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- FOCUS MEDIA JOURNAL- - -

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ABOUT THE STAFF

Editor-in-Chief (President): Ian Laughbaum

A transfer student from Palomar College stumbling into senior year of the Film and Media Studies program, Ian wants everyone to know that working on FOCUS was absolutely righteous, man. When not tearing his hair out, Ian likes obsessing over silly things and being annoying at parties. Ian told reporters he wants to "give an insanely powerful shoutout to Realest Homie Joe Palladino and the FOCUS FREAKS," though it is unknown what that means at press time.

Editor-in-Chief (Vice President): Matthew McPherson

Before he realized film analysis and media discourse were his bread and butter, Matthew was a kid from Escondido, California, with a dream to study Communication. Today, Matthew is a Communication and Film/Media Studies double major always on a hustle of sorts. When not coordinating with Focus or trying to crank out a paper, Matthew is serving on the SBSHC Board of Directors, praying he did not just mess up your drink at work, or raving about yet another Radiohead song on his sporadically updated blog. Working on Focus with Joe Palladino has left Matthew in awe.

Editor-in-Chief (Co-Vice President): Alejandra Gularte

Alejandra is a third year Film and Media studies major who transferred from San Francisco, CA. She's also involved with the Reel Loud Film and Arts Festival on campus as well as Laughology, the stand-up comedy club on campus. In her free time, she performs stand-up comedy at open mics, paints watercolor, and cries whenever she sees a stray cat. Alejandra is incredibly excited to be working with the Focus Media Journal team and working with the iconic Joe Palladino.

Editor-in-Chief (Treasurer): Elizabeth Cook

Elizabeth is a first year Film and Media studies major from Los Altos, California. On campus, she's also involved with various student films, the Women's Ensemble Theatre Troupe, and Camp Kesem, an amazing non-profit for children affected by a parent's cancer. In her free time, she enjoys editing montages, attending music concerts, and drinking copious amounts of coffee. Elizabeth is thrilled to work with the Focus Media Journal team this year, especially with her best friend Joe Palladino.

Editor-in-Chief (Secretary): Hope Felt

Hope Felt is a first year from the SF Bay Area, currently working on a double major in Film and Sociology. She has loved all of her experiences within the Film Department this year, whether as the Assistant Festival Coordinator for the Reel Loud Committee, as an intern at the Pollock, working for the greatest man on campus, Joe Palladino, or as the first official member of the FOCUS Board of 2018. Hope would like everyone reading this to know that the academic journal would not have been published if it weren't for the dedication, cooperation, and creativity from every single person whose name appears in the publication.

Chief Copy Editor: McKinsey Fidellow

McKinsey is a third-year linguistics major from a small town in San Diego County that you've probably never heard of. She has served as a copy editor for several campus publications and is excited and grateful to be part of the Focus Media Journal team. In her free time she enjoys rollerblading, vacuuming, and venting about her day to her dog.

Copy Editor: Angelina Garcia

Angelina is a second-year English major and Education minor from San Diego. She is thankful to be part of the Focus Media Journal editing team and hopes to contribute to it again. After college she expects to read over many papers working as a teacher and to own several chihuahua dogs.

Copy Editor: Molly Guillermo

Mollý is a fourth year English major and an editorial associate at Punctum Books. This is her first time copy-editing for Focus Media Journal. She is an advocate for the Oxford Comma and loves serif fonts.

Copy Editor: Irene Chen

Irene is a first year Communication and English double major from the Bay Area. She has been a freelance photographer for the past three years, and in her free time she also enjoys binge watching shows on Netflix, going on adventures with friends, and road tripping along the California coast.

Writer: Natasha Sheridan

Natasha Sheridan is a film and media studies major from Los Angeles, in her junior year at UC Santa Barbara after transferring from UC Davis. She was a child actress in films and commercials, she pursued signing while recording albums and EPs, and studied dance at the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts. In college she is involved in the sorority Delta Gamma and enjoys her film studies immensely. She wishes to pursue a career in fashion PR and marketing in the near future.

Writer: Hannah Jackson

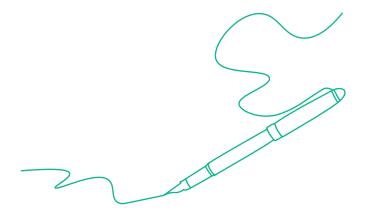
Hannah Jackson is a second-year political science major from Los Angeles, CA. She serves as a member of the Daily Nexus editorial staff as Assistant Opinion Editor. In her free time she enjoys writing, dancing and people-watching.

Writer: Brooke Raines

Brooke is a fourth year global studies and film and media studies double major intending to pursue a career in documentary filmmaking following graduation this June. After joining the film major her junior year, she was amazed by the faculty and student's collective passion. She is excited to take what she has learned during her time at UCSB and use film as a medium to start conversations and enact social change concerning today's pressing issues.

Writer: Eoin Goyette

Eoin Goyette is a writer and filmmaker, aspiring to pursue the fields professionally. He has an interest in any fiction and loves comedy despite the fact that he's a bestselling author of teen romance novels. Just kidding, but he's always willing to watch some Twilight. From the Bay Area, Eoin's a day one Giants and 49ers fan and admittedly somewhat of a bandwagon Warriors fan. Speaking of bandwagon fans, two of Eoin's favorite movies are La La Land and Forrest Gump, which he will defend to his death from any sort of criticism. Eoin has lived with a love for both indoor theatres and outdoor sports fields, which has influenced his passion for environmental protection.

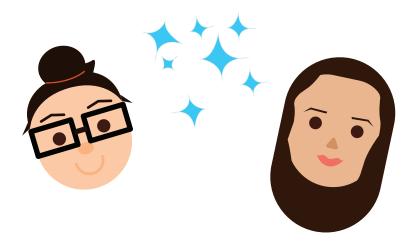


Graphic Artist: Aryana Moreno

Aryana is a transfer student and a Film and Media major from Santa Clarita, California. This is her first year as one of the graphic designers for the Focus Media Journal and she's very excited to be a part of this year's edition! During her free time she likes to explore, fly her drone, take pictures, film stuff and watch movies—preferably horror/thrillers and classic Hollywood noir films!

Graphic Artist: Tinna Lam

Tinna Lam is a third-year art major. She spends her time on campus working on traditional graphic and digital prints in the print lab. This is her first time serving for a campus publication as a graphic artist and she is grateful to be given the opportunity to work and learn with Focus Media Journal. In her free time she cares for her shrimp tank, plays trending PC games, and watches You-Tube documentaries. She misses her cats.



A LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Greetings fellow wanderers!

First off, we want to congratulate you on surviving, in order: the single worst wildfire in California history, a disastrous mudslide, and the most hideous 9 week quarter imaginable. We crafted this issue in one quarter while every other issue in the 39-year history of the Focus Media Journal received the luxury of three quarters. We accommodated tight deadlines, budget shortfalls, and copious amounts of re-edits. Even in the face of adversity, we are remarkably proud of the work within this year's edition. The work of UC Santa Barbara students and community members never ceases to amaze and humble us.

This issue of Focus Media Journal comes to you not only amongst these circumstances, but also in the midst of a tense and confusing political climate. With the rise of the #MeToo movement, public attacks on net neutrality, and the ever-changing standards for internet success, this year presented a demand upon every individual for navigational prowess in the modern media landscape. An unprecedented amount of change - for better and worse - occurred in the White House, on red carpets, and within our corporate media structures. Amidst these trials, the UC Santa Barbara undergraduate community amplified their voices through protest and publication. Within these pages lay courageous and unique insights that tackle the pressing media issues of our day, all of which no doubt will extend into our future.

Presenting and producing this collection of undergraduate scholarly essays and research is a source of great honor and pride. We owe much thanks to our captain, Joe Palladino, for his gracious leadership and guidance. He functions as a comedian, mentor, and trusted confidante all at once, and we love him dearly. To the staff, students, and faculty that remained through this tumultuous period of editing, we extend endless gratitude for the copy-editing, financial support, and mutual compromises. Without further ado, welcome to the 39th edition of the Focus Media Journal: Navigation. As always, thank you for reading and supporting our journal. Without our readership, we would have sank a long time ago. Here's to smoother sailing toward the future.

Godspeed, fellow wanderers.

The Focus Media Team (AKA the FOCUS FREAKS)



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NAVIGATING THE #METOO MOVEMENT.



"Flawed" Men and "Scorned" Women by Elizabeth Cook

In the wake of the #MeToo movement, media and entertainment conglomerates alike have the responsibility of recognizing the talents of formerly ostracized women. However, the recent media attention on the "redemption" tours of certain abusers, notably Mario Batali, Louis C.K., and Matt Lauer, directly opposes this duty. Disproportionate attention to the abusers creates a dichotomy of a "flawed" man versus a "scorned" woman. "Flawed" men receive redemptive opportunities, while "scorned" women face isolation. Within the entertainment industry especially, men receive second (or in the case of Mel Gibson and Woody Allen: third, fourth, fifth, infinite) chances despite their transgressions. Women are not afforded this same privilege; the missteps of their female peers serve as justification for discrimination and underrepresentation. In an industry dominated by men, women receive little support or representation. Each facet of the film industry, from writing and directing to acting and producing, features racial and gender disparities. A study¹ conducted by Stacy L. Smith, a

professor at the University of Southern California, revealed that only 4.2 percent of films in 2016 were directed by a woman. Furthermore, in the biggest movies of 2016, only 27 percent of words were uttered by women.

The avalanche of accusations against men in light of the #Me-Too movement revealed how deeply and widely these "flawed" men infiltrated the ranks of the media industry. This avalanche also revealed how many women faced career setbacks, stagnation, and, in some cases, complete exclusion within their field. A prominent example of career sabotage exists in the case of Ashley Judd and Harvey Weinstein. As of May 1, Vanity Fair detailed Ashley Judd's civil action suit against Weinstein, claiming "Weinstein used his power in the entertainment industry to damage Ms. Judd's reputation and limit her ability to find work."2 Most notably, Judd cites her exclusion from Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings franchise. Weinstein convinced Jackson not to cast Judd, ultimately "retaliating against Ms. Judd for rejecting his sexual demands approximately one year earli-

er, when he cornered her in a hotel room under the guise of discussing business."3 Judd is an example of a "scorned woman," as her career stagnated because of a man's persuasion. Meanwhile. Weinstein faced no challenges and flourished, due to the complicity of colleagues and coworkers. As revealed through accounts from countless other women. Weinstein utilized his power and influence to ruin the careers of women who rejected his advances, effectively silencing them and halting their careers. Other "scorned women" include Rose McGowan and Asia Argento, both actresses-turned-activists who accused Weinstein of rape. For years after their initial accusations, Mc-Gowan faced isolation and slutshaming within the film community, while Argento received backlash from the Italian press. This treatment reflects not only ingrained rape culture within the entertainment industry, but also a hierarchy of importance; Weinstein's career was more important to maintain than the safety of countless women.

However, the same outlets that reported on the struggles and setbacks of #MeToo victims

now feature articles detailing the potential comebacks of their abusers. In April 2018, media sites with considerable influence, such as The New York Times. The Hollywood Reporter, and Vanity Fair, published articles ranging from speculation to assertion of the comebacks of these men. In a recent Hollvwood Reporter article written by Stuart Miller, the title read, "Louis C.K.'s Path to a Comeback Likely Runs Through Comedy Clubs."4 Within a glance, the article reveals an achievable, plausible path to his "redemption." The author even states, "The question is not really whether C.K. will eventually come back but when, where and how."5 Louis C.K. remains a "flawed" man who needs "time" to earn his spot in the limelight again. His victims, on the other hand, received little print or attention, furthering the binary of "scorned women;" however, their requests for anonymity may be responsible for part of this limited attention. Nonetheless, there are plenty of female comedians who embody C.K.'s nihilistic sense of humor-and execute better jokes. Miller's article appeared on the Hollywood Reporter's website on April 17, less than

five months after an article titled, "How the #MeToo Movement Is Changing Showbiz Culture Worldwide."⁶ Reports on the same men who *initiated* female career suicide perpetuate the exclusion and further the stigma around reporting sexual harassment.

