CHAPTER 5

Media and Culture

Although literature and the arts remain important cultural forms, popular culture—television, movies, music, print media, and the Internet—also plays a significant role in reflecting, reinforcing, and sometimes subverting the dominant systems and ideologies that help shape gender. Popular culture is very seductive; it reflects and creates societal needs, desires, anxieties, and hopes through consumption and participation. Popular culture also provides stories and narratives that shape our lives and identities. It gives us pleasure at the end of a long day and enables us to take our minds off work or other anxieties. In this regard, some scholars have suggested that popular culture regulates society by "soothing the masses," meaning that energy and opposition to the status quo are redirected in pursuit of the latest in athletic shoes or electronic gadgets.

Of course, popular culture creates huge multi-billion-dollar industries that themselves regulate society by providing markets for consumption, consolidating power and status among certain groups and individuals. Media conglomerates have merged technologies and fortunes, consolidating resources and forming powerful corporations that control the flow of information to the public. Over the last few decades globalization (those forces integrating communities and economies into a global marketplace) has created global media with powerful mass media corporations that both dominate domestic markets and influence national governments. The Walt Disney Company, for example, is the largest media conglomerate in the world with almost U.S. $50 billion in revenue and $5 billion in profits in 2012. Disney is closely followed by Comcast with more than $4 billion in profits and then Time Warner with almost $3 billion.

At the same time, corporations such as Disney spark resistance as women of color and LGBTQ individuals, for example, respond to their absence and misrepresentation in contemporary media. The FAAN (Fostering Activism and Alternatives Now!) Project is a media literacy and media activism project formed by young women of color in Philadelphia. They seek to critique and create media, with the goal of social change. Another organization is the Queer Women of Color Media Arts Project that creates, exhibits, and distributes new films that reflect the lives of queer women of color and address vital social justice issues that concern them. Blogs and zines, discussed below, and various online communities also provide feminist media activism, including cyberactivism, that seeks to empower and change society. The reading "Cyberactivism and the Role of Women in the Arab Uprisings" by Courtney Radsch is an example of this.

As emphasized in Chapter 4, popular culture plays a huge role in setting standards of beauty and encouraging certain bodily disciplinary practices. Popular culture *is* culture for many people; the various forms pop culture takes help shape identity and

guide people's understandings of themselves and one another. This chapter addresses such issues by focusing on the Internet and cell/mobile phone technology and their relationship to television, movies, the music industry, and print media. In this discussion we emphasize issues of power and access, gender stereotyping, and obstacles to active participation in contemporary media that include both technological (obtaining the hardware) and social aspects (knowledge and relationship to cultural norms about technology and who should use it, as well as literacy skills). The final section of this chapter addresses literature and the arts.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

The Internet is a global system of interconnected private, public, academic, business, and governmental computer networks that serve billions of users worldwide. These are linked by electronic, wireless, and optical networking technologies and carry a wide range of information resources and services, such as the World Wide Web and infrastructure to support email. The Internet is central in enabling and accelerating interactions through Internet forums, instant messaging, and especially social networking and the use of personalized services tailored to users. Most traditional communications media, including music, film, and television, are being reshaped or redefined by the Internet, as are newspaper and other print media, by blogging and web feed features, for example, often accessed through mobile wireless technologies. Of course pornography and gambling industries have also taken advantage of the Internet and provide a significant source of advertising revenue for

MAKING THE NEWS A Guide to Getting the Media's Attention

1. Have a clear message. Decide what you are calling for and keep repeating it clearly and concisely. Don't dilute strong arguments by going off on tangents or harping on trivialities. Relate your cause to everyday concerns. For example, if you're campaigning for ethical investment, point out that it is financially viable *and* has a positive effect on the world. If you speak calmly and appeal to common understandings, radical ideas can appear not only sensible but even obvious.

2. Make media a priority. Effective campaigning means making media engagement a priority. I have often seen activists organize an event and then think about promoting it to the media. Put media at the center of your planning from the beginning.

3. Offer news. Something is news only if it is new. Discussions of opinions are not news—but you can make them news. When the University of London Union campaigned on fair trade, they couldn't make headlines simply by repeating its benefits. But by conducting a survey that showed that London students were among Britain's most enthusiastic fair trade buyers, they made a good news story. Don't forget to be imaginative!

(*continued*)

4. Watch your timing. If you are aiming for a weekly paper that goes to print on Tuesday afternoon, don't hold an event on Tuesday evening. Be where journalists are, both literally and metaphorically. It's difficult to get journalists to come to a protest outside a company's offices, but if you demonstrate outside the company's big annual meeting, business correspondents will already be there. Contact them in advance and there's a good chance they'll come over to speak with you.

5. Talk to journalists. It sounds obvious, but it is often overlooked. Issue a news release when you act or respond to events, but don't rely on the release alone. Get on the phone with the journalists who have received it. Be concise and brace yourself for disappointments—most of them will not be interested. But chances are you will find someone who wants to know more eventually.

6. Build contacts. Go back to journalists every time you have a story, especially those who seemed interested earlier. If you're concise and reliable, and give them good stories, they will soon be phoning you for comments. When this happens, make sure that someone is available. A good relationship with a few journalists is worth a thousand press releases.

7. Choose the right media. Who are you trying to influence? If you're aiming to shift local public opinion, the local press is, of course, vital. When the UK student group People and Planet launched their Green Education Declaration, they targeted specialist education media. The news was read by fewer people than if it had been in mainstream media, but that audience included the decision makers whom the initiative was targeting.

8. Keep it human. A single death is a tragedy; a million deaths is a statistic. For example, Disarm UCL is a group of students campaigning for an end to their university's arms investments. They discovered that a University College London graduate named Richard Wilson had written a book about his sister's death as a result of the arms trade. By involving Wilson in their campaign, they made the story more human and made it harder for their opponents to dismiss them as inexperienced and unrealistic.

9. Make it visual. A good image can make or break your chances of coverage. Photo stunts should be original and meaningful but not too complicated. A great example is students who dressed in military jackets and mortarboards to illustrate military influence on universities. With photos of protests, be careful about the background. I'm amazed how often people protest outside a shop or company without ensuring that the company's name is visible in shots of the demonstration. Specialist media will often use photos provided by campaigners, so it's worth finding someone who's good with a camera.

10. Keep going. Media liaison is hard work, especially when you are new to it. But don't give up! The more you do, the more contacts you will acquire and the more coverage you will get. Keep your press releases and your phone calls regular. It will all be worth it when you see the coverage making a difference to your campaign.

Source: Symon Hill, *Utne,* March–April 2009. Reprinted from *Red Pepper.*

other websites. Although many governments have attempted to restrict both industries' use of the Internet, in general, this has failed to stop their widespread popularity.

As of this writing (and of all the chapters in this book, this is the one where knowledge most quickly goes out of date), more than a third of the world's approximate 7 billion people have used the services of the Internet. Despite this scope, accessibility (to the Internet and other media) is one focus of this chapter, as is the relationship of new technologies to imperialism and global capitalist development. New media both support traditional imperialist practices as well as provide opportunities for subversion and resistance through online communities organized to improve the lives of marginalized people. Indeed, over the last couple of decades there have been several global policy directives like the World Summits on Information Society (WSIS) by, for example, the United Nations, the World Bank, and various nongovernmental organizations to improve women's access to information and communication technologies generally.

In terms of expansion of global capitalist development, online shopping opportunities are now challenging and in many cases surpassing traditional consumer behaviors with staggering profits for major corporations. Much of this commerce relies upon the cheap labor of millions, especially women, worldwide. Data mining allows companies to improve sales and profitability by creating customer profiles that contain information about demographics and online behaviors. Cloud computing merges business with social networking concepts by developing interactive communities that connect individuals based on shared business needs or experiences. Many provide specialized networking tools and applications that can be accessed via their websites, such as business directory and reviewing services. However, the Internet also provides market opportunities for artisans and craftspeople (through websites such as etsy.com).

It is also important to note the environmental consequences of the marketing of these technologies worldwide—especially in terms of "e-waste" and its relationship to global climate change. Consequences of electronic production and use include: (1) raw material extraction of nonrenewable natural resources, including coltan, a rare metal that is mostly found in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where its mining is currently helping finance a war; (2) material manufacturing that involves greater use of fossil fuels than other traditional manufacturing; (3) computer and accessory manufacturing, packaging, and transport that involve extensive use of plastics and Styrofoam; (4) energy use to deal with the explosion of e-data generated, transmitted, and stored; and (5) despite recycling efforts, problems associated with the rapid obsolescence of electronic products containing toxic metals that end up in landfills and pollute the earth and its water sources. A concern is that large amounts of e-waste are sent to China, India, and Africa, where many unprotected workers are exposed to hazardous materials such as mercury and lead in the process of burning electronics in search of copper and aluminum to resell.

An important feature of the Internet is that it allows greater flexibility in working hours and location, especially with the spread of unmetered high-speed connections and tools such as virtual private networks, Skype, and videoconferencing. The relatively low cost and nearly instantaneous sharing of ideas, knowledge, and skills has increased opportunities for collaborative work nationally and transnationally. Such collaboration occurs in a wide variety of areas, including scientific research, software development, conference planning, political activism, and creative writing. Publishing a web page or a blog or building a website involves little initial cost and many cost-free services are available. However, "cyberslacking" has been identified as a drain on business and other organizational resources. A 2013 report suggests the average employee who uses a computer at work spends about an hour a day surfing the Web.

The term *Web 2.0* is commonly associated with web applications that facilitate interactive information sharing, user-centered design, and collaboration. Web 2.0 sites provide opportunities for users to collaborate and interact as initiators of user-generated content in virtual communities. This can be compared to websites where users consume online content created for them. Web 2.0 innovations include applications such as mashups, which use or combine data from several sources to create new services, and folksonomies, or collaborative tagging or indexing, which allow users to collectively classify and find information. Most familiar applications include blogs, wikis, video-sharing sites, hosted services, and social networking sites. Facebook, for example, the most popular social network service and website, has more than 1 billion monthly active users (about one person for every 7 in the world) as well as 50 million pages and 10 million apps. Similarly Twitter and Tumblr offer social networking and microblogging with millions of users. LinkedIn is a business-oriented site offering opportunities for professional networking with 200 million active users, Yelp is a business directory service and review site with social networking features, and Flickr provides image and video hosting, creating an online community allowing users to embed images in blogs and social media. These technologies not only rely on expensive hardware, but also, ultimately, on literacy, a key issue worldwide as women are less likely than men to be able to access education, and thus are more likely to be illiterate.

Increasingly people access the Internet through mobile devices such as cell phones and tablets. Currently about 90 percent of U.S. adults have cell phones and 55 percent of these access the Internet through mobile smartphones (double the number just three years ago). Overall, about a fifth of all people with cell phones use their phones as the primary or only way they connect with the Internet. There are very few significant differences in terms of cell and smartphone usage by gender or ethnicity, although older (older than 65-year-olds) have lower rates. Of U.S. adults using smartphones, more than two-thirds access news and social networking sites, and about a third upload photos, listen to online personalized radio or other music, and play games. About 15 percent watch movies on their smartphones.

A 2013 study by the Pew Research Center found 78 percent of U.S. teenagers (younger than 18 years) have cell phones and of those, almost half have smartphones. In addition, three-quarters of teenagers (a significantly higher number than adults) access the Internet using mobile devices. Teenagers and young adults represent the leading edge of mobile connectivity, and the patterns of their technology signal future changes in the adult population. It is interesting, and frightening, to note that more people on earth have access to mobile or cell phones than toilets. A recent study estimated that out of the world's approximated 7 billion people, 6 billion have access to mobile phones. Far fewer—only 4.5 billion people—have access to working toilets. Of the 2.5 billion who don't have proper sanitation, more than 1 billion defecate in the open. Worldwide there are about a billion Google searches and 2 billion videos viewed on YouTube daily.

Certainly these technologies are changing the ways we interact with each other and how we anticipate friendship and community. A 2012 poll of multiple nations (that included Brazil, South Korea, China, India, the United Kingdom, and the United States), for example, revealed 84 percent of respondents saying they could not go a single day without their cell phones and a fifth admitting they check their phone every 10 minutes. Fifty percent of U.S. smartphone users in this sample said they slept with their phone next to them like a teddy bear or a spouse (a number that includes more than 80 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds). Is unlimited access to information and communication always beneficial? Is the opportunity to have hundreds of friends on social networking sites helping us build community? The answers to such questions are complex and the case can be

made that these devices are providing more knowledge at our fingertips, yet knowledge that is unfiltered as well as voluminous and therefore more easily forgettable. Social networking sites provide opportunities for us to keep in touch with a broad range of people in important ways, yet the case can be made that these are "faux friendships" without the interpersonal intimacies of "real" face-to-face friendship. What are your thoughts on this?

