

# POPULAR CULTURE REVIEW

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## From the Editor's Desk

This summer promises to be the hottest on record, and while I can't promise that this issue of *PCR* will cool you off, the contents herein may help you to forget global warming, or perhaps not.

In his disquieting article, "The Fourth Reich: Ishmael Reed's *The Terrible Twos* and the Triumph of U.S. Popular Culture" Vincent Perez kicks off the issue explaining how Trump's presidency was foretold in 20<sup>th</sup> century works of dystopian fiction emphasizing Reed's novel which reads much less like satire today than on its publication. In "Order on the Net!!" Juror Misconduct *via* Social Media", Attorney Regina Judge warns how juror misuse of social media can threaten a defendant's right to a fair trial through emailing, tweeting or posting on social networks and discusses judicial strategies for preventing it.

While public histories fail to record "Baltimore's Hidden Communication: Unwritten words by Harriet Tubman and Eleanor Roosevelt and Her Journalist Lorena Hickok", Katherine Cottle explains how this secret communication passed through and influenced the Baltimore landscape. In "Expressions of Sorrow: Nonverbal Forms of Communication" Milford A. Jeremiah argues that nonverbal forms of communication in response to tragedy are as important as verbal in conveying meaning both to those at the site and from a distance.

In a fascinating analysis, Keith Moser argues that the advent of simulated reality is a real issue deserving of attention through his analysis of a single episode of *South Park* "The Advent of a Simulated Reality and Computer Generated-Femininity in the *South Park* episode *The Hobbit: A Baudrillardian Reflection*. In "Castles in the Air: Relationships on *Castle*, the TV show" William and Patricia Kirtley examine the cancellation of the popular TV show *Castle* in the wake of deviations from the established scenario and viewers' displeasure.

Casino gaming authority, William Thompson looks at gaming's past and probable future in Cuba, while Graeme Wilson deconstructs *Jurassic Park* as an early text in third wave feminism.

In Book Reviews, Gina Sully reviews Erika Engstrom's highly readable and informative *Feminism, Gender, and Politics in NBC's Parks and Recreation*, while Jarret Keene reviews

three new books of comic scholarship ideal for comic historians and others interested in the genre.

On a different note, 2018 marks the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Far West Popular and American Culture Associations, the parent organization of *Popular Culture Review*. The conference, which runs from February 23 – 25, will be a gala affair held at the Palace Station Hotel in Las Vegas and there is plenty of time to get me your abstract. See [fwpca.org](http://fwpca.org) for more information.

Felicia

The Fourth Reich: Ishmael's Reed's *The Terrible Twos* and the Triumph of Celebrity Culture  
By Vincent Pérez, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

**Abstract:** Donald Trump's rise to the U.S. presidency was foretold in many 20<sup>th</sup> century works of dystopian fiction as well as Western Marxist scholarship written during and after the Nazi era. The most prescient modern dystopian novel, Ishmael Reed's *The Terrible Twos* (1982), has much in common thematically with earlier American dystopian fiction while also sharing the bleak vision of U.S. mass (media) culture postulated by Frankfurt School theorists such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947). But Reed's novel diverges dramatically from these earlier writings, whether fictive or scholarly, through its farcical and absurdist postmodernist depiction of a future neo-fascist America in which popular (media) culture reigns triumphant even as spaces of resistance take shape amid the seemingly overdetermined ideological and cultural landscape.

**Keywords:** Ishmael Reed, American dystopian fiction, postmodernist fiction, mass media culture, consumerism, fascism, Frankfurt School, presidential politics.

**Resumen:** El ascenso de Donald Trump a la presidencia de EE. UU. fue predicho en muchas obras de ficción distópica del siglo 20, así como en el trabajo académico marxista occidental escrito durante y después de la era Nazi. La novela distópica moderna más profética, *The Terrible Twos* (1982) de Ishmael Reed, tiene mucho en común temáticamente con obras anteriores de ficción distópica estadounidense y también comparte la visión sombría de la cultura de los medios masivos de EE. UU. que está postulada por teóricos de la Escuela de Fráncfort como Theodor Adorno y Max Horkheimer en *La Dialéctica de la Ilustración* (1947). Pero la novela de Reed diverge dramáticamente de estas obras anteriores, así sea en la ficción o académicamente, a través de su representación postmodernista ridícula y absurdista de un EE. UU. neofascista en el futuro, en el que la cultura popular de los medios es triunfante, inclusive cuando los espacios de resistencia se forman dentro de un panorama ideológico y cultural que parece estar superdeterminado.

**Palabras clave:** Ishmael Reed, ficción estadounidense distópica, ficción postmodernista, cultura de medios masivos, consumismo, fascismo, Escuela de Fráncfort, política presidencial.

**摘要:** 唐纳德·特朗普当选美国总统一事在诸多20世纪的著作中就已预见。这些著作包括反乌托邦小说和纳粹时期及之后的西方马克思学术作品。其中最具先见之明的现代反乌托邦小说是伊斯米尔·里德（Ishmael Reed）1982年的著作“可怕的两岁”，它在主题上和早期美国反乌托邦小说有很多相似之处，同时认同法兰克福学派理论家对美国大众媒体文化荒凉景象的假设。这些理论家包括西奥多·阿多诺（Theodor Adorno）和马克斯·霍克海默（Max Horkheimer），他们合著的启蒙辩证法对该假设进行了描述。然而，里德的小说不论在创作还是学术上都与这些早期著作存在极大的差距，例如其用荒唐的后现代主义描绘未来的新法西斯式（neo-fascist）美国，而处于该环境下的美国流行媒体文化依旧占据主导地位，尽管在这看似超定的意识形态和文化景观中还存在反抗的空间。

**关键词:** 伊斯米尔·里德，美国反乌托邦小说，后现代主义小说，大众媒体文化，消费主义，法西斯主义，法兰克福学派，总统政治

There is a cult of ignorance in the United States, and there has always been. The strain of anti-intellectualism has been a constant thread winding its way through our political and cultural life, nurtured by the false notion that “my ignorance is just as good as your knowledge.”

Isaac Asimov, “A Cult of Ignorance” (1980)

As the child grows he tells you things. He tells you about nations and individuals. About how civilizations come into being. You’re glad that two-year-olds don’t have access to ICBMs the way the responsible leaders in your government do.

Ishmael Reed, *The Terrible Twos* (1982)

Donald Trump’s rise to the U.S. presidency was foretold in many 20<sup>th</sup>-century works of dystopian fiction as well as Western Marxist scholarship written during and after the Nazi era.<sup>1</sup> The most prescient modern dystopian novel, Ishmael Reed’s *The Terrible Twos*, has much in

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<sup>1</sup> Major Frankfurt School theorists include Adorno, Horkheimer, Benjamin, Marcuse and Fromm.

common thematically with earlier dystopian fiction while also sharing the bleak vision of U.S. mass (media) culture put forward by Frankfurt School theorists Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer in their foundational study, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947). But *The Terrible Twos* diverges sharply from these earlier writings, whether fictive or scholarly, through its farcical and absurdist depiction of a near-future neo-fascist America in which mass (media), celebrity and entertainment culture reign triumphant even as spaces of resistance take shape amid a seemingly overdetermined ideological and cultural landscape. The novel's multicultural (postmodernist) "Neo-Hoodoo" aesthetic, modeled after the cultural syncretism of the Vodoun religion that emerged from the African diaspora, further contrasts Reed's novel to earlier evocations of a future neo-fascist United States.<sup>2</sup>

In writings about dystopian fiction published in the wake of Trump's victory, Reed's novel and other postmodernist dystopian fiction have been largely overlooked.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, amid the deluge of journalism on Trump, the legacy of the Frankfurt School and its critical relevance to the Trump phenomenon have been lost. Reed's novel and its sequel, *The Terrible Threes* (1989), have always received less critical attention than they deserve. As the Trump presidency ushers in a new era in which a celebrity icon has in fact taken the reins of the White House, Reed's novel, and its intersection with dystopian fiction and Western Marxism, offer an urgently needed critical framework for reading news media coverage as well as "mass culture" approaches to our fraught historical moment.

Written in response to Ronald Reagan's election to the presidency, *The Terrible Twos* narrates the story of Dean Clift, a former model who, because of his fame and "sex appeal," is chosen to be a vice-presidential candidate. Shortly after winning the election, Clift's running mate dies, leaving him to assume the Presidency. Like Trump, Clift has no background or experience in politics, and, perhaps also like Trump, possesses the emotional maturity and intellectual capacity of a toddler. The "terrible twos" captures President Clift's emotional and intellectual condition, forming a running figuration in the novel for American individualism run amok. It also alludes to the United States' Bicentennial, celebrated a few years before the novel's

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<sup>2</sup> See Rushdy for an insightful overview of the four primary scholarly interpretations of Reed's Neo-Hoodoo aesthetic. Also see Reed's "Neo-Hoodoo Manifesto."

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Feffer's discussion of the Trump presidency in relation to dystopian fiction and Hefner's similar analysis of major U.S. dystopian novels. Although neither work discusses postmodernist dystopian fiction, Hefner's essay addresses the issue of why racial bigotry was not foregrounded in early dystopian fiction.

publication. As set forth by a follower of a (fictional) religious sect, the Nicholites, which hopes to spiritually rehabilitate the country by promoting St. Nicholas as God:

I keep thinking of a two-year-old when I think of an appropriate metaphor with which to describe this sour, Scroogelike attitude which began with the Scrooge Christmas of '80...Two years old, that's what we are, emotionally--America, always wanting someone to hand us some ice cream, always complaining, Santa didn't bring me this and why didn't Santa bring me that. (95)

Unlike most dystopian fiction, Reed's multicultural Neo-Hoodooism imagines the rise of neo-fascism in America as closely aligned with racism, nativism and other forms of bigotry. For example, since the figurehead President Clift is incapable of making decisions on momentous national and international issues, he overlooks his own generals' plot to carry out a pre-emptive nuclear attack on Nigeria for its soon-to-be-realized nuclear weapons aspirations, "Operation Two Birds" (evoking the fraudulent rationale for the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq). Nigeria will simultaneously be blamed for launching a nuclear attack on New York City, the second target of "Operation Two Birds." Why New York? Neo-fascists in Clift's cabinet believe the city has become irredeemably "negrified" by millions of "mud people," a population that in the novel's near-future America comprises the large majority of what the elite "vital people" call "surplus people. A Nazi advisor to the President admonishes Clift's cabinet:

You all ridiculed Hitler, but he was only concerned about you and your future. He warned you about the negrification of Europe and the Jewing of America. And now you're faced with the mongrelization of America, and it's your fault. It's your fault--what you did to that man. You fools, for you to have dishonored this man so. You called him a monster and a devil, but now you need him; you need him to guide you before the Southern Hemisphere creeps over the planet...You persecuted him. This prophet. This great man." (58)

Clift's media advisor, Bob Krantz, a former mogul at WBC (Whyte Broadcasting Corporation) has become the shadow president, leaving the clueless Clift out of the real decision-making process. Initially Clift has only a vague notion of his feeble status, telling his wife, "Dear, I've been thinking. You know I am the President of the United States and they ought to at least tell me what's going on from time to time...I may not be an intellectual giant, but I'm as smart as the next fellow. If my advisors would give me more responsibility, I'd show that I know

a thing or two. They never ask my advice about a damned thing, and do you know what? I'm getting pretty sore. Why, I look like a fool in front of the press" (48-51).

But, inspired by a visit from the ghost of St. Nicholas, Clift undergoes a surprising spiritual transformation, echoing Ebenezer Scrooge's in *A Christmas Carol*. St. Nicholas transports Clift by elevator to America's own Dantean hell, where he sees former presidents burdened with guilt for government-sponsored crimes committed while they were in office. Dwight D. Eisenhower is haunted by the CIA-sponsored assassination of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo in 1961, Harry S Truman by the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, and Nelson A. Rockefeller by the massacre committed by police during the 1971 Attica Prison riot. Like the frightful ghost of Christmas future in *A Christmas Carol*, these spirits spur Clift to a moment of self-recognition. Clift is also deeply moved by St. Nicholas' ethic of generosity and selflessness, as captured by his legend, and, later in the novel, even more so by Clift's visit to the crippled grandson of his African American butler (i.e., the novel's Tiny Tim). As a result, Clift decides that he will renounce publicly the wanton greed, militarism, racism and corruption that mark his administration. This speech is foreshadowed early in the novel by one character's speculation that one day the President could "pull a Mr. Smith on them . . . [In] that movie, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* . . . Mr. Smith gets up and makes a speech in Congress in which he exposes all of the corruption in the land, and this one Senator, played by Claude Rains, becomes so agitated he leaps to his feet and confesses it all" (13).

Part One of the novel, "A Past Christmas," is set in early 1980, at the time that Reed wrote the novel in the wake of Reagan's victory. The much longer Part Two, "A Future Christmas," is set in the 1990s. In Part Two Reed elaborates his dystopian vision of a future neo-fascist America in which the chief executive is manipulated by reactionary corporate, military and Christian Evangelical power brokers, all enabled by a pliable news media whose former head, Krantz, now wields near-absolute authority in the White House. Reed did not, in 1980, imagine the rise of Fox News, a news network that CNN-founder Ted Turner and many others have equated with the Nazi propaganda machine; but Krantz's character clearly anticipates the roles played by Roger Ailes and Steve Bannon in Trump's presidential campaign.

As all of this suggests, *The Terrible Twos* fuses together a dizzyingly eclectic mix of high, popular, vernacular, ethnic and national cultural traditions, an example of what the

anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss refers to in *The Savage Mind* (1962) as “bricolage” and which Reed famously defined in his 1970 literary manifesto as Neo-Hoodooism. Often cited as a defining trait of postmodernist fiction, bricolage is the practice of using whatever is at hand--in Reed’s case seemingly any facet of U.S. or global culture--and putting them together to create a new cultural (literary) artifact. According to Levi-Strauss, the practitioner of this process, the “bricoleur,” embodies the “savage mind,” one who cleverly and cobbles together pre-existing things to improvise something new and unique. While Levi-Strauss’s concept does suggest the convoluted amalgamation of cultural influences in *The Terrible Twos*, in his 1970 “Neo-Hoodoo Manifesto” Reed formulated his own “postmodernist” aesthetic, rooted not in French structuralist theory, but rather in the history and culture of the African Caribbean. Neo-Hoodooism de-centers European and U.S. literary and cultural histories by foregrounding the syncretic cultures of African Caribbean, a “contact zone” which Reed identifies with spirits (loas), magic, nature, music, history, freedom and creativity.

Just as Alejo Carpentier, in his 1949 literary manifesto “On the Marvelous Real in America,” rejects European surrealism in favor of the organic “magical reality” of the African Caribbean, Reed’s aesthetic highlights the reified and monolithic nature of Euro-centric U.S. cultural traditions. But Reed, again much like Carpentier, does not simplistically reject European and Euro-American cultural traditions; rather, he “calls for the creation of a new cultural field at once appropriative and multivocal and constantly in flux.”<sup>4</sup> While Neo-Hoodoo emerged at the “confluence of African-Haitian vodoun and the music and dance of slave culture,” Reed envisions it in 1970 as a cultural movement through which new artist-priests “are building our own American ‘pantheon’” or “loas (Spirits)” from the resources of all people, not just African Americans.<sup>5</sup> In *The Terrible Twos*, the character Black Peter, an African American street performer who joins the Nicholites, embodies this syncretic, multicultural and historically-informed ethos. The character is based on a Moorish assistant to St. Nicholas first introduced to the St. Nicholas legend in the mid-nineteenth century. The original Black Peter was drawn from earlier versions of the St. Nicholas legend which alluded to a companion, possibly the Devil as slave, who accompanied Nicholas. Although Black Peter still plays a prominent role

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<sup>4</sup> Mielke, 4. This essay provides an illuminating examination of the Neo-Hoodoo aesthetic in relation to women characters in Reed’s novel *Flight to Canada* (1976).

<sup>5</sup> Mielke, 4.

today in Christmas traditions in the Netherlands and Belgium, he was dropped from the St. Nicholas legend in the United States, as Reed says, because of America's peculiar "racial customs" rooted in slavery. Even President Clift's spiritual transformation, as Reed explains in an interview, derives from African and Afro-Caribbean culture as much as it does from Charles Dickens. "[The] idea of hell and descent and reform...is a feature of African literature...in the African tradition, [the spirits] Esu-Kekere-Ode...have a fight with the chief deity, [and] are forced to live among the dead and become wise." (*Conversations With Ishmael Reed*, 365)

A list of some of the other characters and plot lines in *The Terrible Twos* further illustrate the expansive cultural syncretism of Reed's Neo-Hoodoo aesthetic. Oswald (Ziggie) Zumwalt heads the North Pole Development Corporation, which buys the rights to the character and image of Santa Claus and plans to build a domed city/shopping mall at the North Pole called Christmasland. Disillusioned by the commercialization of Christmas as personified by Zumwalt, Boy Bishop founds the Nicolaites to re-establish the true spirit of Christmas—the virtues of generosity, charity and love—which he hopes to make a guiding cultural creed year-round for all Americans. The central plot line revolves around Nance Saturday, a private investigator who is hired to solve the disappearance of a street hustler (Snowman) who was last seen in the Nicholites' compound; Nance's estranged wife, Virginia, is a reporter for WBC, where Krantz formerly worked before joining Clift's presidential cabinet. Black Peter, the former street performer (ventriloquist) and longtime member of the Nicolaites, grows disaffected by the sect's Euro-centric theology; he hopes to revitalize the sect by replacing its God, St. Nicholas, with Haile Selassie, the messiah of the Rastafari movement. Flinch Savvage, an American Indian liaison for the North Pole Development Corporation in Alaska, mediates disputes between it and native peoples whose land the corporation has usurped; his girlfriend, Vixen, works for Zumwalt's North Pole Development Corporation. And Rex Stuart, an alcoholic, out-of-work TV soap opera actor, is hired by the North Pole Development Corporation to play the role of Santa Claus at corporate and public functions. At one such event—a nationally-televised kick-off of the holiday season—rather than the usual Christmas greetings, *this* Santa gives an impassioned speech criticizing America's culture of greed and selfishness and calling for a national boycott of Christmas. The Nicholites, it turns out, have surreptitiously replaced Stuart with their own Santa Claus, using him to spread their anti-capitalist message to the masses.

As Zumwalt and other dignitaries look on helplessly, at the start of the most important shopping season of the year the imposter Santa Claus announces his real feelings about the Christmas holiday season:

I think it's time to have a grown-up Christmas...A Christmas where we can get to the bottom of things. Get to the bottom of what's troubling this country so...I think of this nation of lonely people, of lonely alienated male assassins alone in their motel rooms, hamburger wrappings scattered about, empty ice cream cartons in with the rubbish, people alienated from the past, the future, nature, and one another. And how did we get that way, and what is wrong with us? We scream and kick and say no when we can't get our way. We say no to the sick, no to the destitute. We say no to the millions of refugees now crowding our cities, tired, jobless, hungry, using garbage-can lids for pillows...Look at all of the people homeless, wandering the streets. Suppose one of them was Jesus Christ. Would you say no to Jesus Christ? Would you lock the door of the church and freeze the Lord out?...I say it's time to pull [the] naughty people off their high chairs and get them to clean up their own shit. Let's hit them where it hurts, ladies and gentlemen. In their pockets. Let's stop buying their war toys, their teddy bears, their dolls, tractors, wagons, their video games, their trees. Trees belong in the forest. (95-97)

Santa's speech, broadcast live across the country, sparks a social and political crisis. His more radical supporters show their commitment by wearing white berets, Reed's Neo-Hoodoo nod to the Black Panthers and Brown Berets of the 1960s.

The novel draws heavily from the hagiography of St. Nicholas, a fourth-century Bishop of Asia Minor (Turkey) and patron saint of children, sailors, and young women. The legend of St. Nicholas is, of course, the basis for the modern myth of Santa Claus. According to the Catholic legend, St. Nicholas saved three young women from prostitution by providing them with dowries in the form of purses filled with gold ornaments. Hence, he became known as a bearer of gifts. Unlike Christ, St. Nicholas could fly; consequently, he also became known as miracle worker. As *The Terrible Twos* explains, St. Nicholas became a very popular saint in the Eastern church, where a cult developed around him. In the centuries after his death, this cult spread to England and other parts of Europe, where hundreds of churches were eventually dedicated to him. By the early medieval era, the St. Nicholas cult was universally embraced in Western Europe. But, as

Reed's narrator also observes in the same passage, "the Catholic Church was always nervous that Nicholas's reputation would outflank Christ's. Not only had Nicholas performed miracles and raised the dead as Christ had done, not only was he as ubiquitous as Christ was, but he could fly as well. Christ could ascend, but Nicholas could fly! The Vatican, as the years passed, became more and more hostile to Nicholas, and in 1969, the Pope declared Nicholas 'moribund.'" (120) The legacy of St. Nicholas's medieval fame never waned in Russia and other regions under the influence of the Eastern Orthodox Church, which still reveres him.

As this summary attests, Reed's Neo-Hoodoo aesthetic erases the distinction between "high" and "low" cultures by juxtaposing popular, folk and media culture with classic literature and other forms of "high" art. Among the most prominently referenced genres or texts in Reed's novel are detective fiction, proletarian and naturalist fiction, *A Christmas Carol*, Dante's *Inferno*, Rastafarianism, Nordic pagan religion, German fairy tales, classic Hollywood movies and the hagiography of Saint Nicholas. Reed has also long acknowledged the influence of jazz music on his writing, perhaps the most crucial element of the Neo-Hoodoo aesthetic. As in many of his fictions, *The Terrible Twos'* style and structure echo the improvisational rhythms of Be-Bop jazz.

True to its Neo-Hoodoo ethos, *The Terrible Twos* also "signifies" on other 20<sup>th</sup>-century novels that depict the rise of an authoritarian leader or fascist-like government in the United States. Collectively these works comprise a fascist dystopian sub-genre in modern American fiction. They include Jack London's *The Iron Heel* (1908)--the earliest modern dystopian novel--which chronicles the rise of a tyrannical government controlled by an a newly ascendant oligarchy; Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* (1935), which portrays a charismatic demagogue who ascends to the U.S. presidency to dismantle democratic institutions and replace them with a fascist regime modeled after the Nazis; Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), in which books have been banned by a near-future totalitarian government and television lulls the masses into distraction and passivity; Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), in which the Nazis defeat the allies in WWII and install a puppet regime in the United States. Similarly, Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men* (1946) depicts the rise to power of a Southern populist politician whose career echoes Hitler's in the 1930s.

Published after *The Terrible Twos*, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) projects 1980s Reagan policies to a future New England in which a totalitarian theocracy has toppled the U.S. government. Unlike other fascist dystopian novels, Atwood's, now a cable TV series, explores women's subjugation in a dystopian near-future in which Christian fundamentalists target women's rights, replicating toward women the violent Nazi repression of Jews and other ethnic groups. Among dystopian novels of the new century, Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* (2004) envisions an alternate history in which an anti-Semitic, pro-Nazi president Charles Lindbergh makes peace with Nazi Germany and establishes a repressive state apparatus modeled after Germany's.

This overview of U.S. fascist dystopian fiction includes only the most well-known texts. But, given its striking thematic parallels to *The Terrible Twos*, one early dystopian work merits special attention, though it's unlikely Reed knew of it in 1980. In a recent essay, Brooks E. Hefner discusses the little-known fascist dystopian fiction, "The Black Stockings," by the African American writer William Thomas Smith. Published from June through August 1937 in the African-American weekly newspaper *The Baltimore Afro-American*, "The Black Stockings" differs from other dystopian fiction of the period in that it "imagines the rise of [U.S.] fascism as rooted almost purely in racial animosity and American nativism, a fear and hatred of others that generates an irrational cycle of blame and resentment."<sup>6</sup> In Smith's narrative, "the 'Black Stockings' of the title are...an informal [white] militia...[who] wear black stockings over their heads, ensuring anonymity as they terrorize non-white groups."<sup>7</sup> Their leader, Hugo Heflock, runs for president, and through his privately-owned radio network exploits racist and nativist fears to build broad support among Depression-era whites and eventually threaten the power of mainstream political parties. The anti-fascist resistance coalition in the narrative, the "Sons of Light," are "a multiracial and multiethnic group allied with the U.S. president and presented as the only hope for preserving American democracy." Like Smith's dystopian work, *The Terrible Twos* similarly identifies racism and bigotry as crucial components of Dean Clift's neo-fascist administration, as noted in earlier pages. The Nicholites, also a multiracial and multiethnic resistance group, work to undermine the spread of neo-fascist ideology, in this case by appealing

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<sup>6</sup> Hefner discussion of "Black Stockings" highlights the absence of race in other early anti-fascist dystopian fiction.

<sup>7</sup> See Hefner's summary of the "Black Stockings" plot.

to America's Christian traditions to subvert its capitalist creed. Though he is deposed before he can make his own planned speech to the nation, Clift himself, under the influence of St. Nicholas's spirit, eventually embraces the Nicholites' anti-fascist and anti-capitalist beliefs. Publicly, Clift's cabinet, invoking the Twenty-Fifth Amendment to the US Constitution, claims the President has suffered an emotional breakdown. In fact, Clift has been arrested and dispatched to a psychiatric hospital. In the sequel *The Terrible Threes*, Clift's Nazi advisor, Jesse Hatch, becomes the president, and the Christian Evangelical Reverend Jones calls for the military to roundup secular-minded Americans to re-educate them in Christian belief. The first woman chief justice of the Supreme Court is visited by the tormented ghost of Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, who in 1837 presided over the Dred Scott case. She saves the republic by ruling against the government's policies, effectively toppling President Hatch.

In the approximate period that Smith and other U.S. writers explored the prospect of a fascist America, in Germany a group of scholars who would come to be known as the Frankfurt School were fleeing Nazi persecution. Most of these theorists made their way to the United States and, in an array of influential studies written over a span of three decades which today comprises the foundation of Critical Theory, scrutinized U.S. media culture in the light of their experiences under Nazism. Scholars associated with this group, and especially Herbert Marcuse and Eric Fromm, greatly influenced the New Left and sixties counterculture. It is this influence that ties these scholars to Reed, who as noted previously, in *The Terrible Twos* parodies, or "signifies" on, many sixties countercultural icons.

Western Marxist scholars examined the influence of the "culture industry," a term coined by Adorno and Horkheimer in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, in twentieth-century Western society. In chapter four of this study, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," Adorno and Horkheimer equate the products of the culture industry, defined as ideologically-fraught mass (media) and entertainment culture, with the fascist propaganda of the Nazi period. In this Frankfurt School model, Donald Trump's victory attests the reactionary ideological currents always present in post-WWII U.S. mass (media) and entertainment culture. Blind to the market ideology, jingoistic nationalism and racial/ethnic bigotry circulating in U.S. mass (media) and entertainment culture, consumers in the post-WWII era epitomize the passive mass audience postulated by Frankfurt School scholars, with billionaire TV celebrity Trump this population's not unexpected hero. More recently, Cultural Studies scholars have embraced a far more fluid,

less deterministic model, first posited by the theorist Antonio Gramsci and later elaborated by Stuart Hall and other scholars associated with the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies. These theorists reject Adorno and Horkheimer's "mass (media) culture" argument, particularly its assumption that consumers comprise a hopelessly passive audience in the face of media and entertainment culture and that this multifaceted culture can be reduced to an ideological formula. While recognizing the ideological power of mass (media) culture and entertainment culture, Cultural Studies scholars dismiss the Frankfurt School's premise that this multifaceted culture is ideologically monolithic. Embracing Gramsci's concept of hegemony, these scholars view the process by which ideology operates in mass (media) culture as complex and often contradictory. Though a critical site of power, mass (media) culture is a space in which power relations are both established and potentially resisted. Consumers are not passive "readers" of mass (media) and entertainment culture, uncritically embracing a market ideology that it supposedly uncritically promulgates. Consumers also interpret, or "decode," media and entertainment culture in ways that potentially interrupt and resist the dominant ideology.