Media outlets should not dedicate any energy to report on revealed abusers, regardless of whether they plan a "comeback" or not. Without the power and spotlight associated with press coverage, these men cannot successfully re-integrate into the media realm. Furthermore, awarding these men any attention invalidates the bravery and courage of their accusers. Focusing on the whereabouts of abusers perpetuates a debilitating hierarchy of importance-placing value on the abuser's career trajectory rather than the well-being of the women he harassed.

These tentative forays into the spotlight are not a result of introspection or apology. Most likely, each plea from Batali or Lauer results from an intrinsic desire to receive the same, preaccusation fame. These men not even six months after the accusations appeared—yearn to regain the validation and power that allowed them to carry out these heinous acts in the first place. Designating a path to redemption for these men also places the full meaning of sexual assault on sex rather than power. The harassment and behavior exhibited by these men traces back to an exploitation of power dynamics, not just a sexual encounter.

Media attention should champion the work and accomplishments of neglected, scorned, and ridiculed women. Though we may "miss" the work of the accused men, we do not need them: more time and effort should be dedicated toward bolstering the careers of those "missed" all along. Restricting these men from the spotlight is not a loss, especially if this "loss" comes at the gain of a new onslaught of talented women. Focusing on the men in a women's movement is cliché, outdated, and reflects a lack of original thought. Reporting on the activities of abusers places the spotlight and, subsequently, the power back into the hands of lecherous men, fueling "redemption" narratives and invalidating their victims.

Pledges to the Time's Up movement are useless if the actions of media outlets support the attackers. Out of sight, out of mind, and ultimately, out of mouth—this is integral to the removal of misogyny from media.

Endnotes

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Me Too by Hannah Jackson

Published Nov. 1, 2017, and appeared in the Nov. 2, 2017 print edition of the Daily Nexus.

When news broke of Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein's numerous acts of sexual assault, many people in the film industry found themselves unsurprised. Weinstein's actions, while undoubtedly horrifying and odious, created a sense of déjà vu in the news cycle.

Though the narrative changes slightly every time a powerful man is accused of assault, the public has heard similar stories of abuse of power time and time again. The magnitude of Weinstein's power is what will cement him in history with Bill Cosby, Bill O'Reilly, and Donald Trump, but for the average woman, sexual violence is a common occurrence committed by friends, relatives, acquaintances, and strangers—not something only perpetrated by the elite.

After many members of the film industry came forward with accusations of harassment or assault committed by Harvey Weinstein, allegations began to bleed into other fields.

Former Olympic gymnast McKayla Maroney issued a statement claiming that former Team USA doctor Larry Nassar sexually assaulted her on multiple occasions throughout her time in the sport. Accusations against journalist Mark Halperin and director James Toback have also come to light since the initial Weinstein story broke.

The hashtag "#MeToo" began trending on social media as a way for women and men to express solidarity with victims of sexual violence and relay their own experiences. The trend is widely credited to actress Alyssa Milano, but it was actually started in 2007 by activist Tarana Burke. Burke started the "Me Too" movement to foster an environment of healing in lower-income communities, places people would not often venture, to provide aid to survivors of sexual assault. Burke, who said that the words "me too" changed the trajectory of her mitigation process, firmly believes that this is a movement, not just a momentary hashtag.

I do not know a single woman who has not experienced some form of sexual harassment in her lifetime, be it catcalling, stalking, groping, molestation, or rape. The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) reports on its website that 23.1 percent of female undergraduate students will experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence or incapacitation. If 23.1 out of 100 does not seem like an enormous number, let me put it into different terms: that is equated to one out of about 4.3 women. Whether you are aware of it or not, it is highly likely that someone you know has been subjected to sexual violence.

I too have encountered my fair share of sexual harassment thus far, and I expect no shortage of it in the future. One of the most harrowing cases I have faced occurred in a packed crowd at a community holiday parade during my senior year of high school. It was not my first experience with harassment and it was certainly not the last, but I will never forget how utterly powerless it made me feel. My dance studio had been asked to perform at the festival, and when I stepped off the stage I found myself swept up in the congregation. Suddenly, I felt a deliberate and lingering hand come up behind me and land on my backside. Fully aware that this was no accident, I managed to push my way through the crowd. Two of my

peers alleged that the same thing happened to them that night.

The worst part of that experience was not the event itself-I even found myself feeling thankful that it wasn't worse-but rather it was the aftermath of the event. I felt as though my allegations were not taken seriously, even though I knew of two other people with their own corroborating statements. Being violated by someone in my community was humiliating, and every time I saw the perpetrator after that it reminded me of how vulnerable I felt. Every time he brought his kids into the studio while I was working, I felt disgusted that a man who could violate at least three people could traipse into the same place of business and face no serious repercussions. Though I can only speak for myself, I imagine that this is the same way many women who must face perpetrators of sexual violence feel when they see their abuser's success, or at the very least, their ability to carry on without consequence. The #MeToo movement has fostered an environment for people to share their stories and confront the abuse that has plagued their lives, but it is not perfect. #MeToo has been used by many people in

positions of power who are well established and are at less of a risk of facing backlash for coming forward. Some people are not as lucky. Whether people choose not to share their stories because they are ashamed, believe that it will put them in harm's way, or simply do not want to, we cannot discount their experiences. Sharing one's encounter with sexual violence of any form is an extremely personal and difficult decision to make, and we should not dismiss the experiences of people who do not come forward.

Sexual violence is rampant in this country. A sexual assault occurs once every 98 seconds, but only six out of every 1,000 rapists faces jail time, which often becomes a reduced sentence. If sexual assault was a disease, the World Health Organization would have declared it an epidemic long ago. The rate at which this violence occurs is so astronomical that young women grow up expecting these things to happen. We do not treat incidents of sexual violence as an "if;" we treat it as a "when."

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NAVIGATING CORPORATE INTERNET MEDIA.



Myths of Modernity Through Sonic Coercion by Brooke Raines

"Now the whole world had one language and a common speech ... Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth ...' The Lord said, 'If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other ...' So, the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city...That is why it was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world."

- Genesis 11:1

On November 6, 2014, Alexa awoke, and the sensory experience of modernity forever changed. Alexa, part of the Amazon Echo series, is a brand of smart speakers that functions via voice-activation, developed by one of America's fastest growing corporations.¹ Today, 16% of Americans own a smart speaker, and 55% of households are expected to have a smart speaker by

2022.² The ways in which Alexa has impacted sound's influence on spatial organization-and therefore society-have undermined the ocular-centrism of modernity. Alexa eliminates the need for a visual interface and ingrains the experience of navigating a computer into quotidian life through a powerful sonic object-the voice. Alexa completely reframes the ontological and epistemological notions of the voice. Alexa functions as a disembodied voice, which introduces an "imaginary" body into the living space and restructures the sensory experience of the private home to that of a global Amazon "family." Furthermore, the voice-activated technology requires disproportionate labor from linguistic populations who are given the burden of building Amazon's twenty-first-century Tower of consumerist Babel.

This paper will examine how Alexa revolutionizes sound's relationship to space, labor, and power. This paper seeks to explore, if not answer, how voice-activated technology spatially reorganizes individual homes and normalizes these "re-mappings" as collective, corporate driven experiences. How does the normalization of voice-activated technology further inscribe vocal divisions across society? How do these technologies with new features reap sonic labor from marginalized groups who wish to have their voice heard? Finally, what are the power dynamics of this increasingly "militarized" sensory experience in the home?

Alexa provides a release from the hyper-visual sensory assault of modernity through a revival of oral culture. In the privacy of one's home, voice-activated technology provides a welcomed break from the visual interfaces that dominate urbanized modern existence. The cultural imagination positions vision and sound as binaries, in which one asserts dominance through the other's suppression. The "ascendancy of the eye," which carries Enlightenmentbased assumptions of rationality and knowledge, can only be realized in contrast with the tribal myth of "ear culture."³ Media theorist Marshall McLuhan asserts that different epochs can be understood through their sensory preference. According to Mc-Luhan, the electronic era, which

arose in the mid-twentieth century through media developments like radio, reasserted oral culture in dominant society.⁴ Technological innovation gave the eye a break from constantly scanning and consuming visual information as the sensory method for the transmission of information. With interactive voice-activated technology, the current digital era collapses the binary of sound and sight by inscribing the ear with the rational capability of the image. Fittingly, Alexa's name was chosen to be "reminiscent of the library of Alexandra, which was at one time the keeper of all knowledge."5 Voice-activated technology absorbs the function of the image by masking the visual interface one must confront to ascertain information.

Furthermore, this sensory collapse expands beyond the sonic and visual to include other senses, such as touch. Voice-activated technology entered the home as speakers, but through corporate partnerships their capability continues to evolve and expand into other areas of the home. The desired goal is not a smart speaker, but a synthesized and centrally controlled *smart home*. Recently, Amazon's deal

with Echobee, a thermostat company, merged the smart speaker's compatibility with home appliance technology.⁶ Alexa has not only altered the home experience through a collapse of sight and sound, but has also revolutionized the tactile geography through which individuals interact with their home. Currently, Alexa is in the process of integrating smart light switches into the voice-activated interface as well.⁷ By collapsing tactile and visual sensory experiences with sound, voice-activated technology masks the interface and therefore domestic labor. The sensory experience of the utopic, anthropomorphic, and voiceactivated smart home evokes a perceived sense of ease through this erasure.

Alexa upsets the conventional experience of the home by introducing a symbolic extra body into the living space through a disembodied voice. Alexa's genesis stems from a desire to replicate the all-capable and knowing "computer" in StarTrek.⁸ Alexa creates the auditory navigational experience of using a computer, but through an innately human object—the voice. According to Amanda Weidman, "The western meta-

physical and linguistic traditions have bequeathed us two powerful ideas of the voice."9 First, the voice is understood as the guarantor of truth and self-presence, which encapsulates sentiments of agency and identity.10 Second, dominant ideology believes "the sonic and material aspects of the voice are separable from and subordinate to its referential content or message."11 According to this binary, in the cultural imagination, a voice's "materiality" is subordinate to its sentient function "as presence, authenticity, agency, rationality, will and self."12 Voice-activated technology manipulates the logic of this binary to present the technological material voice as belonging to a human. Amazon recently updated Alexa's voice in an effort to make it more "human-like." In the marketing campaign that reveals this change, Alexa "loses" her voice and Amazon temporarily solves the crisis by having celebrities such as Gordon Ramsey and Anthony Hopkins speak through the interface.13 After these narrators berate the unsuspecting users who are accustomed to Alexa's polite and obedient nature, the commercial ends by premiering Alexa's new voice as she says,"Thanks guys, I'll take it from here."14 This

commercial negotiates cultural anxieties regarding technology's anthropomorphism while valorizing Alexa's voice over that of the human. The upset of having the disembodied extra human voice in one's home is solved with the reassertion of the anthropomorphized corporate voice—Alexa.

The disembodied voice introduces a symbolic extra body into the home that functions as a servant and a companion. According to Böhlen, voice-activated technology normalizes "Android Culture" into society and creates a sympathetic base for robots that the machines do not necessarily deserve.15 Voice-activated robots are "designed as pets or servants" with benevolent and polite mannerisms that allude to the promise of a friendly utopia that remains unfulfilled.¹⁶ Alexa is the ideal companion and servant, silently and patiently waiting to be called to duty through wake words that authorize her to assume her obligation as a digital assistant. Alexa's software affords her the ability to facilitate voice-activated shopping, control home appliances, quickly access and transmit vast amounts of factual knowledge, and even crack a few

jokes or offer advice.17 Consumers create a behavioral profile through their interaction with Alexa, intended to tailor the sonic experience of the home to each individual. Alexa is the utopic servant and friend, always listening, learning, and evolving to ameliorate the user's navigation of the sonic interface. Through patterns of conversation, overheard conversations, and questions posed by the user, Alexa amasses personal information, such as "who is home, when dinner is cooked, and the user's personality."18 Voice-activated technologies exert their presence in the home as "perfect" servants and companions, while ultimately funneling this information back to corporate headquarters.