Sherry Turkle, founder and director of the MIT Initiative on Technology and Self and someone at the forefront of technological innovation, recently gave her opinion on the future of social life in this rapidly changing time. We are "networked and we are together," she said. "But so lessened are our expectations of each other that we feel utterly alone. And there is the risk that we come to see others as objects to be accessed—and only for the parts we find useful, comforting, or amusing." Scholars and clinicians have underscored her reservations with identification of various forms of Internet addiction disorder whereby excessive computer use interferes with daily life in relatively serious ways. Although Internet users are more efficient at finding information and have developed strong visual acuity and eye-hand coordination, these practices appear to interfere with deeper level thought related to creativity. And, although cell phones are usually considered devices that connect people, a 2012 study at the University of Maryland found that cell phone use for both women and men reduced empathic and pro-social behavior (measured via willingness to aid a charity). Researchers suggested that cell phone use evokes perceptions of connectivity to others, thereby fulfilling the basic human need to belong and reducing the desire to indulge in pro-social behavior. The ultimate risk of heavy technology use is that it not only fragments our life though multiple, diverse, and often superficial stimulation, but that it also diminishes empathy by limiting how much people really engage (off-line) with one another.

More significantly, how are digital technologies changing our brains? What does it mean for someone who has spent since birth, large portions of her or his day in front of screens, interrupted constantly, and encouraged to juggle various streams of information? Some scientists say without hesitation that juggling multiple sources of information and responding to ongoing communication is changing how we think and behave. It appears that the technology is actually rewiring the brain as neural networks continue to develop through life. Scientists say our ability to focus is undermined by bursts of information that stimulate (through a dopamine surge) the primitive impulse to respond to immediate opportunities and threats. This is why people experience digital technologies as addictive and feel bored or anxious when they are not "connected" to their devices. Along with this surge comes stress hormones that also have powerful effects on the body. Educators explain children have reduced attention span, difficulties focusing, and increased problems with obesity as a direct consequence of the ways we structure life around digital devices.

Originally the Web was imagined as utopian spaces where gender, race, class, and sexuality were neutral forces or where alternative subjectivities could be performed. Although this potential still remains, virtual realities tend to reinforce current social standards about gender and other identities. This occurs in two ways. First, traditional standards are scripted through gendered and racialized content supported by advertising, entertainment, and pornography. This "content" is saturated with traditional ideas about gender, downloading music and videos, watching television shows and reading narratives about other people's lives and activities on social networking sites.

Advertisements accompany most websites and a large percentage of Internet traffic is pornography related. Currently the worldwide pornography industry revenue is more than U.S. $100 billion with about $14 billion in U.S. revenue (although these numbers

are notoriously difficult to estimate). The pornography industry has larger revenues than Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Yahoo, Apple, and Netflix combined. In addition, pornography is often credited as fuel behind technological innovation and adoption. For example, pornography companies were attempting to perfect video streaming long before mainstream media in order to offer live sex performers that could be streamed directly to consumers. Live chat rooms between pornography consumers and performers also innovated much of the technology used today in other arenas. Today about a quarter of all search engine requests and more than a third of all Internet downloads are pornographic in nature. Estimates include about 30,000 viewers of Internet pornography every second with peak Internet pornography traffic during the work day between 9 am and 5 pm. Approximately a fifth of U.S. men admit to watching online pornography at work and between two-thirds and three-quarters of men aged 18 to 24 years visit pornography sites in a typical month.

Finally, of course, it is important to mention the levels of violence in online entertainment. Of particular concern are violent video games marketed to adolescent boys and the relationship between these activities and teen violence. This concern has precipitated hearings in the U.S. House of Representatives to discuss the regulation of certain games that depict the death, maiming, and harassment of people and animals. Violent video games tend to glorify violence, desensitize individuals to suffering, and may legitimize and trivialize violence and hate crimes against marginalized groups.

Second, despite the fact that Internet technologies provide new opportunities and help people connect across wide geographical expanses, these technologies are not available to everyone. Social class limits access to all information and communication technologies, irrespective of gender. The speed with which technology evolves or becomes obsolete (the "technology turnover" that pushes new gadget accessories through the marketplace at astonishing speeds) exacerbates these issues of equity associated with Internet technologies. According to a study published in 2013, there are few gender differences in Internet access in the United States, although in terms of usage women are more likely to use it for communication (email, blogs, and fan following) and participate in social networking sites. Men are more likely to use the Internet for recreation. Women participate in more streaming content, whereas men downloaded more. Men also have a higher use of Internet pornography and violent gaming, as discussed above. In this way, although in the global north a majority of women have access to the Internet, it is still a contested site where girls and women may experience marginalization, discrimination, abuse, and/or disempowerment. Online predation of girls and young women is an increasingly important problem as computers are installed in children's bedrooms and phones with Internet capabilities are owned by younger and younger individuals, making the Internet a central feature of teen and preteen life. It is estimated that one in five children is approached by an Internet predator, mostly through social networking sites.

Although a global perspective on women's access to the Internet reveals similar gendered usage, there are important gender and class differences associated with access. Where resources are scarce, the gap between those with resources, access, and skills, and those without, grows. This means that because women as a group are limited by poverty and lack of education, they are less likely to be able to access digital technologies. In addition, cultural differences also come into play as some communities encourage women's

access to the Internet and some do not. In this way, women's access to media is limited by socioeconomic factors as well as literacy and numeracy skills, and "user" characteristics such as time constraints associated with family obligations.

Finally, at the same time that the Internet reinscribes power issues on multiple levels, as already mentioned, it provides opportunities for subversion and resistance. Its relevance as a political tool facilitating various forms of cyberactivism is now well known. For example, recent U.S. presidential campaigns have been notable for their success in organizing voters and soliciting donations through the Internet. Digital technologies are also increasingly employed in resistance against standing regimes outside the United States, as in the case of the 2012 Arab Spring uprisings. In particular, social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter helped citizens organize protests, communicate grievances, and share information. The reading "Cyberactivism and the Role of Women in the Arab Uprisings" by Courtney Radsch focuses on Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain, and Yemen and explores how women used such media and employed citizen journalism to counter state-dominated media. China's attempts to censor and filter material on the Internet also reflect the growing civic potential of online communities and cyberactivism generally. Indeed, this activism is responding to the explosion of mass media globally that have grown with the expansion of markets on local, national, and global scales. Media corporations have grown stronger in their reach of audiences and in their ability to shape production and distribution processes worldwide.

The content and organization of the Web also provides opportunities to dispute and create new knowledge. Many women have fought to make a place for themselves in the technological world, developing their own activist websites, blogs, and computer games.

LEARNING ACTIVITY Analyzing Social Media

1. Become a Twitter follower of a celebrity for a few days. Then complete a gender analysis of her/his tweets: What issues are important to this celebrity? Who is the audience for the tweets? What is s/he trying to accomplish with these tweets? How does this celebrity perform gender in these tweets? Does s/he address gender issues in her/his tweets? Do the tweets reinforce or challenge gender norms? Do you think tweeting can be an effective form of feminist activism?
2. Search for YouTube videos on a topic related to feminism. Watch a selection of these videos and analyze them: Who is the intended audience? How does the video frame feminist issues? What is the goal of the video? How does the video make its argument? How would you assess the video's contribution to feminist dialogue? Can YouTube videos be an effective form of feminist activism?
3. Identify three feminist bloggers and read a selection of their blogs on feminist issues. Who is their audience? How do they construct their arguments to reach this audience? What kinds of comments get posted in response to their blogs? How effective do you think these blogs are as a form of feminist activism?

The reading in Chapter 13 by Moya Bailey and Alexis Pauline Gumbs on black feminist blogging ("We Are the Ones We've Been Waiting For") is also a case in point. Blogs allow opportunities for citizen journalism that allows people to critique and provide social commentary on their lives or the world around them. Blogging has also changed the face of publishing. Although bloggers are not usually formally trained and may not have professional credentials, they have been able to publish their opinions or beliefs about any number of subjects, appearing in school projects, on activism websites, and on political web pages, often with accompanying video. Similarly, wikis are knowledge databanks in which any user can add, edit, and create definitions for common words, concepts, histories, or biographies. It is important to note that though wikis can be good sources of common information, they are not always accurate and should not be confused with academic databases! These sites reflect a democratic construction of knowledge to which individuals can contribute (the website Wikipedia is one example).

TELEVISION

Television is one of the most influential forms of media because it is so pervasive and its presence is taken for granted in most households in the United States. Television impacts family life because it encourages passive interaction, often replacing alternative family interaction. In addition, television is a visual medium that broadcasts multiple images on a continual basis in digitized, high-density formats. The ways people watch television, however, are changing as viewers increasingly record shows rather than watch them in real time, watch parts of shows in other formats (for example, YouTube), and view television shows through computers and other mobile devices. However, although television viewing habits are increasingly diverse and fragmented, still these images come to be seen as representing the real world and influence people's understanding of others and the world around them. This is especially significant for children because it is estimated that most children, on the average, watch far more television than is good for them. Of course, the range and quality of television shows vary, and a case can be made for the benefits of educational television. Unfortunately, educational programming is only a small percentage of television viewing.

The explosion of cable and satellite availability has resulted in an unlimited number of television channels. Such choice, however, has not meant greater access to a wide range of alternative images of gender. Reality shows, and makeover shows, in particular, reinforce dominant notions of gender and standards of beauty, as do entertainment shows such as *American Idol* and *The Voice*. In addition, a host of shows such as *Teen Mom* and *Pregnant and Dating* provide sometimes contradictory messages about the challenges and benefits of unplanned pregnancies (although recent research suggests these shows may increase contraceptive usage). Shows incorporating shame and humiliation can be said to "discipline" an audience even while they present other people's misfortune as entertainment. Ultimately they are engaged in the selling of products.

Advertising sponsors control the content of most commercial television. During male sporting events, for example, the commercials are for beer, cars, electronic products, Internet commerce, and other products targeted at a male audience. During daytime soap operas or evening family sitcoms, on the other hand, the commercials are aimed at women and focus on beauty and household products. As a result, commercial sponsors have enormous

influence over the content of television programming. If they want to sell a certain product, they are unlikely to air the commercial during a feature that could be interpreted as criticizing such products or consumerism generally. In this way, commercial sponsors shape television content.

Television messages about gender are often very traditional, even when they are attempting to capitalize on new trends. The popular show *Modern Family* is case in point. Although it depicts a secure, loving gay couple, for example, it reinscribes many stereotypes about gay men. Similarly, while it also presents a very likeable Latina struggling to cope with life in the United States, it supports stereotypes of the ditsy Latin woman in most episodes. In fact, the assumed differences between the genders very often drive the plot of television programming. The format of shows is also gendered. For example, daytime soap operas focus on relationships and family and employ rather fragmented narratives with plots weaving around without closure or resolution, enabling women to tune in and out as they go about multiple tasks. Daytime soaps are only part of the story. Shows with drama and overt sexuality such as the long-running *Grey's Anatomy* target an evening audience, as do crime and thriller shows such as *Persons of Interest* and *NCIS*. The popularity of the historical drama *Downton Abbey* represents not only the interest in romance and intrigue, fashion and stately homes, but a nostalgia for the past. Cable networks such as HBO and AMC feature dramatic series such as *Mad Men,* another show set in the past, that garner popular acclaim and then become profitable as boxed-set DVDs. *Mad Men* provides a critique of corporate masculinity through its focus on men employed in a 1960s advertising agency. Similarly, popular series like *Game of Thrones* offer sexualized violence and misogynous male characters alongside some dynamic female characters. Even Breaking *Bad,* a show with high hopes from a feminist perspective, provided fodder for debate about contradictory messages about gender. Scholars have pointed out that these shows reconcile women to male-dominated interpersonal relationships and help enforce gendered social relations. Others argue that these shows enable women viewers to actively critique blatant male-dominated situations in ways that help them reflect on their own lives.

A similar analysis can be made of evening family sitcoms. Shows such as *Modern Family* and *The Good Wife* are funny and entertaining because they are relatively predictable. The family or work group (as in *The Office*) is made up of characters with distinct personalities and recognizable habits; each week this "family" is thrown into some kind of crisis, and the plot of the show is to resolve that crisis back to situation as usual. Sometimes

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Talking About Talk Shows

Watch several television talk shows. Keep a journal describing the topic of the show, the guests, and the commercial sponsors. How would you characterize the host? What do you notice about the interactions among host, guests, and audience? In what ways does gender operate in the shows? Do you think the shows are in any way empowering for the guests, audience members, or television viewers? How do you think these shows reflect either dominant or subordinate American cultures? How do you think these shows contribute to public discourse?

it involves a group of roommates or neighbors as in the classics *Friends*, *Seinfeld, The Big Bang Theory,* or *New Girl*. For the most part, the messages are typical in terms of gender, race, class, and other differences, and they often involve humor that denigrates certain groups of people and ultimately maintains the status quo. As already mentioned, reality television is especially influential. The appeal of "reality" shows such as *The Bachelor, Survivor, The Biggest Loser, Hell's Kitchen,* and *Jersey Shore* rely on creative casting, scripting, and editing to make the shows seem spontaneous, incorporating character traits and personalities that viewers love to hate and adore. These shows also rely on a cult of the celebrity, rampant in popular culture.

