the topos approach helps to detect novelties, innovations, and media-cultural ruptures as well.”<sup>77</sup> Essentially, the most effective way to make sense of and orient ourselves within the modern media landscape is to develop an understanding of media’s various histories. Archival study allows us to look for patterns in these histories and also to recognize fissures in those very patterns. With these moments, academia can begin to draw conclusions about the way media function in contemporary culture and, through a topos-oriented approach, extend such conclusions to a broader cultural understanding.

But what, then, is the function of the media archaeologist in relation to the archive? There is controversy surrounding the question of whether or not the archival record should exist in concert with historical narratives or simply be an independent collection of material objects—as Wolfgang Ernst puts it, “the past as artefactual hardware, so to speak, upon which historical discourse operates like a software.”<sup>78</sup> Ernst puts forth the concept of a “media-critical antiquarianism” which aims



to bridge the gap between “the physical presence and the discursive absence of the past” through “touching and tasting the immediate, material object.”<sup>9</sup> That is, media archaeology should be preoccupied with the physicality of the archive, and historical discourse, though relevant, should exist on a separate and parallel line of thinking. But Ernst’s thinking becomes complicated in the contemporary age of immaterial and virtual data. Anticipating this conflict, Ernst rightly points out that “[i]n a digital culture of apparent, virtual, immaterial realities, a reminder of the insistence and resistance of material worlds is indispensable, and all the more so from a media-theoretical point of view.”<sup>10</sup> He basically asserts that this movement away from materiality increasingly privileges the importance of a mode of study that preserves the study of the physical media archive. Though this may be true, what then of the present?

Ernst’s assessment lacks a strong enough connection with ways to characterize an archaeological record of the digital present. In an article criticizing Ernst’s attempt to differentiate German media archaeology as its own unique brand, Jussi Parikka notices the ways in which Anglo-American theorists have been able to take German appropriations of material emphasis and “combine them with the traditional strong points of cultural and visual studies, including power, gender and even political economy.”<sup>11</sup> If we look at the ways in which an interdisciplinary approach can expand material media archaeology, the lines between a strictly material mode and one that allows for elements of media-cultural discourse become blurred as we recognize the need to reassess the very basis of materiality. According to Parikka: “A historical mode of writing finds itself rejuvenated not in a narrative historical interest of knowledge—not only writing counterhistories of media—but in looking at temporality as a complex object of media cultural analysis as well as a driver of

such processes of technical media which characterize software cultures.”<sup>12</sup>

The software culture in which we currently live is inextricably connected with a discussion of temporality, and it is this idea of temporal transience that can be used to distinguish things such as Internet phenomena from physical object archives. But if we look at temporality *as an object*—that is, the physical aspect of how time functions in the preservation of a cultural item (be it a sculpture or an e-mail)—the discussion becomes more useful and all encompassing. Also, the discussion of temporality lends itself to the ways in which ephemerality and the difficulties in preservation go on to shape not only the substance of digital content and its cultural understanding, but also the physical (hardware) means that power these functions.

In order to better understand how ephemerality functions in media archaeology, I will now turn to Wendy Hui Kyong Chun’s chapter, “The Enduring Ephemeral, or The Future Is a Memory” and look at the ways in which temporality, preservation, and cultural memory become complicated in the modern digital environment. Chun, referencing concepts like the speed of a YouTube video’s circulation and the continual resurfacing of old tidbits via social networking sites, claims that “[t]his constant repetition, tied to an inhumanly precise and unrelenting clock, points to a factor more important than speed—a nonsimultaneity of the new.”<sup>13</sup> By denying the importance of speed, she is moving away from the common academic anxiety of not being able to catch up with digital trends, instead working towards a contemporary understanding of newness as it relates to our daily lives.<sup>iii</sup> This “nonsimultaneous” newness is abundantly evident in current media trends such as Facebook, especially when thinking of it as an archive of the present. For instance, somebody could post a new status update and have it go relatively

unnoticed, leaving it to be forgotten in the endless barrage of other posts. But at any point—even years later—another person could come upon the very same post and by commenting on it, recycle it back to the top of other friends' news feeds, effectively making it new again.<sup>iv</sup>