Most dystopian novels, such as George Orwell's *1984* (1949), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1931), and Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) or in the U.S. *The Iron Heel*, *The Man in the Hightower* and Kurt Vonnegut's *Piano Player* (1952), depict a future fascist society that strikingly recalls the Frankfurt School's bleak vision of modern Western society. And though dystopian fears structure many postmodernist novels, such as Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985), postmodernist absurdism rarely allows for the kind of overtly political project, shaped by a Neo-Hoodoo perspective rooted in the syncretic cultures of the African Caribbean, that Reed carries out in *The Terrible Twos*. A farcical postmodernist vision of a near-future fascist America in which resistance takes many forms and real change is possible, Reed's novel also wholly contradicts, or rather, signifies on, the deterministic Frankfurt School model. Though written more than three decades ago, its farcical depiction of the incestuous relationship between the electronic media, popular and celebrity culture and presidential politics adumbrated the Trump era far more cogently than other fascist dystopian novels. Only Reed's campy brand of satire plot delineates a twenty-first century popular media and entertainment culture in which celebrities like Donald Trump and Kim Kardashian, grotesque caricatures of the American dream, reign triumphant. After watching Stanley Kubrick's cold war farce *Dr. Strangelove*, the activist Daniel Ellsberg, at the time a nuclear strategy analyst at the RAND Corporation, told a

friend that the movie was a *documentary*, not a farce. Today, as corporate, neo-fascist, and white nationalist voices take up cabinet and other positions in the Trump White House, the same can be said of *The Terrible Twos*.

Yet even Reed's Neo-Hoodooism could not imagine some of the more "terrible" and terrifying elements of the current historical moment, such as the rise of a reactionary neo-fascist news network in Fox News; Trump's use of a new electronic medium, home computers and the internet, to communicate directly to his millions of (primarily white) supporters; his proposal to build a two-thousand-mile impenetrable wall to prevent Mexican immigrants, "criminals" and "rapists" from overwhelming America; his appointment of his daughter and son-in-law to White House advisory positions; and his overt flouting of the U.S. Constitution, which in *The Terrible Twos* at least takes place surreptitiously.

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## Order on the Net!! Juror Misconduct Via Social Media

By Regina Judge, Montclair State University

**Abstract:** The Internet is a powerful communication tool that also provides the ability to research a variety of topics. Unfortunately, Internet use threatens a defendant's right to a fair trial when jurors use it to investigate the cases they are hearing and post information about them online. Empaneled jurors are told not to converse with each other or anyone else about the trial they are reviewing. They are also told to avoid reading news articles and watching television shows that discuss the case they are deciding. Our high-tech world also mandates, however, that they are cautioned against Internet use as well. Jurors are now warned against emailing, tweeting or posting info on social networks like Facebook or Twitter during the course of a trial. This article examines juror misconduct via the use of the Internet and judicial strategies for preventing it.

**Keywords:** juror, misconduct, internet, social media, mistrial.

**Resumen:** El Internet es una poderosa herramienta de comunicación que proporciona la capacidad de investigar una variedad de temas. Desafortunadamente, el uso del Internet es una amenaza contra el derecho del acusado a un juicio justo cuando los jurados lo utilizan para investigar los casos que se les presentan y publican información en las redes. A los jurados conformados se les dice que no conversen ni los unos con los otros, ni con nadie, acerca del juicio que están examinando. Se les dice también que eviten leer artículos de noticias y que dejen de ver programas de televisión que hablen del caso que se está decidiendo. Nuestro mundo de alta tecnología también obliga, sin embargo, a que cuiden su uso del Internet. Ahora se les advierte que no envíen correos electrónicos, que no usen Twitter y que no publiquen información en redes sociales como Facebook o Twitter en el transcurso de un juicio. Este artículo examina la conducta inapropiada a través del uso del Internet y las estrategias judiciales para prevenirla.

**Palabras clave:** *Jurado, conducta inapropiada, Internet, redes sociales, juicio nulo.*

**摘要:** 互联网是一个强大的交流工具。它同时提供了搜索各类话题的能力。不幸的是，当陪审员使用互联网调查其听审案件并上传信息时，会威胁到被告享有公正审判的权利。被

选为陪审团成员的人不能互相交流正在调查的案件，也不能和任何人谈论此事。他们也需要避免阅读新闻文章，或是观看相关的电视节目。然而，在高科技的世界里，他们同样也被要求禁止使用互联网。在审判期间，陪审员被警告不能使用电子邮件、推特或在脸书等社交网络里上传信息。本文检测了陪审员通过使用网络产生的不当行为和防止该行为的司法策略。

**关键词：**陪审员，不当行为，互联网，社交媒体，无效审判

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

We live in the digital age. The Internet makes it easy to obtain data quickly and easily. It also provides us with a vehicle through which to exchange information and ideas instantaneously. The Internet affords us with a means of accessing data on a variety of topics and communicating with a vast audience. No matter the platform, Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo or Google, people are using websites to interact and conduct research. In 2016, approximately 3,424,971,237 people used the Internet. There is no doubt that jurors made up a percentage of that number. Unfortunately, they are not only using it on their own time, but on the court's time as well. Empaneled jurors are told not to converse with each other or anyone else about the trial they are reviewing. They are also advised that this directive includes emailing, tweeting or posting info on Facebook or Twitter during the course of the trial.<sup>1</sup> The majority of jurors adhere to these guidelines; but some do not. This article examines juror misconduct via the use of the Internet and judicial strategies for preventing it.

## **II. THE IMPARTIAL JUROR GUARANTEE**

Jurors are instructed to refrain from discussing a pending case with anyone, even fellow jurors, until it is time to deliberate. They are cautioned to avoid reading news articles and watching television shows that discuss the case they are deciding. Our high-tech world also mandates, however, that they are cautioned against Internet use as well. "Internet resources,

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<sup>1</sup> Emily M. Janoski-Haehlen, *The Courts Are all a 'Twitter': The Implications of Social Media Use in the Courts*, 6 Val. U. L. Rev. 43, 45-46 (2011).

particularly when combined with new technologies such as smart phones and tablets with web-browsing capabilities, provide jurors with a new avenue to conduct research on the defendant or the case, and to communicate trial-related material before deliberations are complete; [all] of which violate a defendant's Sixth Amendment right."<sup>2</sup> The Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution provide guarantees that a defendant will be treated fairly when prosecuted for a crime.<sup>3</sup> The Sixth Amendment accentuates those guarantees.<sup>4</sup> It mandates that a juror's decision on guilt must be based solely on the evidence presented during the course of a trial.<sup>5</sup> In addition, it requires that jurors adhere to the admonishments of the court.

Now, more than ever, it has become increasingly difficult for the court to exercise control over juror use of the Internet and the information to which they are exposed. The Internet provides them with a venue for unauthorized communication of their thoughts and ideas with people all over the world. Conversely, they are open to receipt of others' opinions as well. This creates a serious threat to the jurors' ability to judge a case without outside influences. "Modern jurors' online and mobile activity exposes them to outside information that could influence the outcome of a case."<sup>6</sup> They must, therefore, refrain from forging their own investigation and seeking external information on the case they are hearing and avoid using the Internet to read or communicate about it as well. "Social networking by jurors during trial (whether at the courthouse or at home) carries with it a dangerous potential to undermine the fundamental fairness of trial proceedings."<sup>7</sup> Juror noncompliance of court mandates against the use of technology can lead to the violation of a defendant's constitutional right to a fair trial.

Sixth Amendment concerns regarding Internet misconduct focuses on jurors' access to external information on the Internet as well as their use of social media to communicate about the trial as it proceeds. Advancements in technology enable individuals the ability to tweet, blog, text, e-mail, phone, and look up facts and information during breaks, at home, or even in the jury

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<sup>2</sup> Marcy Zora, *The Real Social Network: How Jurors' Use of Social Media and Smart Phones Affects a Defendant's Sixth Amendment Rights*, 2012 U. Ill. L. Rev. 577, 577 (2012).

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Const. amends. V & XIV, §1.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Const. amend. VI.

<sup>5</sup> Mark J. Geragos, *Symposium: Celebrity Prosecutions: The Thirteenth Juror: Media Coverage Of Supersized Trials*, 39 Loy. L.A. L. Rev. 1167, 1170 (2006).

<sup>6</sup> Nathan L. Hecht, *Juries and Technology: Revised Texas Civil Jury Instructions Include Warnings About The Internet and Social Media*, 60 The Advoc. 50, 50 (2012).

<sup>7</sup> Hon. Amy J. St. Eve and Michael A. Zuckerman, *Ensuring an Impartial Jury in the Age of Social Media*, 11 Duke L. & Tech. Rev. 1, 9 (2012).

room.<sup>8</sup> The threat of unauthorized juror communication is not a new phenomenon. However, instantaneous Internet communication has complicated the issue even further.<sup>9</sup> Juror interaction with the public creates a fear that third parties will influence a juror, who will, in turn, fail to weigh the evidence admitted at trial and consequently, not form his or her own opinion of it.

### III. TYPES OF JUROR MISCONDUCT

#### A. Posting Information on Social Media

Although seemingly harmless, a juror's tweet or post can have devastating effects on the outcome of a trial and wreak havoc on the integrity of the judicial process. Internet postings invite comments, thus allowing for the possibility that the response will effect decisions made. "A juror who comments about a case on the Internet or social media may engender responses that include extraneous information about the case, or attempts to exercise persuasion and influence."<sup>10</sup> "A Jurors' social media communications.... risk "chill[ing] robust discussion" in the jury room. If members of a jury become aware that one of their own is publicly communicating about the trial, those jurors may question the secrecy of the deliberative process and the protections afforded their discussions."<sup>11</sup> They, in turn, may curb their comments for fear of them being broadcast to the world. In addition to causing uneasiness in jurors, the use of social media by jurors to discuss the details of their service could also cause the public to question the capacity of the modern jury system to achieve justice.<sup>12</sup>

A new trial was granted in *Dimas-Martinez v. State*<sup>13</sup> after a defendant was convicted of murder. At the conclusion of the State's rebuttal, a juror tweeted, "Choices to be made. Hearts to be broken. We each define the great line."<sup>14</sup> The appellant argued that this action was a flagrant violation of the court's instruction against tweeting and demonstrated that the juror could not follow the court's instructions.<sup>15</sup> The court disagreed, however, ruling that the tweeting was not a material breach of the instruction or the juror's oath. Thus, the court refused to strike Juror

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<sup>8</sup> Ralph Artigliere, Jim Barton and Bill Hahn, *Reining in Juror Misconduct* Practical Suggestions for Judges and Attorneys, 84 FLA. BJ 9, 9. (2010).

<sup>9</sup> Zora at 581-582.

<sup>10</sup> St. Eve at 11.

<sup>11</sup> Id at 11-12.

<sup>12</sup> Id.

<sup>13</sup> *Dimas-Martinez v. State*, 2011 Ark. 515 (2011).

<sup>14</sup> Id. at 246.

<sup>15</sup> Id. at

2 from the panel. Even after questioning by the judge about his Internet activity and receiving an additional admonishment, Juror 2 continued to tweet during the sentencing deliberations. He posted, “If its wisdom we seek . . . We should run to the strong tower.” and, “Its over.” [sic]<sup>16</sup> The court denied the appellant's motion for new trial, finding no prejudice. Nevertheless, the Arkansas Supreme Court reversed its decision. It held that the appellant was indeed denied a fair trial since Juror 2 disregarded the court’s instructions and tweeted about the case. It provided, “Because of the very nature of Twitter as an online social media site, Juror 2’s tweets about the trial were very much public discussions. Even if such discussions were one-sided, it is in no way appropriate for a juror to state musings, thoughts, or other information about a case in such a public fashion.”<sup>17</sup> The court recognized that the risk of prejudicial communication might be greater when a juror comments on a blog or social media website than when he/she has a discussion about the case in person, given that the universe of individuals who are able to see and respond to a comment on the Internet is significantly larger.<sup>18</sup> Other examples of inappropriate juror postings include a Michigan juror who made a Facebook post the day before the verdict was announced. She stated that she “was actually excited for jury duty tomorrow . . . it’s gonna be fun to tell the defendant they’re guilty.”<sup>19</sup> In another case, a juror made a Twitter post that said, “I just gave away TWELVE MILLION DOLLARS of somebody else’s money.”<sup>20</sup>

### *B. Conducting Search-Engine Research*

Ordinarily, conducting online research to discover information is viewed as a favorable practice. The Internet enables people to become knowledgeable on a myriad of topics with the click of a mouse. It has a negative impact, however, when a juror uses it to investigate a case where he or she is the determiner of the facts. Unfortunately, jurors are using search engines like Bing, Chrome and Safari to acquire information about the cases they are reviewing. “The modern potential juror has, at their fingertips, more information than “the most resourceful journalist”

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<sup>16</sup> Id. at 247.

<sup>17</sup> Id. at 248.

<sup>18</sup> Id. at 246.

<sup>19</sup> Martha Neil, *Oops. Juror Calls Defendant Guilty on Facebook, Before Verdict*, September 2, 2010, [http://www.abajournal.com/news/article/oops\\_juror\\_calls\\_defendant\\_guilty\\_on\\_facebook\\_though\\_verdict\\_isnt\\_in](http://www.abajournal.com/news/article/oops_juror_calls_defendant_guilty_on_facebook_though_verdict_isnt_in). Last accessed May 10, 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Zora at 587.

had in years past.”<sup>21</sup> This occurrence is disruptive for many reasons. Use of data learned outside the confines of a trial is unfair to the defendant. To be admissible, evidence must be found to be material and relevant. It must also comply with the Rules of Evidence. Information found on the Internet may be inadmissible if challenged in a court of law, inaccurate and prejudicial and therefore should not be used to determine guilt.

Smart phones have changed how jurors can access prohibited information. Jurors are no longer restricted to televisions, newspapers or magazines in the acquisition of information. They now have access to limitless amounts of data at their fingertips.<sup>22</sup> “Because the Internet is such a vast resource, the potential exists for jurors to do independent research on matters of law with more ease and stealth than going to the local law library would require.”<sup>23</sup> This occurred in a Florida drug case dubbed a Google mistrial.<sup>24</sup> Nine of the twelve jurors participating in that trial admitted to researching the case on the Internet.<sup>25</sup> Their research consisted of “locating information on the lawyers and the defendant, looking up news articles about the case, checking definitions on Wikipedia and searching for evidence that had been specifically excluded by the judge.”<sup>26</sup> The jurors’ actions caused the judge to declare a mistrial after eight weeks of testimony. Their misconduct was not discovered until after they had begun deliberating. Similarly, in *Russo v. Takata Corp.*<sup>27</sup> a juror’s Internet search resulted in the granting of a new trial after it was learned that a juror provided outside information to other jurors during deliberations.

Snohomish County Superior Court Judge Richard T. Okrent declared a mistrial in a Washington case where a defendant was charged with sexually assaulting his young daughter. Grounds were based on the misconduct of a juror who, despite being told that jurors were to consider only evidence admitted in court, went onto the Internet and conducted his own research.

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<sup>21</sup> Kristin R. Brown, *Somebody Poisoned the Jury Pool: Social Media's Effect on Jury Impartiality*, 19 Tex. Wesleyan L. Rev. 809, 817 (2013).

<sup>22</sup> Zora at 583.

<sup>23</sup> Erika Patrick, *Protecting the Defendant's Right to a Fair Trial in the Information Age*, 15 Cap. Def. J. 71, 87 (2002).

<sup>24</sup> John Shwartz, *As Jurors Turn to the Web, Mistrial Are Popping Up*, March 17, 2009, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/18/us/18juries.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/18/us/18juries.html?_r=0) Last visited May 31, 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Douglas L. Keene and Rita R. Handrich, *Online and Wired for Justice: Why Jurors Turn to the Internet*, Nov. 1, 2009, <http://www.thejuryexpert.com/2009/11/online-and-wired-for-justice-why-jurors-turn-to-the-internet-the-google-mistrial/>. Last accessed May 31, 2017.

<sup>26</sup> Janoski-Haehlen at 48.

<sup>27</sup> *Russo v. Takata Corp.*, 2009 SD 83 (2009).

This fact came to light during deliberations. Rather than subjecting the 6-year old victim to another trial, deputy prosecutor Andrew Alsdorf reduced the rape charges to three counts of incest, essentially reducing the defendant's potential prison sentence from 15 years to 5 years. A jury poll revealed that 11 of the jurors would have voted to convict but for the mistrial. "The misconduct committed by one rogue juror who did not follow the court's instructions in an effort to persuade his fellow jurors using methods specifically forbidden by the court, resulted in not only a mistrial but an injustice as well."<sup>28</sup>

#### **IV. CONSEQUENCES OF JUROR MISCONDUCT**

##### *A. Declaration of a Mistrial and Ordering of a New Trial*

The most damning effect of juror misconduct via the Internet is the granting of a mistrial and ordering of a new trial. These judicial declarations are necessary, however, to cure the violation of the defendant's right to a fair trial. They also represent an unfortunate circumstance - "The awarding of a new trial means that the costs, time and resources expended were all in vain."<sup>29</sup>

The slightest connection between a juror and a defendant, even without physical contact, can result in the granting of a new trial as illustrated by *State v. Dellinger*.<sup>30</sup> This case involved Juror Amber Hyre who it was later learned was a MySpace friend of the defendant whose trial she was hearing. This fact was discovered after a guilty verdict was rendered. Hyre remained silent when asked if she had a social relationship with the defendant during voir dire (the jury selection stage), even though she became MySpace friends with him prior to trial. The trial court denied Dellinger's request for a new trial citing that Hyre's contact with the appellant was minimal and she was fair and impartial. The West Virginia Supreme Court held however, that the trial court abused its discretion in failing to order a new trial because of Hyre's misconduct.<sup>31</sup>

##### *B. Dismissal From Jury Service*

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<sup>28</sup> Diana Hefley, *Juror's 'Research' Forced Mistrial in Child Rape Case*, February 21, 2015, <http://www.heraldnet.com/article/20121212/NEWS01/712129975>. Last accessed April 7, 2017.

<sup>29</sup> Janoski-Haehlen at 47.

<sup>30</sup> *State v. Dellinger*, 225 W.Va. 736 (2010).

<sup>31</sup> *Id.*

A less severe consequence of misconduct is a juror's dismissal from service. Jurors are often ejected from trials when they violate court orders to refrain from Internet use. One such juror was Jonathan Hudson. Hudson was dismissed from service after he attempted to "friend" the defendant in his case on Facebook.<sup>32</sup> Another juror, a high-school librarian, was dismissed from the jury panel for conducting online research on the victim's injuries.<sup>33</sup> A juror in Lancastershire, England was dismissed after it was discovered that she was posting information about the child abduction/sexual assault trial she was hearing and taking a poll on whether to vote in favor of the defendant's guilt.<sup>34</sup>

#### IV. METHODS OF PREVENTING JUROR MISCONDUCT

The availability of Smart phones, tablets, and laptops enable the use of the Internet virtually anywhere. People can surf the Internet in banks, shopping malls and even on airplanes. The courthouse, therefore, is certainly not off limits. While judges frequently warn them against Internet use, unfortunately, admonitions are not enough. For this reason, many courts have developed strategies for curtailing Internet use and the imposition of punishment for jurors who violate directives.

##### A. Bans, Confiscations and Restriction of the Use of Electronic Devices

The judiciary has taken steps to eliminate the occurrence of juror transgression by limiting the availability and use of electronic devices. Some courts in Indiana and Oregon completely ban electronic devices<sup>35</sup> as do many in Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New Mexico, and Ohio.<sup>36</sup> The confiscation of jurors' phones, tablets, and other electronic devices is a measure used to eliminate the distraction and temptation of Internet use.<sup>37</sup> After a jury has been empaneled in Colorado they must turn off their wireless communication devices and turn them

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<sup>32</sup> Ned Potter, *Facebook Mistake: Texas Juror Tried to "Friend" Defendant*, September 7, 2011, <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/technology/2011/08/facebook-mistake-texas-juror-tried-to-friend-defendant/>. Last accessed March 24, 2017.

<sup>33</sup> Brian Grow, *Juror Could Face Charges for Online Research*, January 19, 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/01/19/us-internet-juror-idUSTRE70I5KI20110119>. Last accessed March 18, 2017.

<sup>34</sup> John Browning, *Dangers of the Online Juror*, 2010. <http://www.dmagazine.com/publications/d-magazine/2010/special-edition-legal-directory/dangers-of-the-online-juror>. Last accessed April 1, 2017.

<sup>35</sup> Paul Elias, *Courts Finally Catching up to Texting Jurors*, March 6, 2010, <http://www.newsmax.com/US/Texting-Jurors-courts-blogs/2010/03/06/id/351842>. Last visited April 24, 2017.

<sup>36</sup> Tricia R. Deleon and Janelle S. Forteza, *Is Your Jury Panel Googling During the Trial?*, 52 *Advoc.* 36, 38 (2010).

<sup>37</sup> Artigliere at 13.

in. To avoid the chore of safekeeping devices, some courts simply require that jurors leave them home. Jurors are advised, “Do not bring wireless communication devices: phones, pagers, and PDA’s. Phones are available in the jury assembly room.”<sup>38</sup>

### *B. The Promotion of Voir Dire Questioning on Internet Use*

Some courts have begun encouraging attorneys to use the jury selection process to identify jurors who might be prone to misbehavior via the Internet. Questioning jurors concerning their level and frequency of Internet use accomplishes this goal.<sup>39</sup> Queries explore the amount of time jurors spend on the Internet, whether they post videos, if they use social media networks, participate in chat rooms, post on bulletin boards or maintain a blog. Some attorneys have taken their investigations further by monitoring jurors’ online use for the duration of the trial once they are chosen to hear a case.<sup>40</sup> Observing jurors’ online activity alerts counsel to instances of misbehavior that translate into grounds for mistrials and new trial requests.<sup>41</sup>

### *C. Explicit Jury Instructions*

One method of preventing juror misconduct via the Internet is the creation of court rules that specifically outline prohibited behavior. Numerous states have taken this approach. A 2011 survey of state and federal jury instructions reported that 31 states have standard civil jury instructions that contain specific warnings about the Internet.<sup>42</sup> “The Texas Rules of Civil Procedure and the standard civil jury instructions provide specific warnings to jurors about communicating and gathering information online and through social media.”<sup>43</sup> They require that immediately after jurors are selected for a case, the court must instruct them to turn off their cell phones and not to communicate with anyone through any electronic device while they are in the courtroom or while they are deliberating. The court also advises that while they are serving as jurors, they must not post any information about the case on the Internet or search for any information outside of the courtroom, including on the Internet, to try to learn more about the

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<sup>38</sup> Paul Elias, Courts Finally Catching Up to Texting Jurors, March 6, 2010, <http://www.blueridgenow.com/news/20100306/courts-finally-catching-up-to-texting-jurors>. Last accessed May 15, 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Zora at 578.

<sup>40</sup> Id. at 591.

<sup>41</sup> Janoski-Haehlen at 46.

<sup>42</sup> Hecht at 52.

<sup>43</sup> Id. at 50.

case.<sup>44</sup> Michigan has followed suit by requiring judges to instruct jurors against the use of electronic devices at the time the panel is sworn in.<sup>45</sup> Florida courts allow for the confiscation of jurors' electronic devices at any stage of the trial and specifically provide that they be removed just prior to deliberation.<sup>46</sup>

Federal courts have also implemented specific instructions targeted at jurors' Internet use. Some use the model jury instructions prepared by the Committee on Court Administration and Case Management to combat this type of juror misconduct.<sup>47</sup> The rules direct the judge to provide the rules as often as possible; before trial, at the close of a case, at the end of each day before jurors return home, and other times, as appropriate."<sup>48</sup> The jury instructions enumerate what devices and actions are prohibited by stating, "You may not communicate with anyone about the case on your cell phone, through e-mail, Blackberry, iPhone, text messaging, or on Twitter, through any blog or website, through any internet chat room, or by way of any other social networking websites, including Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, and YouTube."<sup>49</sup> Also, the instructions compel jurors to inform the court if the instructions are not being followed. The judge states, "I expect that you will inform me as soon as you become aware of another juror's violation of these instructions."<sup>50</sup> Some courts have reported success in preventing misuse of social media after issuing these instructions.<sup>51</sup> They believe that it is because in addition to providing specific information on forbidden behavior, judges explain why avoiding the Internet is important in order to provide the defendant with a fair trial. It is believed that jurors respond better to directions if they understand the reason why such requirements have been placed on them.<sup>52</sup>

#### *D. Contempt Charges*

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<sup>44</sup> Hect at 51.

<sup>45</sup> Rule 2.51, Michigan Court Rules (amended June 30, 2009).

<sup>46</sup> Rule 2.451(b), Florida Court Rules (amended 2014).

<sup>47</sup> Munisteri, 56.

<sup>48</sup> Judicial Conference Comm. on Court Admin. & Case Mgmt., Proposed Model Jury Instructions: The Use of Electronic Technology to Conduct Research on or Communicate About a Case (2012), <file:///Users/reginiajudge/Downloads/jury-instructions.pdf>. Last accessed August 14, 2017.

<sup>49</sup> Id.

<sup>50</sup> Id.

<sup>51</sup> Jay Munisteri, *Use of Social Media By Jurors - Death Knell or Paper Cut to Jury Trial Integrity?*, 60 The Advoc. 55, 56 (2012).

<sup>52</sup> Id.

Some courts use more aggressive methods of controlling juror conduct. They stress the fact that Internet misconduct constitutes a violation of the law and that harsh penalties await violators. Punishment is often issued via a criminal contempt charge. “Contempt of court generally refers to conduct that defies, disrespects or insults the authority or dignity of a court. Often, contempt takes the form of actions that are seen as detrimental to the court’s ability to administer justice.”<sup>53</sup> Given the severity of the consequences to the defendant, the court is hard pressed to administer justice in an instance where a juror engages in the improper activity. Disobedient jurors are charged with criminal contempt or a punitive reprimand that serves to deter future acts of contempt by punishing the offender no matter what happens in the underlying proceeding.<sup>54</sup> It is believed that giving the instructions orally and in writing followed by the consequences of disobedience serves to prevent misconduct.<sup>55</sup> The goal is to use punishment as a deterrence. A juror on a case in Tarrant County Texas attempted to “friend” the defendant in his case on Facebook. Not only did his action result in dismissal from service, but contempt charges also ensued. After a guilty plea, the juror was sentenced to two days of community service.<sup>56</sup>

Courts have also ordered jurors to pay fines after being found guilty of contempt of court for engaging in inappropriate conduct. A juror serving on a rape case in Georgia was fined \$500 for Googling information about the case. A judge in Michigan fined a juror \$250 in a trial where a defendant was charged with resisting arrest. There the juror posted information about the trial on Facebook.<sup>57</sup> In *United States v. Juror No. One*<sup>58</sup> a juror was found guilty of criminal contempt after she disregarded the court’s instructions regarding email communication. A \$1,000 fine was imposed against her. One court used a novel approach to penalizing a juror for wrongdoing. In addition to leveling a fine, it also ordered the juror to write an essay on the constitutional right to a fair trial.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Findlaw.com. *Criminal Contempt of Court*. <http://criminal.findlaw.com/criminal-charges/criminal-contempt-of-court.html>. Last accessed March 24, 2017.

<sup>54</sup> Id.

<sup>55</sup> Janoski-Haehlen at 67.

<sup>56</sup> Eva-Marie Ayala, *Tarrant County Juror Sentenced to Community Service for Trying to ‘Friend’ Defendant on Facebook*, Aug. 28, 2011, <http://www.tdcaa.com/issues/tarrant-county-juror-sentenced-community-service-trying-friend-defendant-facebook>. Last accessed February 19, 2017.

<sup>57</sup> Brian Grow, *supra*, N. 13.

<sup>58</sup> *United States v. Juror No. One*, 866 F. Supp2d 442 (2011).

<sup>59</sup> Brian Grow, *supra*, N. 13.