Voice-activated technologies afford corporations a newfound ability to build a global sonic "family" (or empire) with smart speakers' material voice as the corporate emissary surveying and maintaining their presence in the home. Voice-activated technologies sonically assert a located sense of community akin to Alain Corbain's analysis of the sense of community derived from bells in nineteenth-century France, which

sonically constructed a temporal and spatial architecture through which communities formed a sense of identity, connectedness, and social place.¹⁹ Corbain explains, "A bell was supposed to be audible everywhere within the sound of a specified territory."20 Those who heard the bell's sound knew they were part of a community, and those who controlled the sound sonically laid claim to space and bodies. Today, Alexa creates the sonic architecture through which individuals across the nation experience and interact with their home in personalized yet homogenized ways. While Alexa's tone, pitch, and timbre can be somewhat personalized with choices in accent and language, as well as wake words, there is a level of fixed vocal materiality in these devices. This pseudo-individualization does not negate the fact that when they hear Alexa speak, users subject themselves and their home to Amazon's imaginary global empire. Sixty-eight percent of voice enabled speaker users in the US today use Amazon Echo software, 25 % use Google Home smart speakers, and following this trend, Apple just released the Home Pod.²¹ Similar

to Jonathan Sterne's analysis of the soundscape of the Mall of America—in which sonic signals, such as foreground music, define a corporate identity through cultural assumptions of taste—the vocal materiality of different smart speakers creates a specific identity to homes. Alexa's voice acts as a source of sonic coercion and imperialism, actively carving up the homes of America and constructing sonic empires according to corporate interests.

Alexa's technological programming and dominant cultural assumptions of the voice allow Amazon to enter the private home discreetly through the façade of a servant or companion. Alexa's ever-present role as a corporate emissary reveals itself through technical errors in which vocal materiality asserts itself and undermines technology's duty as the utopian servant or companion. For example, Daniel Howley writes, "My apartment is haunted, disembodied voices randomly echo off the egg-shell walls of my humble abode, playing Taylor Swift and trying to get my attention with bright flashing lights."22 The Western binary of the voice is flipped through

technical error, as the vocal materiality exposes the device's inhuman qualities and limitations.

Akin to Jason Stanyek and Benjamin Piekut's discussion of dead musicians' vocal leakage asserting an agency to non-living voices,²³ the material voice of Alexa asserts itself through *linguistic* leakage. As a purely material voice, Alexa asserts her own curious essence in situations that negate the device's own myth. Through their technological limits, these digital assistants exert their presence and disrupt patterns of human voice, when the devices misinterpret conversations as activation phrases or when human vocal variations, such as accents, prompt Alexa to misinterpret patterns of speech not programmed into the software. Alexa asserts agency over the consumer who accepts these problems as an unfortunate trade-off of the utopian smart home.

Voice-activated technology requires different degrees of labor from sections of Amazon's sonic empire to address technological limitations. Voice-activated technology functions according to two forms of synthetic speech: Text to Speech

(TTS) and Automated Speech Recognition (ASR).²⁴ TTS requires human labor within the corporation and "entails the creation of a sound pattern from a textual input," which then constructs an "utterance" from this information.²⁵ ASR entails the mapping of arbitrary voice input to text through diction, although Böhlen notes that this process often has little real-world success.²⁶ Böhlen argues that TTS technology is often designed along "national fault lines with localized voice fonts and linguistically identifiable entities" that produce a synthetic voice representing a cleansed and controlled version of standard language.27 Since TTS software requires significant capital investment from the corporation, voice-activated technologies speak in homogenized and dominant forms of linguistic patterns. For example, Amazon just released a line of Echo speakers in India, but the software does not support Hindi, allowing only linguistically western individuals to use the software.²⁸ Additionally, voice-activated technologies often misinterpret the words of users with distinct regional accents that vary from the dominant

language, such as the standard English these interfaces are programmed with. Johnson writes, "The rise of voice-activated technology threatens to split the world further into accents with privileges."29 These vocal divides are often negotiated along class and race lines, evidenced by the fact that "Bing speech, made by Microsoft, found both black and mixed-race speakers harder to comprehend than white ones."30 If these marginalized linguistic groups want to use Alexa, they must train her.

ARS software, which coerces users to train their interfaces to speak their language, provides the solution to the technical limitations of TTS software. Amazon just released Cleo, a new function that acts like a game and "tempts users into sending Amazon new data, whether on new languages or ones that Echo has not yet assimilated but in theory already knows."31 Now, marginalized linguistic and social groups must subject themselves to a new labor requirement in order to attain the cultural dream of a smart home, servant, and companion. Furthermore, TTS software should not be seen purely as a "technical limitation" but

also as a conscious decision to save costs when programming Alexa. Voice-activation further engrains the hierarchical distinction of race and class through linguistic means. Marginalized users who desire equal access must provide free labor to train the device. Additionally, Böhlen stated that ARS software is rarely successful in programming voice-activated devices. One must wonder whether features like Cleo actually serve to democratize the hierarchical distinction embedded in voice-activated technology or primarily serve as a corporate strategy aimed at broadening the company's behavioral profile of consumers. Is the information being shared really purely linguistic, or is Amazon convincing users to tell them more so they can sell users more products?

Metaphorically, Amazon is building a twenty-first century Tower of Babel. By separating the voice from human presence and material bodies, the material voice acts as force of sonic coercion acting on behalf of the corporation. As Firth states, "the voice, in short, may or may not be the key to someone's identity, but it is certainly a key to the ways in which we change identities."32 Through applications like Cleo, Alexa could, in theory, gain the ability to comprehend and speak most of the world's languages. This would give Amazon a single voice with the singular ability to codeswitch and assimilate among the earth's diverse linguistic populations. The disembodied and anthropomorphic material voice asserts corporations' presence and coerces users to allow consumerist drives to penetrate and restructure the home experience. This effect masks the disproportionate labor that voice-activated technologies extract from marginalized linguistic populations in building the twenty-first century Tower of Babel.

Voice-activated technology does not provide a relief from the visual barrage of modernity, it turns this barrage into an equally aggressive sonic experience. In his new book *Sonic Warfare*, Steve Goodman questions the ontological condition of war to reveal the "lowintensity warfare that reconstitutes the most mundane aspects of everyday existence through psychological torque and sensory overload."³³ According to Goodman, there is a new kind of warfare, a sonic warfare in which "media technologies discipline, mutate, and preempt the affective sensorium."³⁴ Alexa turns the home into a space of consumption, labor, and surveillance. The voice activated smart home is not a utopic oasis, but a perversion of dominant ideology intended to subject even private spaces to the militarized experience of modernity.

As Amazon continues to build its Tower of Babel through sonic coercion aided by the smart speaker as a corporate emissary, one must wonder whether these technologies will meet the same fate as the mythic tower of Babel or further assert their sonic grip on humanity. Voiceactivated technologies have the potential to-and have already begun to-fundamentally alter humans' relationships with space, labor, and power through vocal materiality. Individuals voluntarily subject themselves to the militarized experience of the home in hopes of attaining the culturally valued myths of the servant, companion, and smart home. The question is: Are these devices really making us smarter or only docile?

Endnotes

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22 | NAVIGATING CORPORATE INTERNET MEDIA

Climate Change and Journalism: Controversial, Sporadic, Sensational! by Eoin Goyette

Public interest ratings indicate that journalists push for the sensational. The market model of US media promotes a consumerist society in which economic concerns are prioritized over alternative concerns such as diversity and accurate representation. Such focus on economic concerns makes consumer ratings paramount. Whether it's a reality television show or a controversial gun control debate on CNN, content creators are constantly pressured by their dependence on consumer ratings to entertain rather than inform. By the ratings dependent standards of news media, anthropogenic climate change is not entertaining. However, climate change is pervasive. Climate change causes an estimated 150,000 deaths every year due to disease migration, agricultural changes, and unexpected weather (WHO). Atmospheric carbon dioxide has risen to dangerous and unprecedented levels, global temperatures have risen, glacier ice caps continue to melt, and natural disasters such as hurricanes are increasing in intensity

("Hurricanes and Climate Change"), but news media gives minimal attention to this growing concern; a mere 1.5 percent of media stories focus on environmental issues ("Yale Climate Opinion Maps"). Furthermore, studies indicate that only thirty-eight percent of Americans are worried that climate change will harm them personally. News media discusses climate change sporadically, as a secondary thought in the reporting of natural disasters because persistently growing climate change issues like rising carbon dioxide levels generate less ratings than more instantaneous and dramatic events like natural disasters. And in a consumerist society in which advertising and sponsorships dictate news media content, ratings and drama are essential and allimportant.

Newspapers and television are the most frequent sources of information about climate change and global warming (Boykoff and Roberts, 21). In 2012, Hurricane Sandy affected twenty-four states, caused billions of dollars of damage, hundreds of fatalities, and incited considerable coverage in high circulating newspapers. However, the content of the coverage still remained unfocused on accurate discussions of climate change and focused on sensationalism.

Major newspaper coverage of Hurricane Sandy reflects the sporadic nature of sensationalist journalism and a journalistic reliance on controversy, both of which are fostered by the dependence on ratings a consumerist society upholds. A sensationalist approach to journalism prevents legitimate discussion about environmental concerns, therefore inhibiting an accurate representation of anthropogenic climate change in news media.

Major newspapers covering Hurricane Sandy adhered to the "Issue-Attention Cycle," allowing public interest to dictate the frequency of their coverage. The "Issue-Attention Cycle," as expressed by Anthony Downs, theorizes that enthusiasm spikes when the public originally discovers a significant issue in a form of media, but after a certain period of time and a certain amount of media coverage, viewers eventually become uninterested with the topic, causing public interest to gradually decline (Downs). Newspapers covering Hurricane Sandy anticipated this cycle and diminished their coverage of Sandy to correspond with diminishing public interest (Kahn). In his article "Hurricane Sandy Hasn't Shifted Climate Change Narrative," Kahn argues that despite widespread media claims that Hurricane Sandy actually marked a turning point in climate change coverage throughout news media, developments of anthropogenic climate change remained similarly unaddressed after the initial enthusiasm of the disaster declined. Discussions of important climate change topics such as "climate adaptation," or the adjustment to environmental changes and exploitation of beneficial environmental opportunities, and "disaster preparedness" rose significantly during the prime of Hurricane Sandy's coverage, yet rapidly subsided as media coverage of Sandy diminished in frequency (Kahn). Environmental and political framework regarding Hurricane Sandy still needed to be discussed, but major newspapers still lessened their overall coverage of the disaster in an effort to maintain high public ratings.