And if something like a status update resurfacing a year later can happen once, there is no reason for that cycle not to keep repeating, thus reorganizing how we conceive newness. According to Chun, in this model “response is demanded over and over again. The new is sustained by this constant demand to respond to what we do not yet know” and “the goal of new media czars is to constantly create desire for what one has not yet experienced.”<sup>14</sup> So when we personally add something to Internet media space, it is impossible to know exactly how the response cycle will work for that particular post. And, as we see with politicians and potential employers, we have no idea when something from the past will resurface in the public sphere and cause unanticipated problems (such as an ill-advised photograph from the past showing you drinking underage causing an employer to choose somebody other than you for a position). Under this model, instead of thinking about the relative speed with which events move, “we must analyze, as we try to grasp a present that is always degenerating, the ways in which ephemerality is meant to endure.”<sup>15</sup> What is it that causes certain things to keep recurring? Here we can come back to the idea of topos theory and slightly recharacterize the ways in which we can conceive topoi.

As Chun notes, “What is surprising is not that digital media fade but rather that they stay at all and that we stay transfixed by our screens as their ephemerality endures.”<sup>16</sup> Going beyond a single status update, we can see that it is not just individual posts that resurface, but also larger conceptual ideas. The idea of a profile in general, for example, can be seen as a topos. After all,

MySpace came before Facebook, and AOL Instant Messenger allowed users to “express themselves” on the “profile” section of their account as well.<sup>v</sup> There seems to be a culturally based desire amongst individuals to have a way of expressing themselves in a very concise and very public way. A profile is supposed to represent who you are as a person, and because we create our own profiles, we are given free rein to omit what we perceive as our negative qualities and emphasize what we perceive as our positive qualities—or to just completely falsify our representations and in a way *become* somebody that we are not. Very basically, one could choose not to list the music that he or she actually listens to, instead listing the music that he or she perceives to carry the most favorable connotations.

But these profiles are always ephemeral. On one level, we update them constantly. Our digital facades are incessantly changing as we adjust our interests, change our profile pictures, and reorganize our friends. And, as Chun pointed out already, we continuously seek feedback on these changes, even though we *know* that they are ephemeral. Perhaps we seek this feedback as a form of reassurance that we are in fact unique and interesting as individuals—that in this digitally connected world where we are surrounded by unfathomable amounts of information and personal opinion, we can create a form of ourselves that matters to somebody else (even though all they have to do is type a sentence or click a button). In this way, Facebook is just another emergence of the topos of contrived representation—putting a digital spin on the idea of keeping one's front lawn in pristine condition and having a fancy car in the driveway. According to Rodney Harrison, “The electronic media do not simply produce an archive relating to the recent past, but actively create the present through facilitating its imagined futures.”<sup>17</sup> That is, through submitting to this topos, we allow digital media to create

a new present. We imagine the future in terms of what responses and feelings we desire, and that dictates our understandings of our own personal presents. This extends to the public sphere in an unprecedented way, effectively characterizing the entire contemporary discourse. And to bring back the idea of the enduring ephemeral, we see that the platforms for these ideas are ephemeral while the topos endures. My AOL Instant Messenger profile gave way to my MySpace profile, which I replaced with Facebook and Twitter. But the way that I used these services and the satisfaction that I sought is what endured, and the social implications of that endurance is evident in the daily discourse.

Another way in which Facebook complicates ephemerality and permanence goes along with Chun's way of describing the volatile and complicated nature of digital memory in general. She points out the practical lapse in the ideal notion of perfect preservation people had envisioned for digital media, arguing that, "[d]igital media, through the memory at their core, were supposed to solve, if not dissolve, archival problems such as degrading celluloid or scratched vinyl, not create archival problems of their own."<sup>18</sup> We want to think of things like hard drives and servers as the answers to archival degradation, but in reality, the problems associated with digital storage functioning as the primary form of cultural preservation are vast and difficult to conceptualize. Much of our reliance on digital memory comes from a blind trust in something that we do not fully understand. Now we use Facebook to archive our life in photographs as opposed to a traditional photo album, but what happens when the Facebook servers crash? Some of us back up our archives on personal hard drives, but those often fail as well. When it comes down to it, Facebook and other websites have the ability to allow us to pull up and view nearly everything we would want to from our pasts, and that leads to a dangerous

reliance on ephemeral storage. According to Chun, "This belief in the Internet as cultural memory, paradoxically, threatens to spread this lack of memory everywhere and plunge us negatively into a way-way-back machine: the so-called digital dark age."<sup>19</sup> The idea here is that as we become more reliant on digital storage, the preservation of non-digital media loses its importance. Though non-digital archives have their problems, we simply *know* more about them (how physical preservation works or *where* the items actually are). If we continue a blind reliance on cloud servers and crashing hard drives, we risk losing unbelievable amounts of cultural data.