The Ellen DeGeneres Show and gay-themed decorating and personal styling shows may have helped normalize gay life for the broader society even while they often relied on traditional stereotypes. Some television specifically feature empowered LGBTQ characters such as Pam De Beaufort and Tara Thornton in *True Blood*, Callie Torres and Arizona Robbins in *Grey's Anatomy*, and other LQBTQ mainstays in such shows as *The Good Wife, The New Normal, Lost Girl,* and *Lip Service*.

Increasingly, we are seeing shows and advertisements that resist traditional representations, or at least show them with a new twist. Empowering roles for women are actually more likely to appear in television than in the movies because the former expects a female audience, whereas the latter relies on young male viewers. In addition, changes in society's views of gender and other differences have made sponsors realize that they have a new marketing niche. Susan Douglas writes about the proliferation of empowered female characters in the reading "Enlightened Sexism." She points to such characters as Miranda Bailey, the strong African American surgeon on *Grey's Anatomy;* agent Scully on *The X-Files,* a white, no-nonsense, smart character out to solve crime; and one of the most influential people in the entertainment industry, Oprah Winfrey. Douglas makes the case for these representations as fantasies of power that are especially seductive for girls and young women in that they provide the illusion and post-feminist message that "all has been won." Douglas explains that such "enlightened sexism" embeds feminism into its representations and insists that because women are now equal to men, it is okay and merely entertainment to present the old, tired stereotypes under new glitter. Often, unfortunately, these new representations involve the same old package tied up in new ways; typically they involve women and men resisting some of the old norms while keeping most intact.

For example, although women are starting to be shown as competent, strong, athletic, and in control of their lives rather than ditsy housewives or sex symbols, they still are very physically attractive and are often highly sexualized. In the reading, "Don't Act Crazy, Mindy," Heather Havrilesky discusses the trend for smart leading women in television sitcoms to act like "volcanoes that could blow at any minute." She recognizes this is televisionland's shorthand for complicated, strong-willed women and makes the case for saner, more authentic characters.

Glee is still a relatively popular evening television show that provides a gay-friendly script and some empowering roles and messages about femininity while at the same time featuring young women who are again physically attractive and often highly sexualized even though they often portray high schools students. Other examples abound in crime drama such as *Law & Order: SVU* and *CSI.* These shows provide strong, intelligent women as primary characters, but at the same time these women fulfill the stereotypical standards of beauty. They can track down criminals using forensic science and look gorgeous while doing it. Unfortunately, most of the victims are female, too. Despite some empowered

characters in shows like *CSI*, the focus on sexy female corpses ultimately associates women, queer cultures, and sexual subcultures with traditional and shallow stereotypes, negativity, and death.

Finally, news programs play an important role in shaping public opinion. Fox News, for example, is known for its support of conservative political opinion. Media scholars are particularly interested in the relationship between political ideologies and news media and especially the role of organizations like Fox News in supporting a conservative Republican agenda. One of the most influential pundits shaping popular opinion is Rush Limbaugh. With an estimated net worth of $350 million, Limbaugh is the outspoken, ultra-conservative host of *The Rush Limbaugh Show*, an A.M. radio show about U.S. politics, although he is a personality with cross-over appeal to television. The reading, "The New Networked Feminism," by Tom Watson discusses the organized feminist response to one of Limbaugh's misogynous outbursts that resulted in a dozen advertisers and two radio stations canceling his show. Satire news shows such as Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show* and Stephen Colbert's *The Colbert Report* provide alternative, more liberal takes on domestic and international news.

MOVIES

In her groundbreaking work on cinema, feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey identifies the "male gaze" as a primary motif for understanding gender in filmmaking. Mulvey argues that movies are essentially made through and for the male gaze and fulfill a voyeuristic desire for men to look at women as objects. Viewers are encouraged to "see" the movie through the eyes of the male protagonist who carries the plot forward. In other words, the focus is on the production of meaning in a film (including television and digital media), how it imagines a viewing subject, and the ways the mechanisms of cinematic production shape the representation of women and marginalized others, reinforcing intersecting systems of inequality and privilege. Mulvey makes the point that traditional feminine subjects in film are bearers of meaning not meaning making. Meaning making in Hollywood tends to incorporate heteronormative (centering of heterosexuality) themes that reinforce gender ranking through such genres as gangster films, action films, and westerns that celebrate heterosexual masculine power (with exceptions, of course, such as *Brokeback Mountain*). In other words, these films portray heterosexuality as the dominant theme representing masculinities.

Some feminist scholars have suggested the possibility for "subversive gazing" by viewers who refuse to gaze the way filmmakers expect and by making different kinds of movies. A key aspect of this criticism is recognizing the way identities are constructed and performed (in everyday life as well as in the movies) rather than essentialist and intrinsic to people. Coming from a black feminist perspective, bell hooks writes about the "oppositional gaze," encouraging women of color in film to reject stereotypical representations in film and actively critique them. In addition, film theorists are increasingly taking global or transnational perspectives, responding to critiques of Eurocentrism or the centering of a white, European, as well as straight and economically privileged perspective that has traditionally excluded disparate approaches across class, racial, and ethnic groups throughout the world. The Bollywood film genre, for example, a Hindi-language film industry in India, demonstrates the popularity of non-"Western" consciousness. Feminist film theorists

such as Claire Johnson, hooks, and Mulvey emphasize that alternative (to traditional Hollywood) films can function as "counter cinema" by integrating alternative cinematic forms and images and by putting women and other marginalized people in charge of directing and producing films. Finally, the integration of lesbian/gay/queer politics in film attempts to destabilize traditional Hollywood themes. For example, the Queer Film Society, a consortium of LGBT film critics, historians, artists, and scholars, focuses on the production and celebration of queer images in world cinema. One of their mottos is "We're here, we're queer, we're watching movies."

Probably the best genre of film in which to observe gender is the romantic comedy or romantic drama. Romantic comedies have become the de facto film produced for female audiences that shape notions of multifaceted femininities. Their heteronormative formula reinforces myths about romantic love and marriage as the most important keys to women's happiness. This popular and seductive genre sometimes contains glimpses challenging heteropatriarchy (such as the blockbuster film *He's Just Not That Into You*). These films are packed with subtle and not-so-subtle notions of gender. For example, the now classic movie *Pretty Woman* is a contemporary retelling of the Cinderella story, in which a young woman waits for her Prince Charming to rescue her from her undesirable situation. In this case, the prostitute-with-a-heart-of-gold is swept away in a white limousine by the older rich man who procured her services and then fell in love with her. Some films like *Enchanted* are trying to challenge the idea that all women need to be saved by a handsome prince. The *Shrek* series of movies satirizes traditional fairy tale elements, with the princess choosing to become an ogre and exhibiting her own sense of self and agency. Yet even these films that seem to challenge masculinist assumptions still often reproduce patriarchal understandings. So while Fiona in *Shrek* forsakes traditional femininity, she still embraces the roles of wife and mother as the ultimate goals for women.

Other genres of films are also revealing in terms of norms about gender. Slasher films and horror movies are often spectacular in terms of their victimization of women. The killers in these movies, such as Norman Bates in the classic *Psycho* (a spin-off television show in 2013, *Bates Motel,* capitalizes on this plot and reveals his ambiguous childhood psyche), are often sexually disturbed and hound and kill women who arouse them. This is also the subtext of other old films such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* movies and *Prom Night.*

LEARNING ACTIVITY **Women Make Movies**

Very often the subjects that are important to women are ignored in popular filmmaking or are distorted by stereotypes or the male gaze. Despite lack of funding and major studio backing, independent women filmmakers worldwide persist in documenting the wide range of women's lives and experiences.

Visit the website of Women Make Movies at *www.wmm.com.* Browse the catalog and identify movies made by filmmakers outside the United States. What themes do they pursue? Are these themes also common in American women filmmakers' movies? In what ways do they also express cultural distinctions? How do these films differ from mainstream box office releases? Why is an organization like Women Make Movies important?

Often it is sexually active couples who are killed, either after sex or in anticipation of it. Another plot of horror movies is the crazed and demanding mother who drives her offspring to psychosis, as in *Carrie,* where the mother gives birth to the spawn of Satan. The "final girl" trope is also a staple of slasher films. She is the last girl left alive, the one who confronts the killer and presumably lives to tell the story. She's seen in classic films such as *Halloween, Friday the 13th, Scream, A Nightmare on Elm Street,* and *Hatchet.* Although both women and men claim to be entertained by these films, it is important to talk about the messages they portray about men, about women, and about the normalization of violence.

Pornography is an extreme example of the male gaze and the normalization of violence against women (discussed in Chapter 10). With its print media counterpart, pornography extends the sexualization and objectification of women's bodies for entertainment. In pornographic representations, women are often reduced to body parts and are shown deriving pleasure from being violated and dominated. Additionally, racism intersects with sexism in pornography when women of color are portrayed as the "exotic other" and are fetishized and portrayed in especially demeaning and animalistic ways. Although many feminists, ourselves included, oppose pornography, others, especially those described as "sex radicals," feel that pornography can be a form of sexual self-expression for women. They argue that women who participate in the production of pornography are taking control of their own sexuality and are profiting from control of their own bodies.

Advertisers have targeted young girls with stripper and porn-inspired merchandise that creates a very narrow definition of what constitutes sexiness for women. Such pressures encourage young women to identify with this objectification and sexualization and confuse it with notions of self-empowerment. As already discussed, young people often follow celebrity blogs that feature gossip and photos about their favorite movie and music celebrities. Although this "cult of the celebrity" is not something new in popular culture, the growth of the Internet has facilitated public fascination with famous people and also encourages young people to seek their few minutes of fame. It has been suggested that this celebration of fame not only shapes young people's ideas about self and body with unrealistic expectations, but has also facilitated the growth and interest in reality television.

Some of the more pervasive and lasting gender images in U.S. culture derive from Walt Disney feature films. As mentioned, Disney Corporation is the number one media conglomerate in the world in terms of revenue created. A key source of their profits lies in the fact that Disney heroines live not only on the big screen, but also as dolls in little girls' rooms, on their sheets and curtains, and on their lunchboxes and clothes. On the whole, Disney characters reflect white, middle-class, heteropatriarchal, and imperialist norms. More recent representations in Disney movies have attempted to be more inclusive, but still rely largely on these traditional norms. For example, new Disney heroines are empowered to make choices for themselves, but still tend to be represented in sexualized ways with Anglo features.

As women have made societal gains, Hollywood filmmaking has changed and become more inclusive of new norms about gender and other forms of social difference. Indeed, as Susan Douglas explains in the reading "Enlightened Sexism," film media contain multiple images of female empowerment and gay-friendly narratives. Douglas asks why these images of female empowerment are not aligned with the realities of most women's lives and makes the case for a seductive appropriation of feminism for corporate gain. These empowered characters are more likely to be white and economically privileged at the same

time that narratives about them tend to rely on heterosexual romance. Notice also the dearth of people of color or LGBQT characters in leading roles in most films. Bringing a critical eye to the movies we watch helps us notice how films play a role in maintaining privilege and moves us from being passive recipients of the movies' message to active viewers who can offer informed analysis.

One of the biggest contemporary movie hits is the *Twilight Saga*: screenplays based upon novels by Stephanie Meyer. A case can be made that the movies provide examples of subversions of traditional gender and complex messages about female power and agency. However, as Alison Happel and Jennifer Esposito suggest in the reading "Vampires and Vixens," the movies sexualize violence with potentially negative consequences for teenage girls. The major theme of the movies, for example, concerns a girl's love for a boy who wants to kill her. Even though he tells her to avoid him, the main character, Bella, repeatedly risks violence through her pursuit of him. Happel and Esposito emphasize that Bella's body language is especially sexual in violent scenes. Another very popular young-adult novel turned movie is Suzanne Collins's book *The Hunger Games*. Declared a feminist narrative in its representation of a strong black girl in pursuit of social justice, the movie also shows the main character, Katniss, clever and competent with qualities usually given to boys, who risks death to save her sister and another girl child. She appears as the opposite to Bella of *Twilight* in that she is not love-obsessed, and unlike Hermione of the *Harry Potter* series, she is the lead character and not the sidekick. Still, despite these credentials, it is noted that Katniss makes few decisions of her own, is still protected by men, and blessed with lucky accidents; and when things get impossible, there are packages from the sky. Some critics have also noted that it is a prime example of a cultural product that should not be assumed to be feminist simply because it has a female creator and female protagonist. If you have read or watched *The Hunger Games*, what do you think?