Just as public interest ratings control the frequency of newspaper coverage, they encourage the journalistic norm of producing "fresh" material. Journalists fear the "repetition taboo" and attempt to appeal to the public by consistently publishing new stories in order to avoid the possibility of seeming repetitive (Boykoff and Roberts, 12). In regards to natural disasters like Hurricane Sandy, rather than wholly depicting the event's long term consequences, newspapers as well as other forms of news media focus on short term effects in order to limit potentially "repetitive" reporting. For example, US newspaper coverage of Honduras' Hurricane Mitch in 1998 focused mainly on immediate micro effects rather than focusing on its macro effects, or the long-term issues such as future economic downturns and governmental vulnerability (Boykoff and Roberts 19). In addition to increasing micro-oriented journalism, the repetition taboo forces newspapers to generally disregard persistently growing environmental concerns such as droughts or greenhouse gas emissions (Boykoff and Roberts 12). These concerns are not fresh; they

don't have instantaneous micro-effects like Hurricane Sandy. Boykoff and Roberts reference that for every person killed in a volcano disaster, 40,000 people must die in a drought to attain an equal probability of media coverage (27). Consequently, climate change coverage rose significantly with the occurrence of Sandy, but the journalistic fear of repetition prevented an adequate discussion of climate change's role in the disaster to be covered in major newspapers. Although research has proven that climate change increases the intensity of hurricanes, it took months to officially determine the extent of climate change's role in Sandy specifically, and once an official diagnosis was reached, newspaper coverage of Sandy had declined to a minimal level (Kahn). Coverage seemed to end when news media deemed that they had covered enough of the story to appease the public's understanding of the disaster, yet in reality they cut coverage before accurately articulating climate change's significant contributing role (Kahn). The "repetition taboo" won't allow news media to

wait, and scientific diagnosis is not going to be rushed.

However, "freshness" is not the only tool of sensational journalism meant to capture public interest; newspapers also rely on the norm of relatability. While it isn't the sole determinant of how long a topic remains in news media, relatability encourages an increase in a topic's frequency of coverage. The extensive media coverage of Hurricane Sandy led to widespread notions that discussions of "climate resilience" and weather disasters would become exponentially more relevant in news media (Kahn). But, unsurprisingly, newspaper coverage and news media coverage as a whole did not reflect such a prediction in the year following Sandy. Although Sandy was a massive Category Four hurricane, a large portion of the US remained untouched, and therefore the many woes that accompanied Sandy were not "universally relatable" (Kahn). Major newspapers covering Sandy were unable to appeal to the public's desire for relatability, and thus enthusiasm about climate change and its role in Hurricane Sandy gradually declined within

months (Kahn). Even in areas that the disaster affected directly, anthropogenic climate-change enthusiasm dwindled as other topics began dominating the media elsewhere and the effects of the hurricane began to mend; an overall decline in interest occurred at both national and local levels. Despite proposing a multi-billion dollar climate resiliency bill and undergoing the storm's full impact, New York City as a whole exhibited a lack of interest in climate resiliency following Hurricane Sandy (Kahn). Furthermore. Brian Werner determined the reporting of climate change in the four highest-circulating newspapers of the cities most directly impacted by the storm: The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Press of Atlantic City, The Star-Ledger, and Newsday. During the storm, when climate change concerns were most directly related to personal experience, articles discussing climate change peaked in coverage. But after Sandy finished tearing through the areas, two of the four newspapers mentioned above returned to prehurricane levels of climate change coverage (Werner 22). Newspapers believed that the storm's relatability was no longer present

after the immediate tribulations that were induced by the storm seemed to be resolved, and thus they turned their attention elsewhere. Alternatively, relatability can be exploited by newspapers to encourage climate change action. Certain "frames" of climate change appeal to certain groups (Shanahan 2). Shanahan asserts that the "polar bear frame" of climate coverage which focuses on global warming's harmful effects on the polar bear population, can be exploited by news media to resonate with animal lovers specifically; polar bears are often utilized to symbolize climate change issues altogether, but only a small portion of the population cares about a bear species that has little relation to their lives (Shanahan 2-3). Rather, research suggests that news media should take a similar approach to that of advertising companies. In his article Advertising as Religion, Jhally reveals that advertising companies follow the ideal of "totemism," or advertising that appeals to specific groups (Jhally 224). By framing climate change concerns to appeal to specific groups, like animal lovers, newspapers may potentially have the ability to foster an overall increase in environmental enthusiasm (Shanahan 3). However, the news media's reliance on advertising and ratings, per usual, discourages the potential benefits of climate change framing.

Instead, most newspapers promote "climate porn," visuals that focus on defeatism and victimization rather than analyses and potential solutions (Boykoff and Roberts 12). As opposed to appealing to certain climate change frames in order to promote solution-oriented action, newspapers continuously focus on the "catastrophe" frame, which mainly discusses alarmist viewpoints and the detrimental effects of humans on the environment (Shanahan 2). Research reveals that this frame is ineffective because it inspires pessimism and inaction, yet newspapers continue to exploit it in order to appeal to public interest; stories about victimization receive more views because they are often more dramatic than a story focused on overarching processes and long-term environmental implications (Shanahan 2, Boykoff and Roberts 12). For example, Shanahan's research demonstrates that only twenty-five percent of

newspaper stories in the UK were considered positive and focused on climate solutions rather than seemingly irreversible human-induced environmental harms. Newspapers appeal to viewer interest and provide visuals with an emotional appeal, focused mainly on a disaster's wreckage and destruction rather than its implications of climate change and environmental discussion: therefore, in the event of Hurricane Sandy, the victim-oriented "catastrophe" frame fit perfectly (Rebich-Hespanha 3). Newspapers make this emotional appeal resonate even more with audiences by focusing on individuals. Boykoff and Roberts explain that there are "first-order journalistic norms" that focus on novelty, personalization, and dramatization (12, 13). Journalists already exhibit a reliance on novelty through their compliance with the "repetition taboo." By focusing on the various stories of suffering from individuals, newspapers can personalize an event as well. Hurricane Sandy is no longer depicted as a tropical storm inducing significant damage in the northeastern sector of the United States; rather, it's a story of homelessness, financial

woes, heartbreak, and drama, as well as public interest. Newspapers depict disasters like Sandy as exciting by highlighting its victimization and appealing to a historically popular emotional frame (Rebich-Hespanha). But when the presumably dull discussion of climate change eventually slips into the eye of the media, news media outlets employ another effective form of dramatization: controversy. Newspapers create controversy through "false balance" reporting (Park). Although the scientific consensus states that anthropogenic climate change is a real threat increasing in severity, the majority of US newspapers over a fifteen-year timespan were found to give "roughly equal attention" to those expressing the dangers of global warming and skeptics claiming that climate change is merely a natural process that remains unaffected by human activity (Boykoff and Roberts 13). Boykoff and Roberts refer to false balance reporting as a "second-order journalistic norm," or one that's naturally formed as a result of a first-order norm such as dramatization or personalization. A study of political framing in news

media found that forty-seven percent of news articles focus mainly on the GPN image frame, which focuses mainly on the differences of opinion between various political figures regarding the validity of anthropogenic climate change and potential action and solutions (Rebich-Hespanha 11). This frame doesn't take into account scientific consensus or evidence of the current environmental state, but instead focuses on the political figures in particular, fostering a public focus on their differences in opinion rather than a clear source of action for the harms of human-induced climate change.

However, this false balance results from both the journalistic standard of dramatization and the journalistic norm of objectivity, or "neutral reporting" (Park, Carlson 6). The excessive prevalence of sensationalism in news media has created the counter-effect of a blind reliance on journalistic objectivity. Carlson claims that with the advancements of digital media, the rise of neutral reporting has coincided with the rise of algorithmic "filter bubbles" (Carlson 11). Algorithms of online search engines promote an "algorithmic

objectivity," which prioritizes objective news articles over news articles with aspects of subjectivity (10). Since journalism lacks an officially "professional" status, countless numbers of news articles online aren't prioritized through journalistic professionalism, but through a rank of objectivity (Carlson 3, 4). As a result, the few journalists who choose to report on the role of anthropogenic climate change in relation to Hurricane Sandy are pressured into depicting conflicting viewpoints as equal in order to seem objective in order to have their article prioritized in search engines. Balanced reporting is particularly common in the US as opposed to UK and Germany, whose newspapers focus more on scientific consensus (Rebich-Hespanha 15). The framing of balanced climate change reporting before and after Sandy was recorded for the four highest-circulating newspapers of the areas most directly impacted by the storm. While the acknowledgments of climate change's validity from The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Press of Atlantic City, The Star-Ledger, and Newsday increased after Sandy, their frequency of balanced climate change reporting remained the same (Werner 26). While journalistic objectivity may seem to effectively limit personal biases in reporting, its prominence in climate change reporting indicates that in many cases objectivity actually promotes bias.

Newspaper coverage on Hurricane Sandy indicates that reliance on sensation compromises the integrity of truthful journalism. Newspapers anticipate public interest and cut coverage for a topic they suspect will soon dwindle in viewer enthusiasm. Additionally, the journalistic norm of adhering to a "repetition taboo" doesn't create a time frame extensive enough to provide an accurate climate change diagnosis to an event like Sandy. In the insufficiently short time frame newspapers covered Sandy, they focused on the hurricane's "micro" effects rather than explaining the disaster's overarching cause and the enduring implications of climate change. In order to increase the enthusiasm for a specific event like Sandy, journalists attempt to appeal to the public's desire for relatability; Sandy, like most

events, was not universally relatable and therefore didn't create a permanent change in the public's overall approach to anthropogenic climate change. Even though research suggests that the influence of relatability could be exploited through framing in order to promote public resonance and action for climate change, news media continue to inspire defeatism by focusing on catastrophe and victimization because ratings tend to rise when news stories have an emotional appeal. Newspapers create a false balance between scientific consensus and evidently incorrect climate skeptics in order to both incite a sense of controversy and adhere to the prominence of excessive objectivity promoted by the evolution of "filter bubbles" in search engine algorithms. In doing so, news media actually implies that clearly biased ideas are valid, compromising the truth journalism is supposed to seek.

The current state of journalism in the free market of the US discourages truthful news reporting. Consequently, much of the public is conflicted about human-induced climate change, a topic clearly backed by scien-

tific evidence. News media can express the frightening truth about climate change without inspiring defeatism. News media has the power to promote action and solution. Although a large portion of the public may appear uninterested in environmental issues. the widespread harms of anthropogenic climate change can be framed to relate to most of the public. "Sensational" should not be a term to describe journalism. Serving the public is different than adhering to the public. News media can adequately inform the public of severe concerns about current environmental state and thus promote productive, solution-oriented discussion. With a focus on truth rather than the dramatic, climate change is not controversial, sporadic, and sensational, but factual, persistent, and solvable.

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Welcome Back, Stupid Viewers

by Matthew McPherson

In 2001, Cartoon Network decided to make a gamble. Their longest running original program, Space Ghost Coast to Coast (1994-2004), was beginning to show signs of aging. In addition, the firm establishment of the "Cartoon Cartoons" lineup had left the more adult, anti-humor driven program in the dust. Even with spinoffs and one-off specials expected to debut, the network knew that unless something drastic changed, none of these shows would find success in the new millennium. However, there was hope. MTV had pioneered late-night cartoons with Liquid Television (1991-1994) and Cartoon Sushi (1997-1998), but had failed to capitalize on it with a dedicated programming block in the same manner Nickelodeon had with its classic TV block "Nick at Nite," Cartoon Network's "Toonami" had found success with showing a block of uncut anime on Saturday nights, but was still having issues finding a suitable timeslot for more extreme anime like Outlaw Star (1998) and Cowboy Bebop (1998-1999). In June of 2001, Cartoon Network formally announced Adult Swim, a 3-hour

block dedicated to adult animation on Sundays and Thursdays, set to premiere on September 2, 2001. Sixteen and a half years later, Adult Swim has far surpassed its wildest expectations and become an unstoppable juggernaut of a network.

In a new television landscape that has become defined by mergers, consolidation, and outright failure, Adult Swim has become the television network success storv of its time. How the network worked to position itself as the ratings king "with young adults" (Carter, "Adult Swim") was not based simply on securing Family Guy (1999-) and Futurama (1999-2013) syndication rights in 2003, nor on bombarding the airwaves with advertisements for Rick and Morty (2013–). Adult Swim played a long game that other networks, both broadcast and cable, failed to capitalize on sooner, yet still appealed to a predominately young, male audience. In the construction of a "hegemonic counterhegemonic" subculture driven brand, transmitted through several unique channels of engagement, Adult Swim demonstrated how a television network could move beyond television and become a way of life.