The volatile new archive of the present that Facebook incessantly builds, stores, and recycles may be problematic in terms of reliability and conceptualizations of temporality, but it retains the traditional notions associated with a classical collection. Krzysztof Pomian characterizes the traditional value of collections in terms of their mediation between the visible and the invisible, and suggests that the invisible is "spatially distant," "temporally distant," and "beyond all physical space."<sup>20</sup> Basically, the invisible can be seen as the vast network of ideas and concepts that are lost in the passage of time and space—cultures, heroes, emotions, gods, periods of time in general. The *visible* objects in a collection, then, serve as intermediaries between these lost ideas and our present selves. Archives—as collections of the "visible"—are then invaluable in order to stay engaged with the vast invisible network of the past and conceptualize the multidirectional movement of the future. Facebook's archive is unorthodox in the way that it establishes an array of nondominant histories through its preservation of every user's experiences. To quote Rodney Harrison, we are involved in a "production of imagined futures by inviting multiple perspectives on the past and the present as something which we are still in the process of making."<sup>21</sup> Though

as we have seen, this idea leans toward utopianism in its failure to acknowledge the ephemerality of our preserved present. Digital, user-generated archives provide insight into the invisible, but once individuals become actively involved in this archiving, we must understand the implications of that ephemerality if our fleeting present is to endure.

In short, while the pervasiveness of new digital media offers an enticing vision of a more democratic, self-aware future, we must take care not to allow an exciting new paradigm overshadow the importance of more traditional methods of storage. Facebook creates a tremendously detailed archive of our present lives, but the ephemerality of this archive is difficult to grasp, and the material on which it is based may not be as definitive as it appears. Opening up the process of archiving to everybody with a Facebook account leads to a reemergence of the individual's insistence on embellishing details and idealizing representation. An analysis of

Huhtamo's appropriation of topos theory helps to clarify this notion, and we can use an understanding of topoi to examine the present and endeavor to achieve a stronger grasp on the cultural relevance of these sweeping phenomena. These media have, after all, proven themselves to be shockingly ephemeral, but the speed with which trends come and go need not shock and discourage the academic community. The principles of media archaeology not only allow us to evaluate the vanishing present by analyzing the ways in which its particular components consistently endure, but also to look forward to imagined futures with the tools of the past firmly in our grasp. If we continue to rely on the dubious promise of the Internet as a cure to the problems of cultural preservation, then we risk slipping into a frightening new age devoid of substantive knowledge—but if we refuse to fall into the blind trap of the vanishing archive, we can look towards a future that, though comprised of transience, can hope to endure.

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21. Harrison, "Exorcising the 'plague of Fantasies'", p.336

## Notes

i. The chapter brings up the example of the “rejuvenated supernatural old woman” as a concrete example. The idea is that these formulaic constructions repeatedly emerge in different forms without the author necessarily being cognizant of the tradition that he or she is invoking. See Huhtamo 2011, p. 31.

ii. The term “pathos formula” invokes pathology, and thus the idea of the symptom. This provides an avenue for art history at large to move away from classical modes and more towards a psychological understanding of cultural moments. See Didi-Huberman 2004, pp. 12-16.

iii. See Chun 2011, pp. 186-187. Referencing scholars such as Lovink, Wark, and Virilio she establishes a level of academic anxiety in the new age that is the result of speed and malleability. That is, if hyperlinks and documents are not consistently available (in the same form) to people going back and checking academic references, then traditional academic criticism loses its authority over this new realm.

iv. Here I should briefly clarify some terms for those who are not familiar with Facebook. Users create a *profile*, which consists of one’s interests, activities, photos, and various other information. Users can post *status updates*, which are brief statements that can really be anything, but are intended to give information about what one is currently doing or thinking. Status updates are then published to the *news feed* which compiles all of the updates of your *friends*—people who have mutually accepted each other on the website so that their information becomes available to one another. On the news feed, users can *comment* on their friends’ posts—write a short, public response to the post which develops into a sort of conversation—or *like* the posts, which indicates just that—the user likes the post or finds it interesting. When posts are commented on or liked by enough people, they can get recycled back to the top of the news feed under *highlighted stories*.

v. MySpace is a social networking website that has qualities which are very similar to the profiles found on Facebook. MySpace was immensely popular before Facebook came along but has since lost a large portion of its users.