CONTEMPORARY MUSIC AND MUSIC VIDEOS

Popular music genres such as rock, grunge, punk, metal, techno, and hip-hop are contemporary cultural forms targeted at youth. Often this music offers resistance to traditional cultural forms and contains a lot of teenage angst attractive to young people who are figuring out who they are in relation to their parents and other adults in positions of authority in their lives. In this way, such music serves as contemporary resistance and can work to mobilize people politically. Certainly music functions to help youth shape notions of identity. The various musical forms offer different kinds of identities from which people can pick and choose to sculpt their own sense of self. In this way, music has played, and continues to play, a key role in the consolidation of youth cultures in society. There is a huge music industry in the United States, and it works in tandem with television, film, video, radio, and, of course, advertising. The Internet and personalized music devices like the iPod and iTunes allow people to download music and create their own personalized collections rather than purchasing complete CDs. Similarly, personalized radio like Pandora and Slacker allows individuals to indicate and provide feedback on a song or artist they like and the service responds by playing selections that are musically similar. These technologies have changed industries and listening practices.

Just as rock music was an essential part of mobilizing the youth of the 1960s to rebel against traditional norms, oppose the war, and work for civil rights, hip-hop music and

culture has been influential in recent decades as a critique of racial cultural politics. Originating in African American urban street culture of the late 1970s, rap was influenced by rhythm and blues and rock and quickly spread beyond its roots into television, fashion, film, and, in particular, music videos. At the same time that the rap music industry has been able to raise the issue of racism, poverty, and social violence in the context of its endorsement of black nationalism, rap has also perpetuated misogyny and violence in its orientation and musical lyrics. There are women performers in hip-hop and new female rappers are receiving much more attention, but their status in the industry is far below that of male bands. Aya de Leon reflects on this in her poem "If Women Ran Hip Hop." Women's success in hip-hop is illustrated by the success of such artists as Queen Latifah, Lil' Kim, and Missy Elliot. Elliott in particular is known not only as a writer and performer but also as a producer of other artists' music. These women continue in the footsteps of blues and soul artists such as Billie Holiday, Aretha Franklin, and Etta James.

About 30 years after the advent of rock music, the combination of music with visual images gave rise to the music video genre, which gained immense popularity in the 1980s with the prominence of MTV, a music video station that has now branched into specialized programming. Music videos are unique in blending television programming with commercials such that while the viewer is actually watching a commercial, the illusion is of programmatic entertainment. Music videos are essentially advertisements for record company products and focus on standard rock music, although different musical genres like country-western also have their own video formatting. Most music videos are fairly predictable in the ways they sexualize women, sometimes in violent ways. As in movies, women are generally present in music videos to be looked at. In fact, music videos featuring male musicians are aired in greater numbers than those featuring female musicians.

Nonetheless, we could also argue that the music video industry has allowed women performers to find their voice (literally) and to script music videos from their perspective. This opportunity gave women audience recognition and industry backing. Music videos also helped produce a feminine voice with the potential to disrupt traditional gendered perspectives. At its peak in the mid-1980s, MTV helped such women as Tina Turner, Cyndi Lauper, and Madonna find success. Madonna is especially interesting because she was cast simultaneously as both a feminist nightmare perpetuating gendered

IDEAS FOR ACTIVISM

- Write letters to encourage networks to air television shows that depict the broad diversity of women.
- Write letters to sponsors to complain about programs that degrade or stereotype women.
- Form a reading group to study novels by female authors.
- Create your own zine about a feminist issue that's important to you.
- Sponsor a media awareness event on campus to encourage other students to be aware of media portrayals of women. Use social media to promote awareness of women's issues.
- Create a YouTube video to promote your women and gender studies program.

stereotypes about sexualized women and an important role model for women who want to be active agents in their lives. Lady Gaga (Stefani Germanotta) is similarly positioned as an icon who simultaneously supports and resists female sexualization. Both Madonna and Lady Gaga have been regarded as returning the male gaze by staring right back at the patriarchy. Similarly, Beyoncé, for example, has declared her feminism with empowering songs like "Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)" and Destiny's Child's classic "Independent Women." Sophie Weiner makes the case for Beyoncé as a celebrity who furthers the cause of social justice in "Beyoncé: Feminist Icon?" Other artists like Christina Aguilera and Pink are also celebrated for being both sexual and assertively feminist in much the same way.

Performing rock music has generally been seen as a male activity, despite the presence of women rockers from the genre's beginnings in the 1950s. The male-dominated record industry has tended to exclude women rockers and tried to force women musicians into stereotypical roles as singers and sex objects. But the advent of new, accessible technologies has allowed women greater control of their own music. Now, instead of needing a recording contract with one of the big labels, an aspiring rocker can write, record, produce, and distribute her own music. For years, independent artists sold most of their music out of the back of a van, but now the Internet has made global distribution possible for just about every musician—without a large budget, agent, manager, or record label. New technologies both inside and outside the music industry have provided more ways for women to express themselves. Opportunities for self-promotion on YouTube and various social networking sites have encouraged a new generation of women musicians. Musicians can display their music and image for free with minimal effort. This allows them to break out of expected norms and potentially avoid industry stereotyping. Online communities such as GoGirlsMusic and Women in Music also support and help launch new artists.

Other strategies for independence include "indie" artists and bands whose music is produced within networks of independent record labels and underground music venues that emerged in the United States and elsewhere in the 1980s and 1990s. Indie is also seen as a distinct genre of rock music with a specific artistic aesthetic that includes many female artists. Singer-songwriters such as Ani DiFranco, the Indigo Girls, Tracy Chapman, and Tori Amos were important in providing feminist music as also were the "riot grrl" feminist punk artists and bands of the 1980s. Many of these artists continue to serve as role models for young women seeking to gain a more independent place in contemporary music.

PRINT MEDIA

No discussion of popular culture is complete without a discussion of print media. These mass media forms include magazines, newspapers, comic books, and other periodicals that are usually simultaneously available online. Like other media, they are a mix of entertainment, education, and advertising. Fashion magazines are heavy on advertising, whereas comic books tend to be geared toward entertainment and rely more on product sales of the comic books themselves. Newspapers fall somewhere in between.

Women's magazines are an especially fruitful subject of study for examining how gender works in contemporary U.S. society. As discussed in Chapter 4, women's magazines are a central part of the multi-billion-dollar industries that produce cosmetics and

LEARNING ACTIVITY Looking Good, Feeling Sexy, Getting a Man

Collect a number of women's magazines, such as *Cosmopolitan, Vogue, Elle, Glamor, Redbook,* and *Woman's Day.* Read through the magazines and fill in the chart listing the number of articles you find about each topic. What do you observe from your analysis? What messages about gender are these magazines presenting?

Magazine Title	Makeup	Clothes	Hair	Sex/ Dating	Dieting	Food/ Recipes	Home Decoration	Work	Politics

fashion and help shape the social construction of "beauty." Alongside these advertising campaigns are bodily standards against which women are encouraged to measure themselves. Because almost no one measures up to these artificially created and often computer-generated standards, the message is to buy these products and your life will improve.

Generally, women's magazines can be divided into three distinct types. First are the fashion magazines that focus on beauty, attracting and satisfying men, self-improvement, and (occasionally) work and politics. Examples are *Vogue* (emphasizing fashion and makeup), *Cosmopolitan* (emphasizing sexuality and relationships with men), and *Self* (emphasizing self-improvement and employment), although the latter two are also heavy on beauty and fashion and the former is also preoccupied with sex. Most of these magazines have a white audience in mind; *Ebony* is one similar kind of magazine aimed at African American women. Note that there are also a number of junior magazines in this genre, such as *Seventeen,* aimed at teenage women. However, although its title suggests the magazine might be oriented toward 17-year-olds, it is mostly read by younger teenagers and even preadolescent girls. Given the focus of teen magazines on dating, fashion, and makeup, the effects of such copy and advertisements on young girls are significant.

The second genre of women's magazines includes those oriented toward the family, cooking, household maintenance and decoration, and keeping the man you already have. Examples include *Good Housekeeping, Redbook,* and *Better Homes and Gardens.* These magazines (especially those like *Good Housekeeping*) also include articles and advertising on fashion and cosmetics, although the representations of these products are different. Instead of the seductive model dressed in a shiny, revealing garment (as is usually featured on the cover of *Cosmo* or *Glamor*), *Redbook,* for example, usually features a less glamorous woman (although still very normatively beautiful) in more conservative clothes, surrounded by other graphics or captions featuring various desserts, crafts, and so forth. The focus is off sex and onto the home.

The third genre of women's magazines is the issue periodical that focuses on some issue or hobby that appeals to many women. *Parents* magazine is an example of an issue periodical aimed at women (although not exclusively). *Ms.* magazine is one aimed at

HISTORICAL MOMENT *SI for Women*

By Lindsay Schnell

Featuring a variety of male athletes, marketed to men and written (mostly) by men, *Sports Illustrated (SI)* magazine has never done a consistent job of covering and featuring female athletes. It's easy to see why: *SI* primarily covers professional sports, and a small percentage of professional athletes are women. For years, female athletes struggled to get a fair shake in media coverage, often being touted more for their looks than their abilities on the playing field.

That all changed in the spring of 1999 with the debut of *Sports Illustrated for Women.* Featuring teen basketball phenom Seimone Augustus—who went on to star at Louisiana State University and become the number-one pick of the 2006 WNBA draft—on its first cover, *SI for Women* catered to female athletes of all ages and skill levels. The magazine offered tips on eating like a professional athlete, previews of college and professional teams, in-depth features on known and unknown females making an impact in the world of sport, and much more. One issue even had a sports horoscope for its readers! *SI for Women* also had an answer to its parent magazine's hottest-selling issue annually: a swimsuit issue of its own, with male athletes showing off the bodies they had worked so hard for. Finally, women had a sports magazine just for them that celebrated their athletic accomplishments instead of just their looks.

One of the earliest covers featured Julie Foudy, a member of the 1999 Women's World Cup soccer team. Foudy and her teammates became known across the nation after a thrilling 5–4 shootout victory over China in the Rose Bowl for the '99 Cup title. Brandi Chastain's "shot heard 'round the world" and subsequent act of ripping off her shirt and falling to her knees in ecstasy became one of the most iconic sports images of the twentieth century.

Coupled with the success of the '99 World Cup team, *SI for Women* helped athletes like soccer great Mia Hamm and basketball superstar Sheryl Swoopes become household names. Unfortunately, *SI for Women* wasn't a hot seller on the newsstands, and lasted just 18 issues. It folded in 2002, but in the two-and-a-half years that *SI for Women* was in print it helped give a face—or faces—to a generation hungry for strong female role models.

In 2008 Winter X Games star Gretchen Bleiler told *ESPN The Magazine*, "It sucks. When you're a woman in sports, people want you to show some skin." Though it's no longer in print, *SI for Women* helped prove female athletes didn't have to show skin to get some pub. And with female athletic participation at an all-time high since Title IX was passed in 1972, is there any better news we can give to our friends, teammates, sisters, and daughters?

feminists, as are *Bitch* and *Bust*. Examples of hobby-type periodicals include craft magazines on needlework or crochet and fitness magazines. There are many specialized issue periodicals aimed at men (such as hunting and fishing and outdoor activities periodicals, computer and other electronic-focused magazines, car and motorcycle magazines, and various sports periodicals). The best known of the latter is *Sports Illustrated,* famous also for its "swimsuit edition," which always produces record sales in its sexualization of female athletes' bodies (see the sidebar "*SI for Women*"). That there are more issue periodicals for men reflects the fact that this group is assumed to work and have specialized interests, and women are assumed to be preoccupied with looking good, working on relationships, and keeping a beautiful home.

Again, as in music, technology has also provided a way for women to express their voices through publishing. "Zines" are quick, cheap, cut-and-paste publications that have sprung up both in print and online formats in recent years. These publications, which range in quality, often provide a forum for alternative views on a wide variety of subjects,

WOMEN IN PRINT

by Nancy Barbour

Feminist consciousness-raising efforts in the late 1960s and early 1970s increased women's awareness that their personal experiences needed articulation in wider sociopolitical contexts. Like their first wave sisters before them, second wave feminists worked to spread their critical knowledge to greater numbers of women by distributing newsletters and pamphlets. The now famous book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (1973), by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective, began as a 35-cent feminist pamphlet that aimed to demystify women's health and sexuality. But the women's movement faced resistance from mainstream publishers.

High-circulation magazines for "ladies" rejected feminist articles that addressed issues of real concern to women. Instead, they often published advertising "puffs"—articles that appear to be informative but are designed to sell an advertiser's product. Feminists understood that these publications, while marketed directly to women, were controlled and edited almost entirely by men. In 1970, more than 100 feminists descended upon the offices of *Ladies' Home Journal* and staged an 11-hour sit-in. They demanded that the magazine hire women to fill all editorial and advertising positions, that it hire a proportionate number of

(*continued*)

non-white women at all levels, and that it cease publishing advertisements that were degrading to women. The editor did not capitulate, but the August 1970 issue included an eight-page insert on "The New Feminism," written by protesters. In 1973, *LHJ* hired a woman as editor-in-chief.