Not every network can simply enter into existence and craft a brand immediately with an uneven, limited start. Adult Swim was no exception to this rule. In Cartoon Network's decision to provide a frugal budget for the block, Adult Swim was cheaply constructed. From its start in the fall of 2001, the media portrayed the fledgling block as "Japanese anime, shows that were canceled by networks [WB and UPN], a cheap original or two, and second-rate Hanna-Barbera action series that had been cut up and repurposed (Walker, "CONSUMED, Adult Swim"). Yet Mike Lazzo, the original head programmer of Cartoon Network and creator/ chief operator of Adult Swim, had years of experience in financial limits and audience engagement. His years of experience crafting Space Ghost Coast to Coast, a show made from recycled animation of a forgotten Hanna-Barbera cartoon, gave him and his "guerilla team" experience in attempting whatever comedy ideas they would write up "at nights when the Turner conference rooms were empty" (Jensen, "Transmissions from the Ghost Planet"). The show's bizarre, surreal writing and

unfathomably cheap animation gave off particular aesthetic found nowhere else on TV. It would end up attracting an adult audience to Cartoon Network, a group that would ultimately comprise "onethird" of Cartoon Network's audience by 1997 (Marks, "After 14 Years..."). This was the audience that Lazzo actively sought to court on Adult Swim, with other surreal and cheaply animated shows (a single episode of an Adult Swim originally had a production budget of "\$60,000") similar to Space Ghoast Coast to Coast, such as Sealab 2021 (2000-2004) and Aqua Teen Hunger Force (2000-2015). The anime and network holdovers were there to pad out the block and give it some variety, but at the heart of Adult Swim were those network originals, the ones that had episodes that could be watched "more than a dozen times ... [and hold up] as well as any sadistic scenario Chuck Jones ever concocted for Bugs Bunny (Itzkoff, "Cartoons He Can't Stop Watching, Repeatedly"). Turner saw quick results, citing a "67 percent growth in [18-34] ratings and 84 percent growth in delivery compared to 2000" (TimeWarner, "A Year of Record Ratings and Delivery") in 2001. By October of 2002, Cartoon Network announced an expansion to the block to Monday through Thursday nights with reruns of *Futurama* starting January 12 of 2003. The block was stable, but now the identity needed to be refined.

The change in Adult Swim's bumps (title cards, promos, and network IDs that run in between commercial breaks) in May of 2003 helped to start an open dialogue with its audience. For the first twenty months of its existence, Adult Swim leaned heavily into the concept of "adult swim", a period of time where kids were not allowed to swim in a public pool. Bumps featured old people engaging in all kinds of pool activity while promoting said shows. The "pool" bumps would be dropped in January of 2003 in favor of the "safety" bumps (both are terms the fan base has used to describe these periods of bumps), a series of animated bumps that showcased the cast of various Adult Swim shows in how-to manual-style adventures. The bumps' tonguein-cheek nature was counteracted by their price tag. They were too expensive to be updated for new shows or specials, thus the same bumps were played ad nauseam. Enter the simple, minimal Helvetica black and white title cards, ushering in a new era of Adult Swim. The cost efficiency of these bumps meant that Adult Swim could begin active community management and building. Bumps directly respond to fan mail and requests from the burgeoning Adult Swim message boards, offer insight on ratings or upcoming shows, promote emerging music talent, and respond to anything the network felt it necessary to make fun of. The bumps are sarcastic, cutting, and nonchalant, closely paralleling the tonal marks of shows like Space Ghost Coast to Coast and Aqua Teen Hunger Force, while also giving Adult Swim a distinct platform to promote its "counterhegemonic" branding.

The key to Adult Swim's unwavering success, especially among 18–34-year-old white males, is that the network has branded itself as a counterhegemonic subculture in comparison to hegemonic tastes. While *Space Ghost's* aesthetic was mentioned earlier as a driving factor in what drew early audiences to Adult Swim, animation targeted toward adults has seen over two decades of remarkable growth to the point where the FOX broadcast network devotes Sunday nights' programming to

animation. In order to compete, Adult Swim explicitly advertises itself as a television experience that cannot be found anywhere else on TV or in mainstream culture. Under the eye of Lazzo, this has left Adult Swim programming in the hands of many frequent and recurring collaborators. From the infomercial insanity of Absolutely Productions' Tim and Eric Awesome Show, Great Job! (2007-2010), to the genre hybridity and subversion of PFFR's Delocated (2008-2013), Adult Swim programming purposely attacks "canon" of traditional programming aesthetics, striking up a new para-cinema canon in the process (Elkins 606). This is furthered in their programming stunts. Not only have the network's annual April Fool pranks been used to bring back a nostalgic anime block and bring attention to the cult film, The Room (2003), programming stunts help Adult Swim figure out what might be the best fit for the network. Shows liked high school comedy Saved by the Bell (1989-1993), classic cartoon Popeye, and British television's import Look Around You (2002-2005) have all been aired as stunt programming at one point or another on Adult Swim

because (in Lazzo's words), "The show[s] have been such big hits on YouTube" (Martin, "Cable spins Web to catch guys"). Lazzo did not care if they were actually good or not-the audience responded positively nonetheless. Their successes on the network paved the way for more YouTube inspired content like David Hughes experimental Off the Air (2011-) collages and Alan Resnick's AB Video Solutions, LLC ARGs. In programming and experimenting with their audience's tastes based on countercultural trends, Adult Swim furthers their content delivery to their audience, strengthening the "us-versus-them" mentality that their brand markets for.

Programming is only one part of reinforcing of Adult Swim's counterhegemonic brand. Most of the work on that end comes through the placement of their bumps. The black and white title card bumps (a large majority of which have been collected online at www.bumpworthy.com) talk and engage with an audience in a way that programming cannot. The bumps often feature hip-hop or underground artists outside of the mainstream, celebrate elements of recreational drug culture (Elkins 602), and attack elements

of mainstream culture. All of these give viewers the sense that Adult Swim is subverting norms without ever feeling that this subversion is heavy handed. When Adult Swim provides rating reports in the bumps, they do not just simply "tout rating numbers." They purposely place them against "mainstream hegemonic tastes," like the Super Bowl or "America's Boyfriend, Tim Allen" (of Home *Improvement*) as a demonstration of how successful their shows and audience are in combatting what appears in the "hegemonic" media landscape (Elkins 599). Moreover, viewers are often thanked for their participation in Adult Swim's ratings victories, as if to give off the perception that Adult Swim viewers are on a winning team, which can help to build a community fan base. The establishment of a fan base based around the bumps' aesthetic is a powerful tool in establishing this counter-hegemony.

This is not to say that Adult Swim'scounter-hegemonic brand does not, ironically, lack an unruly hegemonic influence. At the start of the decade, Adult Swim knew that its audience was "twothirds male and two-thirds white" (Itzkoff, "The Spirit of Freaknik Comes to TV") and so chose to play directly to these groups. On screen, Adult Swim shows have featured numerous appearances from porn actresses and continually focus on male-centric characters and sketches (Elkins 600). Bumps have been known to use misogynistic appeals such as promoting watching Adult Swim over sleeping with a heavy woman or using Women's History Month to promote the March Madness basketball event (Elkins 599-600). Both the bumps and features of porn stars and male-centric characters are ironic, but this irony does not work hard enough to counter the reinforcement of white masculine hegemony across the network. Furthermore, Adult Swim seems to have no issue in pointing out the reinforcement of white masculine hegemony on other networks, as in the case of a February 2012 bump that pointed out all of the History Channel's Black History Month programming was white, but rarely acknowledged their own faults on the network. After sixteen and a half years, programs by black creators still number in the single digits compared to their white counterparts, neither of which include programs by women. As the media news website Splitsider

noted in 2016, Adult Swim has yet to pick up a show from a woman despite the fact that "women [now 43% of the Adult Swim audience as of 2014] are watching, women work there in non-creator 'roles', and women have praised female characters there that feel more 'real' than ever," (Wright, 47, 0 Women: Why Doesn't Adult Swim Order Shows from Female Creators?"). While Lazzo has responded to these claims (on Reddit, of all places), he failed to cite any initiatives Adult Swim would take to alleviate this issue, leaving any solutions firmly in the hands of Adult Swim's collaborators to solve. Ironically, by leaving this issue in the hands of other male creators and producers, all parties end up reinforcing this hegemony. For as counterhegemonic as Adult Swim has marketed itself, the aesthetic is skewed toward misogyny and the network continually fails to look for outside voices. In other words, Adult Swim is a "hegemonic counterhegemonic" brand.

Despite these structural issues, the Adult Swim brand is too lucrative to be relegated to only television promotion and not used for fan engagement and monetary gain. The Adult Swim website, originally intended to update the

schedule status of the block, has become a powerful conduit for fan engagement. From bizarre anti-games and incoherent babbling on the forums, to exclusive comics and live streaming content (that can often be called in to directly), Adult Swim's website can simultaneously offer a platform for fans to stay up to date with their favorite programs and while allowing them to engage in other types of media that Adult Swim endorses. In 2007, Adult Swim founded Williams Street Records as a way of releasing music from their shows. However, the label is now predominately used for releasing free music from up and coming indie and hip-hop artists for their yearly "Adult Swim Singles Program" in order to establish positive relations with artists that may want their music to end up as bump music. Since the network's inception, Adult Swim has appeared at the San Diego Comic Con and Atlanta Dragon Con for promotion. Now, through the promotional division of Adult Swim, Adult Swim Presents, the network has become proactive in setting up mini-carnivals, drive-ins, concerts, and "Rickmobiles" (for Rick and Morty), among other events in cities across America. These

events not only provide direct fan engagement toward the brand, they also contain some of the only licensed merchandise that can be purchased outside of their shop. All of these tools of engagement listed above incorporate synergy into the Adult Swim's brand. They connect fans to other fans and expose them to additional content while also providing them with an incentive to spend money on the shows they enjoy. Their power to utilize this synergy in the media ecosystem presents the Adult Swim brand not as a television network but as a way of life.

Since Adult Swim has achieved such a title, other imitators have taken a stab at replicating the Adult Swim brand, only to have failed for a myriad of interconnected reasons. The most obvious imitator was Fox's Animation Domination High Definition (or, ADHD for short), a block that lasted for a little less than a year. Its glaring issue was that there was little investment in the programming that is central to stabilizing a fan base. It was a 90-minute block comprised of six 11-minute shows, and yet Fox invested in a "new 12,500-squarefoot studio on Sunset Boulevard" that would produce content for "the Web, YouTube, mobile apps,

game consoles, and VOD", instead of additional content for a 90-minute block on Saturdays (Spangler, "Fox Sets Toons to Warp Speed"). ADHD saw the future of television as media spheres outside of broadcast, but their treatment of their main lineup as an afterthought ended up killing the block less than a year later. Ratings were low, and audiences were polarized by the short content, calling it "too risqué." ADHD was meant to give Adult Swim a run for their money by attacking them in spheres they did not market toward. However, the lack of effective audience outreach to generate positive feedback on their content, accentuated by competition from Adult Swim's successful anime block Toonami, left them in the dust. In cancelling ADHD, Fox cited that "It's too late on Saturday to generate big bucks," (Malone, "Fox Scrapping ADHD"). Rough translation: Adult Swim had complete control over the late-night television market and is free to remain king for the foreseeable future.

Having been around since the start of the century, Adult Swim entered into one broadcast world and came out on the other side of an incredibly different one. In that time, Adult Swim learned to

position themselves against mainstream culture, taking on a subculture role television networks often stayed away from, not anticipating its lucrative value. Engagement with its audience through bumps and other media spheres like website or promotional events gave Adult Swim the power it needed to synergize this brand by rebranding itself as a way of life rather than a cable network. While competition like ADHD has come and gone (and may come again), Adult Swim has no immediate cable or broadcast competitor to fear. With a massive audience and the lack of such a threat, Adult Swim is free to further their brand empire. The days of broadcast empires are ending, but the days of brand empires are just beginning.