### *E. Juror Pledges*

An innovative approach to limiting Internet use involves requiring jurors to sign written pledges not to communicate about the case through social media.<sup>60</sup> The American College of Trial Lawyers has proposed the following “Statement of Compliance” for jurors to sign:

I \_\_\_\_\_ agree that during the duration of the trial in \_\_\_\_\_, I will not conduct any independent research into any of the issues or parties involved in this trial. I will not communicate with anyone about the issues or parties in this trial, and I will not permit anyone to communicate with me. I further agree that I will report any violation of the court’s instruction immediately.<sup>61</sup>

Some courts in California require “jurors to sign declarations attesting that they will not use “personal electronic and media devices” to research or communicate about any aspect of the case. That includes computers, cell phones and laptops. Jurors will have to sign the declarations, made under penalty of perjury, both before and after they serve.”<sup>62</sup> “A juror who signs the declaration that is found to have done research or otherwise communicated online about the case could face fines and possibly probation or jail time, [all] of which are among the penalt[ies] for perjury.”<sup>63</sup>

## **V. CONCLUSION**

The accessibility of the Internet has made it more and more difficult to uphold the guarantees of a fair and impartial trial. This is not because a case has drawn overwhelming attention from the media or due to outside forces tampering with jurors, but is due to wrongdoing by the jurors themselves. “The problem of outside influence on jurors is no longer confined to high profile cases that are covered in the press or other media. Courtroom misconduct seems to be

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<sup>60</sup> Yahoo News, *Judge: No Web for Jurors at Society Arms Trial*, October 5, 2011, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/ny-judge-no-jurors-soviet-arms-trial-025047790.html>. Last accessed February 20, 2017.

<sup>61</sup> American College of Trial Lawyers. *Jury Instructions Cautioning Against Use of the Internet and Social Networking*. 2010, <https://www.actl.com/library/jury-instructions-cautioning-against-use-internet-and-social-networking>. Last accessed June 1, 2017.

<sup>62</sup> Greg Moran, *Revised Jury Instructions: Do Not Use The Internet Researching, Discussing Of Cases ‘Huge Problem*, September 13, 2009, <http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/2009/sep/13/revised-jury-instructions-do-not-use-internet/?&zindex=165049>. Last accessed June 1, 2017.

<sup>63</sup> *Id.*

everywhere.”<sup>64</sup> Instances of juror misconduct via the use of the Internet are steadily increasing. Courts have reacted by implementing various methods of stopping this type of juror misconduct. Some methods are more effective than others. The fact remains, however, if our judicial system is to ensure that defendants receive a fair trial, it must monitor and sometimes punish those that sit in judgment of them.

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<sup>64</sup> Artigliere at 9.

Baltimore's Hidden Communication:(Un)written Words by Harriet Tubman  
and Eleanor Roosevelt and Her Journalist, Lorena Hickok

By Katherine Cottle, Goucher College

**Abstract:** “Baltimore's Hidden Communication: Un(written) Words by Harriet Tubman and Eleanor Roosevelt and her Journalist, Lorena Hickok” explores the hidden words used to divert secret communication around the societal and geographical borders and boundaries of 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>- century America. Tubman's unwritten words and Eleanor Roosevelt’s and Lorena Hickok’s written (but inaccessible and/or destroyed) words passed through and influenced the Baltimore landscape; however, these communicative routes remain absent from standard public histories.

**Keywords:** Harriet Tubman, Eleanor Roosevelt, Lorena Hickok, communication, Baltimore

**Resumen:** “La comunicación clandestina de Baltimore: Palabras (no) escritas por Harriet Tubman y Eleanor Roosevelt y su periodista, Lorena Hickok” explora las palabras escondidas que se usaron para transmitir comunicaciones secretas a través de las barreras impuestas por la sociedad y la geografía en los siglos 19 y 20 en Estados Unidos. Las palabras no escritas por Eleanor Roosevelt y las palabras escritas (pero inaccesibles y/o destruidas) de Eleanor Roosevelt y Lorena Hickok trascendieron e influenciaron el panorama de Baltimore; sin embargo, estas rutas comunicativas permanecen ausentes en las historias públicas comunes.

**Palabras clave:** Harriet Tubman, Eleanor Roosevelt, Lorena Hickok, comunicación, Baltimore

**摘要:** 本文探索了隐藏的文字（hidden words），该文字曾被用于转移19和20世纪围绕美国社会边界和地理边界的秘密沟通。图伯曼（Tubman）留下的口头话语和埃莉诺·罗斯福及其记者罗瑞纳·希科克写下的文字（但已无法获得或被销毁）影响了整个巴尔的摩。然而，这些在标准公共历史中都不存在。

**关键词:** 哈里特·图伯曼，埃莉诺·罗斯福，罗瑞纳·希科克，沟通，巴尔的摩

Readers may be surprised to find Harriet Tubman and Eleanor Roosevelt (and her journalist, Lorena Hickok) sharing geographical literacy, though their contributions to American history surely group them together in the category of pivotal female societal achievers. Readers, too,

may be surprised to find a Baltimore connection within their communication, since Tubman was illiterate and remained purposefully hidden while traveling through the city, and Roosevelt's and Hickok's professional and political lives were primarily found in other settings. Yet, when one looks beyond traditional timelines, primary records, city limits, and linear framework, a new map unfolds which charts the (un)written words of these historical women. This map acknowledges not only what is discovered when researching hidden communication within a city's marginalized communities, but also what is unable to be found.

A new print of the city emerges where Tubman's unwritten communication—created out of a desire for freedom—gains the validity of preserved records, and Roosevelt's and Hickok's personal communication—created out of a desire for female intimacy—validates secondary non-public lives. Baltimore's status as a host of these hidden histories quickly reveals the (un)written words that guided the city's residents and visitors as they navigated beneath, around, through, and above the geographical and societal boundaries of race and sexuality during their times. Enlarging Baltimore's literary and societal history to include both unwritten and written words reveals the provocative and neglected genre of hidden communication.

### **Unwritten Words: Harriet Tubman**

The artifact most closely resembling written communication by Tubman found to date (and included in the Harriet Tubman Exhibit at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture—scheduled to open in September 2016) is a hymnal, published in 1876, which has several Xs penciled on its songs. However, it must be noted that even the curators at the National Museum of African American History and Culture, where the hymnal is housed, cannot determine that Tubman was the person who wrote the Xs in her hymnal (Serwer).<sup>1</sup> The lack of first-person records from Tubman, as well as by many early African Americans, has led to the repeated question: How *does* a city adequately honor an historic woman whose personal deeds were purposefully concealed from public view and whose words were only saved through second party recollections and scribing? Baltimore, as well as the rest of the country, has battled with this conundrum for years. Additionally, Tubman's illiteracy

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<sup>1</sup> The National Museum of African American History and Culture's Harriet Tubman Collection was donated by "Charles L. Blockson, writer, historian, and former board member of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania" ("Harriet Tubman Collection"). Blockson, who inherited the items from a deceased relative of Tubman's, is a "descendant of Jacob Blockson who escaped slavery on Maryland's Eastern Shore with Harriet Tubman." ("Harriet Tubman Collection").

represents much more than a lack of reading and writing. Her unwritten "words" symbolize the language and freedoms withheld from generations of African Americans, as well as the non-conventional language substitutions needed for safety and survival. The challenge of proper tribute, then, is reliant on future generations who must find the proper words to document a private woman whose societal aims intentionally avoided traditional literary prints.

A range of scholars have attempted to "write" their own different representations of Tubman, born Araminta "Minty" Ross in 1822, on the plantation of Anthony Thompson in Dorchester County ("Harriet Ross Tubman Davis") on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Beverly Lowry is an example of an author who has found a creative way to come to terms with the complex issue of documenting a life that was lived without writing or records, as evidenced in *Harriet Tubman: Imagining a Life*. Lowry explains how "Tubman's illiteracy certainly presents a problem for scholars looking for primary material. Beyond government records, court documents, property assessments, and census figures, everything we have has been interpreted or—as historians say—mediated, even when the writer interviewed Tubman directly or took down a dictated letter" (7). Lowry's project, to write a book length biography about Tubman by piecing together known documentation and publications, is a possible version of "what life *might* [author's emphasis] have been like for the American hero Harriet Tubman" (1), including her actions and communication in Baltimore. Lowry admits that "[t]his book does not pretend to be a work of intense scholarship," but "the story of a life as I have studied and reimagined it" (1). The intersection of research and imagination remains a crossroads which must be admitted and addressed when handling lives and words lacking primary record. As Lowry reinforces, the personal aims and stakes of the researcher inherently become a part of the historical retelling.

In *Harriet Tubman: Myth, Memory, and History*, Milton C. Sernett takes a slightly different approach than Lowry in his desire to remove the "lady" from the "legend" of Harriet Tubman and to locate "the remembered Tubman—that is . . . the myth that draws on the factual core but is often in tension with it" (3). Sernett argues that "Tubman may be America's most malleable icon[;]" however, she holds unmalleable "significance for . . . how we are to remember the nation's struggle with the issue of slavery" (3). Tubman's malleability, while complex in its traditional historical context, actually welcomes a widening of her universality and creates a larger setting for the framework of personalized public histories. "By learning of Harriet Tubman and her place in the American memory," Sernett asserts, "we learn about ourselves as the

American people” (3). The same parallel can be said of any city in America. For example, “[b]y learning about Harriet Tubman and her place in [Baltimore] memory . . . we learn about ourselves as [Baltimoreans]” (Sernett). Both Tubman's hidden routes and hidden communication are in need of validation in order to fully appreciate today's geographical and societal landscapes. Additionally, Sernett admits the constantly shifting public perception of society toward its historical figures, explaining that “[t]he intersubjective process by which certain personalities from the past gain and lose stature in the American memory is convoluted and often clouded by the interjection of myth” (3). Tubman’s (un)written status, therefore, encourages historically pro-slavery cities, such as Baltimore, to gather myth and history into a blurry map, which Sernett calls a “distilled” and “inherited” American memory of Tubman.

Sernett solves the dilemma of having to locate a singular Tubman within this distillation by presenting two separate Tubmans and “chronicles the life history of the commemorated Tubman (the symbol) in relation to the historical Tubman (the life)” (9). Sernett’s critique of memory, history, and myth serves not to discredit public recognition and tribute of historical figures, such as Tubman, but to identify the factors involved in creating these often out-of-focus and larger-than-life life portraits. In fact, Sernett admits that his book “is not about . . . privately constructed memories [of Tubman]. It is not about what is silent or hidden from the public” (8) [but, rather] about “the construction of an American icon; it is about collective or national memory” (9). Part of Baltimore’s dilemma regarding its public tribute to Tubman, and other African Americans with (un)written words and records, is its own pressure to find a proper public representation of private life which does not produce artificial results in that translation. Often, Tubman is seen as more-than-human and capable of super-hero actions beyond those of ordinary people. By presenting Tubman as a brave, unique, and embodied woman whose (un)written words played a vital role beyond her own history, Tubman's life can better resonate with young people today who may feel unable or discouraged from writing their own personal narratives. Baltimore, too, can be (un)written in its capacity to be more than a geographical footnote within Tubman’s legacy.

Tubman learned the cost and importance of hidden communication in achieving freedom early in her life, as Kate Clifford Larson depicts in *Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman—Portrait of an American Hero*: “On the cusp of adulthood, the disabled

Tubman went to work on a timber gang, exhibiting great skills laboring in the logging camps and in the fields. There she was exposed to the secret communication networks that were the province of black watermen and other free and enslaved blacks” (65). Hidden communication was created out of necessity, when public and/or direct discourse was not an option, as (un)written words delivered the thoughts, support, and instructions needed for survival. Tubman's success in navigating the Underground Railroad hinged on her ability to see and read beyond traditional legal, literacy, and geographical levels. Her (un)written words, ultimately, enabled her to re-route history.

How, then, does Baltimore claim personal connection to Tubman, when, as Sernett asserts, she is “no longer tied to any particular place” (291)? Sernett suggests that Tubman’s “story can be told in geographic settings far removed from the grounded Tubman of the United States and Canada,” as “[s]he has become a citizen of the world” (291). One source that helps in establishing Tubman’s hidden communication within Baltimore is *Harriet Tubman and The Underground Railroad*, a section of the *Baltimore Legends and Legacies* website, which states:

In December 1850, Harriett Tubman conducted her first rescue mission. Her niece, Kessiah Jolley Bowley and her two children were set to be auctioned to the highest bidder at the [Cambridge] County Courthouse. Kessiah’s free husband, John Bowley, devised a plan with Tubman to bring Kessiah and the children away before they could be sold. On the day of the auction, John bid on his wife and children, even though he did not have the money to pay for them. Before the auctioneer could call for payment, John quickly and safely hid his family in a nearby home. That night, he secretly sailed them to the Fell’s Point waterfront in Baltimore where Tubman hid them until she was able to safely bring them to Philadelphia. (“Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad”)

While there will never be comprehensive proof of Tubman’s time and hidden communication in Baltimore, *Baltimore Legends and Legacies* provides a travelable series of historical and geographical sites that map Tubman’s life with tangible markers via “The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway.”<sup>2</sup> However, Baltimore is not included in the Byway; instead, it is presented as a possible side trip or detour to take if one has time.

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<sup>2</sup> “The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway” shares the remarkable stories of freedom seekers who risked their lives to escape slavery in the 1800’s. With more than 30 sites that include the newly designated Harriet

Tubman stands as a prime example of the difficulty of creating accurate public and geographical tributes for historical figures whose deliberate intention to stay out of public view and record within a particular location was necessary for their survival. Tubman's temporary status in Baltimore as a fugitive, as well as her illiteracy, make her unable to be completely and/or accurately portrayed in today's public realm. Scholars, therefore, must choose their own deliberative communicative routes when attempting to find proper "words" to address Tubman and other written voids in history. James A. McGowan and William C. Kashatus, authors of *Harriet Tubman: A Biography*, add details to recreate Tubman's unwritten story, stating that "Kessiah's husband, John Bowley, a free black ship carpenter, sent word to Harriet hoping to enlist her help" (28).<sup>3</sup> Obviously, "word" could have been oral and/or written, and "word" could have been received through a third party reader.<sup>4</sup> McGowan and Kashatus regularly draw from Larson's *Bound for the Promised Land*, in describing how, "[s]heltered by a family in the free black enclave of Fell's Point, Kessiah and her children were met by Harriet, who guided them safely [up the Chesapeake] to Philadelphia" (30).<sup>5</sup> Additional returns and rescues by Tubman from Baltimore are only briefly mentioned by McGowan and Kashatus, including a rescue "a few months later to bring [Tubman's] brother, Moses, and two other runaways to freedom" (30). In addition, McGowan and Kashatus mention evidence of other Baltimore sites Tubman used for hiding refugees, such as the Orchard Street African Methodist Episcopal Church (43).

Larson acknowledges her inability to accurately recount Tubman's history through the repetitive use of "perhaps" and "likely" throughout her biography. While admitting the uncertainty of Tubman's personal actions and words, Larson is certain in describing the

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Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument [A National Park Service Unit], the self-guided driving tour routes the places where Tubman grew up, worshiped, labored, and led others to freedom.

<sup>3</sup> McGowan and Kashatus highlight the reason for Tubman's entrance into Baltimore: the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, which "allowed slave hunters to seize alleged fugitive slaves without due process of law and prohibited anyone from aiding escaped fugitives or obstructing their recovery" ("Fugitive Slave Law").

<sup>4</sup> "Word," for Tubman, and for others who could not rely on a traditional literary system for safe communication, embodied a language not necessarily written not on paper, but within the private circles of friends and family members.

<sup>5</sup> Baltimore, and Fell's Point in particular, was a (relatively) safer hiding place for Bowley and his family (compared to the Eastern Shore) because of its large free African American population, even though slavery was still in full practice in the city, as "[t]here [Bowley and his family] would circulate among the city's 36,000 blacks—29,000 of them free—and become indistinguishable to slave catchers and federal marshals alike" (McGowan and Kashatus 30). Forty years earlier Fell's Point had been labeled "a nest of pirates" by former British merchant ship captains ("Baltimore and the War of 1812"). McGowan and Kashatus explain that "[f]rom Baltimore, [Tubman] could continue north on the Chesapeake, secreted on a steamship by African American stewards, until she reached the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal" (43).

alternative communication that was required to replace written words in the pursuit of safety and freedom:

[I]n a world of suspicious whites, a letter could elicit unwanted attention. Like the heavily coded spirituals Tubman would later use to guide fugitive slaves north, a look, a glance, a movement, a shift of the foot, or a wave of a hand could be invisible to the white master, yet speak louder than words to fellow blacks, passing messages in times of need, when the stakes were life or death. (65–6)<sup>6</sup>

Tubman's unrecorded words belong to a genre that will never receive its due credit or validation—hidden communication—though the genre continues to be integral for all societal progressions. Each new decade and generation must find new ways and new language mediums to pay tribute to Tubman. When, as Frederick Douglass wrote to Tubman in 1868, only "[t]he midnight sky and silent stars have been the witnesses of your devotion to freedom and your heroism," (qtd. in Bradford), it is up to today's scholars to find alternative witnesses and standards to validate hidden communication, even if that communication will remain forever unwritten.

### **(Un)Written Words: Letters between Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok**

Eighty-four years after Tubman's first rescue mission through Baltimore, another one of America's most recognized figures sent her own secret messages through the city. Unlike Tubman, however, this woman's written words were housed inside paper envelopes and the safety of a federal postal system which prohibited interception. This woman was also functioning under a completely different set of American standards, due to her race, class, education, and the position of her marriage to the President. Additionally, unlike Tubman's (un)written words, produced for the desire for freedom, this woman's written words took cover due to their content, which expressed a desire for female intimacy. These words were mailed to the Lord Baltimore Hotel, located at 20 West Baltimore Street, one of many hidden communication hubs of Eleanor Roosevelt's and Lorena Hickok's intimate correspondence.

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<sup>6</sup> The Archives of Maryland states that "[i]n 1835 or 1836, [Brodess] managed to hire [Tubman] to John Stewart, a large plantation owner and business man who lived in the Tobacco Stock area of Dorchester County . . . The community supported a vital communication network among Chesapeake African-Americans, which [Tubman] would use extensively in her future rescues. The move also allowed [Tubman] to be closer to her father, and eventually led her to John Tubman, a free black man working in the same neighborhood" ("Harriet Ross Tubman Davis").

Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok (who will be referenced as ER and Hickok) initially met in 1928, when Hickok, who was reporting for the Associated Press, landed the “first formal interview with Eleanor Roosevelt on November 7, the day after FDR won election as governor of New York” (Golay 1). Both women had experienced betrayal in their personal relationships during the previous decades. As Rodger Streitmatter notes in his 1998 collection of edited letters between ER and Hickok, *Empty Without You: The Intimate Letters of Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok*, “Eleanor had discovered [in her mid-thirties] that her husband, FDR, was having an affair and had agreed to continue the marriage—but not sexual relations with [him]” (Streitmatter xx). Ironically, ER discovered FDR’s infidelity by “stumb[ing] upon a packet of lightly scented [hidden] letters that documented [FDR’s] affair with the very young and very beautiful Lucy Page Mercer” (Streitmatter 1).<sup>7</sup> Hickok’s betrayal came from the abandonment of her live-in companion of eight years, Ellie Morse, a woman from a very wealthy family who had dropped out of Wellesley College to work at the *Minneapolis Tribune*, where she met Hickok (Streitmatter xix).<sup>8</sup>

In the summer of 1932, Hickok was assigned to FDR’s Presidential Campaign, though, as Michael Golay describes in *America 1933: The Great Depression, Lorena Hickok, Eleanor Roosevelt, and the Shaping of the New Deal*, Hickok “found herself drawn more to the candidate’s wife than to the candidate himself” (9). As the women grew closer, the pressure of juggling public journalistic duties with growing intimacy began to take its toll, and Hickok decided to leave the Associated Press in 1933. ER arranged for Harry Hopkins, friend of the presidency and head of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, “to offer [Hickok] a job as chief investigator for the agency” (Streitmatter 33), where Hickok was assigned to travel around the country to report on economic conditions and FERA status in various cities.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Mercer was social secretary to ER. “In that capacity, [Mercer] helped ER with the social obligations associated with her position as spouse of the assistant secretary of the navy. When necessary [Mercer] also served as the extra woman at the Roosevelts’ dinner parties” (“Lucy Page Mercer Rutherford (1891–1948)”).

<sup>8</sup> Morse, “frightened by [Hickok’s] chronic depression and emotional flare-ups, had walked out in 1926” (Streitmatter xx) and “renewed her acquaintance with a childhood friend from a Minneapolis dance class twenty years earlier and then eloped with him,” leaving Hickok “in shambles” (Streitmatter 4).

<sup>9</sup> Hickok was hired to travel around “the country to gauge the effectiveness of the nation’s relief programs and then write detailed reports on her findings for [Harry] Hopkins, identifying which programs were working and which were not” (Streitmatter 34). Hickok’s Relief Program reports and public communication were sent to ER, “who often showed them to Franklin . . . [who often] read them out loud at Cabinet meetings.” The reports offered a very different perspective and tone than the second set of pages that Hickok regularly composed, “at the end of the day and often while lying in bed” to ER (Streitmatter 34). Streitmatter notes that “[b]etween trips around the country,

Golay credits the early partnership of ER and Hickok in “mak[ing] it possible, in eighteen months spanning 1933 and 1934, for Hickok to assemble as powerful a documentary record as we have of the hardest of American times (The Great Depression)” (1).<sup>10</sup> Hickok was stationed at Baltimore in the late fall months of 1934, where she and ER continued their ongoing correspondence relationship. Their letters were made public in 1978, when “the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library opened eighteen cardboard boxes filled with Eleanor Roosevelt’s and Lorena Hickok’s personal correspondence to each other” (Streitmatter xiv). At that time, ER had been deceased for sixteen years, and Hickok had been deceased for ten. Hickok had donated the letters to the FDR Library in 1958, along with the proviso that the material not be opened until ten years after her death. In the collection “3,500 letters that [ER] and ‘Hick’ had written during their thirty-year friendship—the first lady sometimes writing two letters in a single day—documented that the women had shared a relationship that was not only intense and intimate, but also passionate and physical” (Streitmatter xiv). There were so many letters, in fact, that archivists are still struggling in their assessment and organization of it in 2016.<sup>11</sup>

The first historian to read through ER's and Hickok's letters, Doris Faber, expressed her discomfort with what she found within the sealed boxes at the FDR Library and Museum National Archives in *The Life of Lorena Hickok: Eleanor Roosevelt's Friend*, released in 1980. The preface and ending note describe Faber's elation, and then anxiety, over being chosen to be the first historian to read through the letters and present them to the public. Faber immediately admits her discomfort with the female intimacy found in ER and Hickok's letters, and in the disclosure of that information, as she writes, “Because of Eleanor Roosevelt’s renown, their story belongs to history. I wish this were not so. In my Personal Notes starting on page 329, I have described my own unavailing effort to postpone the inevitable disclosure” (5). This disclosure is

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[Hickok] slept on a daybed in a room adjoining [ER's] bedroom . . . [and] had daily contact with FDR—who called ‘Hick’ [how ER referenced Hickok] his wife’s ‘she-man’” (Streitmatter xvi-ii).

<sup>10</sup> Many of Hickok's letters to Harry L. Hopkins are included in *One Third of a Nation: Lorena Hickok Reports on the Great Depression*, edited by Richard Lowitt and Maurine Beasley. Included in the book is Hickok's November 13, 1934 Baltimore letter to Hopkins, which discusses wages for various local businesses, such as Bethlehem Steel, Glenn Martin, and stenographers for the Equitable building, as well as her finding that “WAGES [ARE] SO LOW THAT PEOPLE ON RELIEF REFUSE TO TAKE THE JOBS BECAUSE THE WAGES OFFERED ARE LOWER THAN RELIEF” (342).

<sup>11</sup> This author's request for Baltimore correspondence from the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum National Archives was met with prompt enthusiasm regarding the scholarship interest in ER and Hickok's letters and an apologetic response in terms of the limited search engines and accuracy available for researching ER and Hickok's correspondence through thematic or geographical means (such as locating communication which was processed through the Baltimore postal system) (Carter).

that of an intimate female/female relationship—one which Faber foresaw as being problematic for public reception, even close to twenty years after ER’s passing.

One of Streitmatter’s main goals in collecting and publishing some of the hidden letters between ER and Hickok was to uncover “glimpses . . . of an Eleanor Roosevelt who is strikingly different from the icon she has become” (xvii)—a woman who was a complex human, not just a political and historical “figure.” Streitmatter explains: “More fundamentally, the figure who emerges from between the lines is not a paragon of virtue but a woman who could be not only sarcastic and funny, but also catty and judgmental, snide and petty” (xvii). Streitmatter defends his collection’s intentions, stating that the public exposure of ER’s letters to/from Hickok “should not diminish [ER’s] stature, but rather should serve to reassure us that she was, like all of us, *human*” (xvii). Often, hidden communication is the only medium that highlights this humanity in public figures, due to the filtered and exposed status of public lives.

ER’s and Hickok’s preserved communication begins in March 1933, not long after FDR’s inauguration and ER’s move into the White House (Streitmatter 15), and continues until September 1962, stopping only two months before ER’s death in November 1962 (Streitmatter 288). To date, ER and Hickok’s preserved letters have only been partially published, with only two full collections providing significant excerpts from the correspondence—Streitmatter’s *Empty Without You* and Faber’s *The Life of Lorena Hickok*. The majority of ER’s and Hickok’s letters remain unpublished and are only accessible through direct appointment at the FDR Presidential Library and Museum National Archives or by paid orders (for copies) through the postal mail.

There is little mention of the letters written while Hickok was stationed in Baltimore, or the significance of Hickok’s time there, in either of the collections. Only one of Hickok’s letters from this time frame is included in *Empty Without You*, mailed from the Lord Baltimore Hotel on November 2, 1934.<sup>12</sup> In the letter, Hickok reacts to newspaper reports which covered ER’s speech New York City the night before (Streitmatter 138). Hickok readily admits her disgust

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<sup>12</sup> The Lord Baltimore was the “first integrated hotel in Baltimore,” and was “seen as a ‘crowning architectural jewel’ when it was built in 1928 in the center of downtown Baltimore” (Ober). The hotel has a rich history of guests, including George Burns, Martin Luther King, Jr., Carol Channing, Snoop Dogg, and Chris Rock (Zajac, “Lord Baltimore”). Also of note, The Lord Baltimore Hotel’s online blog has a link where guests can post haunting encounters that have occurred in the hotel, such as accounts of the lingering spirits of men who jumped from the nineteenth floor of the hotel during the Great Depression and the ghost of a child with “a cream-colored dress and black, shiny shoes” (“Ghost Stories”).

with the media and their perception of ER as one of “the prominent people”: “Damn the newspapers! Here I am, keen to know what you said last night and how it went. And what do the papers carry? One of them described you in a blue velvet dinner gown, described all the prominent people present and ‘Mrs. Roosevelt’ leaving after her speech but not a word on the content—I hated it” (qtd in Streitmatter 138–9). Sadly, the media’s attention to prominent figures’ wardrobes, as opposed to their public words and actions, continues to be the norm in the twenty-first century.<sup>13</sup>

“God damn it,” Hickok continues, “none of us ought to be wearing velvet dinner gowns these days. Not when, as the chief attendance officer in the Baltimore public schools said today, 4,000 Baltimore children couldn’t go to school in September because they didn’t have clothes” (qtd. in Streitmatter 139). Hickok’s obvious frustration with economic inequality in Baltimore includes criticism directed at ER, and Hickok is quite frank in her articulation of the contrast between ER’s privileged attire and the vast poverty in the city. “As [the chief attendance officer] was saying that,” Hickok admits, “the thought of you in a blue velvet dinner gown—even though you are my friend and I love you—irritated me profoundly. Sometimes I get so sick of this whole damned mess! . . . Darling—in a blue velvet dinner gown or out of it—I love you” (qtd. in Streitmatter 139). The juxtaposition of ER’s public life (complete with public attire) next to her private life (with optional attire) reflects the benefit of private record exposure, as private words “encapsulate [lives] because they show rather than tell us what a person was like” (O’Connell 61). Readers and future generations are better able to step into the lives of past figures when reading private material, as opposed to just hearing about those lives from a temporal and edited distance as public works dictate.

Personal requests for correspondence from the FDR Presidential Library and Museum National Archives coinciding with Hickok’s stay in Baltimore in late 1934 produced a collection of thirty letters: three from Hickok and twenty-seven from ER. Hickok’s three letters are all written on Lord Baltimore Hotel Stationary.<sup>14</sup> ER’s letters are penned on stationary from various

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<sup>13</sup> *The Huffington Post* has an entire section devoted to “First Lady Fashion,” which has included articles such as “Michelle Obama Continues China Tour in Printastic Outfits” and “Michelle Obama, Senegal’s First Lady Marleme Faye Sall Pose in Coordinating Pastels” (“First Lady Fashion”).