Feminists recognized that they could not rely upon the traditional publishing industry to represent women's interests and experiences. In the 1970s, a number of small, independent feminist presses were established across the United States, some first operating out of homes and garages. Shameless Hussy Press, The Women's Press Collective, Out & Out Books, New Victoria Publishers, and CALYX Press were among the first feminist and lesbian publishers that specialized in poetry, art, fiction, and nonfiction, predominantly by and for women. Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, started in 1980, was the first to be managed and run exclusively by women of color. Many well-known and widely published women writers were first discovered by independent feminist publishers. Some of these presses are still operating. Others have disappeared in the wake of domination by conglomerate corporate publishers.

Today, a handful of conglomerates controls 80% of the U.S. book market. Feminist publishers once relied upon independent women's and lesbian bookstores as their major retailers, but many of these stores were driven out of business by chain sellers. Big chain bookstores collaborate with the publishing giants to dictate which books will be prominently featured and which are destined for obscurity. High-visibility spaces—at the ends of shelves and on tables near the entrance and cash registers—are purchased by publishers to increase their books' visibility and sales. Small, independent, and nonprofit publishers rarely have the marketing budgets to participate in these pay-to-display schemes. Their books are typically relegated to bottom shelves in the far corners of chain bookstores—if the stores carry them at all.

Feminist presses continue to strive toward strengthening the presence of women writers in the literary canon. Visit these independent feminist publishers online, join their mailing lists, and ask your favorite bookstores to carry their titles.

CALYX Press: Independent, nonprofit publisher of fine art and literature by women from diverse backgrounds. *www.calyxpress.org*

The Feminist Press: Independent, nonprofit literary publisher that promotes freedom of expression and social justice. *www.feministpress.org*

Seal Press: Independent publisher of books about women's health, parenting, popular culture, sexuality, gender and transgender life, and much more. *www.sealpress.com*

Cleis Press: The largest independent queer publisher in the United States. *www.cleispress.com*

Aunt Lute Books: Multicultural women's press, publishing literature by traditionally underrepresented women, especially women of color. *www.auntlute.com*

Spinifex Press: Independent Australian feminist publisher of feminist books with an optimistic edge. Eighty percent of titles are also available as eBooks. *www.spinifexpress.com*

especially pop culture. As Alison Piepmeier notes in the reading "Bad Girl, Good Girl," zines provide an opportunity for young feminists to resist ideas in mainstream publications that sustain women's subordination. Piepmeier explores the ways zines have allowed girls and young women to both critique and embrace girlishness and femininity. She suggests zine authors focus on the pleasures of girlhood even while they critique racist, heteropatriarchal social structures. She discusses *Bust* magazine as an example.

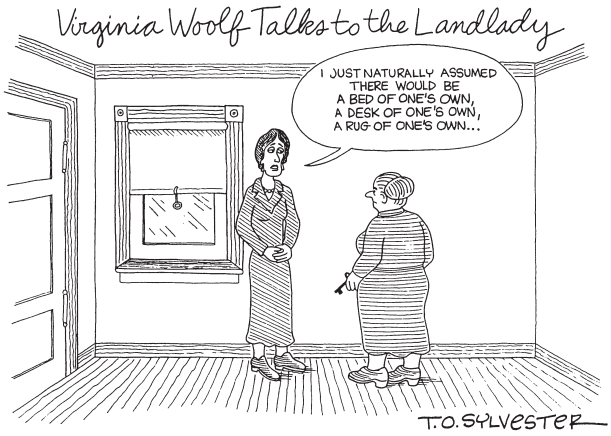
LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

In the reading "Thinking About Shakespeare's Sister," Virginia Woolf responds to the question "Why has there been no female Shakespeare?" Similarly, in the early 1970s, Linda Nochlin wrote a feminist critique of art history that sought to answer the question "Why have there been no great women artists?" Woolf and Nochlin reached very similar conclusions. According to Nochlin, the reason there had been no great women artists was not that no woman had been capable of producing great art but that the social conditions of women's lives prevented such artistic endeavors.

Woolf wrote her essay in the late 1920s, but still today many critics and professors of literature raise the same questions about women's abilities to create great literature. Rarely, for example, does a seventeenth- or eighteenth-century British literature course give more than a passing nod to women authors of the periods. Quite often, literature majors graduate having read perhaps only Virginia Woolf, George Eliot, Jane Austen, or Emily Dickinson. The usual justification is that women simply have not written the great literature that men have or that to include women would mean leaving out the truly important works of the literary canon (those written by white men).

In her essay, Woolf argues that it would have been impossible due to social constraints for a woman to write the works of Shakespeare in the age of Shakespeare. Although women did write, even in the time of Shakespeare, their works were often neglected by the arbiters of the literary canon because they fell outside the narrowly constructed definitions of great literature. For example, women's novels often dealt with the subjects of women's lives—family, home, love—subjects not deemed lofty enough for the canon of literature. Additionally, women often did not follow accepted forms, writing in fragments rather than unified texts. As the canon was defined according to white male norms, women's writing and much of the writing of both women and men of color were omitted. Jane Austen is still a popular novelist despite having written her books two centuries ago. Her current popularity is based in part on the dramatization of her work in a series of blockbuster movies as well as the fact that Austen was both a romantic and a feminist. The still-relevant romantic plots in Austen's novels provide a foundation for her strong critique of sexism and classism. We include in this chapter Emily Dickinson's short poem "The Wife," with its lament about the wife who "rose to his requirement, dropped/The playthings of her life/To take the honorable work/Of woman and of wife." Writing in the mid-nineteenth century, Dickinson was very aware, as women still are today, of the duties and expectations of women as they become wives.

Yet, toward the end of the twentieth century, more women began to publish novels and poetry, and these have been slowly introduced into the canon. These works have dealt with the realities of women's lives and have received wide acclaim. For example, writers such as Toni Morrison (who received the Nobel Prize for literature), Alice Walker, and Maya Angelou have written about the dilemmas and triumphs faced by black women in



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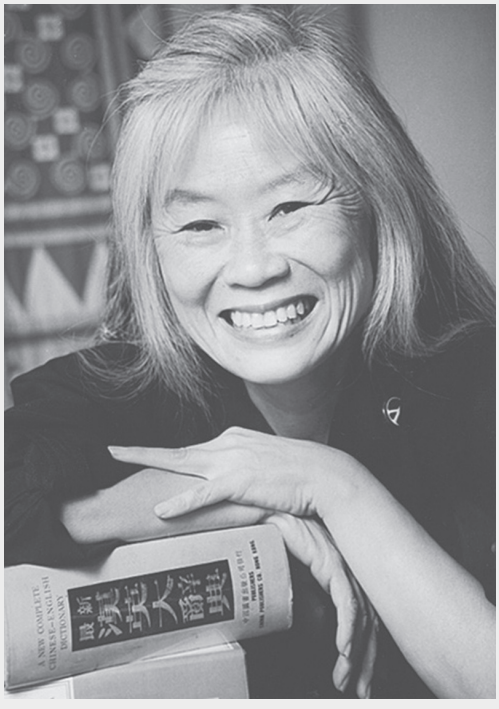
a white, male-dominated culture. Annie Dillard won a Pulitzer Prize at the age of 29 for her nature essays about a year spent living by Tinker Creek. Feminist playwrights such as Wendy Wasserstein, Suzan Lori-Parks, Lynn Nottage, Migdalia Cruz, and Eve Ensler; performance artists such as Lily Tomlin and Lori Anderson; and feminist comedians such as Suzanne Westenhoffer, Tracey Ullman, Wanda Sykes, and Margaret Cho have also been very influential in providing new scripts for women's lives. Audre Lorde talks about the importance of literature in "Poetry Is Not a Luxury." She describes poetry as opportunity to bring forth dreams, longings, and all that we dare make real. She implores us to speak and write the truths of our lives.

Just as female writers have been ignored, misrepresented, and trivialized, so too female artists and musicians have faced similar struggles. Women's art has often been labeled "crafts" rather than art. This is because women, who were often barred from entering the artistic establishment, have tended to create works of art that were useful and were excluded from the category of art. Often, female artists, like their sisters who were writing novels and poetry, used a male pen name and disguised their identity in order to have their work published or shown. With the influence of the women's movement, women's art is being reclaimed and introduced into the art history curriculum, although it is often taught in the context of "women's art." This emphasizes the ways the academy remains androcentric, with the contributions of "others" in separate courses. Female artists such as Frida Kahlo, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Judy Chicago have revitalized the art world by creating women-centered art and feminist critiques of masculine art forms. Similarly, graphic artists such as Barbara Kruger and mixed-media artists such as Jennifer Linton have incorporated feminist critiques of consumerism and desire. Photographers such as Cindy Sherman and Lorna Simpson have also raised important questions about the representation of women and other marginalized people in media and society. Joyce Wieland has famously created quilted art pieces using a traditionally feminine art form and Kiki Smith has sculpted feminist imagery focusing on bodily secretions such as blood and sweat. Finally, the "Guerilla Girls," an anonymous feminist group wearing gorilla masks, use the names of dead female

ACTIVIST PROFILE

Maxine Hong Kingston



As a young girl, Maxine Hong Kingston could not find herself in the images in the books she read. The public library in her hometown of Stockton, California, had no stories of Chinese Americans and very few that featured girls. For Kingston, this meant a significant need and open space for the telling of her stories.

Kingston was born in Stockton in 1940 to Chinese immigrant parents. Her mother was trained as a midwife in China, and her father was a scholar and teacher. Arriving in the United States, Tom Hong could not find work and eventually ended up working in a gambling business. Maxine was named after a successful blonde gambler who frequented her father's establishment.

Growing up in a Chinese American community, Kingston heard the stories of her culture that would later influence her own storytelling. By earning 11 scholarships, she was able to attend the University of California at Berkeley, where she earned a B.A. in literature. She married in 1962, and she and her new husband moved to Hawaii, where they both taught for the next 10 years.

In 1976 Kingston published her first book, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts.* This story of a young Chinese American girl who finds her own voice won the National Book Critics Circle Award. Kingston's portrayal of the girl's struggle with silence was met with a great deal of criticism from many Chinese men who attacked Kingston's exploration of critical gender and race issues among Chinese Americans.

Kingston followed *Woman Warrior* with *China Men* in 1980, which also won the National Book Critics Circle Award. This book explored the lives of the men in Kingston's family who came to the United States, celebrating their achievements and documenting the prejudices and exploitation they faced. Her 1989 novel, *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book,* continued her explorations of racism and oppression of Chinese Americans. Although some critics have accused Kingston of selling out because her stories have not reflected traditional notions of Chinese culture, she has maintained her right to tell her story in her own words with her own voice.

(*continued*)

The Fifth Book of Peace, published in 2003, uses her personal tragedy of losing her house, possessions, and an unfinished novel in the Oakland-Berkeley fire of 1991 as a metaphor for war. She asks repeatedly the questions "Why war? Why not peace?" In 2006, she edited *Veterans of War, Veterans of Piece,* a collection of essays written by survivors of war who participated in her healing workshops. She published her memoir, *I Love a Broad Margin to My Life,* in 2012.

artists to highlight the ways women and people of color are disproportionately excluded from the art world through posters, postcards, and public appearances.

The works of female composers and musicians (such as by Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel and Clara Schumann) have also been ignored as barriers to female achievement in this arena prevented recognition of their talents. Women of color faced almost insurmountable obstacles by virtue of both race and gender discrimination as well as the effects of class. It was mostly economically privileged women who were able to devote themselves to music. In 1893 Margaret Ruthven Lang was the first female composer in the United States to compose a piece performed by a major American symphony orchestra. Contemporary women composers still face challenges despite achievements by such women as Cynthia Wong, Yu-Hiu Chang, and Paola Prestini. Similarly, very few women have been given the opportunity to conduct orchestras until recently with the debut of contemporary female composers such as Marin Alsop, Emmanuelle Haïm, Julia Jones, Anu Tali, and Xian Zhang. Nadia Boulanger was the first woman to conduct a symphony orchestra in the early twentieth century and was known as one of the best music teachers of her time. Women were limited in music by the gendered nature of certain musical instruments that rendered them inappropriate for women. In fact, through the nineteenth century, only certain instruments such as the keyboard and harp were considered appropriate for women to play, and, even today, women are still directed away from some instruments and toward others. Despite these obstacles, they continue to produce literature and art and to redefine the canon. As in other male-dominated arenas, however, women have had to struggle to create a place for themselves. This place is ever-changing, providing women with opportunities for fame, empowerment, self-validation, and respect.

HISTORICAL MOMENT The NEA Four

Chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) provides funding for artists to develop their work. In 1990 Congress passed legislation that forced the NEA to consider "standards of decency" in awarding grants. Four performance artists—Karen Finley, Holly Hughes, John Fleck, and Tim Miller—had been selected to receive NEA grants, but following charges by conservatives, particularly Senator Jesse Helms (R–North Carolina), that the artists' works were obscene, the NEA denied their grants. All but Finley are gay, and Finley herself is an outspoken feminist.