# THE WORLD REMIXED:

## HOW NEW MEDIA IS CHANGING OUR WORLD

By Sharon Reeh

This spring, UCSB had the chance to have Michael Wesch guest lecture as part of the Arts & Lectures “Innovation Matters” Series. Wesch is an Associate Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Kansas State University. His videos about digital ethnography have been viewed by millions on the web, thus getting attention from publications such as Wired Magazine and National Geographic. His visit brought a really interesting and key issue to the center stage: the online video’s power to create meaning between people all over the world. Right away, he brings us into his personal journey as an ethnographer. His background in cultural anthropology proves unique. A quick history lesson, a timeline of human life, puts civilization’s development over the centuries into context. Each step he takes across the stage is 500 years, and he reviews humanity’s important milestones, such as the representation of speech in pictures and letters and the development of the printing press. Everything that matters to us is represented in his final step: the development of trains, automobiles, aviation, television, the electronic revolution, then in the very toenail of his foot: the Internet. The next step we take as a civilization is yet to be decided by our ever-changing social practices.

Because it is now so ridiculously easy for anybody to connect and share in an ubiquitously mediated world, Wesch directs our attention to the importance of shifting our educational values from being “knowledgeable” to “knowledge-able”—“able” as in being able to navigate expertly in our mediated world. However what is yet more important is the inspiring sense of wonder that must be found in order for anything fruitful to emerge.

A viral video of snow falling in Wallington, New Zealand shows the people

on the streets in awe because snow has never fallen in Wallington before. Wesch narrates, “there is a sense that everything matters; as if the people in the video are celebrating the world, and the world watching them is also enchanted”. This amazement of seeing the world in a new way, brought together by the force of the internet, is what should inspire us to solve the problems that need solving. What we must then fear is what he describes as “the end of wonder in the age of whatever”. The problem with education today is that students care less about learning than the grades they earn. No longer inspired by curiosity to learn, they now use the tool of Facebook as a distraction in class.

Michael Wesch came to learn the most about technology in a place with none. During his visit to New Guinea, he was faced with various obstacles, starting with a language barrier. Unable to speak with anyone, he found his identity in crisis. Of this experience, he recalls : “by losing myself I was able to see myself in a totally new way”.

The villagers in New Guinea had something very special : a shared vulnerability in sharing their lives and deaths together. He contrasts this with how Westerners feel alive because of their need to be included in the conversation (here he refers to Robert Putnam’s *Bowling Alone* and Lieven De Cauter’s *The Capsular Civilization*). The culture of fear is dominating over the culture of curiosity; obesity and consumption are a way of numbing ourselves - but emotions cannot be numbed selectively. Wesch noticed that media affected the villagers the same way in that the seductive clean straight lines on census grids influenced them to organize their huts accordingly to count and quantify themselves. This led him to question the

greater power relations of our own society. Building from Marshall McLuhan's famous media theory that the nature of media mediates relationships ("the medium is the message"), he examines the media of our generation today: the online video.

Concerned about the way we are thinking, Wesch created an online video about the history of text and how text now networks people on the internet with its ability to be hyperlinked, tagged, and blogged. The video went viral, impressively soaring to number one video during Super Bowl week after growing increasingly popular on content-ranking websites. This is the age of "user-generated filtering", where YouTube searches cater to you and your personal tastes for revenue, and RSS feeds and content-ranking websites like Reddit, Digg, and Delicious organize popular content among users for easier visibility. And once you understand how the internet works, its power is opened up to you.

Brought into the conversation are media activists like the Yes Men, the culture-jamming duo that is infamous for hi-jacking websites and impersonating big corporations. The Yes Men and other media activists have utilized the internet to raise awareness for socially relevant problems. Skilled in media literacy, anyone can gain power over the communication lines. This is how someone can have a voice. Anyone can be an activist, and anybody can get in. Wesch shows a Dove commercial remixed by Greenpeace that brought Unilever's ironic ethics of using palm oil to attention, going as far as pushing the corporation to initiate an immediate moratorium on palm oil plantations. Wesch then demonstrates on the spot how easy it is to do a quick video edit and make a remixed commercial by overlaying a commercial with some music and text.