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NAVIGATING INTERNET PERSONALITIES.



Constructed Authenticity and Instrumentalized Identities in a Profit-Driven Blogosphere by Brooke Raines

Is the decision between the Lark and Inkwell Instagram filters as important as a wellcrafted resume for securing a job? For lifestyle bloggers, the answer to this question is yes. With the rise of social media, lifestyle blogging is a fascinating occupation redefining the boundaries between labor and leisure, reality and replication, and creativity and entrepreneurship. Lauren Bullen and Jack Morris are lifestyle bloggers in their twenties who have a combined following of 4.5 million while each earning a six-figure salary by traveling the world, taking photos, and posting them on Instagram.¹ With Bullen and Morris as the central case study, this research paper examines how lifestyle blogging changes labor when the product being made and sold is what Jean Baudrillard defines as the simulacra. The collapse between labor and leisure in lifestyle blogging creates a hyperreality of authenticity, which serves to obscure the economic forces driving the production of social

media content. The larger concern is that the assumed freedoms of lifestyle blogging, which result from the collapse of labor and leisure, are illusions that mask a new kind of worker alienation caused by the constant pressure to produce a hyperreal authenticity to satisfy corporate interests.

Lifestyle blogging differs from other social media blogs in both content and vocational outcomes. First, lifestyle bloggers create "content inspired and curated by their personal interests and daily activities."² Unlike niche blogs, lifestyle blogs feature a broad variety of content inspired by the personal lives of the bloggers, covering topics such as family, fashion, home, travel, beauty, and food.³ Lifestyle blogs often evolve from niche blogs. For example, Morris grew his Instagram follower base through various niche accounts focused on animals, fashion and cars.⁴ After two years, Morris realized he could support himself financially through brand collaborations and sold all his

niche accounts except for his travel blog.⁵ Morris's account (@doyoutravel) and his girlfriend's account (@gypsylust) matured into travel-centered lifestyle blogs that feature fashion, travel, food, and beauty, often in enviable exotic locales. Lifestyle blogs promote a lived experience over the segments of life featured in niche blogging.

Second, the occupational goals of lifestyle bloggers differ from those of niche bloggers. Social media scholar Brooke Erin Duffy explains that most niche bloggers use their blogs as a mode of entry into preexisting creative industries.⁶ For lifestyle bloggers, like Morris and Bullen, their blogs provide full-time employment. Brands and tourism boards pay the young couple to promote their respective products on Instagram.7 Bullen and Morris use the social media platform Instagram to carefully construct grids of photos that include both advertisements for brands and intimate glimpses into their glamorous yet vagabond lifestyle.

Through the emphasis on lived experience, lifestyle blogging offers liberation from what E.P. Thompson calls "industrial clocktime". Clock time is the antithe-

sis of the natural work rhythms that grew out of the Industrial Revolution.⁸ With clock time came task orientation that had three effects on industrial labor: Task orientation asserted the dominance of timed labor, enhanced the separation between life and labor, and propagated the belief that natural work flows were wasteful and lacked urgency.9 A nine-to-five workday grew out of industrial workflows. The current digital era offers alternatives to the rigidity of nine-to-five work schedules. Digital media breaks down the geographic boundaries and communicative obstacles that made a nine-to-five job necessary. Lifestyle bloggers conduct work of equal efficiency from remote locations and according to their own work rhythms. Lifestyle bloggers structure their work around brand collaborations. For example, a phone company flew Morris to an island for three days to take photos, which he then had to edit and post on his Instagram.¹⁰ After Morris took the photographs, he was not confined to a nineto- five work schedule. Bullen and Morris conduct their work entirely through social networking sites. This affords them the

ability to blend labor and leisure time and profit from their travels by posting content while in remote locations.

Lifestyle blogging responded the "problem of leisure"¹¹ by making it profitable. There is an intrinsic tension between labor and leisure in blogging, in which "creativity becomes accidental entrepreneurship."12 This idea of accidental entrepreneurship conflates bloggers' work with creativity and leisure. Bullen and Morris state that, "Both of us started out doing this purely by having fun."13 Discourse surrounding lifestyle blogs paints them as passion projects rather than traditional work. One blogger from Duffy's study echoed these sentiments, exclaiming, "I cannot differentiate work from life because I love what I do so much."14 Bullen and Morris are careful to emphasize that not all of the content on their Instagram is product placement. The creativity and passion imbedded in blogging endows the work with notions of leisure and a heightened sense of autonomy and liberation not available in traditional work. In effect, lifestyle blogging collapses leisure and labor. This collapse of labor and leisure creates a

hyperreality of authenticity.

The framework of Instagram facilitates the hyperreality of authenticity that lifestyle bloggers and corporations use to their advantage. Instagram is a relatively static form of social media. Via Instagram, lifestyle bloggers convey their experiences through images that are cropped, edited, and carefully laid out in a grid. There is a calculated labor that goes into Instagram blog production. This labor is often deliberately hidden in the beautiful final product. Bullen and Morris's images look effortlessly organic, whether they are standing in front of the pyramids of Giza or embracing each other on a cliff overlooking the ocean. Morris explains that he and Bullen often wake up early to shoot on location an hour after sunrise.¹⁵ The couple edits their photos in a consistent style, using their own Adobe Lightroom presets so that their posts have continuity.¹⁶ Finally, Morris explains that he looks at the grid on his profile and tries to plan the next image to make sure it works well with the rest of his recent feed.¹⁷ In comparison to fluid, video-based social medias, like Snapchat or vlogging, the im-

age on Instagram gives bloggers calculative control over how they present themselves to their followers. Instagram's emphasis on the image limits the dynamism of bloggers' posts, the representation of themselves, and their interactions with their followers. As a result, lifestyle bloggers turn to the image and its manipulation as the key way to express their individual identities. Followers of lifestyle bloggers are supposed to take these meticulously planned and constructed images as authentic and organic extensions of a blogger's identity and actual experiences.

The evolution of Instagram's images to the level of the hyperreal mirrors the phases of the image Jean Baudrillard outlines in The Procession of the Simulacra. Instagram was released on July 16, 2010, by co-founders Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger as a photo-sharing platform. 18 In the early days of Instagram, like the first phase of the image, posts were a reflection of a basic reality.¹⁹ Instagram was the hipster cousin of Facebook, filled with artsy snapshots of mundane experiences that were free from market influence. Instagram was a communicative, grassroots

social media site where users could connect and see what others were doing in their daily routines. Instagram reinforced traditional modes of communication and disseminated these norms beyond geographic boundaries in the digital age.

In April 2012, Facebook purchased Instagram and changes were made in the app. The terms of service gave Instagram the right to sell users' photos to third parties without notification or compensation.²⁰ At the same time, an increasing number of users were being drawn to Instagram and hierarchies among profiles emerged. Some users amassed significant followings, and the concept of an Instagram influencer emerged. In fact, it was in 2012 when Morris sold his niche accounts and decided he could survive purely on his lifestyle travel account.²¹ With the rise of Instagram influencers and paid content, Instagram progressed to the second phase of the image, wherein the image masks and perverts a basic reality.²² A sense of authenticity is still discernable in the Instagram image during this time, although it is increasingly perverted by "status seeking behaviors" that

eclipse more individualized forms of self-expression.²³ One blogger in Duffy's study laments, "I see girls running around San Francisco at 11 a.m. wearing tutus and glitter shoes and it's ridiculous! These girls are trying to live out their fantasies by creating these worlds and it just seems so fake."24 The intrusion of market forces into Instagram perverted a real authenticity, as bloggers instrumentalized their identities on social media sites to gain more followers and the potential for corporate sponsorship.

With the rise of lifestyle blogging as a bona fide career, emphasis on bloggers' individual identities brought image authenticity to the stage of hyperreality. On social media, "realness is coded as relatability to an imagined audience," and lifestyle bloggers channel this ideal into their social media projects, in an attempt to carve out "a unique space for their personal brands in a densely populated blogosphere."25 Lifestyle bloggers carefully carve their authenticity through many forms, from heartfelt captions to open dialogues with followers in their comment sections. Bullen and Morris carve out their authenticity through an empha-

sis on the image and its filter. They openly flaunt their individualized authenticity through their joint account (@doyoutravelpresets). The account reposts photos from their main accounts that are edited using their personal Adobe Lightroom presets, in addition to original unedited photos.²⁶ The @doyoutravelpresets account functions much like Baudrillard's example of the economic forces behind Watergate. Baudrillard asserts that, before Watergate, "the task to was to dissimulate a scandal, today the task is to conceal the fact that there is none."27 In the same way, the @doyoutravelpresets attempt to negotiate the "scandal" of authenticity when in fact there is no authenticity left in the Instagram image. Authenticity in social media is a hyperreality used to mask the market forces behind perceived leisure.

The hyperreality of authenticity shields the fact that individualized blogger identity is a construct that corporations have adapted to and monopolized to promote their economic interests. The marketability of authenticity has a long history outside of social media. For example, Coca-Cola's 1971 advertising campaign portrayed their soda as the "real thing."28 Authenticity is the essence of commercial messages. Lifestyle blogging provides the perfect framework for corporations to further their economic interests and products, through the promise of identity branding that is mutually beneficial for the company and the lifestyle blogger. Bullen states that, "we only work with brands we personally like or truly believe in, it's authentic."29 She explains that she and Morris "would never promote something they didn't agree with, just for the money."30 Bullen and Morris believe that the corporate brands, hotels, and consumer products they display in their posts help form their distinct social media identity and authenticity. In effect, the young couple cannot separate themselves from the products they help to sell, nor can they define themselves completely without these products. Akin to Marxist worker alienation, Bullen and Morris put their lives into the object, but in doing so, their lives no longer belong to themselves, but rather to the product itself.³¹ A blogger in Duffy's study exemplifies the

commodification of bloggers when she notes the tension between sharing an authentic version of oneself and one that fits with the brand persona that is created for and through an audience.³² Lifestyle bloggers instrumentalize their authenticity in accordance with corporate interests.

The question of authenticity situates lifestyle blogging in a moral discourse of identity that masks corporations' adaptation to and influence over social media, which allows them to profit from preexisting commodified audiences. Today, seventy-five percent of brands and corporations use influencer marketing to disseminate their products through "electronic word of mouth."33 The very basis of mass marketing is grounded in the cultivation of commodified audiences eager to consume. Consumer labor theorist Rick Maxwell explains that "media economics tell us that an audience must be produced and maximized in order for certain cultural industries to survive."34 Instagram would not exist without commodified audiences (in other words, followers). Bullen calls attention to the importance of followers when she explains,

"People follow us because they enjoy our content, so when we post about a brand, location or whatever we are being paid for, our followers trust it more than when they see a random advertisement in a magazine."35 The hyperreality of authenticity prompts followers to trust lifestyle bloggers. Lifestyle bloggers also view their promotions as aids to their followers and not simply as electronic, word-ofmouth marketing. Followers do not feel commodified when they scroll through, like, and comment on Instagram posts. Followers fail to realize that their commodified labor serves as invaluable data for corporations that would otherwise have to pay for this same information. For commodified audiences and bloggers themselves, authenticity masks the economic forces that are central to the lifestyle blogger phenomenon.

What is important to understand here is that as lifestyle bloggers are unable to negotiate the divide between labor and leisure, a new form of worker alienation has arisen in the digital era, resulting from anxiety over the need to constantly produce and display the authentic self twentyfour-seven. According to Marx's theory of labor alienation, "labor is external to the worker, it belongs to his essential being," and "the worker, therefore only sees himself outside his work."36 Lifestyle bloggers recognize a similar divide between work and life, but they also see themselves in their work. For example, Morris claims, "my life on Instagram is less than 5% of my life outside Instagram," but "I would never create something fake and I always show real aspects of my best experiences."37 Morris thinks he can separate his labor from his leisure but still conflates his leisure as his labor and an organic part of his lived experience.