<sup>14</sup> The previous year, ER had dined at the Lord Baltimore Hotel in the company of another pioneering woman—Amelia Earhart. On April 20, 1933, Earhart “broke up a White House dinner party” by inviting ER and guests (ER’s brother, the president of Eastern Air Transport, and the parents of author Gore Vidal) to accompany her on a

addresses, including the White House, 49 East 65<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan, New York; Hyde Park-on-Hudson, New York; Warm Springs, Georgia, and unaddressed stationary.<sup>15</sup> Only five of the letters from this time frame are included in Streitmatter's *Empty Without You*.<sup>16</sup> Faber's *The Life of Lorena Hickok* contains a few selected lines and paraphrases from this correspondence time frame and *One Third of a Nation: Lorena Hickok Reports on the Great Depression*, edited by Richard Lowitt and Maurine Beasley and released in 1981, contains the November 21, 1934 letter written to ER by Hickok. The majority of ER and Hickok's Baltimore communication, however, is unpublished and inaccessible, except through an FDR Library and Museum National Archives appointment and/or paid request for postal mailed copies. In other words, the majority of ER and Hickok's communication—from Baltimore and other cities—remains hidden

Hickok's letters are lengthy and legible, while ER's are shorter and practically illegible. ER's handwriting is extremely difficult to read, with heavily slanted cursive and letters that are hard to decipher. Streitmatter confirms that "[m]any of [Eleanor's] sentences ramble on and on and on with many twists and turns, comma splices, misspelled words, and challenges to coherence" (xvii). ER's letters actually resemble another language, and readers may wonder if, like Distiller suggests, ER was writing her own form of intimacy as "lesbian writers have had to re-make themselves using a language that they inherit" (53). Due to this deciphering challenge, as well as the overwhelming amount of correspondence by ER and Hickok, which enables traditional archiving and indexing routes, the history within ER and Hickok's communication also remains hidden from public view.

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roundtrip flight to Baltimore (Rasmussen, "Amelia"). The party landed in Baltimore, and then dined at the Lord Baltimore Hotel before returning to the White House.

Rasmussen describes how "Earhart, dressed in a white silk gown and wearing white kid gloves, was at the controls of the plane for most of the flight, and "Mrs. Roosevelt . . . was by Earhart's side" ("Amelia").

<sup>15</sup> The Roosevelts' Manhattan residence, located at 49 East 65<sup>th</sup> Street, was directly next to FDR's mother's residence at 47 East 65<sup>th</sup> Street ("Roosevelt House History"). Hyde Park-on-the Hudson was the main residence occupied by the Roosevelts, and it is the home of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum National Archives, which includes ER and Hickok's correspondence ("Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt"). Warm Springs, Georgia was the home of the Roosevelt's "Little White House." The Georgia residence was utilized by Roosevelt as a retreat, therapeutic location, and crafting headquarters for the New Deal ("Little White House").

<sup>16</sup> Streitmatter's collection contains the November 2, 1934 letter from Hickok and four late fall 1934 letters from ER: 1.) an undated letter 2.) a letter dated November 3, 1934 (on The White House letterhead) 3.) a letter dated November 3, 1934 (on Val-Kill Cottage/on Hyde Park-On-Hudson letterhead) 4.) a letter dated November 22, 1934 (on Georgia Warm Springs Foundation letterhead). Val-Kill was a country cottage located two miles from the Roosevelts' estate in Hyde Park. It was the only place ER "ever could call her own" ("Eleanor Roosevelt National Historical Site").

For example, in Hickok's November 21, 1934 letter, she records her unfiltered feelings about the challenges of providing emergency relief to a city with a complex reception, implementation, and perspective regarding federal programs. Hickok quotes the principal “of a school in one of the most poverty-stricken sections of Baltimore” when describing the conditions of the city: “We give free lunches to the children here—only to those who are the worst off, because we haven’t enough money to feed all those who may be hungry . . . Never have we had enough bread—just plain, dry bread—so that there was enough for each child to have all it could eat! Never has there been even a crust left” (Hickok, *One Third* 346). Hickok's hidden communication to ER allowed for multiple first-hand accounts of the city to emerge—as both insider and outsider perspectives merged on her pages in joint frustration of the state of child hunger in Baltimore in 1934.

In addition to illustrating the pervasive state of poverty in the city schools, Hickok communicates details about her recent meeting in Baltimore with the labor leader, Joseph P. McCurdy, “head of the A. F. L. in Maryland” (Hickok, *One Third* 346). Again, Hickok paraphrases a local official’s words to convey the urgency of the situation to ER: “[L]awyers generally, he says, are advising them to ignore the NRA and the other New Deal regulations, on the ground that they are un-constitutional, and that industry can go to court and ‘hear the game’” (Hickok, *One Third* 346).<sup>17</sup> McCurdy explains that “[n]ot five percent of the employers who have been forced to accept [Aid] are living up to it, he says, and none has accepted it without being forced. ‘So far,’ he says, ‘NRA has made about as much dent on industry as a sparrow’s bill could make on an alligator back!’” (Hickok, *One Third* 346). Hickok also double quotes in the letter, as she repeats McCurdy, who then quotes a department store proprietor: “Hell, NRA don’t mean a thing!” (Hickok, *One Third* 346), providing a triple layer of historical primary source accounting.

Lowitt and Beasley cut the remainder of McCurdy’s words (or rather, Hickok’s re-quoting of McCurdy’s words) in *One Third of a Nation*, though readers would not know this unless they

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<sup>17</sup> A. F. L. is an acronym for the American Federation of Labor. The Independent Hall Association summarizes the A. F. of L.'s formation in the United States: “In December of 1886, the same year the Knights of Labor was dealt its fatal blow at Haymarket Square, Gompers met with the leaders of other craft unions to form the American Federation of Labor. The A. F. of L. was a loose grouping of smaller craft unions, such as the masons’ union, the hatmakers’ union or Gompers’s own cigarmakers’ union. Every member of the A. F. of L. was therefore a skilled worker” (“American Federation of Labor”).

had also ordered a copy of the original version of the letter from the FDR Library. The following excerpt by Hickok is replaced with ellipsis in *One Third of a Nation*:

“How in God’s name,” he said, “You’re going to inculcate in people the desire to do the right things is something I don’t know. You can’t legislate it into them . . . It looks to me as though the only way might be for the President to get the boys together and say: “If you’ll be decent about this, I’ll help you to save some of what you’ve got. If you won’t, you’ll lose—and, by God, I’ll help ‘em to take it away from you!” (“Wednesday Night, November 21<sup>st</sup>”)

Cutting this section of Hickok's letter from the collection deletes an insightful glimpse into the raw feelings of union leaders toward city and federal officials during the Great Depression. Moreover, this editing reinforces the reality that what Lowitt and Beasley (and other editors) may view as unimportant or distracting in hidden communication may be viewed quite differently by other readers, and that editorial decisions are often hinged on constantly shifting political and economic trends within publishing and academic industries.

Other unpublished finds in ER and Hickok's Baltimore communication stored within the FDR Library include Hickok's November 23, 1934 letter. In this letter, Hickok summarizes the recent national news of “the President’s executive order pulling all the various representatives of the Government out in the states together into a body” (“Friday Night, November 23<sup>rd</sup>”), and responds with a bit of an “I told you so”: “Remember how I was pleading for something of the sort a few months ago?” (“Friday Night, November 23<sup>rd</sup>”). Hickok’s frustration with national and local governments and officials permeates her letter, as she recounts how she “called up the Baltimore relief administration today and asked him who was head of the NRA compliance board here, and he didn’t know!” (“Friday Night, November 23<sup>rd</sup>”). Much of the dysfunction in Baltimore, Hickok finds, is due to employees being “overloaded with routine and administrative work” (“Friday Night, November 23<sup>rd</sup>”), and she spends a good part of her letter listing grievances connected to the grid-locked city.<sup>18</sup>

Case in point, Hickok explains to ER that “[i]n the last few months two Baltimore companies—one of them Glenn Martin airplane manufacturers, with a lab of Government orders—announced they were going to raise wages. And the Baltimore Association of

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<sup>18</sup> See “Rare Political Irony,” published on November 2, 1934 in the *Baltimore Sun*, for a satirical critique of the FERA program. The anonymous writer makes fun of both parties in denying the politics involved in the federal government's relief effort allotments (“Rare Political Irony”).

Commerce requested them not to do it!” (“Friday Night, November 23<sup>rd</sup>”). Hickok's view of Baltimore business leaves much to be desired, as she admits to ER that “[t]his morning I met the only intelligent businessman I’ve encountered so far in Baltimore” (“Friday Night, November 23<sup>rd</sup>”), reinforcing the city's stereotype as one of economic incompetence.

ER’s letters mailed to Hickok at The Lord Baltimore Hotel are much more difficult to incorporate here, due to their lack of illegibility. In an interesting way, ER’s letters add a new element to the study of hidden communication: indecipherability. Streitmatter does manage to decipher one of ER’s letters from the fall of 1934 in *Empty Without You*: “Hick my darling/ That cry of ‘I want something all my own’ is the cry of the heart and I was near to tears last night. You told me once it was hard to let go but I found it was harder to let go and yet hold on . . . for I love you and you’ve made of me so much more of a person just to be worthy of you” (qtd. in Streitmatter 138). Interestingly, Streitmatter leaves off the last line of this letter in *Empty Without You*. That line reads: “If you can come on [untranslatable word] I can put my arms around you tonight” (“Hick my darling”). Again, readers would not know this unless they had a copy of the original letters with which to compare. Regardless of the editorial intention behind this decision, both the decipherable and the undecipherable words in ER’s 1934 letter to Hickok demonstrate a hidden desire for female intimacy in no uncertain terms.

In 1936, two years after leaving her temporary position in Baltimore, Hickok “began retrieving the letters she had written to Eleanor; between that year and 1968 when [Hickok] died . . . she purposely destroyed hundreds of letters” (Streitmatter xxi–ii).<sup>19</sup> The hidden communication of ER and Hickok housed in the FDR Library is, then, a mere trace of a much larger body of hidden communication that will never be found—words that were once written, but are now unwritten. Streitmatter explains that Hickok “burned the most explicit of the letters, dramatically dropping them, one by one, into the flames of a fireplace,” so that “[w]e can only imagine what has been lost” (xxii). ER and Hickok’s preserved communication, even if only partially representative of its original contents, still serves to represent the hidden communication of many other intimate women which will never be found.

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<sup>19</sup> Hickok “destroyed all of her letters to Eleanor written prior to November 26, 1933” (Streitmatter 15).

Eleanor Roosevelt's and Lorena Hickok's hidden communication exposes much more than same sex-female intimacy. Their letters underscore the private needs of public figures, the role that society continues to play in policing relationships and determining validity, and the history that remains beneath the history books. Hidden communication does the thankless job of working as an ongoing catalyst in determining the course of societies. There are many more (un)written lives and communications buried beneath, around, through, and above our cities. Viewing hidden communication as its own genre and mapping medium shapes a fuller view of history and geography—both in the past and as it unfolds . . . within a now (un)written and digitized future.

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## Castles in the Air: Relationships on *Castle*, the TV Show

By William M. Kirtley & Patricia M. Kirtley, Independent Scholars

**Abstract:** The writers of the TV show *Castle*, starring Nathan Fillion (Castle) and Stana Katic (Beckett) cultivated shippers, a loyal fan base devoted to this series. The writers' deviation from the established scenario and cancellation of Katic's contract brought viewer displeasure on social media and forced the cancellation of the show. *Castle* helped people escape their everyday doldrums. This brilliant show captured moments when time stood still in the face of a magnetic attraction between two fascinating people.

**Keywords:** *Castle*, Nathan Fillion, Stana Katic, shippers, show cancellation.

**Resumen:** Los escritores del programa de televisión *Castle*, protagonizado por Nathan Fillion (Castle) y Sara Katic (Beckett), atrajeron a los transportistas, una base de fanáticos muy apegados a la serie. El alejamiento de la situación establecida por parte de los escritores y la cancelación del contrato de Katic causó la inconformidad de la audiencia en las redes sociales y resultó en la cancelación del programa. *Castle* ayudó a la gente a escapar su desánimo cotidiano. Este brillante programa capturó momentos cuando el tiempo se detuvo en cara a la atracción magnética entre dos fascinantes personas.

**Palabras Clave:** *Castle*, Nathan Fillion, Stana Katic, transportistas, cancelación de un programa

**摘要:** 电视剧“灵书妙探”的主演为内森·菲利安 (Nathan Fillion, 饰演Castle) 和斯坦娜·卡蒂克 (Stana Katic, 饰演Beckett)。本剧作者为该剧培养了一批被称之为 shipper 的铁杆粉丝。然而编剧在之后的创作过程中偏离了既定情景, 同时主演卡蒂克签订的合约也被取消, 因此观众在社交媒体上表达了不满, 该剧也取消了续订。灵书妙探曾帮助人们摆脱每日沉闷。这一好剧捕捉了男女主角之间奇妙的磁场吸引力。

**关键词:** 灵书妙探, 内森·菲利安, 斯坦娜·卡蒂克, shippers, 电视剧取消

### Introduction

Popular culture is full of fun, excitement, and that special “Aw Yeah!” moment. It's geocaching, cosplay, and Tsum Tsum. It's *Castle*, a television show that brought passion, laughter, suspense, and escape to our everyday lives. Richard Castle was a childlike, charming

mystery novelist. Kate Beckett was a tough, glamorous NYPD detective. They both had personal baggage. Her mother's murder left Beckett emotionally isolated. Castle had two ex-wives, lived with his mother, and was a single parent. Despite their differences, a palpable attraction was there. At the end of the first episode, Castle invited Beckett to dinner, to "debrief." After she declined, Castle remarked, "It's too bad. It would've been great." She whispered enticingly in his ear, "You have no idea," and walked seductively away to the OneRepublic song "Stop and Stare." Castle stood there, in that moment thoroughly flummoxed ("Flowers for Her Grave" 1.1).

One simple definition of popular culture is something that "many people like and favor" (Storey, 6). This certainly applies to *Castle*. Lead actor Nathan Fillion earned a Best Actor Award and the show won Best Crime Drama in the People's Choice awards. *Castle* was one of the top fifty shows in America for eight years. It developed a loyal fan base that participated in sites, blogs, wikis, tweets, and trivia contests.

Canadian born, Fillion (Rick Castle) brought credibility, a fine sense of comedic timing, and a solid fan base to the show. He was an accomplished actor in film and TV with notable roles in Joss Whedon's cult classics *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Firefly*. Fillion related that when he first read for the lead in *Castle*, he said, "I am this guy" ("Bonus Feature" 1.1). Stana Katic, also a Canadian, personified beauty, style, and wit. She was one of 141 who auditioned for the role of Kate Beckett. She had problems with her blouse before tryouts. Fillion cut her blouse with a pair of scissors to the length she desired. Thus began the magic chemistry that animated the show (*Castle Trivia*).

Andrew Marlowe, a graduate of Columbia with an MFA in screenwriting from the University of Southern California, created and produced the show. Marlowe built a solid cast around Fillion and Katic. He fashioned a police procedural series that showcased popular music, fashion, and guest appearances of famous actors and writers. His formulaic plot featured stand-alone episodes driven by the act of solving a murder mystery and the burgeoning relationship between the two leads. Every episode followed a familiar pattern; a crime scene, followed by an investigation, and closure with the apprehension of the culprit.

This paper examines three levels of discourse: original sources, the critique of reviewers and fans, and academic analysis. It examines relationships, introduces the cast, reviews the show's eight seasons, and analyzes narrative devices, but its true focus is on cultivation theory in the 21<sup>st</sup>

century. The creator and writers of *Castle* ceded power to a dedicated group of fans. Fans responded favorably on social media. Ratings continued at a high level for six years. Several of the actual books written by Richard Castle, the fictitious lead character, topped the bestseller list. However, *Castle's* writers ignored the protests of shippers when they brought in unlikeable characters and muddled the story line. They deviated from what shippers expected: emphasis on the romantic attraction between the two leads. Modern fans are no longer passive. When the writers failed to heed their desire for relationships, they abandoned the show and ratings plummeted. Shippers knew what they wanted and how to get it. When the writers and producers of *Castle* ignored this fact, shippers forced them to cancel this popular and profitable show.

### **Cultivation Theory**

Journalist George Gerbner founded cultivation theory, one of the most influential approaches to the field of mass communication. He hypothesized that viewers who watched television perceived the real world in ways that reproduced the most common and recurrent messages of the television world (Shanahan and Morgan 8). The primary objective of *Castle's* producers was to secure and mold audiences. *Castle* reflected and shaped the attitudes of these viewers. The fans invited its delightful characters into their lives and felt entitled to influence their behavior.

According to cultivation theory, television swayed the behavior of individuals in a targeted demographic group. It created a synthetic world that fans viewed as reality (Moon 5). Individuals were involved in the friendships and feelings of the characters as they emotionally attached to the show. Media scholar Henry Jenkins in *Textual Poachers* commented on this phenomenon. "Only by integrating media content back into their everyday lives, only by close engagement with its meanings and materials, can fans fully consume the fiction and make it an active resource" (62).

Before the Internet, producers anxiously awaited weekly ratings to determine their success or failure and continued sponsorship. The *Castle* community posted immediate and copious comments on network and independent websites. Their outpourings constituted critical discourse about *Castle*, influenced other viewers' opinions, and pressured the networks regarding the program's fate. The strong bond between fans and *Castle* produced a dedicated following. They texted, tweeted, and blogged their approval when relationships on the show were sweet and their anger when they soured. Jenkins noted in *Convergence of Culture* that over his career he

“watched fans move from the invisible margins of popular culture into the center of current thinking about media production and consumption” (12).

*Castle's* writers introduced a new term in the episode “One Life to Lose” (3.18). Castle and Beckett investigated the murder of a TV soap opera star. In reply to the proverbial detective’s question, “Is there anyone who comes to mind that was angry at the victim?” A cast member replied, “Sara had this crazy obsessed fan kicked off the show. She writes an unofficial blog about the show. She is a shipper who goes by the name Fox Canelo Shipper.” Castle queried, “shipper?” Beckett answered, “It’s a person who invests in the relationships of the show” (3.18).

### **Relationships**

Marlowe referred to Castle and Beckett’s powerful chemistry as the “dance” (“Bonus Features” 1.1). Sometimes it was a stately waltz, other times it was a fierce Paso Doble, and occasionally a torrid Tango. The progress of their relationship formed the narrative line of the show. Fillion believed viewers would not connect with “an immature rich childlike murder mystery novelist.” He thought people “would relate to two people who are meant for each other, but can’t get it together” (Images). Fans saw the couple’s relationship as paramount from the first episode when the writers coined the term “Caskett” (“Murder He Wrote” 5.4).

Marlowe faced two related challenges. How long should he keep the sexual tension between Castle and Beckett going and, once they became an item, how would it affect ratings? One ABC executive suggested Marlowe cool things off between the two because it looked like they were going to jump into bed by the second episode. Katic didn’t think this was a problem. She declared she would grab Castle and snog his face off if they did not get together soon (Castle-Beckett). Jim Garner of *TV Fanatic* asked his readers what they thought. Their consensus was that *Castle's* writers should let the Castle-Beckett relationship develop naturally, advice the writers followed (Garner Review).

The executive that expressed fear of precipitous intimacy referenced the “Moonlighting” curse. He alleged that after Cybil Shepard (Maddie) and Bruce Willis (David), stars of the hit comedy/drama TV series *Moonlighting* (1985-1989) acted upon their mutual attraction, fans grew bored and restless. This led to a drop in ratings and the show’s cancellation. Reviewer Jim Garner argued that the show’s demise was not due to a jinx, but to bad writing, production costs,

and the fact the Cybil Shepard was pregnant with twins and had to limit her appearances on the show (Garner Review).

Marlowe believed that a detective series featuring a married couple would hold the audience's attention (Castle-Beckett). He cited as proof *The Thin Man*, a classic 1934 film, written by Dashiell Hammett, starring Myrna Loy (Nora), William Powell (Nick), and their wire-haired terrier, Asta (played by canine actor Skippy). *Castle's* continued high ratings confirmed Marlowe's assertion. Once Castle and Beckett were engaged, shippers delighted in wedding preparations. After the couple's marriage, they eagerly followed the struggle of the newlyweds to resolve conflicts, create a blended family, and solve mysteries. Fillion observed that the first four years were prologue to the fireworks of a complicated relationship (Castle-Beckett).

### **Meet the Cast**

*Castle's* superb supporting cast framed the characters and story line. Molly Quinn, Castle's daughter, Alexis, received training as a child and earned her role on *Castle* at the age of seventeen. Fillion praised her growth as an actor. Scenes of the two playing brought out Castle's childish side and physical humor. More serious scenes allowed Fillion to express the depth of the love of a father for his daughter. Alexis liked Beckett, asked her for advice, and facilitated her assimilation into a new family.

Two-time Emmy and Golden Globe nominee Susan Sullivan played Castle's mother, Martha Rodgers. Her acting career paralleled that of the woman she portrayed, appearing on Broadway, film, and television. She depicted Martha as a grand dame dressed in haute couture clothes. She stole every scene in a way that developed the plot and made her fellow actors look better. Her witticisms (Marthaisms) such as "Clothes are civilization" evoked a great deal of humor ("Inventing the Girl" 2.3). Her unsolicited advice to her son helped him better understand his feelings for Beckett. Martha was the only character that called Beckett by her full name, "Katherine," a sign of her respect and desire to see two lovers resolve their conflicts and find happiness.

Ryan (Seamus Dever) and Esposito (Jon Huerta) played brave and committed cops. Laura Akers, a reviewer for *Den of Geek*, described them as, "the best example of what a true partnership looks like" (Season 6 Review). Esposito was the cynical physically imposing tough guy. Ryan was the insightful emotional center of the team. They good-naturedly poked fun at

Beckett's affection for Castle, and over time accepted Castle as part of the team. Fans visited websites featuring their quotes. One YouTube video promised to show them how to dance like Ryan and Esposito.

Lanie, played by TV and film actress, Tamala Jones, served as Beckett's best friend, confidant, and Esposito's love interest. Lanie urged Beckett to date Castle. In "The Limey" (4.20) she told Beckett life was too short and uncertain to wait to make a move. Reviewer Luciana Mangas of *TVOM* observed, "Now, we've got a tease with Beckett talking to Lanie about telling Castle how she feels. I swear, if they don't take this relationship to the next level soon, I am going to scream" ("The Limey, Review").

Ruben Santiago-Hudson played Roy Montgomery, the Captain of the 12<sup>th</sup> precinct. He overcame Beckett's objections to having Castle observe the workings of the homicide department. He encouraged their relationship, stating, "Kate, you weren't having any fun before he came along" ("Knockout" 3.24). Captain Montgomery died in a shootout at the end of season three. Victoria "Iron" Gates (Penny Johnson-Jerald) replaced him for seasons four through seven. Gate's tough-minded character forced Castle to earn a place in the precinct by fitting in and solving cases. Reviewer Courtney Morrison hoped "she (Gates) ends up being a *Castle* shipper like the rest of us" (*Castle: Season Premier Review*).

### **Through the Seasons**

Marlowe shaped the story of Castle and Beckett like a soap opera, an interesting choice since one of Fillion's previous roles was on *Desperate Housewives*, Susan Sullivan starred on *Falcon Crest* and Seamus Dever had a role in *General Hospital*. The story line began with charismatic characters in a distinctive setting. The classic theme of boy meets girl soon changed to two people seeking love. The characters' first meeting was a defining moment. There was a connection and conflict. Beckett described Castle as "an immature, egotistical, self-centered jackass" ("Probable Cause" 5.5). However, Castle's boyish charm, humor, and concern for her won her over.

The theme of two people finding love moved the characters through danger, doubt, and separation. Most of the formulaic episodes moved the relationship forward or backwards. Shippers fretted over the setbacks, but delighted in the episodes that highlighted changes in the couple's relationship from flirtation, to dating, intimacy, and marriage. They considered episodes

that didn't do either "filler." An easy way of categorizing the eight seasons of *Castle* is to divide them in half. The first half is a tease. How long will it take for Castle and Beckett to commit romantically? In the second half the new couple were engaged and married.

### ***Season 1***

Marlowe expanded the pilot to create the first episode. ABC executives produced only ten episodes because they had some doubt the series would succeed. Nine of them dealt with murders and one with a kidnapping. Producers filmed episodes in Los Angeles and New York so the interior scenes of the precinct changed. The initial episode established the plot and outlined the characters. The writers depicted Beckett as a determined and professional detective. In one scene, she kicked open a door. Katic recalled later that she put her high heel through the door ("Bonus scenes" 1.1).

Castle earned Beckett's trust by episode 5, "A Chill Goes Through Her Veins" (1.5). She showed him mementos of her mother, Johanna, and shared the details of her murder. Esposito and Ryan gave Castle the file on the murder, knowing full well the consequences if Beckett found out. Several episodes showed the lighter side of Beckett, the part that she kept hidden since her mother's death. Castle discovered information about Johanna's murder in the season's last episode, "A Death in the Family" (1.10). He knew that if he told Beckett, it would endanger their relationship, but believed he had to tell her the truth. The TV audience had to wait until the next season to discover the consequences of Castle's action.

### ***Season 2***

The writers fully developed the characters and plot during the 24 episodes of this season. Episodes treated fans to a steady diet of cop and pop. Season 2 opened with a scene shot in the precinct that depicted a promo for Castle's new book, *Heat Wave*. To Beckett's chagrin, the promo highlighted attractive women in bare-midriff police outfits. She fumed, but the Captain reminded her it was good publicity. Their pursuit of a murderer led Castle to a poker game with Russian mobsters. Beckett's quick thinking saved Castle's life. Afterwards, Castle made a sincere apology to Beckett for meddling in her mother's case. Beckett replied, "See you tomorrow" ("Deep in Death" 2.1).

Castle explained the allure of police procedural dramas. He told the members of the homicide squad, “You guys should really sell tickets. I mean, you’ve got everything, madness, mayhem” (“Double Down” 2.2). A number of emotional events occurred in the cliffhanger for the season. Alexis went off to college. Kate almost confessed her feelings for Castle just before his ex-wife dragged him off to the Hamptons. Beckett began a romance with another man. One shipper vented, “THAT EPISODE BROKE MY FREAKIN’ HEART!” (Garner).

### ***Season 3***

*Castle* reached the height of its popularity; 12.93 million viewers watched the last episode of the season (*Castle* TV Show). TV critic Morrison noted, “There are a few things *Castle* knows how to do better than most shows on TV, present cases filled with multiple twists and showcasing serious chemistry” (Review “Countdown”). Half the episodes focused on dark serious crimes. The rest focused on cultural icons such as male strippers, steam punks, soap opera stars, and beauty queens.

Lanie and Esposito (Esplanie) began a sizzling relationship. Castle was jealous of Beckett’s handsome suitor, Josh, a cardiac surgeon (Victor Webster). Castle derisively called him, “motorcycle boy.” Castle’s ex-wife Gina returned as a love interest and competitor for Alexis’ affections. Morrison of *TV Fanatic* warned, “Gina has got to go” (Review Anatomy). Then the couple encountered Natalie, the actress playing Nikki Heat, in a film based on Castle’s book. Castle’s sublimation of his romantic desire for Beckett into writing prompted Natalie to identify it as “verbal masturbation.” (“Nikki Heat” 3.11).

The couple’s first real embrace occurred when the two pretended they were a heavily inebriated romantic couple. Their ruse quickly became passionate and intimate, shocking both of them (“Knockdown” 3.13). Morrison observed, “most viewers know the main characters can’t be together yet, but the hope that they will, keeps them watching episode after episode” (Review “Countdown”). The devastating season finale written by Will Beal left shippers inconsolable. In continuing to investigate the murder of Beckett’s mother, Castle set off a chain of events that resulted in the death of Captain Montgomery. During Beckett’s eulogy at the funeral, a sniper shot her in the chest. Castle rushed to her, held her in his arms, and said, “I love you” (“Knockout” 3.24).