What happens when we empower students with these tools to bring out their best voice and collaborate? When citizen reporters on Twitter have majorly influenced

the elections in Kenya and students used the same platform during the Haiti earthquake, the ethnographer's point is compelling to consider. "This is the ultimate collaboration machine, but it is not going to be unless we make it".

It is valuable that Michael Wesch is raising awareness of the power of YouTube and online video. He relevantly puts them into an anthropological perspective as the way humans now connect and create dialogue with each other in today's day and age. Because it is a phenomenon that is occurring—and rapidly growing—as we speak, it is difficult to clearly see its importance, nature, and direction. In urgent human spirit, Wesch brings to our awareness that the online video is a powerful tool that must be understood in order for it to be harnessed to its fullest potential and not be let gone to waste.

Michael Wesch joins a growing amount of thinkers in the major forefront discourse of internet media technology, and his addition to the debate is one that should be carefully noted. One of his most significant points is that there is great potential for the tool of the online video to become useless just as much as powerful, and that we must be cautious in how we use it. This is largely unrealized and very true; most of us will agree that there is most definitely a blatant negative side to the effects of all this internet technology. Michael's belief that we must educate the youth accordingly is legitimate, and it is one of the most pragmatic and thoughtful approaches I have encountered so far. While there is a lot of energy and discussion surrounding the internet's potential, not many people examine its trends from a practical and empowering perspective like Michael Wesch has done. This is where cultural anthropology's involvement becomes exciting; Wesch draws a line tracing what he sees in his anthropological observations and then invents a plan-of-action - teaching kids the tools to create well-informed media on



the net. Ideally, this can be implemented in schools and education. It however involves more questioning and evaluation, but it is part of the next step we must take, a step which Wesch wants us to think carefully about. Can we do it?

**Michael Welsh's website:  
mediatedcultures.net**

**Watch the video that started it all at:**

**[www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gmP4nk0EOE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gmP4nk0EOE)**



# ABOUT THE STAFF

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## Colleen Klinefelter : Co-Editor-in-Chief



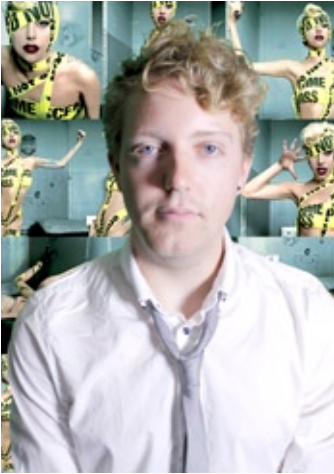
Colleen Klinefelter is a second-year Film and Media Studies student at UCSB, and because she is stingy and refuses to pay for a fourth year of college, she will still not be able to legally drink liquor when she graduates in 2013. She is originally from Murrieta, CA. Her hobbies include eating In N Out (the greatest treasure of California) and donuts, running, and above all else, watching movies and television. Her favorite movie of forever and all time remains a tie between *A Little Princess* and *Jurassic Park*. When she graduates, she wants to study improv and writing at the Upright Citizens' Brigade or The Second City, and plans on someday buying a fabulous Manhattan apartment that she will share with a St. Bernard named Andre, a Maine Coone cat named Wendel, and her favorite person in the world: herself.

## Jessica Stevenson : Image Scout



Jessica Stevenson is a third-year Film & Media Studies major and is 90% water and 10% caffeine. Her favorite shows include 30 Rock, Gilmore Girls, and Friends. She enjoys critiquing and analyzing the social, political, and cultural aspects of television programming and film. After she graduates from UCSB in the Fall of 2013, she intends to attend graduate school, and obtain her PhD, where she will focus on Media Criticism, Environmentalism, and Policy. As a result of this education, research, and knowledge, she hopes to help educate others and inspire them to make changes to our current media policies.

## **Darrell Hall : Co-Editor-in-Chief**



Darrell Hall is a British foreign exchange student at UCSB, from the University of Bordeaux (France). Having studied Film for the last five years, he enjoys many things (not) cinema-related. He believes that liking both “high” and “low” culture does not make you a terrible person, and has a weird obsession with pop music, Diet Coke, Princess Beatrice’s Royal Wedding Hat and cereal. On a more serious note, he is currently working on a research dissertation about french actor Jean Dujardin. Going back to France to finish his master’s this summer, he hopes to participate in giving contemporary popular cinema a good name in the academic research field. His emphases in Film Studies include silent film, star studies, and contemporary French cinema. Darrell also enjoys screenwriting, photography and theater and will be directing Shakespeare’s *Comedy of Errors* next September.