Finley's work deals with raw themes of women's lives. She gained notoriety for a performance in which she smeared herself with chocolate to represent the abuse of women. Latching onto this image, conservatives referred to Finley as "the chocolate-smeared woman." Her work is shocking, but she uses the shocking images to explore women's horrific experiences of misogyny, and she uses her body in her performances in ways that reflect how society uses her body against her will.

Hughes's work explores lesbian sexuality, and, in revoking her NEA grant, then-NEA chairman John Frohnmeyer specifically referenced Hughes's lesbianism as one of the reasons she had lost her grant. Some of her performances have included "Well of Horniness," "Lady Dick," and "Dress Suits to Hire."

Following the revocation of their grants, the four sued the U.S. government, and in 1992 a lower court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, reinstating the grants. The government appealed in 1994 and lost again. Then, in a surprise move, the Clinton administration appealed the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court. In 1998 the Supreme Court overturned the lower court rulings and held that the "standards of decency" clause is constitutional. Since the ruling, the budget and staff of the NEA have been slashed, and artists like Finley and Hughes must seek funding from other sources to continue their performances.

If you're interested in finding out more about feminism and censorship, visit the website of Feminists for Free Expression at *www.ffeusa.org*.

Thinking About Shakespeare's Sister

Virginia Woolf (1929)

. . . [I]t is a perennial puzzle why no woman wrote a word of extraordinary literature when every other man, it seemed, was capable of song or sonnet. What were the conditions in which women lived, I asked myself; for fiction, imaginative work that is, is not dropped like a pebble upon the ground, as science may be; fiction is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners. Often the attachment is scarcely perceptible; Shakespeare's plays, for instance, seem to hang there complete by themselves. But when the web is pulled askew, hooked up at the edge, torn in the middle, one remembers that these webs are not spun in midair by incorporeal creatures, but are the work of suffering human beings, and are attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in.

I went therefore, to the shelf where the stories stand and took down one of the latest, Professor Trevelyan's *History of England.* Once more I looked up Women, found "position of," and turned to the pages indicated. "Wifebeating," I read "was a recognized right of man, and was practiced without shame by high as well as low. . . . Similarly," this historian goes on, "the daughter who refused to marry the gentleman of her parents' choice was liable to be locked up, beaten and flung about the room, without any shock being inflicted on public opinion. Marriage was not an affair of personal affection, but of family avarice, particularly in the 'chivalrous' upper classes. . . . Betrothal often took place while one or both of the parties was in the cradle, and marriage when they were scarcely out of the nurses' charge." That was about 1470, soon after Chaucer's time. The next reference to the position of women is some two hundred years later, in the time of the Stuarts. "It was still the exception for women of the upper and middle class to choose their own husbands, and when the husband had been assigned, he was lord and master, so far at least as law and custom could make him. Yet even so," Professor Trevelyan concludes, "neither Shakespeare's women nor those of authentic seventeenth-century memoirs, like the Vemeys and the Hutchinsons, seem wanting in personality and character." Certainly, if we consider it, Cleopatra must have had a way with her; Lady Macbeth, one would suppose, had a will of her own; Rosalind, one might conclude, was an attractive girl. Professor Trevelyan is speaking no more than the truth when he remarks that Shakespeare's women do not seem wanting in personality and character. Not being a historian, one might go even further and say that women have burnt like beacons in all the works of all the poets from the beginning of time—Clytemnestra, Antigone, Cleopatra, Lady Macbeth, Phèdre, Cressida, Rosalind, Desdemona, the Duchess of Malfi, among the dramatists; then among the prose writers: Millamant, Clarissa, Becky Sharp, Anna Karenina, Emma Bovary, Madame de Guermantes—the names flock to mind, nor do they recall women "lacking in personality and character." Indeed, if woman had no existence save in fiction written by men, one would imagine her a person of the utmost importance, very various; heroic and mean; splendid and sordid; infinitely beautiful and hideous in the extreme; as great as a man, some think even greater. But this is woman in fiction. In fact, as Professor Trevelyan points out, she was locked up, beaten and flung about the room.

A very queer, composite being thus emerges. Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger.

Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband.

. . .

Be that as it may, I could not help thinking, as I looked at the works of Shakespeare on the shelf . . . it would have been impossible, completely and entirely, for any woman to have written the plays of Shakespeare in the age of Shakespeare. Let me imagine, since facts are so hard to come by, what would have happened had Shakespeare had a wonderfully gifted sister, called Judith, let us say. Shakespeare himself went, very probably—his mother was an heiress—to the grammar school, where he may have learnt Latin—Ovid, Virgil and Horace—and the elements of grammar and logic. He was, it is well known, a wild boy who poached rabbits, perhaps shot a deer, and had, rather sooner than he should have done, to marry a woman in the neighbourhood, who bore him a child rather quicker than was right. That escapade sent him to seek his fortune in London. He had, it seemed, a taste for the theatre; he began by holding horses at the stage door. Very soon he got work in the theatre, became a successful actor, and lived at the hub of the universe, meeting everybody, knowing everybody, practising his art on the boards, exercising his wits in the streets, and even getting access to the palace of the queen. Meanwhile his extraordinarily gifted sister, let us suppose, remained at home. She was as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world as he was. But she was not sent to school. She had no chance of learning grammar and logic, let alone of reading Horace and Virgil. She picked up a book now and then, one of her brother's perhaps, and read a few pages. But then her parents came in and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books and papers. They would have spoken sharply but kindly, for they were substantial people who knew the conditions of life for a woman and loved their daughter—indeed, more likely than not she was the apple of her father's eye. Perhaps she scribbled some pages up in an apple loft on the sly, but was careful to hide them or set fire to them. Soon, however, before she was out of her teens, she was to be betrothed to the son of a neighbouring wool-stapler. She cried out that marriage was hateful to her, and for that she was severely beaten by her father. Then he ceased to scold her. He begged her instead not to hurt him, not to shame him in this matter of her marriage. He would give her a chain of beads or a fine petticoat, he said; and there were tears in his eyes. How could she disobey him? How could she break his heart? The force of her own gift alone drove her to it. She made up a small parcel of her belongings, let herself down by a rope one summer's night and took the road to London. She was not seventeen. The birds that sang in the hedge were not more musical than she was. She had the quickest fancy, a gift like her brother's, for the tune of words. Like him, she had a taste for the theatre. She stood at the stage door; she wanted to act, she said. Men laughed in her face. The manager—a fat, loose-lipped man—guffawed. He bellowed something about poodles dancing and women acting—no woman, he said, could possibly be an actress. He hinted—you can imagine what. She could get no training in her craft. Could she even seek her dinner in a tavern or roam the streets at midnight? Yet her genius was for fiction and lusted to feed abundantly upon the lives of men and women and the study of their ways. At last—for she was very young, oddly like Shakespeare the poet in her face, with the same grey eyes and rounded brows—at last Nick Greene the actor-manager took pity on her; she found herself with child by that gentleman and so—who shall measure the heat and violence of the poet's heart when caught and tangled in a woman's body?—killed herself one winter's night and lies buried at some cross-roads where the omnibuses now stop outside the Elephant and Castle.

That, more or less, is how the story would run, I think, if a woman in Shakespeare's day had had Shakespeare's genius. . . .

This may be true or it may be false—who can say?—but what is true in it, so it seemed to me, reviewing the story of Shakespeare's sister as I had made it, is that any woman born with a great gift in the sixteenth century would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked at. For it needs little skill in psychology to be sure that a highly gifted girl who had tried to use her gift for poetry would have been so

thwarted and hindered by other people, so tortured and pulled asunder by her own contrary instincts, that she must have lost her health and sanity to a certainty. No girl could have walked to London and stood at a stage door and forced her way into the presence of actor-managers without doing herself a violence and suffering an anguish which may have been irrational—for chastity may be a fetish invented by certain societies for unknown reasons—but were none the less inevitable. . . .

But for women, I thought, looking at the empty shelves, these difficulties were infinitely more formidable. In the first place, to have a room of her own, let alone a quiet room or a sound-proof room, was out of the question, unless her parents were exceptionally rich or very noble, even up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Since her pin money, which depended on the good will of her father, was only enough to keep her clothed, she was debarred from such alleviations as came even to Keats or Tennyson or Carlyle, all poor men, from a walking tour, a little journey to France, from the separate lodging which, even if it were miserable enough, sheltered them from the claims and tyrannies of their families. Such material difficulties were formidable; but much worse were the immaterial. The indifference of the world which Keats and Flaubert and other men of genius have found so hard to bear was in her case not indifference but hostility. The world did not say to her as it said to them, Write if you choose; it makes no difference to me. The world said with a guffaw, Write? What's the good of your writing? . . .

READING 39

The Wife

Emily Dickinson (c. 1860)

She rose to his requirement, dropped
The playthings of her life
To take the honorable work
Of woman and of wife.

If aught she missed in her new day
Of amplitude, or awe,
Or first prospective, or the gold
In using wore away.

It lay unmentioned, as the sea
Develops pearl and weed,
But only to himself is known
The fathoms they abide.

READING 40

Rush Limbaugh and the New Networked Feminism

Tom Watson (2012)

So much for post-feminism.

The world of networked hurt that descended on the spiteful media enterprise that is Rush Limbaugh revealed a tenacious, super-wired coalition of active feminists prepared at a moment's notice to blow the lid off sexist attacks or regressive health policy.

When Limbaugh called Georgetown University law student Sandra Fluke a "slut" and "prostitute" in response to her testimony before Congress on contraception costs, he may well have been surprised by the strength of the response. But he shouldn't have been.

At latest count, 12 advertisers and two radio stations have pulled the plug on Limbaugh. Each was effectively targeted on Facebook and Twitter by an angry and vocal storm of thousands of people calling for direct action. The campaign was almost instantaneous, coordinated by no individual or organization, and entirely free of cost. Prominent feminist organizers told *Forbes* that it was social media's terrible swift sword, led once again by Twitter and Facebook-savvy women, that dealt Limbaugh the worst humiliation of his controversial career, and in many ways, revealed the most potent "non-organized" organization to take the field on the social commons in the age of Occupy Wall Street and Anonymous.

"Given that much of the increased vocabulary and awareness about gender in the national discussion comes through social media and from young people, I think that instances like this one should give those who claim that young people don't care about feminism pause!" says Rebecca Traister, a contributor to Salon and author of the important feminist history of the 2008 Presidential race, *Big Girls Don't Cry*. "Young people are the ones who know how to use social media in this way, and look at the kind of impact it's having."

"What's most interesting to me is that in the last two years or so specifically, women have been leading the charge online to campaign for themselves against this kind of abuse, largely thanks to advances in social networking," said media technologist Deanna Zandt, author of *Share This! How You Will Change the World with Social Networking*. "In the past, we'd have to wait for some organization to take up the cause—create a petition, launch an email campaign—and outside of traditional feminist movement types, those campaigns rarely reached widespread acceptance."

"Women aren't waiting to be told what to do or which petition to sign, they're just doing what we do best: talking and connecting," agreed Allison Fine, senior fellow for progressive think tank Demos.

It's the next chapter in many ways to the story that hit the public consciousness with the strong, active online reaction to the Susan G. Komen Foundation's decision to cut funding to Planned Parenthood a month ago. The response was quick, massive, and targeted. My own social graph (on both Facebook and Twitter) lit up like a summer fireworks display after sundown—stirring conversation, concentration around hashtags and shared media, and truly crowdsourced action.

"What we're seeing right now is a continuation of the networked response to the right-wing war on women's health that began with the Komen reaction a few weeks ago," said Fine. "It is across generations and extra-organizational with individual women using a variety of social media channels to connect with other women and create their own protests."

Yet it would also be a mistake to view the semi-organized reaction to Limbaugh as purely another battle between left and right on the American political spectrum. While Limbaugh's sexist words have to been seen in the light of a Republican Presidential race that has, inexplicably, placed an opposition to contraception and women's health at the center of its increasingly nasty public debate, the roots of El Rushbo's humiliation also run deeper than spectrum ideology and political parties.

You can see those roots, for instance, in the brilliantly-organized campaign in late 2010 against two prominent liberal voices: filmmaker Michael Moore and talk show host Keith Olbermann. Feminist blogger Sady Doyle took Moore to task for posting bail on behalf of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange after rape accusations brought by two women in Sweden confined him to custody in England, and her supporters battled both Moore and Olbermann for being dismissive of those accusations and implying they were a set-up to derail Assange's exposure of U.S. government secrets.

Wrote Doyle in December, 2010 in a post that ignited a firestorm: "We are the progressive community. We are the left wing. We are women and men, we are from every sector of this community, and we believe that every rape accusation must be taken seriously, regardless of the *accused rapist's connections, power, influence, status, fame, or politics.*"

Thousands of activists then used the #mooreandme tag on Twitter to (successfully) demand apologies

from Moore and Olbermann. That campaign disproves the assertion by Fox News political analyst Kirsten Powers in the Daily Beast that "the real fury seems reserved only for conservatives, while the men on the left get a wink and a nod as long as they are carrying water for the liberal cause."