### ***Season 4***

This season opened with a scene of Beckett in a hospital bed holding hands with Josh and ended with her going to bed with Castle in his apartment (“Rise” 4.1). The transformation of their relationship from Beckett’s denial that Castle had declared his love for her to realization their love was reciprocal enthralled shippers. Fans found enticing several other developments in the story line. Castle’s relationship with Alexis matured. Lanie and Espo continued their passionate affair. Ryan married Jenny played by Juliana Dever, wife of Sean Dever (Ryan) in real life.

Five episodes were dark and serious. The rest emphasized police procedure or pop culture phenomenon such as super heroes, ghosts, Elvis, dog shows, fairy tales, and zombies. In “Heroes and Villains” (4.2) a show about super heroes, Beckett said she liked “Electra.” Probably, observed Castle, because they both buried their emotions. As the story developed the couple sorted through a bevy of super heroes, only to discover that “The Lone Vengeance” was one of their own, Officer Anne Hastings. Shippers grasped the irony when Beckett told her, “You’re a good cop. You’ve got somebody who cares for you. Don’t be so driven by the past that you throw away your future” (4.2).

Shippers knew that Beckett’s observation about Lanie and Espo applied to her relationship with Castle. “It’s so obvious. They both want to be together, but neither will admit to it” (“Cuffed” 4.10). “The Blue Butterfly” (4.14) was a spoofy 1947 period piece redolent with cheesy dialogue. Lanie demonstrated her singing talents and ability to work the room. Shippers delighted in a kiss and an “I love you,” between Castle and Beckett. In “Limey” (4.20), Becket commented about her relationship with Castle, “It’s been weird between us lately,” Lanie replied, “Lately? Kate, it’s been weird for four years” (4.20).

Guest star Adam Baldwin reprised his relationship with Fillion as a bad cop in “Headhunters” (4.21). Fun, fads, and frustration reached a climax in the season’s finale. Castle and Beckett kissed passionately and headed for the bedroom (“Always” 4.23). Laurel Brown, a reviewer for *buddy TV*, shed tears. “I cried because everything familiar about four seasons of *Castle* was over. And I cried because of the amazing future we can expect from Castle in season 5 (buddy TV).

## ***Season 5***

Castle and Beckett awakened in his bedroom ready to explore a panoply of wackiness in the twenty-four episodes of season 5. There were four serious episodes. One involved Senator Bracken, the man behind the conspiracy to murder Beckett's mother; two dealt with the kidnapping of Alexis, featuring actor James Brolin as Castle's father; and one starred Seamus Dever. It is difficult to categorize any episode because there was always so much going on. Reviewers classified the remainder of the episodes as emphasizing catching criminals or having fun with cultural icons.

Alex Navarro, *Tv.com* reviewer, commented on two episodes. He enjoyed the takeoff on storage locker shows in "Castle 'Secret's Safe With Me' Review: Yuuuuuuuuup!" However, he disliked "Scared to Death" (5.17), a spoof of horror movies, even though its guest star was Wes Craven, the author of the slasher movie *Nightmare on Elm Street*. Navarro groused that he wished the writers would stick to solving crimes (Review).

Fillion is at his comedic best when his character is upset or obsessed, which is most of the time. There were a multitude of quirks, bumps, and diversions to overcome as Castle and Beckett journeyed toward commitment. The crime-fighting couple decided to keep their new intimate relationship secret thus offering writers endless opportunities for situation comedy. Yet, there was new depth to their relationship. Castle counseled Beckett not to be upset with the filming of a documentary at the precinct in "Swan Song" (5.7). He told her the cameras were not going away and he wanted them "to see what I see" about her (5.7).

Beckett blurted out the words shippers wanted to hear "Rick, I love you" in "Still" (5.22). Morrison observed, "As a Caskett shipper, I can't help but say, IT'S ABOUT TIME" (Moving Forward). Beckett accepted Castle's proposal of marriage and a diamond engagement ring in the last episode of the season, "Watershed" (5.24). One shipper, May, wrote, "God, it was amazing! I spent so much time squealing my voice is all messed up now" (Mitovich).

## ***Season 6***

This season took viewers from marriage planning to a devastating finale. Ratings remained high, averaging 12.63 million viewers for the year (*Castle* TV show). *Castle* was a top 25 show every year since its very first season. The plot grew in a logical way during the twenty-three episodes, except for Kate's new job in Washington D.C. Why give her another partner when she

has Castle? There were four serious episodes involving danger to Kate, Ryan, and Espo. In the remaining fourteen episodes, the couple solved crimes and overcame obstacles to their love.

Shippers hated Alexis' chirpy new boyfriend, Pi, (Myko Oliver). One fan described him as the most irritating character ever appearing on the show (bizkit41). Castle considered a marriage ceremony in space, no doubt to get away from intense wedding preparations. Two episodes featuring babies and weddings were absolute delights for shippers. In "The Good, the Bad, and the Baby" (6.10), Castle and Beckett took care of an infant. Castle asked Beckett, "Wanna have a baby? Come on, it'll be fun!" (6.10). Fans were giddy at the prospect. One shipper observed in all seriousness, "I really don't see a Caskett baby happening in the show though, that would sort of be the end of it, because how do they explain that at work?" (Castle-Beckett Relationship).

A Castle-Beckett wedding meant a bridal gown. In "Dressed to Kill" (6.14) Beckett and Castle investigated the murder of the assistant to the editor of *Modern Fashion Magazine*. The editor recognized Beckett as a former model and offered her a wedding dress. The dress featured a re-embroidered French silver bullion lace sheath filled out by a silk taffeta and an organza skirt. Austrian crystal highlighted the black bodice. *Castle* costume designer Luke Rechie created this one-of-a-kind dress. Off-the-rack it would cost over \$30,000. Several reviewers asked fans if they liked the dress. In one poll, seventy-two percent loathed it (Barnes). Reviewer/shipper Christine Orlando, of *TvFanatic* in, "I hate the dress!" fulminated, "when that dress showed up at her home, I found myself hoping that this apartment might blow up too just to get rid of it."

The couple tried to obtain a marriage license in the season finale, "For Better or Worse" (6.24). The clerk discovered Beckett was already married. She confessed to a short-lived college fling. She and Castle embarked on an amusing complicated search to find her husband and persuade him to sign the divorce papers. Once they resolved this crisis the couple prepared for the wedding. Castle was twenty minutes away driving a rented Rolls Royce. Another driver forced him off the road. Castle's car burst into flames. Beckett arrived at the scene in her wedding gown. She saw the car, fell to the ground, covered her face with her hands, and sobbed.

### ***Season 7***

The season opened with Beckett crying in front of Castle's burning car. Water from fire hoses destroyed her expensive gown. Viewers poured cold water on the show's ratings as well. Nielsen ratings dropped from 10.75 million viewers for the first episode to 8.44 million for the

last episode (*Castle* TV show). They did perk up a bit for Castle and Beckett's long awaited marriage in "The Time of Our Lives, (7.6). Writers tried a number of unsuccessful story lines to stem the decline in ratings in season 7.

Season 7 featured all five *Castle* genres: serious, procedural, pop culture, showcases, and relationships. There were seven serious police crime solving shows including one in which Castle saved a hijacked airplane and two episodes featuring sinister villains, Dr. Kelly Nieman and serial killer Jerry Tyson. Popular culture episodes focused on a Western theme, Castle's fascination with action heroes, and a murder on Mars. Dever and Huerta starred in their own episodes. Weddings, babies, and farewell parties were the only things that kept shippers glued to their televisions.

Castle and Beckett married. Reviewer Orlando observed that shippers like herself, "got what they had waited for, from the first episode of the first season" (Review 7.6). She liked the bride's blouse, but had some doubts about her pants. In Orlando's discussion of the wedding with fans, Francesco noted she forgave the writers for not spending enough time on the wedding when Beckett told Castle, "When I was vulnerable, you were strong" ("The Time of Our Lives" 7.6). Shipper Kathleen observed, "Loved it, loved it, and loved it. I guess I was one of few people who didn't hate the season 6 finale as I was hoping the writers would make up for the ruined wedding" (Review 7.6).

The question of whether Castle and Beckett should have a child came up again during the wedding. Orlando answered this delicate question of whether Beckett should start a family as if these fictional characters were real people, "Yes, just not right away. I'd prefer to see the newlyweds enjoy their time together for a while...and a little one could make the crime fighting more difficult" (Review 7.16).

Aside from the wedding, critic Laura Akers thought the show looked tired. "It was as if the writers created a random TV procedural dialogue generator and took most of their inspiration from that" (*Castle* Season 6). The writers reprised and reworked stories from past seasons. They lost the humor that held the various genres together. Relation shippers grumbled at the delay in holding the wedding. Nothing seemed to lessen the ratings slide.

The finale of season 7 provided the perfect opportunity to end the series with a crescendo of congratulations at an award banquet. Writer Michael Connelly presented Castle with the Poe's

Pen Lifetime Achievement Award. Beckett praised her husband, “I’m proud to have been his inspiration and I am proud to be his wife” (“Hollander’s Woods” 7.23). Beckett, Alexis, Martha, Lanie, Esposito, Ryan, and Gates toasted each other. Orlando revealed that the writers wrote and the producers filmed the show before they knew if the network would renew the show. “I’m thankful they ended it with the focus on camaraderie, family and love” (Review 7.23). Much to the cast’s surprise, ABC executives decided on one more year.

### *Season 8*

The number of viewers for *Castle* dropped from 10.69 million people for the last episode in season 7 to 6.8 million for the first show of season 8, the show’s lowest rating ever (*Castle* show). Head writer Andrew Marlowe and Terri Miller left to work on a possible *Castle* spinoff. ABC brought in Paul Winter and Alexi Hawley as showrunners (Head writer and producer). Ratings improved slightly over the year, but did not come close to those of the last episode of season 7.

The writers could not have done more to alienate fans. Viewers did not understand or care for the convoluted CIA conspiracy, LokSat, which separated Castle and Becket. The showrunners also brought in Vikram (Sunkrish Bala) as a partner for Beckett and Haley (Toks Olgundoye) as a partner for Castle in his detective agency. Smartsenior emailed the *Entertainment Weekly* Website, “When the writers don’t want to write the show we love anymore, we know the end is pretty close” (Highfill).

Orlando of *TvFanatic* found it all incredibly frustrating. She expressed a desire to hit Vikram because he made five pro-separation or anti-Castle remarks. (*Castle* Season 8 Episode 7 Review). The showrunners brought Castle and Beckett together again in episode 12. Orlando described the moment as the one “when all is right with the universe” (*Castle* Season 8, Episode 12 Review). This was the time for well-written scripts and possibly another season. Instead, the writers provided a grab bag of episodes. They featured less of the show’s principals, more of the superfluous Vikram and Haley, a putrid whiff of LokSat, and the ranting’s of an escaped psychopath.

The showrunners ignored what Marlow called “the dance,” the chemistry between Castle and Beckett. They sought to transform the show into a police procedural starring Fillion, Dever, and Huerta. On April 18, 2016, the network announced they had renewed their contracts for one year,

but not Katic's and Jones'. The reaction to this announcement was overwhelmingly negative. Fans took to social media and actively campaigned for the series' cancellation (Castle Trivia). For them there was no show without Beckett.

The writers created an absurd finale that squandered any residual goodwill held by the fans. Perhaps, they wanted to end Beckett's role. Caleb Brown, a minor character who did the dirty work for LokSat, suddenly appeared and shot both Castle and Beckett. Gasping for life Beckett crawled toward Castle. A commercial intervened, then an abrupt cut to a contrived "deus ex machina." It was seven years later. Castle, Beckett, and their three children talked around the breakfast table. Three days before this pitiful episode aired, ABC cancelled *Castle*. Reviewer Lauren Piesteri observed, "So thank you, ABC.... We're all happier because of it" (*Castle* Finale).

### **Narrative Devices**

The creator and writers of *Castle* employed a number of literary devices to develop a loyal audience. The first type centered around cementing the loyalty of Nathan Fillion's large fan base by the use of hidden references to his considerable body of work. Marlowe called these "Easter eggs." The writers also developed symbols, rituals, tropes, and running gags that bound fans to the show with a "secret handshake."

### ***Fillion Fans***

Stana Katic was a relative newcomer to acting compared to Nathan Fillion. His body of work included roles in the soap operas *One Life to Live* and *Desperate Housewives*, the science fiction show *Firefly*, the film *Saving Private Ryan*, and the teen television classic *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Marlowe wrote in references to Fillion's earlier work in the form of hidden features, artifacts known only to a select audience. The phrase "Always" appeared in the first episode of *Firefly*. Captain Malcom Reynolds, played by Fillion, asked his second-in-command if she was ready. Zoe replied, "Always" (Whedon). The writers used "always" as a verbal cue for the depth of Castle and Beckett's devotion. They were intimate for the first time in the "Always" episode (4.23). The song "Always" by Robert Duncan plays in the background. PI Joe Flynn, Castle's alter ego in "The Blue Butterfly" (4.14), employed this meaningful word. Castle had the bracelet he gave Beckett engraved "Always." Castle told Beckett, "I've always loved you, always" in "Driven" (7.1).

Rick dedicated his book *High Heat* (2016) to K. B. “for always and more.” Castle never mentioned the name “James Bond” during “When the Bough Breaks” (2.5). However, it was obvious he referred to the Scottish icon when he mentioned “a certain famous British spy” when hinting he might be the author of a three book prelaunch of this famous character. Castle’s long lost father revealed that he gave his ten-year-old son a copy of the Bond classic, *Casino Royale*.

The couple investigated the murder of a fan who organized a recreation of the sci-fi TV show, *Nebula 9*, at a Science Fiction convention in “The Final Frontier” (5.6). Beckett was part of a fan group in college. Castle argued *Nebula 9* paled in comparison to sci-fi shows like “Star Trek, Battlestar, that Joss Whedon show ...”(5.6). His oblique reference was to *Firefly*, a show written and created by Whedon, in which Nathan Fillion starred. Castle referred to something exciting as “shiny,” a term used on *Firefly*.

### ***Secrets for Shippers***

For six seasons, inside knowledge strengthened the bond with the fans. The creator and writers of Castle used symbols, rituals, tropes, and running gags to condition shippers. Victor Turner, the anthropologist, observed symbols were “dynamic entities”... “patterned by events and informed by passion, sexuality, friendship, and politics” (96). Every introduction to a Castle episode offered a sequence of symbols: a whistled theme song, the title appeared letter by letter, a pen writing with blood, and then a dead body. They signal, this is *Castle*. The writers and producers sometimes experimented with the colors in the show’s introduction to fit the mood of the episode (Wetpaint). The Utpe2012 channel showcased these various openings in their own video (Castle – Introductions).

Symbols like a ring and a watch reminded Beckett of her mother. The empty chair next to Beckett’s desk stood for Castle in absentia. When he isn’t there, Beckett looked at the chair wistfully, wishing he were there. In “The Dead Pool” (3.21), Castle reserved an empty chair at the weekly poker game upon the death for his friend mystery writer Stephen J. Cannell. The elevator at the precinct symbolized transitions. Fans watched Castle’s facial expression before or after the doors opened.

Humans perform rituals or patterns of human behavior in accordance with social custom (Turner 249). During the height of the show’s popularity, one could order Beckett’s favorite coffee drink, a grande skinny latte, two pumps of sugar-free vanilla, by asking your barista for a

“Beckett.” Castle made it a habit to bring her one every morning. Castle told her that he brought the coffee just to see her smile (“Always” 4.23). When he doesn't bring coffee, it is a sign their relationship was in trouble. When Beckett refused the coffee, it signaled she was angry. With the maturing of their relationship, Beckett sometimes brought Castle coffee. In one episode Castle drank his coffee in a *Castle* mug. In several episodes, a cop told Castle he couldn't bring a cup of coffee onto a crime scene. Castle always did it anyway, and got away with it.

A handshake is a ritual of greeting and acceptance. Between Castle and Beckett it became much more, especially when they hide their relationship from the rest of the precinct. There was a particularly sensuous one in “Secrets Safe with Me” (5.3). Castle held out his hand for a handshake. “This is me, softly touching your face, pulling you in for a long slow kiss.” Beckett shook his hand while rubbing her thumb on the back of his hand. “And this is me, kissing you back, running my hands through your hair.” Castle enthusiastically exclaimed, “Best handshake ever” (5.3).

The ritual of sitting on a playground swing set meant it was time for Beckett and Castle to have a serious talk. “Rise” (4.1) concluded with the couple sitting on a swing set. She held a copy of Castle's latest novel. The fourth season finale “Always” (4.23) ended with Beckett on a swing contemplating her resignation from the NYPD, and near death, before returning to Castle's apartment and declaring her love for him. Castle proposed to Beckett on the swing set in “Valkyrie” (6.1). In a funny poignant moment, Beckett acted confused. She thought Castle was breaking up with her. Instead he offered her a ring. Castle told her, “You do know how this works, right?” (6.1). The swings returned in “Hollander's Woods” (7.23) when the two discussed the possibility of her running for state senate.

A “trope” is a commonly recurring literary device that means something more than its literal meaning. The writers of the series enjoyed playing with tropes about murders dealing with vampires, haunted houses, alien abductions, science fiction conventions and cosplay (*TvTropes*). When rescuing Castle, Beckett greeted him with the reoccurring phrase, “I'm so glad you're okay.” The words meant Beckett was concerned and cared about his well-being. In “A Chill Goes Through Her Veins” (1.5) Castle remarked that “good night” is boring, while “until tomorrow” is more hopeful. When their commitment was solid, “see you tomorrow” is the line they used. When either was dissatisfied with the relationship, they said, “good night.”

Castle and Beckett often finished each other's sentences, ending with them simultaneously announcing the name of the killer. This sign of rapport was a source of good-natured ribbing from their colleagues. When Castle displayed this behavior with another woman, it was an occasion for jealousy. Castle avoided building theory this way and then commented on how out of sync they were in "The Limey" (4.20). Ryan and Esposito also displayed this trope.

Running gags are staples of situation comedies since the days of early television when Jackie Gleason promised Alice that, "You're going to the moon!" The phrase in which Castle declared, "I AM really ruggedly handsome" is featured throughout the life of the show and in promos. It is a tongue in cheek way to poke fun at his conceit.

Marlowe promoted one of Castle's novels in every episode, often in the hands of Detective Ryan. Sharp-eyed viewers noticed an ad for Castle's book on the subway wall in "Murder Most Fowl" (3.8). The running joke, "Why did you kill off Derrick Storm?" first appeared in "Flowers for Your Grave" (1.1). Prolific writer James Patterson told Castle he was glad Castle killed off Storm. It meant less competition. A chef at a restaurant jokingly told Castle, "I ought to punch you in the mouth for killing Derrick Storm like that" ("Food to Die for" 2.22). Alexis reminded Castle that he killed Derrick Storm because he was bored ("The Mistress Always Knocks Twice" 2.16). Castle's novels provided a lucrative source of income for the writers of the show. Cultivation had its rewards.

### **Merchandizing *Castle***

Dedicated fans demonstrated economic power. In their desire to integrate Castle into their daily life, they purchased a number of items. Café Press offered a throw pillow with the phrase, "Castle, Beckett, Caskett, Always." The ABC store sold viewers merchandise emblazoned with the sentence, "I am ruggedly handsome." ABC offered the public nine copyrighted novels that formed an integral plot element in the show: *Heat Wave*, *Naked Heat*, *Heat Rises*, *Frozen Heat*, *Deadly Heat*, *Raging Heat*, *Storm Front*, *Wild Storm*, and *High Heat*. The novels featured a version of the TV series with Nikki Heat and Jameson Rook as the two main characters. After the advent of a new season, ABC included chapters from Castle's books on its website. ABC also authorized three eBooks; a graphic novel published by Marvel Comics, a hidden object mystery game, and even trading cards.

The use of a nom de plume is standard literary practice. *Entertainment* reviewer Steve Margolis claimed to know the name of the real author of the *Heat* series. He ruled out novelist James Patterson because of his inability to write a love scene. Margolis concluded a woman wrote the passionate romantic encounters in the *Heat* series. According to Margolis, the voice of the writer, particularly the tell of the use of the word “gumball” to describe the portable light police position on top of unmarked cars, pointed to one of the *Castle* writers, Terri E. Miller, wife of the show’s creator, Andrew Marlowe. However, no one has ever claimed authorship. The large amount of income generated by these ancillary products may account for the writers’ desire to continue the show long after the story line had run its course.

## **Conclusion**

Networks do not cancel top fifty shows because of ratings alone. There are usually other contributing factors: falling viewership in a particular demographic group, increasing expenses, or conflict on the set. All of these played a part in the demise of *Castle*. Committed shippers would have continued to watch a show emphasizing the interaction between Castle and Beckett. Instead, the writers gave them separation, arcane plots, and superfluous characters.

The writers somehow forgot that since the first episode of season one, when Beckett seductively whispered, “You have no idea” into Castle’s ear that the premise of the show changed from one about a writer and a detective who solved murder mysteries to one about two people falling in love who happen to solve mysteries. Why the writers wanted to return to a crime procedural drama enlivened by Fillion’s comic ability is a mystery. Perhaps they were like Castle in the first scene of episode 1, season 1. Gina, his first wife, berated him for killing off Derrick Storm, the lead character of his best-selling novels. Castle replied, “Derrick used to be fun. Now it’s just work” (“Flowers For Your Grave” 1.1).

This paper described how the writers of *Castle* cultivated shippers, a loyal fan base devoted to the characters in the show. When the writers deviated from the established scenario, viewers voiced their displeasure on social media. A loud, public outcry after the network failed to renew Stana Katic’s contract forced network executives to cancel the show.

The love, laughter, and suspense viewers found in *Castle* helped people escape from the trials and cares of everyday life. A multitude of relationships between kindred spirits captivated fans. What remains is the memory of a brilliant show, kept alive by reruns and DVDs. And, of course,

an academic paper to help relive those moments when time stood still in the face of a magnetic attraction between two fascinating people who entertained and engaged their loyal and devoted audience, *Always!*

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“‘Woman Inherits the Earth’”: Deconstructing *Jurassic Park* as an Early Text in Third-Wave  
Feminism

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**Abstract:** *Jurassic Park* is popularly cited as one of the greatest science fiction films ever produced. An instant pop culture phenomenon, the film takes place in the eponymous theme park, which features genetically recreated dinosaurs as the main attractions. Although *Jurassic Park*'s overarching theme is man's interference with nature, this essay argues that *Jurassic Park* also functions as an early text in third-wave feminism, which originated in the early 1990s. As its administration is entirely male, *Jurassic Park* can be viewed as a patriarchal society, with its captive dinosaurs – who are all engineered to be female – serving as second-class citizens, thus functioning as an inclusive metaphor for femininity. To support this thesis, this interpretive research essay employs a critical textual analysis of *Jurassic Park*, coding for specific dialogue and scenes that support a feminist interpretation of the film. This textual analysis is contrasted with a literature review consisting of relevant texts concerning the ideologies of third-wave feminism. The ultimate goal of this essay is to assist in the normalization and promotion of feminism in popular media, especially through reexamining such a culturally enduring media text as *Jurassic Park*.

**Keywords:** *Jurassic Park*, third wave, feminism, gender roles, patriarchy, womb theory.

**Resumen:** Parque Jurásico es citado popularmente como uno de los mejores filmes de ciencia ficción que se han producido. La cinta, que fue un fenómeno de cultura pop instantáneo, tiene lugar en el parque temático epónimo que cuenta con dinosaurios genéticamente recreados como su atracción principal. Mientras que el tema general de Parque Jurásico es la interferencia del hombre con la naturaleza, este ensayo argumenta que Parque Jurásico también sirve como uno de los primeros textos del feminismo de tercera ola, que tuvo su origen al principio de los años 1990. Ya que su administración está completamente compuesta de hombres, Parque Jurásico puede ser visto como una sociedad patriarcal, con sus dinosaurios en cautiverio—que están todos modificados para ser hembras—representando a los ciudadanos de segunda clase, a la misma vez creando una metáfora inclusiva de la femineidad. Para darle apoyo a esta tesis, este ensayo interpretativo de investigación emplea un análisis textual crítico de Parque Jurásico, codificando

el diálogo específico y las escenas que apoyan una interpretación feminista del filme. Este análisis textual está contrastado con una revisión bibliográfica que consiste en textos relevantes que tienen que ver con las ideologías del feminismo de tercera ola. El objetivo final de este ensayo es asistir en la normalización y promoción del feminismo en los medios populares, especialmente a través de la re examinación de un texto tan culturalmente duradero como lo es Parque Jurásico.

**Palabras clave:** Parque Jurásico, tercera ola, feminismo, roles de género, patriarcado, teoría del útero

**摘要:** “侏罗纪公园”被列为最受欢迎的科幻电影之一。作为一种即时的流行文化现象，“侏罗纪公园”的电影场景为同名的主题公园，该公园的主要特色是通过基因进行再创造的恐龙。尽管影片的首要主题是人类对自然的干预，但本文认为，“侏罗纪公园”同时还充当了第三次女权主义浪潮（始于20世纪九十年代初）中早期文本的作用。由于影片中的管理层都是男性，它也可以被视为一个男权社会，其中包括被囚禁的恐龙—它们都被基因改造为雌性—作为第二阶级，因此充当了女性特征的隐喻。为支持这一观点，本文的诠释性研究（interpretive research）对影片运用了批判性文本分析，为影片中诠释女权主义者的特定对话和场景进行编码。该文本分析与一项文献评论进行了对比，后者包括与第三次女权主义浪潮观念相联系的文本。本文的最终目的是协助女权主义在流行媒体中的正常化（normalization）和推广，尤其是通过重新检验像“侏罗纪公园”这样造成持久文化现象的影片。

**关键词:** 侏罗纪公园，第三次浪潮，女权主义，性别角色，男权，子宫理论

*Jurassic Park*, originally released in 1993, is one of the highest-grossing films in history. Adapted from the 1990 novel by Michael Crichton and directed by Steven Spielberg, *Jurassic Park* takes place in the eponymous theme park, located on remote Pacific island Isla Nublar, which features genetically recreated dinosaurs as its main attractions. A group of experts, consisting of paleontologist Alan Grant, paleobotanist Ellie Sattler, and mathematician Ian Malcolm, are invited by John Hammond, the owner and CEO of Jurassic Park, to be its first

visitors. However, after a power failure liberates the dinosaurs, the animals proceed to kill the majority of the park's administration, and leave the tour group fighting for the lives.

In the two decades following its release, critics have frequently cited *Jurassic Park* as one of the greatest science fiction films ever produced. The film was an instant commercial success, breaking numerous box office records, and quickly evolved into a global pop culture phenomenon. *Jurassic Park* has been credited for reigniting popular interest in dinosaurs, and its innovative visual effects are heralded as groundbreaking (Morris 212). Three sequels to *Jurassic Park* have since been produced, although none have been able to replicate the critical success or cultural impact of the original film. As with much of Crichton's body of work, *Jurassic Park* functions as a cautionary tale against man's interference with nature, a perspective which carries over into the film's various sequels. However, there is one ideology in the *Jurassic Park* franchise wholly unique to the original film: feminism.

There is significant potential in deconstructing *Jurassic Park* as an early text in third-wave feminism. There is established historical precedent for science fiction narratives being designed to "provide social commentary and resist social norms, however explicitly or subtly, through metaphors and conventionally less realistic settings" (Bressler and Lengel 23). Socially conscious science fiction narratives customarily reflect contemporary social concerns. Third-wave feminism is popularly regarded as commencing in the early 1990s (Snyder 176), the time period during which *Jurassic Park* was originally produced and released. One of the film's major plot points is that the entirety of the park's dinosaur population is female, in order to prevent them from breeding. Consequently, this interpretive research essay contends that *Jurassic Park*'s dinosaurs serve as an all-inclusive metaphor for femininity, and their emancipation in the film's climax is a metaphor for social movements pursuing sexual equality. Thus, this essay complements greater research into gender and sexual roles in popular media. Third-wave feminism – and feminism as a whole – encompasses a number of different ideologies and movements, many of which are still treated with dismissal, prejudice and even outright hostility within patriarchal communities. The ultimate aim of this essay is to help normalize and promote feminism in popular media, especially by revisiting a culturally enduring media text such as *Jurassic Park*.