## **Derek Boeckelmann : Copy Editor**



Derek Boeckelmann is a graduating Film and Media Studies major at UCSB. Despite being born stateside, Derek grew up in the small coastal town of Caloundra in Queensland, Australia. During his time at UCSB, he has been involved in numerous student film productions and has worked as a Staff Writer for the “Artsweek” section of the *Daily Nexus* campus newspaper. An aspiring screenwriter, Derek plans to continue his studies towards obtaining a Master of Fine Arts degree and hopes to one day write for television.

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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**Nick Alford** is a graduating senior double majoring in Literature and Film & Media Studies, originally from San Diego, California. When he isn't busy ruminating on complex academic things, you can usually find him watching *Mad Men* or *Breaking Bad*. After graduation he will be making the move down to Hollywood to pursue his dreams of getting coffee and answering phones for people who are more important than he is.

**Corie Anderson** is a third year Film and Media Studies major, emphasizing in screenwriting. While at UCSB, Corie works as a Staff Writer for the Artsweek section of *The Daily Nexus* newspaper and interns at The Carsey-Wolf Center on campus. After graduation, she hopes to take classes at Upright Citizen's Brigade comedy theatre in Los Angeles and eventually write sitcoms for television.

**Ian Barling** is a fourth year film and media studies and philosophy double major. Other than schoolwork and eggplant, he enjoys surfing, photography, and "surfing photography". He is an officer for the UCSB film co-op. Originally from Atlantic City, New Jersey (and no, his accent, if he even has, does not resemble that of Snooki, or the Situation). He is planning on attending graduate school for film and media studies.

**Ariel Campos** is a third year Film and Media Studies Major at UCSB. Though she never got accepted at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, that in no way means that she is not a full time wizard. She intends to become a screenwriter... or actor... or director... or just give up on this world entirely and find Narnia. As a film student, she has the power to ask questions no one else would think to, such as just who it was who decided that Captain America's shield would hold against Thor's hammer. Just in case this skill does not aid in the acquirement of a real world career, she always keeps a bag packed for the inevitable arrival of the TARDIS, which is inevitably coming for her.

**Brenna Osborn** is a Film Studies and Art Studio double major senior at UCSB. She is the co-president of laorana Te Otea, a Polynesian dance club on campus and she also recently wrote and directed the short film *In her Room*. She enjoys film editing and animation and one day hopes to work in the animation industry.

**Sharon Reeh** is a fourth-year undergraduate Film and Media Studies major whose main interests are in both film production and cultural studies. Her other interests include music and other visual arts, and she is fascinated by culture. She has always been involved in student film productions, namely as an editor, and in the future hopes to write and produce material that incorporates her knowledge in film and media studies.

**Eric Stark** is a fourth year Film & Media Studies major and English Minor at UCSB, originally from Laguna Niguel California. At UCSB he was a Carsey-Wolf intern for the production company Green Living Project and was co-president of the official Santa Barbara Friday Afternoon Club. He loves the ocean, his friends, and his family, in no particular order.

**Celeste Wong** is a third year Film and Media Studies major with a minor in French. She grew up in Berkeley, CA, where she spent most of her free time watching films and getting hooked on just about every television show. After graduating next year, she hopes to pursue a career in acting in the film/tv industry, so she could really use all the luck and well-wishes possible. She would like to thank her family and friends for their endless love and support!

# ABOUT THE COVER DESIGNER

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## Eric Stafford

Eric is a recent Film and Media Studies graduate from UCSB. Although he doesn't have an art background, he found himself repeatedly being drawn (hehe...) into illustration and design jobs while at UCSB. He currently works in video post-production in San Francisco and is quite happy. When he's not flying kites or playing *Mortal Kombat* with his son, he can usually be found at his computer wasting time animating, making music, and drawing into the early hours of morning.

Eric has been involved in many projects at UCSB, including designing posters for the Magic Lantern screenings.

Samples of his work can be found here:

**<http://eholden89.carbonmade.com>**

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