But Powers does indeed have a point that casual misogyny among men in the media rather easily crosses ideological lines—and just as clearly, the new feminist moment online is in part a strong and serious pushback against a culture that divines a narrow, almost forgiving attitude toward violence and sexual assault against women. Among the feminist bloggers from more recent generations, tactics like the Slutwalk—and a strong effort to expose a culture of violence to the light of day—point to a renewed and yes, combative new stance. On the left, when prominent figures like Assange and Dominique Strauss-Kahn were accused of sexual violence, a new network of women stood ready to push back on political commentary that seemed to excuse or invalidate the charges. Feminist blogger Lindsay Beyerstein wrote that the target of these new protests was "the inaccurate stereotype that rape is an uncontrollable frenzy of lust that women provoke in men. That's like imagining all theft as an uncontrolled frenzy of consumerism."

When he used the word "slut" to describe Sandra Fluke—linking the need for contraceptives to a kind of rampant (and distasteful) sexual desire in women that society shouldn't pay for—Limbaugh casually played the flip side of the classic "she asked for it" defense of sexual assault. The Republican Party's most potent media figure may well have reckoned that talk radio's legendary reach and loyal conservative audience would easily sustain a few harmless raindrops of outrage on the roof.

But he was (perhaps fatally) wrong.

There was a powerful, decentralized social venture lurking on the digital network—totally empowered and working with a toolset as potent as Clear Channel's microphones.

"I think the feminists were always out there, but often isolated from one another or overwhelmed by the amount of work to be done and lack of time in a day," says feminist writer Kate Harding. "Social media allows us to work together quickly and publicly for something like a boycott or twitter campaign—(mostly) without the distractions of in-group politics or disagreement on any number of other issues—and that creates an energy that makes it feel so much more like a unified movement, even when people are still quite loosely connected."

Philanthropy measurement guru and social ventures blogger Lucy Bernholz believes that the immediate feedback loop of the social networks drove both the Limbaugh and Komen protests—even without visible leadership or a budget.

"The dynamics of the media are such that if you're engaged about something, be it Komen or Limbaugh you can drive your action, measure it, and add it into a larger effort," said Bernholz. "If something resonates, you pass it on. If it doesn't, you try something else. It's like the supposed Facebook mantra 'code wins.' Everyone who participates in these networked action can see—and measure—immediately, what resonates with others and they can work fromt here."

Adds Kate Harding: "I think the public aspect is really important. #mooreandme, the Limbaugh boycott, the Komen/Planned Parenthood uproar all worked because there was somewhere to express ourselves visibly. Who knows how many feminists were sending letters and making phone calls over similar instances in the past? But without any way for an outside observer to measure it, the target of a boycott or letter-writing campaign was never forced to acknowledge that criticism publicly. When your brand's Facebook wall is overtaken by feminist outrage, you can't just write it off as a few man-hating cranks and continue on as usual."

After the 2008 campaign, Traister's book painted a rosy path for feminist organizing that seemed a stretch at the time, at least to me. In Hillary Clinton's failed campaign, she wrote, "women's liberation movement found thrilling new life."

Yet her words now seem prophetic—and indeed, the sheer breadth and strength of the wired feminist network is impressive.

"Some of what we're seeing now feels more coordinated in a way that fits with a maturation and

increased confidence of online activism and with a media that, post-2008, is better trained to hear and report on this kind of response," says Traister. "That last part really matters, and is really relevant coming out of 2008: There is an increased sensitivity around gender and around race and around sexuality that I think was not part of the national conversation ten or even five years ago.

"That makes a difference when Rush Limbaugh calls someone a slut in 2012."

READING 41

Poetry Is Not a Luxury

Audre Lorde (1982)

The quality of light by which we scrutinize our lives has direct bearing upon the product which we live, and upon the changes which we hope to bring about through those lives. It is within this light that we form those ideas by which we pursue our magic and make it realized. This is poetry as illumination, for it is through poetry that we give name to those ideas which are—until the poem—nameless and formless, about to be birthed, but already felt. That distillation of experience from which true poetry springs births thought as dream births concept, as feeling births idea, as knowledge births (precedes) understanding.

As we learn to bear the intimacy of scrutiny and to flourish within it, as we learn to use the products of that scrutiny for power within our living, those fears which rule our lives and form our silences begin to lose their control over us.

For each of us as women, there is a dark place within, where hidden and growing our true spirit rises, "beautiful/and tough as chestnut/stanchions against (y)our nightmare of weakness/"[1] and of impotence.

These places of possibility within ourselves are dark because they are ancient and hidden; they have survived and grown strong through that darkness. Within these deep places, each one of us holds an incredible reserve of creativity and power, of unexamined and unrecorded emotion and feeling. The woman's place of power within each of us is neither white nor surface; it is dark, it is ancient, and it is deep.

When we view living in the european mode only as a problem to be solved, we rely solely upon our ideas to make us free, for these were what the white fathers told us were precious.

But as we come more into touch with our own ancient, noneuropean consciousness of living as a situation to be experienced and interacted with, we learn more and more to cherish our feelings, and to respect those hidden sources of our power from where true knowledge and, therefore, lasting action comes.

At this point in time, I believe that women carry within ourselves the possibility for fusion of these two approaches so necessary for survival, and we come closest to this combination in our poetry. I speak here of poetry as a revelatory distillation of experience, not the sterile word play that, too often, the white fathers distorted the word *poetry* to mean—in order to cover a desperate wish for imagination without insight.

For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives.

As they become known to and accepted by us, our feelings and the honest exploration of them become sanctuaries and spawning grounds for the most radical

and daring of ideas. They become a safe-house for that difference so necessary to change and the conceptualization of any meaningful action. Right now, I could name at least ten ideas I would have found intolerable or incomprehensible and frightening, except as they came after dreams and poems. This is not idle fantasy, but a disciplined attention to the true meaning of "it feels right to me." We can train ourselves to respect our feelings and to transpose them into a language so they can be shared. And where that language does not yet exist, it is our poetry which helps to fashion it. Poetry is not only dream and vision; it is the skeleton architecture of our lives. It lays the foundations for a future of change, a bridge across our fears of what has never been before.

Possibility is neither forever nor instant. It is not easy to sustain belief in its efficacy. We can sometimes work long and hard to establish one beachhead of real resistance to the deaths we are expected to live, only to have that beachhead assaulted or threatened by those canards we have been socialized to fear, or by the withdrawal of those approvals that we have been warned to seek for safety. Women see ourselves diminished or softened by the falsely benign accusations of childishness, of nonuniversality, of changeability, of sensuality. And who asks the question: Am I altering your aura, your ideas, your dreams, or am I merely moving you to temporary and reactive action? And even though the latter is no mean task, it is one that must be seen within the context of a need for true alteration of the very foundations of our lives.

The white fathers told us: I think, therefore I am. The Black mother within each of us—the poet—whispers in our dreams: I feel, therefore I can be free. Poetry coins the language to express and charter this revolutionary demand, the implementation of that freedom.

However, experience has taught us that action in the now is also necessary, always. Our children cannot dream unless they live, they cannot live unless they are nourished, and who else will feed them the real food without which their dreams will be no different from ours? "If you want us to change the world someday, we at least have to live long enough to grow up!" shouts the child.

Sometimes we drug ourselves with dreams of new ideas. The head will save us. The brain alone will set us free. But there are no new ideas still waiting in the wings to save us as women, as human. There are only old and forgotten ones, new combinations, extrapolations and recognitions from within ourselves—along with the renewed courage to try them out. And we must constantly encourage ourselves and each other to attempt the heretical actions that our dreams imply, and so many of our old ideas disparage. In the forefront of our move toward change, there is only poetry to hint at possibility made real. Our poems formulate the implications of ourselves, what we feel within and dare make real (or bring action into accordance with), our fears, our hopes, our most cherished terrors.

For within living structures defined by profit, by linear power, by institutional dehumanization, our feelings were not meant to survive. Kept around as unavoidable adjuncts or pleasant pastimes, feelings were expected to kneel to thought as women were expected to kneel to men. But women have survived. As poets. And there are no new pains. We have felt them all already. We have hidden that fact in the same place where we have hidden our power. They surface in our dreams, and it is our dreams that point the way to freedom. Those dreams are made realizable through our poems that give us the strength and courage to see, to feel, to speak, and to dare.

If what we need to dream, to move our spirits most deeply and directly toward and through promise, is discounted as a luxury, then we give up the core—the fountain—of our power, our womanness; we give up the future of our worlds.

For there are no new ideas. There are only new ways of making them felt—of examining what those ideas feel like being lived on Sunday morning at 7 A.M., after brunch, during wild love, making war, giving birth, mourning our dead—while we suffer the old longings, battle the old warnings and fears of being silent and impotent and alone, while we taste new possibilities and strengths.

NOTE

1. From "Black Mother Woman," first published in *From a Land Where Other People Live* (Broadside Press, Detroit, 1973), and collected in *Chosen Poems: Old and New* (W. W. Norton and Company, New York, 1982), p. 53.

Enlightened Sexism

Susan Douglas (2010)

How do we square the persistence of female inequality with all those images of female power we have seen in the media—the hands-on-her-hips, don't-even-think-about-messing-with-me Dr. Bailey on *Grey's Anatomy,* or S. Epatha Merkerson as the take-no-prisoners Lieutenant Anita Van Buren on *Law & Order,* Agent Scully on *The X-Files,* Brenda Leigh Johnson as "the chief" on *The Closer,* C.C.H. Pounder on *The Shield,* or even Geena Davis as the first female president in the short-lived series *Commander in Chief?* Advertisements tell women that they have achieved so much they should celebrate by buying themselves their own diamond ring for their right hand and urge their poor, flaccid husbands, crippled by an epidemic of emasculation and erectile dysfunction, to start mainlining Viagra or Cialis. Indeed, in films from *Dumb and Dumber* (1994) to *Superbad* (2007), guys are hopeless losers. In *Sex and the City,* with its characters who were successful professionals by day and Kama Sutra masters by night, there was no such thing as the double standard: women had as much sexual freedom, and maybe even more kinky sex, than men. *Cosmo* isn't for passive girls waiting for the right guy to find them; it's the magazine for the "Fun, Fearless Female" who is also proud to be, as one cover put it, a "Sex Genius." Have a look at *O!* The magazine is one giant, all-encompassing, throbbing zone of self-fulfillment for women where everything from pillows to celadon-colored notebooks (but only if purchased and used properly) are empowering and everything is possible. And why not? One of the most influential and successful moguls in the entertainment industry is none other than Oprah Winfrey herself.

Something's out of whack here. If you immerse yourself in the media fare of the past ten to fifteen years, what you see is a rather large gap between how the vast majority of girls and women live their lives, the choices they are forced to make, and what they see—and *don't* see—in the media. Ironically, it is just the opposite of the gap in the 1950s and '60s, when images of women as Watusi-dancing bimbettes on the beach or stay-at-home housewives who needed advice from Mr. Clean about how to wash a floor obscured the exploding number of women entering the workforce, joining the Peace Corps, and becoming involved in politics. Back then the media illusion was that the aspirations of girls and women weren't changing at all when they were. Now, the media illusion is that equality for girls and women is an accomplished fact when it isn't. Then the media were behind the curve; now, ironically, they're ahead. Have girls and women made a lot of progress since the 1970s? You bet. Women's college basketball, for example—its existence completely unimaginable when I was in school—is now nationally televised, and vulgar, boneheaded remarks about the players can get even a money machine like Don Imus fired, if only temporarily. But now we're all district attorneys, medical residents, chiefs of police, or rich, blond, So-Cal heiresses? Not so much.

Since the early 1990s, much of the media have come to overrepresent women as having made it—completely—in the professions, as having gained sexual equality with men, and having achieved a level of financial success and comfort enjoyed primarily by the Tiffany's-encrusted doyennes of Laguna Beach. At the same time, there has been a resurgence of retrograde dreck clogging our cultural arteries—*The Man Show, Maxim, Girls Gone Wild.*[1] But even this fare, which insists that young women should dress like strippers and have the mental capacities of a vole, was presented as empowering, because while the scantily clad or bare-breasted women may have *seemed* to be objectified, they were really on top, because now they had chosen to be sex objects

and men were supposedly nothing more than their helpless, ogling, crotch-driven slaves.

What the media have been giving us, then, are little more than fantasies of power. They assure girls and women, repeatedly, that women's liberation is a fait accompli and that we are stronger, more successful, more sexually in control, more fearless, and more held in awe than we actually are. We can believe that any woman can become a CEO (or president), that women have achieved economic, professional, and political parity with men, and we can expunge any suggestions that there might be some of us who actually have to live on the national median income, which for women in 2008 was $36,000 a year, 23 percent less than that of their male counterparts. Yet the images we see on television, in the movies, and in advertising also insist that purchasing power and sexual power are much more gratifying than political or economic power. Buying stuff—the right stuff, a lot of stuff—emerged as the dominant way to empower ourselves.[2] Of course women in fictional TV shows can be in the highest positions of authority, but in real life—maybe not such a good idea. Instead, the wheedling, seductive message to young women is that being decorative is the highest form of power—when, of course, if it were, Dick Cheney would have gone to work every day in a sequined tutu.