## **Framework & Methodology**

The development of third-wave feminism is attributed to writer Rebecca Walker, who first coined the term in 1992. Third-wave feminism is debated as lasting through the mid 2000s, until the movement was tentatively succeeded by fourth wave-feminism (Diamond 184). Throughout its history, the exact definition and subject matter of third-wave feminism have been debated; however, an accepted tenet of third-wave feminism is the rejection of “women” as a universal category of identity. Instead, third-wave feminism emphasizes intersectionality and the individual experiences of women, and much literature on third-wave feminism is culled from first-person narratives. Third-wave feminism accounts for disparate factors such as race, religion and sexuality, recognizing that femininity is too heterogeneous for the outdated and limited categorization of women from second-wave feminism (Snyder 184).

The purpose of this interpretive research essay is to establish that *Jurassic Park* functions as an early marker in the visual representation of third-wave feminism in popular American cinema, utilizing feminist theory for its theoretical framework. To support this thesis, this essay applies textual analysis to *Jurassic Park*, coding for specific scenes that support a feminist interpretation. Textual analysis, a prominent research method for analyzing media content, is used to distinguish “between the primary, linguistic meaning of a [media] text’s component parts and the secondary, or textual meaning which those parts acquire through a structuring process internal to the text or to the genre” (Altman 15). Textual analysis includes several different systematic methods, including rhetorical criticism. Rhetorical criticism, which is utilized for this essay, is used to identify and explicate persuasive messages embedded in communication texts by their authors, intentionally or otherwise (Jasinski, 2001). This analysis is subsequently compared and contrasted with a literature review composed of relevant texts regarding third-wave feminist ideologies.

## **Analysis**

Besides Sattler, the other major female character in *Jurassic Park* is Alexis “Lex” Murphy, Hammond’s teenage granddaughter. Both Sattler and Lex are strong female characters that demonstrate independent agency. Most notably, it is Sattler who restores power to the park during the film’s climax, and Lex who reboots the park’s security’s systems. Sattler’s own feminism is made explicit in both the novel and film. In the novel, when Hammond’s lawyer expresses surprise that Sattler is a scientist, exclaiming, “You’re a woman,” Sattler dryly

responds, “These things happen” (Crichton 51). Although this exchange is not replicated in the film, a similar incident occurs when Hammond suggests that it is more appropriate for him to restore power to the park, as he is a man; Sattler exasperatedly responds that, “We can discuss sexism in survival situations when I get back.” Additionally, Sattler is never sexualized in the film – instead, the flamboyant Malcolm spends most of *Jurassic Park* displaying his chest through open shirts, a deliberate role reversal. However, *Jurassic Park*’s feminist sensibilities are most prominently demonstrated through its dinosaurs, which challenge hegemonic gender roles in society.

After Hammond introduces Grant, Sattler and Malcolm to one of Jurassic Park’s attractions, a Brachiosaurus, he takes them to lunch and invites them to share their initial thoughts on the park. However, he is dismayed when all three experts question the moral implications of cloning, as well as his ability to manage and control the park’s prehistoric ecosystem. Malcolm argues that Hammond’s actions represent “the rape of the natural world,” a sentiment shared by Sattler, who points out to Hammond:

You have plants in this building that are poisonous; you picked them because they look good. But these are aggressive living things that have no idea what century they’re in, and they’ll defend themselves, violently if necessary.

Sattler’s dialogue in this scene serves two purposes. First, it calls attention to Hammond’s recklessness and Jurassic Park’s inherent danger; second, it highlights a common misconception about femininity. Flowering plants are popularly regarded as feminine due to their beauty and perceived docility, and therefore harmless (Tessler 3). However, Sattler is asserting that femininity is not diametrically opposed to aggression or dangerous capability, which are culturally regarded as more masculine attributes (Donaldson 645). Not only does this neatly compliment the third-wave feminist philosophy that “third-wavers [are] entitled to interact with men as equals” (Snyder 179), but also alludes to the legitimate danger posed by Jurassic Park’s female dinosaur population.

There are numerous species of dinosaurs on display in Jurassic Park’s exhibits. While each species varies in appearance and geologic period of origin, every animal on Isla Nublar is united through a single, defining trait: their sex, as Jurassic Park engineers each of their dinosaurs to be female. As explained in the film by Henry Wu, Jurassic Park’s chief geneticist, “All vertebrae

embryos are inherently female anyway, they just require an extra hormone at the right developmental stage to make them male. We simply deny them that.” This is a security measure to prevent the dinosaurs from multiplying in the scenario that they escape the island and reach the mainland. However, this revelation can be considered in an alternate light when considering that the entirety of Jurassic Park’s administration is male. Subsequently, Jurassic Park can be viewed as a patriarchal society whose entire economy is based on the monetization of femininity. Patriarchal social structures are characterized by male privilege, with males maintaining primary or exclusive access to positions of authority (Johnson 6; 165), characteristics that Jurassic Park embodies. In this society, only males such as Wu and Hammond occupy roles of power or control; as Jurassic Park’s owner and CEO, Hammond especially serves as the society’s most influential figure. In contrast, the entirety of Isla Nublar’s female population is literally caged for the purpose of amusement.

There is further subtext to be derived from the dinosaurs’ inability to breed through the application of a psychoanalytic concept known as womb envy. Womb envy is a theory in feminist psychology that suggests men feel an anxiety towards women that is derived from envy towards the female reproductive system. Originally coined by psychoanalyst Karen Horney, womb envy is a universal concept, as “Anthropological studies show many cultural practices [are] designed to compensate men in fantasy because they cannot bear children in reality” (Ende et al. 167). While early hunter-gatherer or foraging societies demonstrated equality between sexes, much of modern society is predominantly patriarchal, particularly Western societies that ascribe to Abrahamic religions. In these monotheistic religions, “the womb is described in the scriptures as merely the property of the male God, who appropriates the woman’s role in childbirth” (170). Subsequently, Western societies where these religions are popular established male authority over women’s reproductive rights. Additionally, the anxiety that men feel due to womb envy commonly manifests as femiphobia. The debasement and depreciation that men display towards women serve as a psychological defense against womb envy, as contempt is a socially accepted form of male emotion (Bayne 153). The male narcissism described above is a direct product of patriarchal social systems:

Men seem to have envied the fact that the “inferior” sex, placed on earth to serve them, has the exclusive ability to bring forth life. [Patriarchal religions] encouraged men to have a grandiose self-image. This grandiose self-image appears to have been threatened by women's

ability to procreate. The grandiose image both generates anxiety for men and is used in the attempt to fend off anxiety. (Ende et al. 170).

In *Jurassic Park*, womb envy is demonstrated by the park's administration. Hammond and Wu create life through bioengineering, artificially recreating the dinosaurs – for all intents and purposes, their offspring. As Jurassic Park's chief geneticist, Wu alone wields reproductive abilities on Isla Nublar, while simultaneously exerting control over the dinosaurs' own ability to breed. This is a metaphorical appropriation of the womb; through artificial methods, Wu is capable of breeding, which then he denies his female offspring. Within the park, only men have the ability to procreate. When Malcolm originally asks if the dinosaurs can breed, Wu responds, “We simply deny them that” – out of jealousy and privilege. This plot point is representative of contemporary issues regarding reproductive rights in the United States, which are frequently contested and largely determined by patriarchal power systems (Dixon-Mueller 14).

However, a major plot twist in the film is that the dinosaurs actually *are* capable of breeding, revealed when Grant discovers a nest in the park. While Hammond acquired the dinosaurs' base DNA from prehistoric mosquitoes, Wu substituted gaps in their genomes with frog DNA. However, the frog species selected by Wu were capable of sequential hermaphroditism (Beukeboom and Perrin 17), allowing them to, as explained by Grant, “spontaneously change sex ... in a single-sex environment,” a trait then inherited by Jurassic Park's dinosaurs. The fluid sexuality displayed by the dinosaurs in fact compliments third-wave feminist perspectives on sexuality, which are more inclusive than the second-wave by accounting for LGBT identities, thereby challenging heteronormative sexuality (Snyder 179).

The presence of both sexes allows Isla Nublar's dinosaur population to begin breeding. Notably, paleontological research indicates that in many dinosaur species, the females were the stronger sex, often growing much larger than the males. One such example of this phenomenon is the *Tyrannosaurus rex*, by far the most famous and recognizable dinosaur species in popular culture (Larson 124). Crichton himself accurately depicts the sexual dimorphism between Tyrannosaurs in his 1995 novel *The Lost World* (156), a sequel to *Jurassic Park*. In both the *Jurassic Park* novel and film, a fully-grown Tyrannosaurus is regarded as the park's most valuable attraction and serves as its official mascot. Although the Tyrannosaurus, like the rest of the park's dinosaurs, is female, it is popularly referred to as male by Jurassic Park's

administration. In the novel, Wu explains to the tour group that, “We tend to refer to some of [the dinosaurs] as male – such as the Tyrannosaurus rex; we all call it a ‘him’ – but in fact, they’re all female” (Crichton 109). Wu and his peers do this to reconcile their hegemonic views of masculinity – which culturally fetishize aggression and toughness as dominant traits (Donaldson 644) – with female creatures that demonstrate the same traits. However, by simultaneously demonstrating female identity and dangerous capability, the dinosaurs of Jurassic Park challenge the conservative gender roles that preceded third-wave feminism. Besides the Tyrannosaurus, the dinosaur species that most embodies this duality in the film is the Velociraptor.

While Wu’s speech is not replicated in the film adaptation, it is noteworthy that most of the characters only refer to the dinosaurs using gender-neutral pronouns, instead of explicitly identifying the animals as female. The one exception to this rule is Robert Muldoon, Jurassic Park’s game warden. Muldoon alone respects how dangerous and intelligent the park’s dinosaurs are, particularly the Velociraptors, who arguably serve as the film’s primary antagonists. This rivalry is established in *Jurassic Park’s* opening scene, where a Velociraptor kills one of Muldoon’s subordinates during a transfer, despite Muldoon’s efforts to save him, resulting in a longstanding grudge. Muldoon takes pride in his ability as a hunter but concedes that the Velociraptors alone are worthy prey, as evidenced by his statement to Grant that “I’ve hunted most things than can hunt you, but the way these things move...” Because the Velociraptors’ rival femininity challenges Muldoon’s societal position in Jurassic Park, he consequently wants to destroy them for it, a desire he loudly airs over the course of the film. After the power failure frees the Velociraptors, Muldoon seizes the opportunity to hunt down the dinosaurs and destroy them, thus reestablishing his masculine dominance and securing his societal position. However, the Velociraptors demonstrate their prowess by baiting Muldoon into a trap, ultimately cornering him – Muldoon’s final line in the film, “Clever girl,” finally concedes the dinosaurs’ superiority before he is killed.

Ultimately, after they are emancipated by the power failure, the dinosaurs hunt down and kill the majority of the park’s administration. Hammond, who previously occupied the highest position of power in the park, is forced to concede defeat and flees Isla Nublar with Grant, Sattler, Malcolm and the remaining survivors, which leaves the dinosaurs in full control of the island. One of the final scenes in *Jurassic Park* features the Tyrannosaurus roaring victoriously

inside Jurassic Park's Visitor's Center, the former capital of Hammond's empire; this image represents Isla Nublar's transition from a patriarchal society to a feminized nation-state.

## Conclusion

*Girl power*, a phrase popularized by British pop group the Spice Girls in the mid-1990s, is linked to third-wave feminism, promoting female empowerment and independence (Taft 69). Although Sattler and Lex both demonstrate girl power throughout the film, *Jurassic Park's* girl power is most prominently demonstrated through its dinosaurs. Ultimately, *Jurassic Park* functions as an early cinematic text in third-wave feminism, with its dinosaur population serving as a collective metaphor for femininity.

In the film, Jurassic Park's administration is entirely male; contrastingly, each of the park's confined dinosaurs is deliberately engineered to be female. Resultantly, Jurassic Park can be viewed as a patriarchal society whose economy is founded on the monetization of femininity, with the park's dinosaurs serving as second-class citizens. The narrative of *Jurassic Park*, when interpreted as a feminist text, alludes to and challenges the hegemonic gender roles embedded in modern society. Halfway through the film, after the Tyrannosaurus fails to appear during the initial tour of the park, Malcolm, still disapproving of Hammond's absence of bioethics, laments: "God creates dinosaurs. God destroys dinosaurs. God creates man. Man destroys God. Man creates dinosaurs." Sattler humorously responds, "Dinosaurs eat man...woman inherits the Earth." However, as the entirety of Jurassic Park's dinosaur population is female, it is arguable that in the context of Sattler's quote, the dinosaurs *are* women, and are set to reclaim their natural inheritance, i.e. sexual equality.

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## Expressions of Sorrow: Nonverbal Forms of Communication

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**Abstract:** Nonverbal forms of communication are just as important as verbal ones. This article investigates nonverbal communication observed in response to acts of tragedy, primarily those brought about by acts of terror or by untimely death. Nonverbal communication at these moments takes the form of balloons cards, candles, letters, pictures of the deceased, personal items and street protests. Furthermore, as an element of culture, these nonverbal expressions of sorrow convey meaning to those participants at the site of the tragedy and to those observing at a distance. In essence, both groups have a shared sense of thinking and responding to these events in almost a similar manner.

**Keywords:** *nonverbal, semiotics, episodic memory.*

**Resumen:** Las formas no verbales de comunicación son tan importantes como las verbales. Este artículo investiga la comunicación no verbal que se observó en respuesta a actos de tragedia, primordialmente esos que fueron causados por actos de terror y muertes prematuras. La comunicación no verbal en estos momentos toma la forma de tarjetas, globos, velas, cartas, imágenes de los fallecidos, objetos personales y protestas en la calle. Asimismo, como un elemento de la cultura estas expresiones no verbales de tristeza comunican significado a los participantes en el sitio donde ocurrió una tragedia y a los que observan desde lejos. Esencialmente, ambos grupos tienen una forma compartida de pensar y responder a esos eventos de forma casi similar.

**Palabras clave:** *no verbal, semiótica, memoria episódica.*

**摘要:** 非语言交际形式和语言交际形式同等重要。本文调查了人们在回应悲惨行为时的非语言交际。这些惨案主要由恐怖行为或过早死亡造成。非语言交际形式包括气球卡、蜡烛、信件、已故者的图片、个人物件和街道抗议。进一步而言，作为一种文化元素，这些用于表现悲伤的非语言形式还为置身惨案现场以及在远方目睹这一切的参与者传递着信息。从本质上讲，不论是在现场还是在远方，这些群体都有着相同的看法，同时以几乎类似的方式为悲惨事件作出回应。

**关键词：**非语言，符号学，情景记忆

Reports of tragedy, especially those brought about by acts of terror, are frequently reported on various media. Listeners are given accounts of the location, the individuals, and the possible motives of those involved in these acts of tragedy. Following these acts of tragedy are expressions of sorrow conveyed in various forms. The forms of sorrowful expressions may be expressed through cards, letters, media commentary pictures, street demonstrations and so on. In short, these acts function as language in nonverbal form and fall under the broader topic of communication.

Communication is a method used to share ideas about people, places, and events. For the most part, when we use the word communication, we generally refer to oral and to written forms of discourse. As a result, communication may take various features, depending on the urgency or gravity of the information to be conveyed to a specific or to a general audience. We use the telephone, send texts, write formal letters draw pictures, scribble notes, and use signs to give listeners and readers a sense of how we think about the issue at hand.

In addition, the methods chosen to communicate is a connection between language and thought in that the words we select and their arrangement in discourse give audiences a sense of how speakers and writers construe events, people, places, situations, and so on. An often-cited example to show the connection between language and thought is passive voice construction as in *Mistakes were made*. By using the passive construction, a speaker or a writer does not implicate any specific person when compared to the active construction as in *John made a mistake*. By using the active-voice structure, the agent *John* is responsible for the activity. Furthermore, the use of modern technology has improved the efficiency and speed of communication. Compared to decades ago, information to be communicated is almost instantaneous. We are reminded that events seldom go unnoticed in the nation and around the world, given the use of the tools used in communication today. Writers make use of *Facebook*, *Instagram*, and *Twitter* to communicate information based on how they perceive the importance of such matters.

### **Other Modes of Communication**

Beyond the traditional forms of communication noted above, individuals use other methods to express themselves. These forms of communication include clothing, facial expression, gestures, silence, and spatial relationship. One area of communication that has become salient in American society today is the use of nonverbal forms of discourse surrounding tragic events, primarily the loss of lives from traffic accidents, from homicides, from mass shootings, and from premature deaths, especially when these tragedies are the result of acts of terror in the nation and across the world. In these events, we see elements of communication shown by the presence of balloons, candles, cards, clothing, crosses, pictures, flowers, mementos, and trinkets. We also notice individuals of various ages, gender, racial and socioeconomic backgrounds who participate at these events. These expressions of sorrow are used to communicate a message of care and concern to viewers and to bring together family, friends, strangers, and concerned citizens in a collaborative mode of thought. At such occasions, persons who place these objects at impromptu memorial sites are responding to auditory and to visual stimuli which they encounter. The objects of nonverbal language are meant to convey meaning to an audience near and far. Unlike language, in the traditional sense of words, phrases, and sentences, these expressions of sorrow are *semiotic* in that they are signs that work as language (Hall 36). What is it about these forms of communication that make them vehicles of communication? In addition, to whom are these expressions of communication sent? One possible answer to these questions can be framed within a semiotic approach to language study.

### **Semiotics in Expressing Sorrow**

The semiotic approach is a central feature in cultural studies. It treats signs as language through which meaning is communicated (Barthes 9). Beginning with the work of Ferdinand Saussure, he analyzed communication in terms of *signs*. Signs in societies consist of the *signifier* and the thing *signified*. The signifier is the object, and the signified is the concept associated with the signifier. For example, the placing of flowers at sites of tragedy are *signifiers*. The expression of sorrow is the *signified*. On this topic, Hall further notes that “in the semiotic approach, not only words and images but objects themselves can function as signifiers in the production of meaning” (37). The meaning of flowers in these situations is the *signified* that is, the concepts and ideas associated with flowers. Flowers are used in specific contexts to convey strong, emotional elements of care, love, memory, respect, and so on. As with all elements of culture, context influences meaning. Flowers, for instance, must be used in a specific context to convey a

specific meaning. This process supports the idea of a code in cultural studies. A code “sets up the correlation between our conceptual system and our language system” (Hall 21). Thus, placing flowers at random at any place at any time minimizes their meaning. As with oral and written communication, speakers and writers must internalize the rules (grammar) of language to communicate the intended meaning to an audience. Speakers and writers do not select language structure vicariously. They chose words and the manner of their arrangement based on the specific goals of the speaker or writer. Likewise, it appears as if persons who place nonverbal forms of discourse to express sorrow display similar kinds of knowledge about the location and manner of placing objects.

In addition to Saussure’s analysis of the *signifier* and the *signified*, Roland Barthes has contributed to the topic of *semiotics* from the perspective of *opposition* and *representation*. Opposition theory claims that meaning is the result of conceptualizing things in different ways. The often cited example is that *night* has meaning when opposed to *day*. Representation is the view that any text or spectacle stands for something that is not immediately stated in the text. It is our social codes that we carry around in our heads that contribute to meaning (Danesi 24).

Adding to the analysis of communication in nonverbal form is Suzanne Langer’s idea of *symbols*. A symbol, in Langer’s analysis, brings to mind (6). For example, an expensive home in an upper-class neighborhood is a symbol in that it brings to mind the owners’ socioeconomic status. How do we obtain meaning from these modes of expression? One theoretical approach to this question is that advanced by Hall (24). According to Hall, representation is the production of meaning through language. Language, as stated above, uses signs to refer to objects, to people, and to events in the real world. However, as Hall further points out, language does not function like a mirror in that it directly reflects meaning. Rather, meaning is produced within a signifying process. Objects at tragic sites, in this case, function as signs provided that they have been assigned a concept and meaning within our cultural and linguistic codes (28). Signs in this analysis cover a range of possible language devices (e.g., clothing, facial expressions, gestures music and words). In using various signs at memorial sites, nonverbal in this case, individuals do so with the idea that onlookers share the same concepts associated with the signs.

### **Audience as a Factor**

An audience is a central component in communication. An audience could be singular, or it can consist of a large number of individuals. In Johnstone's analysis, an "audience may be thought to consist of passive listeners whose emotion and beliefs have to be analyzed so that they can identify with what the speaker or writer says" (144). As we noted previously, expressions of sorrow and the response to them by means of various objects have become almost predictable in society today. Shortly after a tragedy has taken place, individuals place objects to express sorrow and concern to family members, to organizations, to remember a specific city, street, or location.

When we observe various forms of expression to indicate sorrow, those who place objects at these locations do so with an audience in mind. We can infer that those who use these objects to express an attitude of despair and sorrow share a similar way of expressing grief with those who view them close up or from a distance. In other words, those who place them and those who view them comprehend the language of these signs in much the same manner as they would comprehend traditional forms of oral or written communication. In essence, they participate in the same culture in that they process these signs in an almost similar manner. For example, the picture of an individual in military attire placed at a memorial site would convey a similar meaning not only to other military personnel, but to others in the nation. Such an object at a memorial site would convey to audiences the concepts of bravery, patriotism, and service that are typically highly appreciated and valued in society. A similar method of sharing a common meaning is the presence of flowers, balloons, and other objects, often seen at these moments of sorrow. As mentioned earlier, flowers convey a similar meaning of sorrow from the perspective of those who place them at these sites and from those who view them. This approach to meaning is similar to Barthes' analysis of signs at the levels of *denotation* and *connotation*. Denotation is the basic level of analysis. Many persons would agree, for example, on what athletic shoes are. At the level of connotation, a wider range of interpretation is possible. Athletic shoes convey a message of latest styles, trends, costs, personalities, and places where they are worn.

### **Place of Emotion**

Expressions of sorrow, by their nature, are emotional phenomena. They reveal the cognitive and neural mechanisms that influence the reasons why individuals behave in a certain manner when they experience traumatic episodes, whether these episodes pertain to family members to friends, or to strangers. In cognition, expressions of sorrow are elements of *bottom -up* and *top-*

*down* processing. Bottom-up processing pertains to sensory elements in the physical world (Smith and Kosslyn 55). We take in information about the world and make sense of it. A knock on a door compels us to respond. Top-down processing comes from information stored in long-term memory that helps us interpret what we perceive. The knock at a door compels us to respond (or not) due to our stored knowledge regarding the sound of a knock at a door. It suggests that someone is there to get our attention, to deliver a package, to relay a message, to ask questions, and so on. Furthermore, our emotions influence the manner in which we respond and communicate certain stimuli. For example, we may respond in an abrupt or in a courteous manner to a knock at the door.

In addition to the role of cognition in expressions of sorrow, certain neural structures are implicated in our understanding of emotions, and, by extension, these structures influence our communicative choice and styles (Reisberg 437). Research in facial expressions, for example, (e.g. anger, sadness, surprise) has identified certain neural structures that underlie disgust (Calder, Lawrence, and Young 352). Studies of patients with orbito frontal disorders (base of the frontal lobe) have shown that patients who have experienced a deficit in a specific part of the brain do not respond to certain emotional stimuli, when compared to normal subjects (Reisberg 438). Evidence of this sort would support the claim that there are specific neural systems and brain areas that underlie human emotions. Accordingly, when these regions are stimulated by sensory stimuli (e.g., mass shootings), an emotional response ensues. In the process, individuals choose appropriate nonverbal forms of communication to express sorrow and sadness.

### **Memory as a Factor**

The manner in which individuals respond to tragic events, as those cited in this study, is associated with our memory, specifically *episodic memory*. Episodic memory is connected to events that take place at a specific time and place (Smith and Kosslyn 194). For example, most of us, if asked, can remember the date and place of our high school or our college graduation. Such an event seems to be permanently stored in our long-term memory and conveys an emotional significance for us.

We can extend the concept of episodic memory in discussing moments of sorrow. Our memories about persons involved in tragic events are meaningful in that they have been stored for a long time in memory and convey emotions. Frequent occurrences of tragic events, near and

far today, have been in the news, and it is safe to conclude that those who see and hear about these events have moved them from short-term to episodic memory. Once an event arises, we can recall similar events regarding the time and place where such events have taken place. Recall in episodic memory then compels individuals to take action with nonverbal expressions of communication. Some symbols of sorrowful expression as those cited before (e.g., *balloons, cards, and flowers*) will influence the choice of symbols to present at memorial sites.

## **Conclusion**

Nonverbal forms of communication have become a salient feature in expressing the manner in which individuals respond to various forms of trauma and tragedy. The forms of tragedy noted are those that result from premature loss of lives due to acts of homicides or terror. From balloons, cards, flowers, these nonverbal forms of communication convey meaning to viewers. As mentioned, these forms of communication are signs and signifiers in that individuals use objects to convey concepts associated with the objects seen at the memorial sites. Moreover, the ability to convey similar meaning from senders and recipients with these signs suggests that such individuals participate and share a common culture. We also mentioned that emotion and memory are also significant at these events since they influence the manner in which individuals respond to sensory stimuli, chiefly auditory and visual, when confronted with tragic events heard in the nation and around the world. It is hoped that a discussion of this type can contribute to an overall consideration of language in social context, especially nonverbal forms of communication that have become salient in societies today as individuals respond to incidents of tragedy.

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Keith Moser: The Advent of Simulated Reality and Computer-Generated Femininity in the *South Park* Episode “The Hobbit”: A Baudrillardian Reflection

**Abstract:** This essay investigates a recent episode of the American, satirical TV show *South Park* from the lens of the interdisciplinary philosophy of Jean Baudrillard. The creators of this popular comedy program are rarely given credit for some of the substantive issues that they often address in numerous episodes due to the raunchy nature of the humor itself. However, this investigation demonstrates that this program should be taken more seriously by international scholars in the field of popular culture. Specifically, this essay reveals that the episode “The Hobbit” is a timely discussion of the perils of simulated reality and computer-generated femininity in the age of information. Delving into the complex and nuanced philosophy of Jean Baudrillard, this analysis of “The Hobbit” demonstrates the veritable depths of the ‘crisis of simulation’ to which the philosopher often refers in numerous works. This Baudrillardian reflection illustrates that the advent of simulated reality is a real issue that warrants more attention than it generally receives in the modern world.

**Keywords:** Jean Baudrillard, *South Park*, Computer-Generated Imagery (CGI), hyperreality, Photoshop.

**Resumen:** Este ensayo investiga el episodio reciente del programa satírico estadounidense *South Park* desde la óptica de la filosofía interdisciplinaria de Jean Baudrillard. Los creadores de este popular programa cómico rara vez obtienen el crédito de algunos de los problemas sustantivos que ellos muchas veces abordan en un gran número de episodios debido a la naturaleza lasciva del humor en sí. Sin embargo, esta investigación demuestra que este programa debería ser tomado más en serio por los investigadores internacionales en el campo de la cultura popular. Específicamente, este ensayo revela que el episodio “The Hobbit” es una discusión oportuna de los peligros de la realidad simulada y la feminidad virtual en la era de la información. Al tocar a profundidad la compleja y matizada filosofía de Jean Baudrillard, este análisis de “The Hobbit” demuestra las verdaderas profundidades de la ‘crisis de la simulación’ a la que se refiere a menudo el filósofo en gran parte de su trabajo. Esta reflexión Baudrillardiana ilustra el hecho que el invento de la realidad simulada es un verdadero problema que merece más atención de lo que recibe generalmente en el mundo moderno.