As previously mentioned, lifestyle bloggers claim liberation from this collapse of labor and leisure, but the consequences of this liberation are an even more demanding work schedule, not a reversion to natural work rhythms. The collapse of labor and leisure creates a "chaotic pace of work, periods of insecurity, and the demand to be ever-present to both audiences and advertisers."38 Since Instagram influencers are only valuable to corporate interests that fund their glamorous lives, they internalize

anxiety over the prospect of losing the interest of commodified audiences. Brands and advertisers actively check lifestyle bloggers' social media behavior, such as follower-to-following ratio, and then try to select "the most efficient and suitable influencer, also keeping the type of product they want to promote in consideration."39 Morris states that the only "con" of his job is this very pressure. Morris explains, "Sometimes I find myself questioning my own work or feeling like I need to go out and create extra content just because I haven't posted in a few days."40 Morris feels the need to deliberately construct experiences his followers and corporate sponsors would want to see, eradicating any possibility of reality in the authenticity remaining in lifestyle blogs.

The collapse of labor and leisure for lifestyle bloggers creates a hyperreality of authenticity that subjects lifestyle bloggers to a new kind of labor alienation, stemming from the constant need to construct an authentic self that meets the interests of their audience and the economic goals of their corporate funders. Discourse surrounding lifestyle

blogging and social media has become preoccupied with the debate over authenticity. This superficial debate obscures the important political and economic phenomena in lifestyle blogging. Furthermore, this debate enhances the ability of corporations to exert influence over social media users, who unwittingly provide uncompensated labor, and bloggers, who suffer from a new form of labor alienation. The hyperreality of authenticity masks the tangible cultural and economic effects of the collapse of labor and leisure. It is impossible to access social media sites, like Instagram, without confronting posts that are content carefully constructed to meet sponsor needs. The images that lifestyle blogs disseminate are not authentic lived experiences and exotic locales, but rather curated images of instrumentalized identities in a commodified world.

Endnotes

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Tunes Too Bold for Television: Crazy *Ex-Girlfriend's* Battle with Content Limitation by Alejandra Gularte

Television shows starring women have continued to break boundaries of what women can do or say on television. The CW show Crazy Ex-Girlfriend is a show about a woman named Rebecca Bunch who quits her job at a top legal firm in New York in order to pursue happiness in a relationship with her ex-boyfriend from high school who now lives in California. The program follows Rebecca's journey of maturing to realize that her happiness will not come from external love, but from self-acceptance. The show challenges heteronormative stereotypes, like women needing love from men in order to live fulfilling lives, and other stereotypes of marginalized groups, such as overweight people and the LGBT community. It focuses on showing these groups in a positive light and representing communities that want to be seen beyond the stereotypes. Two women, Rachel Bloom and Aline Brosh McKenna created the show. Bloom started out as an improviser and

sketch comedy performer in New York and later transitioned to publishing comedy songs on YouTube and writing for late night cable television. McKenna began writing for films such as The Devil Wears Prada (Dir. David Frankel, 2006). Both women came from professional environments where there was little or loosely regulated censorship of aired program content on strictly regulated network television from cable companies. Along with the other writers on the show, Bloom and McKenna are in constant battle with the network's Standards and Practices Department, the regulatory office deciding what content can be aired, continually pushing the boundaries of what can be said on network television. Their fight with the network illustrates the difficulty of challenging existing decency norms for television. However, despite the constant obstacles from the network, they are still able to stretch these boundaries to include topics in the program that are normally not

shown on television, much less on network television. *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* thus pushes the boundaries of censorship to illustrate what content regulators see as appropriate for American audiences, while challenging the accepted dominant ideology by representing unrepresented viewpoints.

In the episode "Getting Over Jeff," Paula Proctor runs into her first love, Jeff, in a supermarket, prompting her to break out into an ABBA and Mamma Mia! inspired song called "The First Penis I Saw." The song tells how Paula falls in love with Jeff and loses her virginity in an awkward but positive sexual experience. The lyrics are full of clever innuendos about sex and modern pop culture references to penises; however, portions of the song had to be edited out during the writing process in order for CW's content regulators to air it on network television. One part of the song originally started with Paula and her back up dancers (the cashier and an elderly shopper) dancing and leaning to grab a phallic shaped vegetable while singing "and then he took my hand," implying a sexual act. The content regulators

told Bloom and her songwriters to add "and taught me all about the first penis" at the end of the questionable line to transition into the approved chorus, taking the focus away from the single line. The additional lyrics were meant to distract from the sexual act being described and shift focus to the song as a whole; removing the emphasis on the couple's experience and just focusing on Jeff (Villarreal). Content regulators, like producers and lawyers, found it inappropriate to have lyrics that focused on the couple's sexual exploration, but appropriate to include lyrics focused solely on the male partner. Content regulators could accept lewd content that caters to men's sexual desires rather than women's sexual desires, as illustrated by changes made in other parts of the song. The Standards and Practices Department at the CW also edited out some of the "dirty" choreography to tame down the video for television (Ivie). The video's choreography has women simply dancing and performing sexual innuendos in a joking, playful way; despite other programming on the CW that is more sexually provocative to satisfy the male audience,

an audience they struggle to capture. The purpose of the choreography is not to be sexually provocative but instead to be playful with the idea that first loves have no idea what they are doing sexually. The content regulators are looking at the content at face value, instead of the content's intended message.

This song's main focus is to demonstrate how first loves normally have no idea what they are doing sexually, while parodying how many songs about first love are often romanticized. The song combines an ABBA-style melody with Mamma Mia! inspired lyrics to parody the romanticizing of first loves by referencing this music style. McKenna and Bloom explain in their L.A. Times interview that many songs about a first love are romanticized and represented to be a perfect sexual experience (Villareal). However, they wanted the focus to be on how awkward it is when two people who have no experience with sex wouldn't have ideal because they lack sexual experience; they'd be confused about how to please each other and it would be an uncomfortable situation. The couple would have to work together

to teach each other about their bodies in order to have a pleasurable experience. McKenna and Bloom want to represent what their reality of first love was: awkward but exciting. Both women in the interview talk about how uncomfortable yet thrilling their first relationships were, yet had never seen a representation of that in television or in modern culture. They wanted to relive that feeling by representing to their audience what their realities were with their first loves. This illustrates that McKenna and Bloom felt a need to write more realistically about a side of a first sexual encounter that is often ignored. Content regulators, like the ones cutting the lyrics of the song, want to focus on what is already established in popular content, what McKenna and Bloom are parodying, because it is safe to show; it conforms to what they believe is the popular ideology. Content regulators want to adhere to standards set by their advertisers so they do not offend their conservative viewers that will prevent them from being interested in the show and whatever advertisers are selling. However, the writers of Crazy Ex-Girlfriend challenge that notion by sharing the embarrassing moments in a relationship, making the awkwardness of a first love into a positive experience that the audience will relate to.

The content regulators at the CW were not always as lenient in merely changing the lyrics of the songs of Crazy *Ex-Girlfriend* in order for a song to still play on television. One song was even considered by the Standards and Practices Department to be too obscene to air at all. Instead, the writers playfully hinted at the song throughout season two when the character Rebecca Bunch would start to sing the song but would be interrupted by another character, thus never allowing the audience to hear the entire song. The song, "Period Sex," was blocked by the Standards and Practices Department and never made it to network television. Rachel Bloom attempted to write a "clean" version of the song and video in order to be approved by the Standards and Practices Department, so the audience could hear the song that had been hinted at all season long. However, the clean version was also not approved by the department; not even as just a short tag at the end of an

episode (Harnick). The department firmly said no and did not accept any rewrites of the song for approval to heard on television. Bloom mentions that, because of FCC rules, the Standards and Practices Department has to interpret what the FCC means by vulgar or graphic language (Harnick). This means that the department sees the topic of period sex as vulgar or graphic. The censorship of the entire song from network television illustrates that while the network attempts to be accepting of the writers' ideas, they have a line that they do not let the writers' cross, and that line is female menstruation

Bloom decided that because the CW wouldn't allow for "Period Sex" to air on television, she would publish the video on her YouTube channel so the fans could still experience their vision for the uncensored song (Martinelli). The YouTube version of the song, the version they wanted to play on television, does not contain any swear words; however, the conversation about menstrual sex was still too much for television, thus their decision to publish the video online. In the eyes of the Standards and

Practices Department, this song contains graphic and vulgar language, despite it not containing swear words, meaning that they find the topic of women's menstrual cycles to be too explicit for their audiences. Most content on the CW is aimed at a teenage and young adult audience; people who normally have conversations about menstrual cvcles with their sexual partners or experience menstrual cycles themselves. The content regulators at the CW, and for network programming in general, are thereby stating that natural bodily functions, like menstruation, are unsuitable for their audiences and advertisers. However, McKenna points out the irony that while topics like menstruation are considered unsuitable for audiences, death and violence is easily shown on television (Howard). The Standards and Practices Department is following what they believe to be most accepted by audiences; that audiences don't want to hear about the female menstrual cycle, or about having sex with a female partner who is menstruating. Although Crazy Ex-Girlfriend fans showed enthusiastic interest for the song to be aired on television, the CW ignored these pleas and refused to air the song at all, illustrating that they are set on their ways of restricting content, which is subjectively regulated. The CW has never displayed content about period sex and despite audience enthusiasm, it doesn't seem like it will change soon.

This adheres to the larger ideology in which content regulators are unsure or uneasy about displaying alternative content celebrating women's bodies. However, what has not been resolved is illustrating positive content centered towards women's issues. The song "Strip Away My Conscience" is about Rebecca seducing her boss Nathaniel to seek revenge on her ex-fiancé, Josh Chan. She is using her sexuality in order to appeal to Nathaniel's malicious nature so that he will help her create a plan to destroy Josh Chan's life. During the writing process of the song, there were challenges in deciding how Rebecca could try to seduce Nathaniel. The Standards and Practices Department approved of Bloom singing the lyrics "Let me choke on your cocksuredness," but did not approve of her singing "Dude, I'm so wet." This illustrates that they

are okay with content that talks about her pleasing her male partner, but not lyrics of her being pleased by him (Martinelli). This asserts the larger, dominant ideology that the network employs; that it is okay for women to talk about sexually pleasing their male partner, but it is not okay to talk about males pleasing their female partner. Most content displayed on television about sex focuses on the male perspective and the male's sexual pleasure, instead of an equal representation of both male and female pleasure and experiences.

However, the writers of Crazy Ex-Girlfriend challenge this imbalance of representation by creating a storyline focused on how men are unaware that they do not please their female partners sexually. One of the male employees at the law firm, Tim, realizes after talking to his female coworkers about sex, that he does not please his wife sexually. This prompts him to break out into the song "The Buzzing from the Bathroom," which is about him realizing that his wife is not actually brushing her teeth with an electric toothbrush after they have sex. This storyline challenges what is commonly represented, that the man's sexual pleasure is paramount in a heterosexual relationship. The women at the law firm let Tim know that he needs to have an honest conversation with his wife about sex and their relationship thus playing up communication as a solution. It also combats the dominant ideology illustrated in the censorship of another song, "Strip Away My Conscience" a storyline that tackles yet another issue of female pleasure. This storyline offers the opportunity to talk about female anatomy while explaining clitoral orgasms to their audience in an attempt to combat this issue in heterosexual relationships. Bloom noted in an interview with James Corden that she had to attend many meetings with the lawyers from the Standards and Practices Department to be able to have one of the characters say the word "clitoris" and explain how it functions in the human body on network television ("Rachel Bloom"). There is so much content on television that refers to male genitalia, both in comedy and dramatic content, that it rarely raises the interest of regulators like the mention of the female reproductive system

does. The dominant ideology influences television content to focus on male pleasures versus educating men on female pleasure that is absence in traditional content. While this was a difficult battle for the show's writers, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* became the first network show to explain what a clitoris does.