**Palabras clave:** *Jean Baudrillard, South Park, Imágenes generadas por computadora (IGC), hiperrealidad, Photoshop*

**摘要:** 本文从让·鲍德里亚 (Jean Baudrillard) 哲学的视角出发, 以跨学科的方式调查了美国讽刺电视剧“南方公园”近期的一则情景。由于众多剧情中的幽默元素较为下流, 制作该剧的人士几乎没有因为其在剧情中处理的实质性问题而受到褒奖。然而, 通过本调查证明, 该剧应该受到研究流行文化的国际学者更多的注意。具体而言, 本文揭示了名为“霍比特人”的剧集值得学者对模拟现实 (simulated reality) 的危险和信息时代由计算机合成的女性特质进行及时讨论。通过对让·鲍德里亚的复杂哲学进行深入研究, 本文对“霍比特人”的分析表明了‘模拟危机’ (‘crisis of simulation’) 的真实存在和深度, 这在让·鲍德里亚的众多著作中都有所提及。本文运用鲍德里亚式的反思证明, 模拟现实的出现是一个真实存在的问题, 它需要现代世界更多的关注。

**关键词:** 让·鲍德里亚, 南方公园, 计算机成像技术 (CGI), 超真实, Photoshop

## **I. Introduction**

Despite the immature ‘toilet humor’ which has been emblematic of *South Park* since its inception in 1997, this animated series has received numerous accolades including Primetime Emmy Awards and the Peabody Award. Underneath the veil of bawdy comedy, Trey Parker and Matt Stone often create social commentaries which are extremely timely and relevant. These biting satires delve into many important issues confronting the modern world. The purpose of this study is to explore a recent episode of *South Park* through the lens of the complex, interdisciplinary philosophy of Jean Baudrillard. Specifically, this essay explores the Baudrillardian concept of hyper-reality as it relates to contemporary reflections of femininity in the *South Park* episode “The Hobbit.”

## **II. Contextualization of “The Hobbit”**

“The Hobbit” is the final episode of season seventeen which originally aired on December 11, 2013. The first scene of this episode paints a rending portrait of the incessant humiliation endured by Lisa Burger, a young girl who is widely considered to be the most unpopular and least attractive person in school. Urged by Wendy Testaburger to reveal her feelings for Butters, Lisa takes a chance asking this young boy if he would like to see a movie sometime with her. Coldly declining this invitation, Butters affirms, “I really appreciate the offer, but you’re too fat for me.” Infuriated by Butters’s callous response and insensitivity, Wendy demands a

justification for this disquieting behavior. Explaining that he refuses to have a companion that does not correspond to his high standards of beauty, Butters asserts, “Well, Kim Kardashian is skinny and she just had a baby.” In an effort to teach Butters and others a lesson about the perils of artificial simulations of femininity that have no basis in reality, Wendy manipulates one of Lisa’s pictures using the software program Photoshop. The computer-generated image that Wendy fabricates in a matter of minutes hardly bares any resemblance at all to the original photograph. Although the message that Wendy is attempting to convey is rather transparent, her plan backfires. The alluring image of Lisa substitutes itself entirely for the real Lisa who in essence ceases to exist outside of the realm of simulacra. Lisa inexplicably becomes an overnight celebrity at her school and a sex symbol that all of the other girls desperately strive to emulate.

### **III. Contextualization of the Baudrillardian Theory of Hyper-Reality**

The main premise of “The Hobbit” is that many people have a difficult time discerning the difference between concrete reality and its symbolic representation in the modern world. This idea mirrors the theory of hyper-reality developed by the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard in numerous canonical works. Constantly immersed in a carefully manufactured hyper-real space in front of one digital screen or another, Baudrillard wonders, “What is real? [...] have we mistaken the image for the real thing?” (Root 237). Underscoring the importance of the central concept of hyper-reality throughout Baudrillard’s diverse *œuvre*, Martin Weiss notes, “Jean Baudrillard illustrates the increasing indistinguishability between ‘reality’ and what he calls ‘simulation’” (n.p.). For the characters of the aforementioned *South Park* episode with the exception of Wendy, seductive images of what it means to live a glamorous life of opulence, allegedly rendered possible by a myriad of useful inventions endlessly lauded by the corporate, mainstream media, appear to be on the verge of replacing reality itself. “The Hobbit” is an example of the phenomenon of hyper-reality that Baudrillard laments in texts such as *La Société de consommation*, *Pour une critique de l’économie politique du signe*, *Le système des objets*, *Séduction*, and *Amérique*.

According to Baudrillard, hyper-reality is so pervasive that it now concretizes nearly every facet of our quotidian existence. As Richard Smith highlights, “signification has replaced reality to such an extent that the world is no more than a giant simulacrum or simulation where signs refer only to other signs within a closed system. This is a world of semiotic models where there

is no real world or referent” (69). The fact that Butters does not question the authenticity of an image depicting a girl that no one initially considers to be attractive gives credence to Baudrillard’s assertion that the vast majority of our experiences are filtered and deliberately packaged for our consumption through a given screen (i.e. TV, tablet, computer, smart phone). Given the ubiquity of the simulacra that constantly bombard the modern subject at home, work, in shopping centers, and everywhere that we go, Baudrillard posits that our “capacity for critical reflection” has been eroded (Norris n.p.). Without a momentary reprieve from the onslaught of images that compel us to consume our way to happiness and prosperity, the philosopher maintains that we are witnessing what he calls the ‘murder of the real’ and the ‘death of meaning.’

For Baudrillard, symbolic representations of the female body that have no significance whatsoever outside of a code generated by pre-packaged models whose sole purpose is to increase revenue for transnational entities are simply part of the all-encompassing “acute crisis of simulation” which has destroyed everything in its path (Baudrillard *Seduction* 48).<sup>1</sup> Enticing images, which intentionally remove any blemishes or imperfections that a woman might have according to a certain ideal of feminine beauty, have substituted themselves for actual sexuality. Due to the collapse of the real buried deep beneath the surface of thick layers of hyper-real fiction, Baudrillard contends that women are judged by empty signs of sensuality and physical beauty predicated upon a fantasy structure portraying a sexual utopia that has never truly existed at all.

#### **IV. Manifestations of Hyper-Reality in “The Hobbit” and the Dire Repercussions of the Pervasive Realm of Simulacra**

In “The Hobbit,” it is only when Lisa begins to display signs of beauty transmitted via computer-generated imagery (CGI) and social networking that she suddenly becomes the object of every schoolboy’s desire. The other girls at school realize that they will never be able to measure up to the grandiose simulations of female beauty that inundate billions of screens across the globe unless they reduce their essence to a meaningless sign which is commonly exchanged as the real thing. For this reason, they turn their backs on reality and embrace the omnipresent

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<sup>1</sup> In a similar vein, Baudrillard denounces pornography as “just another sign in the hypersexual panoply” (*Seduction* 33). Baudrillard’s philosophical concerns related to the hyper-real nature of pornography transcend the pragmatic limitations of this study. For a systematic discussion of the role of pornography in the dissemination of hyper-real, erotic fantasies, see King, Richard. “The Siren Scream of Telesex: Speech, Seduction and Simulation.” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 30(3): 91-101. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

simulacra that stand in for the real in popular consumer culture. At the onset, Wendy is ostracized for her refusal to abandon reality or to play a banal game whose artifice she longs to expose and eradicate.

In Baudrillardian terms, the complicity of Wendy's female classmates in the creation and transmission of hyper-real chimera illustrates "tous les périls de la libération sociale des femmes" 'all of the perils of the social liberation of women' (*La Société de consommation* 217). In a consumer society in which a ubiquitous code has superseded the real, the only way that women can reap the benefits of being perceived as sexy is to swim in the deluge of erotic simulacra that accost them from all sides by following arbitrary trends and purchasing all of the necessary accessories. As Baudrillard explains, "On vend de la femme à la femme [...] la femme se consomme [...] si la femme se consomme, c'est que sa relation à elle-même est objectivée et alimentée par des signes, signes qui constituent le Modèle Féminin, lequel constitue le véritable objet de la consommation" 'We sell women to women [...] a woman consumes herself [...] if a woman consumes herself, it's because her relationship to herself is objectified and feeds on signs, signs that constitute the Feminine Model, which constitutes a true object of consumption' (*La Société de consommation* 138-139). Unless women are willing to lose their inner selves entirely in a self-referential network of simulacra that have no real referents, their beauty will not be recognized or valorized by men who scrutinize them on the basis of a sign. Moreover, the aforementioned conformist behavior of the young girls from *South Park* is indicative of a misguided attempt to live consumerist simulations or to breathe life into an image that was never anything more than an idyllic vision.

Although some women might consider the act of manipulating men through seductive images to shower them with lavish gifts relatively harmless, Baudrillard exposes the nefarious effects of the advent of hyper-reality or an imaginary parallel universe where "there is no reality outside the image" (Mannathukkaren 419). A revealing scene from "The Hobbit" supports Baudrillard's contention that symbolic fantasies are often deleterious. After Wendy shows Butters the picture of Lisa that she enhanced or distorted entirely, the young boy has a surprising reaction. Instead of understanding Wendy's point that celebrity photos are retouched to such an extent that they bear little resemblance to the real, Butters exclaims, "That's Lisa Burger, she's hot [...] Hold up, are you saying that girl wants to go out with me? And, I said no! I gotta upload this and buy her

some flowers and then tell her that I love her.” The apparent absurdity of this response is an effective cinematic technique that strikes the viewer.

Even when presented with irrefutable evidence that unequivocally proves that many photographs including this specific one are sometimes totally fake, Butters still cannot resist the alluring power of the image. Moreover, this tragic scene also confirms Baudrillard’s hypothesis that the proliferation of images via the mass media through a plethora of electronic household gadgets has resulted in the destruction of critical thought. As the philosopher theorizes, “l’individu ne se réfléchit plus lui-même, mais s’absorbe dans la contemplation des objets/signes multipliés [...] Il ne s’y réfléchit plus, il s’y absorbe et s’y abolit” ‘the individual no longer thinks for himself, but is absorbed in the contemplation of multiplied objects/signs [...] He no longer thinks, he is absorbed in these (signs) and he loses himself in these (signs)’ (*La Société de consommation* 309-310). Given that the modern subject is constantly engulfed in the hyper-real, he or she loses the ability to examine anything that exists outside of the operational logic of the code objectively.

Furthermore, as opposed to mocking Butters’s naïveté or incapacity to deconstruct simulations that openly confess to be nothing more than insignificant signs of beauty conceived in a type of fantasy world, all of the other young boys confuse the real Lisa with her computer-generated alter ego. In a testament to the veritable force of social media and the continual exchange of information in the modern world, everyone at school has seen the picture of Lisa that Butters uploaded the next morning. Consequently, when Butters searches for Lisa to profess his love, Cartman informs him that she is already dating Clyde. Clyde’s behavior further underscores the ludicrousness of Lisa’s newfound popularity and status as a diva. Proudly walking down the hall with his new girlfriend by his side, Clyde boasts, “Hey, Token, check out my girlfriend.” However, Clyde shows Token the embellished picture of Lisa from his mobile device even though the real Lisa is standing right beside him. For all intents and purposes, Lisa ceases to exist as an authentic human being. She is now a prized commodity or a simulated object to be appropriated by men. The effacement of the real Lisa by an illusory simulacrum reflects the phenomenon described by Baudrillard in numerous works as the ‘death of the subject.’

Lisa seems to relish her improbable ascension to stardom, but the viewer finds her relationship with Clyde to be extremely disturbing from both a philosophical and ethical

perspective. Clyde does not actually exhibit any affection whatsoever for Lisa. This enamored young boy is in love with a visual representation of Lisa which is merely a lie. Clyde is so disconnected from reality that the true Lisa is a complete stranger to him. After the initial euphoria of dating an icon fades, will Clyde grow tired of Lisa since an intangible image can never truly be possessed by anyone? Additionally, the acquisition of simulacra cannot fulfill basic human needs such a sense of belonging and a genuine connection to other people. Thus, no matter how many men that Lisa will be able to procure because of her hyper-real sexuality, it will be impossible for her to attain a true state of happiness or any lasting appreciation of her existence predicated upon these fake relationships. Both Clyde and Lisa have fallen prey to the trap of seeking happiness in signs. They have been consumed by the images that they impulsively devour on a quotidian basis without any scrutiny or hesitation. In essence, their plight highlights what Baudrillard identifies as a universal problem in the age of (mis-)information. In “The Hobbit,” the viewer begins to ponder just how virtual and inauthentic our lives have become.

Although Clyde’s hyper-real paradise will probably decrystallize eventually despite his elusive efforts to live inside of a narcissistic narrative comprised of artificial signs, the viewer sympathizes with Lisa on a much deeper level. Lisa’s heartrending tale epitomizes the complete appropriation of femininity by simulations of what it means to be a woman. Due to the omnipresence of simulacra, Baudrillard asserts that women have become a pure fetish in consumer republics. For Baudrillard, a fetish is “an object that is positioned purely for its symbolic value” (Koch & Elmore 556). Since representations of female eroticism are quite lucrative for multinational corporations, the philosopher affirms that women are even more vulnerable to the catastrophic effects of hyper-reality than men. Women are constantly being targeted by titans of billion-dollar fashion industries who try to sell their cosmetic products by peddling seductive images of sexuality to female clients. As Baudrillard explains, “c’est la sexualité elle-même qui est donnée à consommer” ‘It’s sexuality itself that is given to be consumed’ (*La Société de consommation* 226). When Wendy is creating the tantalizing photograph of Lisa that spellbinds all of the young boys at her school, she is cognizant of this “code de la beauté” ‘code of beauty’ (*La Société de consommation* 195). She deliberately manipulates these signs in a misunderstood effort to encourage those around her to resist the hegemony of the code. Unfortunately, she fails to realize how engrained these simulacra are in

the cultural fabric of her society. Due to the fact that “The fetishisation of the body through makeup and adornment creates a seductive sexuality that is not grounded in real sexuality,” Baudrillard hypothesizes that women in the modern world have no awareness of themselves as sexual beings outside of simulated reality (Dant 507). For instance, red lipstick exudes sexuality because women are told that this given shade of a banal cosmetic item is synonymous with erotic desire.

Women are deemed to be sexy by pledging their allegiance to a preexisting model designed to create colossal profits. In reference to the revenue generated by simulations, Baudrillard declares, “Le corps fait vendre. La beauté fait vendre. L’erotisme fait vendre” ‘The body sells. Beauty sells. Eroticism sells’ (*La Société de consommation* 211). “The Hobbit” profoundly destabilizes the viewer because it serves as a reminder that consumer society has commodified everything including human corporality. Anything can be sold and disseminated to the masses as an idealistic image. For Lisa, the dire repercussions of this phenomenon cannot be overstated. Her body is no longer her own because it has been reduced to an ironic caricature made available to the highest bidder or to the most popular boy in class. In a society where symbolic exchange is void of any real meaning, signs eclipse the real. Lisa is now a simulated object of carnal desire that is drowning in an abyss of other insignificant objects to which people despondently attach their hopes and dreams. This young girl has been stripped of her very humanity. The only semblance of an existence that Lisa will ever know is watching an artificial image of herself flicker across digital screens. This utopian representation is so utterly divorced from reality that it can only lead to ontological emptiness and despair.

For Baudrillard, this existential angst reinforces the economic system by compelling the subject to continue to search for happiness and meaning in the endless acquisition of insignificant signs in malls, department stores, and shopping centers. As Alex Cline underscores, “the material values of commodities are largely unimportant, when compared to their symbolic and structural values [...] The capitalism of the code attempted to induce existential crises amongst its subjects; to get them to change their job, partner or lifestyle on a regular basis and become fanatical consumers of media, the nectar of simulation” (n.p.). When her relationship with Clyde inevitably crumbles, Lisa will have to seek solace in the same exact signs of sexuality that conceal genuine female eroticism. Given the ubiquity of the code that appears to have permeated all aspects of the modern lifestyle, Lisa will have no choice but to

attempt to discover self-actualization and contentment in the realm of simulated reality. Her desperate efforts to conform to a prefabricated model not only line the pockets of CEOs, but they could also force her to replace one interchangeable Clyde with another.

Given that Lisa appears to have conflated consumerist signs of happiness with actual happiness in “The Hobbit,” the viewer is left to speculate as to whether she will ever actualize a genuine state of contentment and a sense of purpose. She is clearly the most popular girl at school, as evidenced by the thunderous applause that she receives at a pep rally during school, yet no one cares or even knows anything about the real Lisa. It is improbable that Lisa will be able to create a stable identity through her simulated double whose virtual presence hides only nothingness. Elucidating that the modern subject is never truly satisfied by consuming meaningless signs because the schism between the real and the hyper-real is simply too great, Baudrillard asserts,

*Le miraculé de la consommation lui aussi met en place tout un dispositif d'objets simulacres, de signes caractéristiques du bonheur, et attend ensuite [...] que le bonheur se pose [...] L'opulence, l'affluence n'est en effet que l'accumulation des signes du bonheur [...] La pratique des signes est toujours ambivalente [...] Le réel, nous le consommons par anticipation ou rétrospectivement, de toute façon à distance, distance qui est celle du signe.*

The miracle of consumption also puts into place a package of simulacra-objects, signs that are characteristic of happiness and then waits [...] for happiness to manifest itself [...] Opulence, affluence are in fact only the accumulation of signs of happiness [...] The custom of signs is always ambivalent [...] the real, we consume it through anticipation or retrospectively, from a distance, the distance is that of the sign (*La Société de consommation* 27; 30).

From a Baudrillardian perspective, Lisa seems destined to consume the same image of herself that she projects to others. How many fake pictures of herself will she have to create, or how many consumer goods will she have to purchase to keep up this charade in the coming years? Regardless, her simulated femininity might make her a prized commodity, but these banal signs reflect an ideal of beauty that she could never possibly attain in real life. Moreover, Baudrillard offers a cogent argument in his seminal essay *La Société de consommation* in which he stipulates that simulations can only temporarily fill the existential void. After the ecstasy of the moment

triggered by an attempt to obtain inaccessible simulacra wanes, the modern subject must compulsively continue to exchange signs hopelessly longing for a different result in the form of a type of enduring happiness.

#### **V. Femininity in Hyper-Real America and the Hegemonic Role of Celebrity Culture**

Lisa's meteoric rise to fame in "The Hobbit" also reveals the hegemonic apparatuses that maintain hyper-real fictions which have buried true femininity under an avalanche of symbolic representations. In this vein, this episode of South Park is a scathing critique of American culture and the hegemonic role of celebrities in the promotion and transmission of simulacra. Although very few people will ever have access to the simulated glitz and glamour of Hollywood that has seduced global society in addition to hiding unheralded economic inequalities of epic proportions, this grandiose vision has become the new opiate of the masses. Ensnared by a hyper-real fantasy that even celebrities themselves are not actually living, the new 'American dream' is inseparable from the world of simulation. Representations of female beauty are an important part of this chimerical utopia because they represent a billion-dollar industry that has been exported to even the most remote areas of the planet.

Numerous critics including Gyorgy Toth, Jaap Kooijman, Andrew Koch, and Rick Elmore have noted that Baudrillard identifies the United States as "the land of hyperreality [...] a country where the simulation of experience in film, television, museums, theme parks, and monuments is irrevocably replacing the 'real' and 'objective' facts of the past, works of art, human relationships and geographic locals" (Toth 199-200). Expressing his fears that reality is under assault on a global scale from the American, hyper-real dream and the simulated utopias that it represents, Baudrillard boldly asserts, "Il n'y a pas pour moi de vérité de l'Amérique [...] Ce qu'il faut, c'est entrer dans la fiction de l'Amérique, dans l'Amérique comme fiction. C'est d'ailleurs à ce titre qu'elle domine le monde. Chaque détail de l'Amérique fût-il insignifiant, l'Amérique est quelque chose qui nous dépasse tous...L'Amérique est un gigantesque hologramme" 'For me, there is no truth about America [...] What we have to do is enter into the fiction of America, into America as fiction. It's by way of fiction in this respect that it (America) dominates the world. Every detail about America is insignificant, America is something that goes beyond all of us....America is a gigantic hologram' (Amérique 31-33). In Amérique, Baudrillard argues that this seductive paradise where everyone supposedly has the opportunity to live the simulations that flood their screens, if they obey the summons to consume, has been

appropriated by the majority of the earth's inhabitants in the age of globalization. Additionally, the philosopher muses that the only way to understand contemporary American culture is to enter into this enticing fantasy world.

In his often misunderstood essay *Amérique*, Baudrillard also asserts that celebrities are an important cog in a larger, hegemonic framework that is on the brink of abolishing all meaning through the proliferation of symbolic paradises. As the philosopher explains, “C’est pourquoi le culte des stars [...] les idoles de l’écran sont immanentes au déroulement de la vie en images. Elles sont un système de préfabrication luxueuse [...] Elles n’incarnent qu’une seule passion: celle de l’image [...] Elles ne font pas rêver, elles sont le rêve” ‘This is why the cult of the stars [...] the idols of the screen are an inherent part of the rolling out of life in images. They are a system of prefabricated luxury [...] They only embody one passion: that of the image [...] They don’t make people dream, they are the dream’ (*Amérique* 57). According to Baudrillard, stars and divas are the ultimate incarnation of a dream that indoctrinates consumer citizens. Intoxicated by the force of an artificial spectacle, the masses endeavor to imitate airbrushed images that have been manufactured and retouched in a studio before being released to a public with an insatiable appetite for consuming these signs of a good life.

Several scenes from “The Hobbit” mirror the anxiety articulated by Baudrillard in *Amérique* concerning the hostile takeover of reality through the conduit of American culture and its celebrities. First, it is not by chance that Butters identifies Kim Kardashian as the stunning embodiment of female beauty. Although the footage of so-called “reality television” is contrived, edited, and scripted, millions of faithful viewers have been duped into caring about the lives of personas that they know nothing about. Some viewers might question the authenticity of certain scenes, but they still become emotionally invested in these hyper-real fictions. In fashion magazines and shows that glorify stars, these images, regardless of how far-fetched they are, take on a life of their own.<sup>2</sup>

It is evident that Butters does not critically examine the image of Kim Kardashian that flashes across the screen in “Keeping up with the Kardashians.” When Wendy originally tries to convince him to date Lisa before her digital makeover, Butters states, “I have a different standard when it comes to my women. I want a woman who has perfect skin [...] and perfect

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<sup>2</sup> Christopher Wright explores the hegemonic function of reality TV through the lens of Baudrillard’s philosophy. See “Welcome to the Jungle of the Real: Simulation, Commoditization, and Survivor.” *Journal of American Culture* 29 (2): 170-82.

everything.” Not only does Butters pinpoint Kim Kardashian as an example of a girl that corresponds to his lofty criteria, but he also opens his locker revealing photographs of desirable models. Attempting to illustrate that these often heavily distorted images of female eroticism are anything but faithful representations of reality, Wendy grumbles in disgust, “This is a fantasy, you moron. Have you ever heard of Photoshop?”

Aware that her message is falling on deaf ears, Wendy loudly exclaims for all to hear, “Kim Kardashian is a short, overweight woman who manipulates her image and makes average girls feel horrible about themselves. In real life, Kim Kardashian has the body of a hobbit.” In addition to revealing the meaning of the title of the episode, this scene highlights the core message that Parker and Stone are trying to convey. Despite the evident humor intentionally designed to soften the tone of this satirical scene, the central theme of the episode should be taken seriously. Similar to all of the other boys at school, Butters thinks that this idealized version of female corporality must exist somewhere because he sees iconic celebrities on his screens and on the covers of magazines.

Butters is too naïve to realize that even the women in his collection of images are phony because their actual bodies have been manipulated to such an extent by software programs like Photoshop. Butters strives to satisfy his sexual cravings in a symbolic world that has never existed anywhere outside of digital simulations. In this scene, Wendy denounces the dangers of hyper-real representations of female beauty. These distorted images destroy the self-confidence of real women who feel inadequate for being unable to compete with a fantasy. Moreover, these sexual utopias are not innocent given that these unrealistic standards sometimes have deadly consequences for young girls who suffer from eating disorders.

When Wendy publicly voices her concerns, she is dismissed by the school counselor who informs her that “Nobody likes a girl who’s Jelly.” A television reporter who is covering Wendy’s efforts to implement a law which would require that Photoshop images be labeled as fake also accuses her of being jealous of girls who are more popular than her. Neither the children nor the adults of South Park understand Wendy’s true agenda. Wendy is judged harshly by those around her for her refusal to accept the validity of embellished images. Whereas everyone else is so immersed in hyper-real fiction that they have lost the ability to discern artifice from reality, Wendy is still anchored in the real. Hence, Wendy states the obvious fact that many men would not even think twice about Kim Kardashian if they were to encounter her

actual body on the street as a commoner or non-celebrity. In a society in which consumers endlessly attempt to procure metonymic pieces of symbolic fantasies, truth and meaning have no place.

Underscoring the complicity of celebrity culture in the destruction of meaning in the context of Baudrillard's philosophy and reality television, Kathleen Dixon and Daniela Koleva assert, "the [...] hyperreal world of celebrity-it exists nowhere other than in mass-mediated images and the events staged around and through such images" (n.p.). Dixon and Koleva reiterate that the contrived images of stars, like the ones that Butters worships as the ideal of femininity, obfuscate "the ugliness of real celebrity lives and their real bodies" (n.p.). The aforementioned researchers reach the following conclusion: "We won't see Paris and Nicole in the bathroom of a nightclub shooting up drugs (in 'real life,' Nicole is said to be an addict), or barfing up their dinners to keep their Size 3 bodies" (Dixon & Koleva n.p.). Dixon and Koleva's Baudrillardian analysis of celebrity culture helps to shed light on what is transpiring in "The Hobbit." The inhabitants of South Park are captivated by the pervasive, simulated utopias that no one is actually experiencing. As Baudrillard highlights, the only way to understand their behavior is to enter a realm of hyper-real fiction far removed from the real. For this reason, Wendy attempts to point out that Kim Kardashian's real body does not even vaguely resemble the skeletal ideal of feminine beauty in contemporary Western civilization. However, given that she is the only resident of this small Colorado town who recognizes the banality of idyllic simulacra that project a seductive image of femininity which is grounded in fantasy, no one is listening to her well-reasoned arguments.

## **VI. 'The Murder of the Real'**

The somber dénouement of "The Hobbit" offers little optimism that the people from South Park will ever awake from their hyper-real slumber thereby dismissing absurd simulations of happiness and beauty. In fact, the ending of this episode reflects the phenomenon that Baudrillard terms "integral reality" in his later works such as *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, *The Transparency of Evil*, and *The Intelligence of Evil*. "Integral reality" is "the final stage of simulation" in which "we are caught up in a world of images that have lost their referents" (Barron 394; Penaloza & Price 127). As the philosopher theorizes,

What we see now, behind the eclipse of the 'objective' real, is the rise of Integral Reality, of a Virtual Reality that rests on the deregulation of the very reality principle [...] Reality

continues to exist; it is its principle that is dead. Now, reality without its principle is no longer the same at all. If, for many different reasons, the principle of representation, which alone gives it a meaning, falters, then the whole of the real falters (The Intelligence of Evil 17-18).

The final scenes of “The Hobbit” unequivocally suggest that our elaborate networks of instantaneous symbolic exchange, which are supposed to help us make sense out of the world and to render our lives more meaningful, have begun to obliterate the reality principle itself.

Wendy receives an unexpected visit from Kim Kardashian’s boyfriend Kanye West. The rapper reads her a bedtime story about an evil girl who crushes the dreams of a hobbit who transformed herself into a beautiful princess by means of “a magic power named Photoshop.” West finally realizes that his girlfriend is indeed a hobbit, but he confesses that he prefers to live in the imaginary realm where his significant other is the epitome of beauty. Wendy has successfully torn a hole in the hyper-real fabric that enshrouds Kim Kardashian’s iconic image as a sex symbol. However, she is now cognizant as to why there is such little resistance to symbolic fantasies. When grandiose simulations of the good life including representations of eroticism are so beautiful, why would anyone choose to live in the real world?

Now fully aware that she is one of the only people who still valorize the reality principle or who have any connection to it whatsoever, Wendy makes a fateful decision at the end of the episode. Acting upon her boyfriend Stan’s request for a “new picture” to replace his outdated ones, Wendy enters the school computer lab where she manipulates her image using Photoshop. In the final scene of “The Hobbit,” Wendy cries profusely after uploading this photograph to a social media website. The ‘murder’ of the real Wendy is now complete. This young girl has resigned herself to the fate of an empty existence in the world of integral reality. Wendy realizes that even if she were able to wake up more consumer citizens like Kanye West and force them to confront the nothingness that lurks beneath the surface of the image, most individuals would choose to reenter the hyper-real world of fiction.

Furthermore, Wendy knows that she has been fighting a losing battle given that the pull of the mesmerizing images which saturate the modern subject is simply too strong. She is alone in her quest to (re)-embrace reality and what true femininity entails, thus she reluctantly acquiesces. Wendy is visibly ashamed of herself, but the viewer respects her decision due to the advent of integral reality. There seems to be no solution to the existential dilemma of living in nonsense

because of the ubiquity of the code that incessantly attacks passive receptacles glued to their screens.