Despite pushback from the Standards and Practices Department at the CW, the instances discussed here demonstrate how Crazy Ex-Girlfriend still managed to address taboo topics on network television. It did this by pushing to change the regulatory cultural understanding around issues of sexuality for young adults like the awkwardness and excitement of a first sexual encounter, menstruation and sex, and an alternative focus on female pleasure. The creators of Crazy Ex-Girlfriend saw a lack of representation in how relationships were authentically presented on television and used its platform to showcase them. The television program pushes the boundaries of popular content and explores taboos in a positive light. Crazy Ex-Girlfriend is heading into its last season on television and will continue to explore more unconventional topics through its elaborate musicals numerals, and hopefully, include more period sex.

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Keeping Up with the Kardashian Personas by Natasha Sheridan

Kim Kardashian is one of the most famous women in America, an unlikely fashion and lifestyle icon with more than a hundred million social media followers and reported annual earnings of more than \$45 million, yet the "real" Kim Kardashian, if she ever existed, has long disappeared from the public and can only be accessed through media representation-which is always detached from the real. She now exists as a "sign"—a media construct who manifests as multiple differing signifiers, appearing on reality TV as a performer in a staged, loosely scripted "reality" television version of life; on social media branded as an aspirational sex symbol; and as an avatar on mobile phones that is to be manipulated as a figure in play.

Kim Kardashian exists in the public sphere as a carefully mediated representation of herself, signifying the socially aspirational, sexually uninhibited, commodified trope of the "unruly woman." We do not have access to the authentic Kim Kardashian, but instead encounter her as a signifier in different

contexts. Kim Kardashian blurs the lines between the real and commercialized fodder for her followers, such that it is impossible to distinguish the two. Kim Kardashian goes beyond the long-extant "unruly woman," presenting herself as a woman proudly and unashamedly in command of her culturally aberrant behavior, elevating what might be a socially stigmatized source of shame into a highly commercialized display of self-aware grandiosity that celebrates her transgressive excesses. Her followers knowingly abet this deception, conscious of the commodification of her celebrity, reinforcing her fame with their financial endorsement and embracing her as an avatar empowered to live out their fantasies.

Kim Kardashian's social media persona embodies Rowe's analysis of "Roseanne: an unruly woman as domestic goddess." It is a carefully calculated display intended for public consumption at all times, in which every move is planned, often verging on a publicity stunt. Rowe states in her book

that she uses "the name 'Roseanne' to refer to Roseanne Barr-assign, a person we know only through her various roles and performances in the popular discourse" (251). Similarly, Kim Kardashian can be viewed only through the roles in which she is portrayed on social media. She is ostensibly a wife and mother-of-three, and yet, on social media, flaunts her sexual availability and uses her children as fashion accessories. "Through her body, speech, and laughter, especially in the public sphere, she creates a disruptive spectacle of herself" (Rowe, 31). Kim Kardashian embodies this definition of the unruly woman through the different personas that create her "reality." Throughout her plethora of personas, the unruly woman is the underlying glue that holds this "reality" together for the public.

Kim Kardashian is knowingly in command of and calculatingly markets her own sexuality: the veteran of a best-selling sex video, she posts scantily-clad images on social media for her followers to fetishize her. Yet far from being exploited for her sexuality, she exploits and capitalizes on it herself, helping to reshape social mores: in previous eras, a sex video would have killed a public career, but Kardashian (like her friend and long-surpassed inspiration celebutante Paris Hilton) used it to launch her career to new levels. Now her sexuality and selfexploitation is known as a part of her identity, and her "reality," portrayed through social media platforms, can always be linked back to her sexuality being branded for the public.

"I really do believe I am a brand for my fans," says Kim Kardashian, in *The New York Times* article by Wilson. Social media—notably Instagram, where she has more than 109 million followers—makes Kim Kardashian a commodified brand designed for public consumption, shaping her constructed version of "reality."

By exploiting her own family through these social media platforms, even to the point of making the outlandish choice of each child's name—Saint West, North West, and Chicago West—into a global guessing game, Kim Kardashian has become the ultimate social media brand, while ironically monetizing female empowerment as a woman in command of her own life and libido.

Kim Kardashian's social media persona reveals not so much of a fully-realized individual, but rather somewhat of a polished highlight reel stripped of any sense of drama, chaos or reality, branding and selling her sexuality, products, and her family, often pushing these to excess. "And given that they (the Kardashians) routinely 'break the Internet', whether for nude photography shoots or baby-naming, this is pushed, very far, very regularly" (Elliott). Her calculatingly staged Instagram pictures almost embody the concept of windowing. Each picture she posts is strategically planned so that Kim Kardashian-as-brand can profit the most due to the time periods in which she posts, designed to lure the most views. When seen posting pictures of her family, she manipulates reality to show the world she is a regular mom just like her fans, omitting from the images her entourage of nannies, assistants, stylists, makeup artists and producers. Through social media platforms, Kim creates a faux "reality" of her own life designed to showcase and market her cosmetic line, clothing brand, and

seemingly "normal" lifestyle.

Kim Kardashian's social media followers are complicit in this: they see her as an icon of being famous-for-being-famous, and can harbor the fantasy that if they were as socially transgressive and iconoclastic as her, they too could share in her wealth, success and lifestyle. By their presence, they enhance the number of Kim Kardashian's online followers, which translates to greater income from her sponsored or self-marketing posts, encouraging her to greater excess. There is a bizarre dichotomy that she sells to her viewers: she is a loving, attentive mother, yet repeatedly posts fully naked or near-naked selfies flaunting her sexual availability. In doing so, she personifies the male fantasy of a sexy housewife, exuding sexual allure and enticing relationships beyond the bounds of marriage.

In an age where hundreds of millions of people worldwide share intimate moments from their lives for public consumption online, Kim Kardashian has elevated exhibitionism to an art, reflecting the aspirations of her followers—fast cars, exotic vacations, private jets—and indulges their secret fantasies while flaunting unashamedly titillating naked 'selfies.' She develops an intimacy with the public by not merely inviting them into her life, but into her private bathroom, where her barely-concealed naked image often appears reflected in the mirror. She herself is a voyeur of her exhibitionism as much as her audience is. Her followers are given the illusion that they have a relationship with the "real" Kim Kardashian, though in actuality they only have a relationship with a commodified representation which they are happy to endorse with their attention, bringing her a fortune in sponsorship.

Kim Kardashian embodies various personas portrayed through different media platforms that help create the overall "reality" of her public image. Through her reality TV show Keeping Up with the Kardashians, Kim Kardashian signifies her celebrity status. She is shown at red carpet events, and having paparazzi snap away during the banal task of grocery shopping. Her wealth is ostentatiously displayed through her lavish home and materialistic excess put on show for the world to see. While flaunting an aspirational lifestyle that her followers could only dream

of, the show's scripted drama is designed to make Kim Kardashian seem like she's just a regular person at heart as she suffers the same sort of personal crises and dilemmas as the rest of the world, making her a more empathetic and accessible figure despite her actual isolation behind security cameras and bodyguards within a gated community. The "reality" TV show has taken viewers on a carefully curated tour of Kim's hardship with her divorce from her first husband. professional basketball player Kris Humphries-a man familiar with the spotlight of Hollywood. It shows her struggles to conceive children and hire a surrogate mother, and her trivial everyday family dramas, most of which appear manufactured to create drama. Kim Kardashian's "reality TV" persona embodies the "unruly woman/domestic goddess" in extremis. She violates social norms, flaunts her sexuality in provocative photo shoots, creates chaos and drama around her, all while still being a wife and mother and giving the illusion of having it all on her own terms. Just like Roseanne, Kim Kardashian has reinvented the domestic goddess stereotype: she is curvy, ethnic, and goes against conceptions of an idealized feminine figure.

Kim Kardashian's reality TV show is part of a genre popularly known as "train-wreck TV," in which the self-destructive drives of the protagonists produce the drama that captivates audiences and makes it hard for them to look away, no matter how appalling the antics-similar to oppositional viewing. In this way, Kim Kardashian's television audience contribute their attention, which enhances her celebrity in a self-sustaining loop, encouraging increasingly outrageous antics that lures even more viewers.

Kim Kardashian's persona, created for her incredibly successful mobile app, is an idealized fantasy that serves as an avatar for followers and customers who pay-to-play at being Kim Kardashian. She manipulates her following via this app to give her fans a glimpse into her lavish "reality." By commodifying her life, she encourages users to pay for onscreen avatars that partake in luxuries such as virtual private jets, virtual fashion stylists, and virtual designer clothing. The app is branded to show buyers that they too

can enjoy the life of a celebrity as grandiose as Kim Kardashian, even if only in the virtual world on smart phones and tablets. Users create their own celebrity persona and build their way up through Hollywood, in a knowingly crass and self-aware celebration of social climbing. Through this app, which has spawned lucrative spin-off games, Kim Kardashian signifies celebrity-as-normality and sells the fiction that anyone can be just like her. The manipulation she uses through TV, social media platforms, and even apps, make her followers willing participants in this illusion. The term "celebrity" has long been commodified, but Kim Kardashian has gone beyond that to craft a persona that is all high-gloss surface with no evident substance beneath: all brand, with the sole product being herself-or rather, the versions that she curates for public consumption. Every move Kim Kardashian makes is public, whether it's on Instagram promoting her cosmetic line, on her reality TV show revealing some perfectly-scripted manufactured news about her personal life, or her app selling everything that embodies Kim Kardashian. Needless to say, this only exists in the virtual realm and her life along with everything around it signifies a fantasy that her viewers, followers and users envy and aspire to indulge in enough to ignore the fact that they are being manipulated.

Yet when harsh reality - genuine, unfiltered and unscripted real life - intruded into Kim Kardashian's world in the shape of a robbery in her hotel suite in Paris in 2016, in which she was held hostage by jewel thieves, it produced one of the rare emotionally honest moments in her reality TV persona. In Keeping Up with the Kardashians, embracing the family philosophy of "share! everything!" (Dubroff) Kim Kardashian relived the horrors of the robbery in a special episode on her reality TV show, which critics found notable for its rare display of genuine emotion, declaring "it was in fact a very affecting hour of television" (ibid). Yet the attack was also a result of the dark side of a life lived and marketed to the public: jewel thieves knew exactly where she would be and that her husband Kanye West would be performing on stage at the time of the robbery, because

Kim Kardashian exposed herself to continual public view on social media. She reacted by disconnecting and retreating from social media: the key conduit that connects the outside world to her "reality." Shortly before the attack in France, "in September, Kim Kardashian tweeted 162 times, posted 40 pictures on Instagram and sent out more than 200 Snapchat clips" (Kaufman), according to The Los Angeles Times. But after the Paris incident, she was silent and absent from social media for weeks. Her absence from social media resulted in many of her followers panicking and the brands that she was partnered with saw sales quickly plummet. The New York Post quoted Niccolo de Masi, the chief executive of Glu Mobile-the company behind Kim Kardashian's mobile app game—saying "if she decided never to return to social media, the world would mourn the loss of Kim Kardashian online." Yet who would the world actually be mourning? Not the "real" Kim Kardashian—whoever she may be, hidden away and unknowable behind her various media facades. Or might she be like a Russian Matryoshka doll: one figure hidden inside another, with yet more inside, and at its center nothing but emptiness?

The "real" Kim Kardashian may be unknown, but the media entity known as Kim Kardashian is a master manipulator of its various platforms; by extending the trope of the "unruly woman" to become an aspirational and transgressive independent woman shattering social taboos and owning her sexuality, she has successfully commodified the desires of her followers.

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