## VII. Conclusion

In the recent episode of South Park entitled “The Hobbit,” Parker and Stone articulate their apprehension concerning the disappearance of the reality principle in the modern world. Using irreverent, lewd humor that some people might consider to be offensive, the creators of this animated series often tackle important social issues. Additionally, Parker and Stone incorporate vulgarity into their satires in an effort to disarm the viewer making him or her more receptive to the message. Given that “The Hobbit” asks legitimate questions that urgently need to be posed, Parker and Stone’s attempts at fostering a meaningful dialogue should not be minimized. Whether we like it or not, the inception of integral reality is upon us because of the omnipresence of banal simulacra that have superseded the real. In modern consumer republics where everything has been commodified, objectified, and fetishized, the female body is no exception to the crisis of simulation. As seen through the lens of the perils of computer-generated femininity highlighted by Baudrillard, it is our very humanity that symbolic exchange now threatens to efface.

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## Cuba: Casinos Past, Casinos Future (?)

By William N. Thompson, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

**Abstract:** The island of Cuba was the center for casino in the Western Hemisphere for many decades in the mid-twentieth century. This paper looks at those years and the development of the gambling industry from the early 1900s until the time casinos were closed in 1959 after a political revolution led by Fidel Castro. Castro served as the dictator of Cuba from 1959 into the 21st century. After he died in 2016, he was succeeded in power by his brother Raul Castro. Many interests in the gaming industry, some even from earlier years in Cuba, now see the possibilities of reestablishing some of the 13 casinos that had been opened before 1959. This paper looks at the history of Cuba casinos and the prospects that casino gaming may return to the island.

**Keywords:** Cuba, Batista, Fidel Castro, Raul Castro, Lansky, Kennedy.

**Resumen:** La isla de Cuba fue el centro para los casinos en el hemisferio occidental por muchas décadas a mediados del siglo veinte. Este artículo examina esos años de desarrollo de la industria de las apuestas desde los primeros años de los 1900 hasta que cerraron los casinos en 1959 después de la revolución política liderada por Fidel Castro. Castro fungió como dictador de Cuba desde 1959 hasta el siglo 21. Después de su muerte en 2016, lo siguió al poder su hermano Raúl Castro. Muchos intereses en la industria de las apuestas, algunos inclusive de los años tempranos de Cuba, ahora ven posibilidades de reestablecer algunos o muchos de los 13 casinos que estaban abiertos antes de 1959. Este trabajo examina la historia de los casinos en Cuba y los prospectos de que los casinos regresen a la isla.

**Palabras clave:** Cuba, Batista, Fidel Castro, Raúl Castro, Lansky, Kennedy

**摘要:** 自20世纪中期的好几十年里，古巴岛曾是西半球的赌场中心。本文针对这几十年间古巴赌博业的发展进行了研究。赌博产业兴起于20世纪初，直到1959年菲德尔·卡斯特罗（Fidel Castro）领导政治革命关闭了所有赌场。卡斯特罗自1959年起担任古巴统治者，直到21世纪。2016年逝世后，弟弟劳尔·卡斯特罗（Raul Castro）继任了他的权利。古巴赌博业的诸多利益集团，加上一些早年间利益集团，现在有机会重新建立1959年前开设的13个赌场。本文研究了古巴赌场的历史和赌博游戏可能回归的前景。

**关键词:** 古巴，巴蒂斯塔，菲德尔·卡斯特罗，劳尔·卡斯特罗，兰斯基，肯尼迪

During the 1950s, Cuba offered the gambler several of the leading casino facilities in the world. There was little doubt, however, that the gaming was connected to organized crime personalities in the United States as well as to military dictator Fulgencio Batista. Both entities skimmed considerable sums of money from the casino operations. Cuba also had both public and private lotteries, a first-class racing facility, and jai alai fontons. All the gambling activity came to a halt after Fidel Castro engineered a successful rebellion and took over the reins of power in January 1959. Repeated attempts by casino owners and the new government to negotiate a continuation of casino gaming were unsuccessful. It has been suggested that—as a result--U.S. crime interests were involved in attempts to overthrow the Castro regime, both in the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 and in several assassination attempts on the new dictator's life. An entire tourism infrastructure subsequently slipped into decay during the five decades of Fidel Castro's rule. Today that rule has been passed to Fidel's younger brother Raul Castro, and now voices are suggesting that Cuba may soon seek to restore its tourism industry and may even contemplate reopening casinos.

The island of Cuba was colonized and controlled by the Spanish government for four centuries, until a revolution developed in the 1890s. When the United States declared war on Spain in 1898, the revolution became successful, and independence was gained for the Cuban people. Authorities in the United States, however, sought to keep many controls over the Cuban people. American war troops were not removed until 1902, and even after the Cubans elected a new government under Pres. Jose Miguel Gomez that year, the United States “negotiated” to have a major naval base at Guantanamo Bay. Other commercial interests in the United States also continued their economic domination over much of Cuba. These interests had been in Cuba for many years before the revolution. Many Americans looked at the seaside location called Marianao, ten miles outside of the city of Havana, and found it to be a desirable place to live, engage in real estate transactions, and start tourism resorts.

A local group known as the 3 C's (named for Carlos Miguel de Cespedes, Jose Manuel Cortina, and Carlos Manuel de la Cruz) formed a tourism company that sought to build a casino in Marianao. In 1910, they proposed legislation in the National Congress that would have permitted the casino and also would have granted them an exclusive thirty-year concession to operate it. At a time when the Americans in Cuba saw the casino as “opportunity,” Americans in the United States were in a wave of anti-sin social reform. This was the same year that the

casinos of Nevada closed their doors and the Prohibition movement was organized. U.S. President William Howard Taft was lobbied hard by church interests to reject casino gambling so close to our shores. During the Spanish American War, President William McKinley had decreed that there be no more bullfighting in Cuba, calling the activity a disgraceful outrage. Taft, as expected, “bullied” the Cuban Congress to follow U.S. wishes as well. The casino legislation failed to pass. A second attempt was made to have casinos with taxes designed to support \$1.5 million in construction of facilities for tourism in Marianao. One New Yorker, who had a contract to build a jai alai fonton and a grandstand for racing, sought to change Taft’s mind on the issue, but again, casinos were defeated as a result of the moralist campaign in the United States.

However, gambling was in the cards for Cuba. In 1915, Havana’s Oriental Park opened for horse racing. In 1919, casino promoters promised that they would build the streets and plazas for Marianao if they could have casinos. Pres. Mario Menocal, who had been elected in 1917, supported a bill for casinos. The national legislature authorized a gambling hall for the resort on 5 August 1919. The 3 C’s group won the right to run the facility. In addition to land improvements for tourism, they agreed to a national tax that was designated for the health and welfare of poor mothers and their children. At the same time, President Menocal’s family won a concession to have jai alai games in Marianao. The tourism push was on, and patrons from the United States were the primary market, especially after Prohibition of alcoholic consumption came into effect for the whole country in 1919. The Roaring Twenties roared just outside of Havana. Several new luxurious hotels opened, each having a gaming room. Each successive presidency endorsed tourism and welcomed all investors. Even Al Capone opened a pool hall in Marianao in 1928. Then the Depression came, and so too did a movement for general social reform.

Leaders openly condemned the degradation of casino gaming and other sin activities that had been widely offered to tourists. In 1933, the casinos were closed, and the Prohibition ended in the United States. The economy floundered. The next year, army sergeant Fulgencio Batista was able to oust Pres. Ramon Grau San Martin and install his own government. He ruled as chief of staff of the army while another held the presidency. At first Batista tried to bolster the notion of cultural tourism, but he could not resist allowing casinos to reopen—under the control of the military. Batista was very concerned about the honesty of the games. For sure, he would be

skimming. If players were being cheated, however, he knew there soon would be no players. The house odds could give the casinos only enough profits to pay off the generals and the politicians. Games had to be honest. Batista turned to a person who understood this and other dynamics of the casino industry very well--Meyer Lansky. Lansky took over casino operations, and he imported dealers who would work for him and not behind his back. The Mob cleaned things up in all the casinos. Because of World War II and postwar disincentives for foreign travel by Americans, however, the casino activity was rather dormant through the 1940s. Nonetheless, Havana attracted more persons of bad reputation. In 1946, Salvatore "Lucky" Luciano moved in to conduct heroin trade and to be involved with the Jockey Club and the Casino Nacional. Lansky was influential in persuading the government to expel this competitor.

Fulgencio Batista won the presidency on his own in 1940. In 1944 and 1948, he permitted Grau San Martin and Carlos Prio Socarras to win open elections; however, he remained very much a controlling element. In 1952, while a candidate for the presidency, he sensed he had no chance of victory. Batista executed a coup and took the reins of power by force. Subsequent elections were rigged, and Batista remained in power until the beginning of 1959. During this latter period of rule, casino development greatly accelerated.

Prior to 1950, only five casinos were in operation, and a brief reform spirit in 1950 led the government to close them. Commercial pressures, however, led to a reopening before Batista conducted his coup. The casinos now offered large numbers of slot machines for play. By the mid-decade, new Cuban hotels were attracting large investments from the United States, as the gambling operations were quite lucrative. Foreign operators, however, still had ties to organized crime members. A major incentive for a renewed interest in Cuban gaming came from the U.S. Senate Kefauver investigations that were exposing illegal gambling operations in the United States. Organized crime members were being run out of places such as Newport, Kentucky; Hot Springs, Arkansas; and New Orleans, Louisiana. At first, they gravitated toward Las Vegas; then Nevada instituted tough licensing requirements that precluded their participation in operations there. Cuba, the Bahamas, and Haiti became desired locations. Four of the five largest Havana casinos were in the hands of U.S. mobsters. As newer properties such as the Havana Hilton, the Riviera, Hotel Capri, and the Intercontinental Hotel came on line, Mob hands were involved in the action. Meyer Lansky was always the leader of the group. He kept the games honest, and he kept the political skim money flowing in the correct directions. When someone got out of line, he

gave the word, and Batista could make a great show about throwing a mobster out of the country. In addition to enhancing casino gambling, Batista also improved revenues of the national lottery by inaugurating daily games.

In 1958, things seemed to be on a roll just when Fidel Castro gathered strength for his military takeover. Revelations in the *New York Times* about Mob involvement in Cuban casinos dampened tourist enthusiasm, as did the fear of impending violence. The names of Jake Lansky Meyer's younger brother), Salvatore Trafficante, and Joseph Silesi were added to the lists of unsavory participants in the industry.

Fidel Castro was born in 1926, the son of an affluent sugarcane planter. He attended a Catholic school in Santiago de Cuba before entering the University of Havana as a law student in 1945. There he began his career as a political activist and revolutionary. He participated in an attempt to overthrow the government of Dominican Republic strongman Rafael Trujillo and disrupted an international meeting of the Organization of American states in Bogota in 1948. He sought a peaceful way to power in 1952 as he ran for Congress; however, the contest was voided when Batista seized power and cancelled the election. In 1953, Castro took part in an unsuccessful raid on the government; he was captured and imprisoned for a year. He was released by Batista as part of a general amnesty program, but he kept up his revolutionary efforts, leading another unsuccessful raid in 1956. His third try was his charm, as he successfully moved through rural Cuba during 1958, attacking Havana at the end of the year and driving Batista from office.

When Castro's forces descended on Havana on New Year's Eve 1958, there were thirteen casinos in Havana. The hotel casinos represented a collective investment of tens of millions of dollars. Lansky's Riviera alone cost \$14 million. Several owners and operators did not want to join Batista in his hasty exile out of the country, even after revolutionary rioters had smashed up many of their gaming rooms. They wanted to hold on to what had been a very good thing. That would be difficult, however. Castro had waged a revolutionary media campaign that condemned the sin industries of Cuba and their connections to the Batista government. Castro pledged that he would close down the casinos.

Castro was good to his word on this score, at least at the beginning. He also stopped the national lottery from operating. Meyer Lansky, on the other hand, pledged that he would work

with the new government, and casinos were temporarily reopened, ostensibly to protect the jobs of their 4,000 workers. However, the reopenings were short-lived. The casinos closed for good (under the Castro regime) in late 1960. Castro's frontal attack on the Mob and its casino interests in Havana had political consequences in the United States, where the Central Intelligence Agency planned the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion to overthrow Castro and also may have contracted with organized crime operatives to attempt to assassinate the new leader.

The fall of the Batista regime and the end of Cuban casinos had repercussions throughout the gaming industry. Nevada lost its strongest competitive market, and Cuban operatives and owners had to move. The ones that could be licensed went to Las Vegas, as did many of the dealers and other casino workers. Others had to find unregulated or under-regulated jurisdictions. Haiti and the Dominican Republic were close at hand, as was The Bahamas. Most of the gaming entrepreneurs in these jurisdictions had Cuban experiences, as did many who went to London to open casinos after 1960 legislation gave unregulated charity gaming halls a green light. Lansky, George Raft, and Dino Cellini were principals in London's Colony Club until they were expelled from the country. Former Nevada lieutenant governor Cliff Jones of Las Vegas had been active in Cuba. He had made a choice between Nevada gaming and foreign gaming when the "foreign gaming" rule was adopted in Nevada (the rule prohibited Nevada casino licensees from having casinos outside of the state). He chose to be involved in foreign gaming and therefore could not return to Las Vegas. Instead, Jones began campaigns in one small country after another to legalize casinos and then began operations that he would later sell to (or share with) local parties for high profits. Clearly, the activity of Castro in closing down Havana gaming caused a major spread of gaming elsewhere.

The Cuban national lottery, closed in 1959, was permitted to resume operations by Castro. At first Castro allowed the creation of a savings bond lottery, under which all bettors kept their initial wager, but they were paid lottery win prizes instead of interest on their investment. Interest in casinos for Cuba persists as many casino companies eagerly await the passing of Fidel Castro. However, even under his regime, in 2013, a casino cruise ship from Canada was allowed to make port in Havana.

Current interest in having new Cuban casinos has a definite Florida touch in that nearby American state casino gaming has begun with both Native American reservation casinos as well

as machine gaming on race courses. Many Florida operators are staunchly opposed to new Cuban casinos fearing direct competition. On the other hand, Florida interests are also expressing great desires to get on board and participate in new openings. The arena for new legalization fights is being set up at this moment.

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## Reviews

Anglo-American Comics: Three Books from University Press of Mississippi Focus on the Origins of WWII and Post-War Superheroes  
By Jarret Keene

*The 10 Cent War: Comic Books, Propaganda, and World War II*, edited by Trischa Goodnow and James J. Kimble (\$65, 260 pages)

*The British Superhero*, by Chris Murray (\$65, 306 pages)

*Bending Steel: Modernity and the American Superhero*, by Aldo J. Regaldo (\$30, 290 pages)

**Abstract:** In this review, the author assesses the merits of three books of comics scholarship published by University Press of Mississippi in 2017. Subjects discussed include the propagandistic qualities of World War II-era superheroes, the rise and fall of the British comics industry, and the notion that American superheroes reflect a struggle with modernization, industrialization, and urbanization. The author suggests that these books are ideal for comics historians and for undergraduate classes in 20<sup>th</sup>-century American literature and history devoted to popular culture and graphic narratives.

**Keywords:** WWII-era superheroes, British comics industry, 20<sup>th</sup>-century American literature, popular culture, graphic narratives.

The political roots and dimensions of superhero comics—a once-thriving industry created by a need to entertain bored U.S. military personnel during the Second War—continue to enthrall and inspire academics. The foremost publisher of comic-book scholarship at the moment is the University Press of Mississippi, with three new titles confirming the fresh insight of today’s pop-culture critics, suggesting there is much left to unearth in the yellowing four-color yarns of yesteryear.

*The Ten Cent War*, edited by communication professors Trischa Goodnow and James Kimble, presents a formidable collection of essays exploring comics production as a source of relentless propaganda. Goodnow and Kimble’s introduction is arguably the most succinct and digestible summary of WWII-era American comics published to date, complete with a helpful overview of each essay. The general direction of these analyses (comics as wartime propaganda) is indebted to William Savage’s landmark book, *Comic Books and America, 1945-1954* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1990). Overall, though, nearly every academic

contributor—most drawn from the ranks of communication studies—brings new and insightful ideas to the table.

Take, as an example, Christina Knopf's opening essay, "Militarism vs. Femininity in WWII Comic Pages and Books." Knopf zeroes in on depictions of military women in storylines like "Pat Parker, War Nurse" (*Speed Comics*), concluding, "that the artists/authors and their characters did much to demonstrate women's aptitude and acceptability in the armed forces." Gender norms were enforced, of course. The Girl Commandos rarely picked up weapons, even when conducting covert operations behind enemy lines. Still, as the author states, "people got to see what women were capable of doing and accomplishing, without society falling apart."

Jon Judy and Brad Palmer apply Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory (learning through observation) to the subgenre of kid-sidekick comics in "Boys on the Battlefield," showing how stories involving Captain America and Bucky "encouraged a perception among young readers that war is a fun, safe, desirable pursuit." Judy and Palmer outdo themselves with a short but fascinating discussion of a relatively obscure Jack Kirby and Joe Simon-created ensemble, the Young Allies (led by Bucky and Toro, the Human Torch's sidekick). Kirby scholars and fans will appreciate how the editors deftly follow this with a rhetorical examination of *Boy Commandos*, in which John Katsion borrows Barry Brummett's notion of homology—an identifiable pattern uniting context, content and medium—that structures not just another text but also people's experiences. In the case of *Boy Commandos*, Katsion articulates a "homology of hope" that would have comforted a wartime child in the U.S. whose father was at war, and that would have reminded a G.I. overseas that his family back home was resilient and undergoing adventures of their own.

Indeed, what makes *10 Cent War* so valuable is how each essay (actually, the editors prefer the term *chapter*) manages to single out a little-known title from the WWII era. For example, Travis Cox's take on Will Eisner's Uncle Sam character is fascinating in the way it relies on American literary theorist Kenneth Burke's pentad, a method for understanding a text's rhetorical motivation. To the hardcore comics enthusiast's delight, there's a chapter, by author and film-studies scholar David Wilt, devoted to titles published by Novelty Press (*Blue Bolt*, *Target*, *4Most*), a fledgling company that boasted writer Mickey Spillane in its artist roster. Wilt has two contributions in this volume, his second being the final chapter, which takes into

account the propagandistic elements of an *entire* WWII comic, including letters pages, house ads, and incidental art.

Across the pond, after paper rationing ceased with Germany's defeat and Japan's surrender, the saga of the British superhero began developing, slowly yet surely. According to most accounts, U.K. comics struggled in the shadow of the American industry. Chris Murray's *The British Superhero* does a superb job of chronicling the surprisingly compelling history of comics in England and defining the industry's origins in 19<sup>th</sup>-century pop culture (boys' weeklies, penny dreadfuls) and in the sci-fi/fantasy "protosuperheroes" of 1930s pulp-fiction protagonists: the Scarlet Bat, the Black Whip, the Flaming Avenger, and Karga the Clutcher.

Yet even with everything finally in place, the Brit brand of superhero lacked glamor. As Murray eloquently (and fairly) puts it:

The superhero was supposed to soar between huge skyscrapers or charge through noir urban sprawl and to embody the ideals of the American Dream and to challenge the injustice.

America's utopian idealism suited this genre and these characters, but the slow decline of the British Empire viewed from the grimy tenement buildings was a rather less impressive backdrop for superhero narratives.

It is not lost on Murray that, in the end, British grit and gloom has eventually won out, as evident in today's too-dark, fun-challenged, post-*Watchmen* film adaptations like *Man of Steel* and *Logan*. In any case, the author's mix of strong writing skills and thorough historical research make his book a definitive, delightful read. His rendering of the tangled birth of the Marvelman character, a Brit copycat of DC's Captain Marvel, is intriguing and refreshingly clear. Indeed, few scholars have pushed so deeply to understand how exactly so many U.S. comics ended up reaching England. Example: "Another means by which American comics came to Britain was via the unsold remainder copies that were often used as ballast in American ships, with piles offloaded at British ports (mainly Liverpool, Manchester, Belfast, and London)."

If Americans shipped their tired, poor, and huddled masses of unsold comics into England, they were appreciated. The Union Jack's demand for star-spangled four-color product was so intense in the face of a ban on American material that publishers went to extreme lengths, producing fake American comics and reformatting reprinted comics from the States. Simultaneously, this gave English writers and artists breathing room to create their own pantheon of odd yet interesting characters—Purple Hood, Steel Claw, Gadgetman and Gimmick-Kid, to

name a few. By the early 1970s, sales declined significantly, undermined by TV and film. That didn't stop Marvel from installing its own U.K. publishing arm around that time, and it didn't prevent the debut of arguably the most influential fantasy magazine in the world, *2000AD*.

But what happened in the 1980s—specifically the British Invasion of American comics in the form of writers Alan Moore and Grant Morrison and artists Dave Gibbons and Dave McKean and how they subverted American icons like Superman and Batman—would forever link the comics histories of the two nations forever. Murray conveys this oft-told tale with aplomb, his only shortcoming being that he doesn't offer fresh quotes from Moore. Overall, though, this chapter, “Revisionism and the British Invasion (1981-1993),” is a superior summary of the events and moments that evolved the medium into a true art form. Sadly, the book's conclusion reads more like a requiem for British comics, which continues to lose its best and brightest talents to the comics and film and TV industries in the States. This ongoing defection of native Gen-X and Millennial storytelling to satirize and deconstruct monolithic characters fashioned by the Greatest Generation is an irony sometimes difficult to interpret and evaluate. It leaves readers asking: Will British comics characters always remain secondary to America's? Will British creators forever be enslaved to American creations and characters, the very same products that British artists helped evolve and develop?

In his book, *Bending Steel: Modernity and the American Superhero*, historian Aldo Regalado makes the case for superheroes serving as a response to industrialization, modernization, and capitalism. Sure, very often these characters and stories reinforced conventions of race, class, and gender, but they were also capable of, at times, subverting the dominant paradigm. In the chapter, “Jungle Lords, Haunting Horrors, and the Big City,” Regalado digs deep into Edgar Rice Burroughs' iconic protosuperhero Tarzan, reminding readers that the Burroughs novels “emerge as cultural artifacts that embody a white middle-class masculine ambivalence toward modern America.” More interesting is his appraisal of dark pulp writer H.P. Lovecraft, who, by Regalado's estimation, “negotiated a life at the fringes of society, rejecting commercialism and blocking out what he perceived as the chaos of modernity by retreating into the tight-knit world of amateur press associations.” What's omitted, however, is how hard Lovecraft worked to mentor and cultivate relationships with many young authors whose own creations would dominate popular culture, including Robert E. Howard (Conan the Barbarian) and Robert Bloch (*Psycho*).

In any case, Regalado has studied the source material, and the chapter, “From Strange Visitors to Men of Tomorrow,” highlights numerous instances in the pages of *Superman* comics in which the Kryptonian strongman wrestles with images of modernism (weapons manufacturers, tenements, bogus oil stocks). Captain America and Wonder Woman too, are spotlighted, the latter repeatedly neutralizing “violent situations in completely nonviolent ways.” But it’s the scholar’s appraisal of comics fandom and the new misanthropy of today’s corporate comics that really hits hard. When he concludes, “Run by relatively small companies and intimately tied to fan communities, superheroes were arguably more connected to their consumers for much of their publication histories,” readers will be left mulling an important issue: Are today’s mainstream comics, steeped in progressive values yet more violent and cynical than ever, truly more subversive than yesterday’s white-patriarchal products? The answer is rewardingly complex thanks to *Bending Steel*, and two other indispensable UMP releases (*The Ten Cent War*, *The British Superhero*).

Reforming the Patriarchy in Pawnee, Indiana  
By Gina M. Sully, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

*Feminism, Gender, and Politics in NBC's Parks and Recreation* by Erika Engstrom (\$42.95, 146 pgs.)

**Abstract:** Erika Engstrom's *Feminism, Gender, and Politics in NBC's Parks and Recreation* analyzes what has been called the "most feminist show on television" through the neo-liberal feminist lens of the series' protagonist, Leslie Knope. Engstrom's analysis illuminates the strategies the series employs to normalize and celebrate liberal feminism's values and to demonstrate that feminism is integral to a healthy republic.

When I began to read Erika Engstrom's *Feminism, Gender, and Politics in NBC's Parks and Recreation*, I found myself perplexed. While I had seen only a few episodes of the series, it seemed to me that the series mocked Leslie Knope, and, by extension, her feminism. Engstrom, however, argues that the series celebrates and normalizes Knope's feminism, and I wondered why her analysis and mine should be so different. So, I did what any good scholar who is looking for a reason to procrastinate does. I binge-watched the series, attending especially carefully to the myriad episodes Engstrom analyzes in nuanced detail.

Using the language and analytical categories of Leslie Knope's own woman-centered liberal feminism, Engstrom situates her discussion in the scholarly literature and considers conditions of production as well as audience reception. As she lays her argumentative foundation, Engstrom establishes that a combination of prosaic story arcs, an "Everytown, U.S.A" setting (Engstrom 4), and "non-stereotypical" representations (4) of female characters combine to normalize Knope's feminism as "'feminism for everyone'" (Magdalena qtd. in Engstrom 4). She concludes that "the resulting message [of the series] is that gender equality can be *and should be* an implicit aspect of everyday life, including the civic and political spheres" (Engstrom 3, emphasis mine).

The book's structure and chapter titles gesture toward the language and analytical categories of second-wave feminist theories and methods. In chapter 2, "Pawnee, Portrait in Patriarchy," for example, Engstrom scrutinizes Pawnee's racist and sexist history. She describes some of the murals in Pawnee's city hall, and analogizes them to Roosevelt's publicly funded New Deal murals. Especially welcome is her inclusion of a link to a wiki where the murals are displayed. Engstrom argues that the murals do not merely represent Pawnee's historical past, but instead represent "patriarchy's mindset" (36). Acknowledging communal laughter's bonding power, she

notes that laughter evoked by fictional laws that punished women for learning math and forced people of color to hand over their conveyances to any white person who paid them 25¢ allows viewers to recognize that the problems remain, albeit in different form.

One of the strengths of the series is its recognition of the tension between second-wave liberal feminism's ambivalence toward sex work and sex workers and the third wave's sex-positivity; Engstrom devotes considerable space to her discussion of some of the ways the series deals with this fraught relationship. Likewise, her lengthy analysis of the series' male characters and the ways in which they perform a variety of masculinities is particularly nuanced and astute, demonstrating that men benefit from feminism, too.

Liberal feminism's limitations in terms of race and class analyses is somewhat reflected in Engstrom's text in that it gestures toward, but does not fully engage, either the series' treatment of racialized bodies or its heteronormativity. For instance, Engstrom's analysis does not address the ways Tom's and Donna's self-indulgence replicates stereotypes of people of color as being incapable of "correctly" managing their consumption. The analysis's elision of *Parks & Recreation's* heteronormativity is typical of liberal feminism's historically troubled treatment of queerness and queer folks. But it does seem noteworthy to me that the only recurring openly queer characters are the bisexual Saperstein siblings, both particularly vapid, appetitive, unlikeable characters. Still, perhaps more significant for Engstrom's thesis—that *P&R's* feminism has positive social effects—is the fact that none of the characters identify the Sapersteins's queerness as a reason for not liking them or rejecting their company. However, these issues are perhaps outside the scope of Engstrom's specific project, which is to illuminate the strategies the series employs to normalize and celebrate liberal feminism's values and to demonstrate that feminism is integral to a healthy republic.

Engstrom's analyses are solid, and the book includes a season-by-season analysis of story arcs. She rightly holds that character development is key to character analysis over such arcs, and she is careful to contextualize her readings of characters and their roles within the Pawnee universe. She lucidly analyzes "the various ways the series presented feminism as a positive force" (back cover); historicizes the series by situating it among US television's representations of females, female power, and female friendship; and provides an overview of some of the current literature that examines US television's depictions of women. Overall, Erika Engstrom's

*Feminism, Gender, and Politics in NBC's Parks and Recreation* is a welcome resource for instructors and students who wish to analyze popular culture in order to understand the social construction of gender. It might even suffice to get the author's portrait added to Leslie Knope's Wall of Inspirational Women.

## Contributors

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