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So what's the matter with fantasies of female power? Haven't the media always provided escapist fantasies; isn't that, like, their job? And aren't many in the media—however belatedly—simply addressing women's demands for more representations of female achievement and control? Well, yes. But here's the odd, somewhat unintended consequence: under the guise of escapism and pleasure, we are getting images of imagined power that mask, and even erase, how much still remains to be done for girls and women, images that make sexism seem fine, even fun, and insist that feminism is now utterly pointless—even bad for you. And if we look at what is often being said about girls and women in these fantasies—what we can and should do, what we can and can't be—we will see that slithering just below the shiny mirage of power is the dark, sneaky serpent of sexism.

There has been a bit of a generational divide in how these fantasies are presented. Older women—I prefer the term "Vintage Females"—like myself have been given all those iron-clad women in the 10:00 P.M. strip: the lawyers, cops, and district attorneys on the entire *Law & Order* franchise; the senior partner Shirley Schmidt on *Boston Legal;* the steely (and busty) forensic scientists on the various *CSI*s; the ubiquitous female judges; and Brenda Leigh Johnson who, with her big hair and southern drawl, whipped her male chauvinist colleagues into shape ASAP on *The Closer.*

But many of us, especially mothers, have been less thrilled about the fantasies on offer for girls and younger women. For "millennials"—those young women and girls born in the late 1980s and 1990s who are the most attractive demographic for advertisers—the fantasies and appeals have been much more commercial and, not surprisingly, more retrograde. While they are the "girl power" generation, the bill of goods they are repeatedly sold is that true power comes from shopping, having the right logos, and being "hot." Power also comes from judging, dissing, and competing with other girls, especially over guys. I have watched these fantasies—often the opposite of the "role model" imagery presented to me—swirl around my daughter and, well, I have not been amused.

Things seemed okay back in the 1990s when she could watch shows like *Alex Mack,* featuring a girl with superhuman powers who morphed into something that looked like a blob of mercury and conducted industrial espionage, or *Shelby Wu,* a girl detective. But then she graduated to MTV: by this time, the network had stopped showing Talking Heads videos and, instead, offered up fare like *Sorority Life.* Here viewers got to track the progress of college girls pledging to a sorority, and to see which traits, behaviors, and hairdos got them in ("nice," "pretty," ponytails) and which ones kept them out ("like so bossy," "like so phony," any hairstyle that resembled a mullet). Even though the show was allegedly about college life, no books, newspapers, novels, debates about the existence of God, or discussion of any recent classroom lectures cluttered the scene or troubled the dialogue. These college girls were way too shallow for any of that.

My sympathetic response to my teenage daughter on the sofa, wrapped in a quilt, escaping for a bit into this drivel-filled world? A simple bellow: "Shut that crap off!"

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As I stewed about the fantasies of power laid before my daughter and those laid before me, I was, of course, most struck at first by their generational differences, and how they pitted us against each other, especially around the issues of sexual display and rampant consumerism as alleged sources of power and control. But if you think about it, they simply buy us off in different ways, because both approaches contribute to the false assumption that for women, all has been won. The notion that there might, indeed, still be an urgency to feminist politics? You have totally got to be kidding.

. . . While these fantasies have been driven in part by girls' and women's desires, and have often provided a great deal of vicarious pleasure, they have also been driven by marketing—especially niche, target marketing—and the use of that heady mix of flattery and denigration to sell us everything from skin cream to running shoes. So it's time to take these fantasies to the interrogation room and shine a little light on them. . . . We need to understand, and unravel, the various forces that have given us, say, the fearless computer geek Chloe on *24,* without whom Jack Bauer would have been toast twenty-five times over, versus Jessica Simpson on *Newlyweds,* who didn't know how to turn on a stove (ha! ha! get it?).

One force is embedded feminism: the way in which women's achievements, or their desire for achievement, are simply part of the cultural landscape. Feminism is no longer "outside" of the media as it was in 1970, when women staged a sit-in at the stereotype-perpetuating *Ladies' Home Journal* or gave awards for the most sexist, offensive ads like those of National Airlines, which featured stewardesses purring, "I'm Cheryl. Fly Me" (and required flight attendants to wear "Fly Me" buttons). Today, feminist gains, attitudes, and achievements are woven into our cultural fabric.[3] . . . Joss Whedon created *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* because he embraced feminism and was tired of seeing all the girls in horror films as victims, instead of possible heroes. But women whose kung fu skills are more awesome than Jackie Chan's? Or who tell a male coworker (or boss) to his face that he's less evolved than a junior in high school? This is a level of command-and-control barely enjoyed by four-star generals, let alone the nation's actual female population.

But the media's fantasies of power are also the product of another force that has gained considerable momentum since the early and mid-1990s: enlightened sexism.[4] Enlightened sexism is a response, deliberate or not, to the perceived threat of a new gender regime. It insists that women have made plenty of progress because of feminism—indeed, full equality has allegedly been achieved—so now it's okay, even amusing, to resurrect sexist stereotypes of girls and women.[5] After all, these images (think Pussycat Dolls, *The Bachelor, Are You Hot?*, the hour-and-a-half catfight in *Bride Wars*) can't possibly undermine women's equality at this late date, right? More to the point, enlightened sexism sells the line that it is precisely through women's calculated deployment of their faces, bodies, attire, and sexuality that they gain and enjoy true power—power that is fun, that men will not resent, and indeed will embrace. True power here has nothing to do with economic independence or professional achievement (that's a given): it has to do with getting men to lust after you and other women to envy you. Enlightened sexism is especially targeted to girls and young women and emphasizes that now that they "have it all," they should focus the bulk of their time and energy on their appearance, pleasing men, being hot, competing with other women, and shopping.

Enlightened sexism is a manufacturing process that is produced, week in and week out, by the media. . . . Enlightened sexism is feminist in its outward appearance (of course you can be or do anything you want) but sexist in its intent (hold on, girls, only up to a certain point, and not in any way that discomfits men or pushes feminist goals one more centimeter forward). While enlightened sexism seems to support women's equality, it is dedicated to the undoing of feminism.[6] In fact, because this equality might lead to "sameness"—way too scary—girls and women need to be reminded that they are still fundamentally female, and so must be emphatically feminine. Thus enlightened sexism takes the gains of the women's

movement as a given, and then uses them as permission to resurrect retrograde images of girls and women as sex objects, bimbos, and hootchie mamas still defined by their appearance and their biological destiny. So in the age of enlightened sexism there has been an explosion in makeover, matchmaking, and modeling shows, a renewed emphasis on women's breasts (and a massive surge in the promotion of breast augmentation), an obsession with babies and motherhood in celebrity journalism (the rise of the creepy "bump patrol"), and a celebration of stay-at-home moms and "opting out" of the workforce.

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But girls and women are not dupes, simply saying "whatever" to the sexism of *The Real World* or *The Swan* (in which contestants underwent up to fourteen often heroic cosmetic surgeries so they could compete in a beauty contest), as we could see in the outpouring of fury against the media coverage of Hillary Clinton's campaign, or as the ridicule my students heap on most MTV fare suggests. We enter into TV shows, movies, magazines, or Web sites and chat rooms to escape, to transport ourselves into another realm, yet we don't want to feel like we're totally suckered in either. This is where most of us are, in the complicated and contradictory terrain of negotiation.[7]

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Thus, despite my own love of escaping into worlds in which women solve crimes, are good bosses, live in huge houses, can buy whatever they want, perform lifesaving surgeries, and find love, I am here to argue, forcefully, for the importance of Wariness, with a capital W. The media have played an important role in enabling us to have female cabinet members, in raising awareness about and condemning domestic violence, in helping Americans accept very different family formations than the one on *Leave It to Beaver,* even in imagining a woman president.

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With *The Closer,* the surgeons on *Grey's Anatomy,* Dr. House's female boss, and all those technically savvy forensic scientists on the various *CSI*s, might we be tempted to think such political rollbacks are irrelevant and can't really touch us? Or, conversely, do the female obsessions with extreme makeovers and being the one to get the bachelor suggest that, at the end of the day, women really are best confined to the kitchen and bedroom? A 2009 poll revealed that 60 percent of men and 50 percent of women "are convinced that there are no longer any barriers to women's advancement in the workplace."[8] The media may convey this, but data about the real jobs most women hold, and the persistence of discrimination against them, belie this happy illusion.

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It is only through tracing the origins of these images of female power that we can begin to untangle how they have offered empowerment at the cost of eroding our self-esteem, and keeping millions in their place. Because still, despite everything, what courses through our culture is the belief—and fear—that once women have power, they turn into Cruella De Vil or Miranda Priestly in *The Devil Wears Prada*—evil, tyrannical, hated, unloved. And the great irony is that if some media fare is actually ahead of where most women are in society, it may be thwarting the very advances for women that it seeks to achieve.

But still we watch. There is plenty here to love, and even more to talk back to and make fun of. Because, while it's only a start, laughter—especially derisive laughter—may be the most empowering act of all. This is part of the ongoing, never-ending project of consciousness-raising. Then we can get down to business. And girls, there is plenty of unfinished business at hand.

NOTES

1. For an excellent rant against and analysis of this new sexist fare see Ariel Levy, *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture* (New York: Free Press, 2006).
2. See the superb essay by Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, "Feminist Politics and Postfeminist Culture," in their coedited collection, *Interrogating Postfeminism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007), 2.
3. Rosalind Gill does a superb job of summarizing postfeminism in the media in *Gender and the Media* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 2007), 40.
4. I am adapting this term from Sut Jhally and Justin Lewis's term "enlightened racism" from their book *Enlightened Racism: The Cosby Show, Audiences, and the Myth of the American Dream* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992).
5. This entire discussion of enlightened sexism is indebted to Angela McRobbie's pathbreaking work on

postfeminism. See, for example, "Notes on Postfeminism and Popular Culture: Bridget Jones and the New Gender Regime," in *All About the Girl,* ed. Anita Harris (New York: Routledge, 2004); see also Gill, *Gender and the Media.*

6. Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism,* 11. (London: Sage, 2009).
7. Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," in *Culture, Media, Language,* ed. Stuart Hall (New York: Routledge, 1980). And I want to thank my daughter, Ella, for pointing out that these days a negotiated reading of media texts is the preferred reading.
8. See the Rockefeller Foundation/*Time* magazine poll in Nancy Gibbs, "What Women Want Now," *Time,* October 26, 2009, 31.

READING 43

If Women Ran Hip Hop

Aya de Leon (2007)

If women ran hip hop
the beats & rhymes would be just as dope,
but there would never be a bad vibe when you walked in the place
& the clubs would be beautiful & smell good
& the music would never be too loud
but there would be free earplugs available anyway
& venues would have skylights and phat patios
and shows would run all day not just late at night
cuz if women ran hip-hop we would have nothing to be ashamed of
& there would be an African marketplace
with big shrines to Oya
Yoruba deity of the female warrior & entrepreneur
and women would sell & barter & prosper
If women ran hip hop
there would never be shootings
cuz there would be onsite conflict mediators
to help you work through all that negativity & hostility
& there would also be free condoms & dental dams
in pretty baskets throughout the place
as well as counselors to help you make the decision:
do I really want to have sex with him or her?
& there would be safe, reliable, low-cost 24 hour transportation home
& every venue would have on-site quality child care
where kids could sleep while grown folks danced
& all shows would be all ages
cause the economy of hip-hop wouldn't revolve around the sale of alcohol
If women ran hip hop
same gender-loving & transgender emcees
would be proportionally represented
& get mad love from everybody
& females would dress sexy if we wanted to celebrate our bodies
but it wouldn't be that important because
everyone would be paying attention to our minds, anyway
If women ran hip hop
men would be relieved because it's so draining
to keep up that front of toughness & power & control 24-7
If women ran hip hop
the only folks dancing in cages would be dogs & cats
from the local animal shelter
excited about getting adopted by pet lovers in the crowd
If women ran hip-hop
there would be social workers available to refer gangsta rappers
to 21-day detox programs where they could get clean & sober
from violence & misogyny
but best of all, if women ran hip hop
we would have the dopest female emcees ever
because all the young women afraid to bust
would unleash their brilliance on the world

Vampires and Vixens

Alison Happel and Jennifer Esposito (2010)

The movie *Twilight*, first in the *Twilight* Saga and directed by Catherine Hardwicke and produced by Summit Entertainment, was released in November of 2008. The screenplay was based on the 2005 novel of the same name, which was the first of four novels in a series written by Stephanie Meyer. Meyer's book series has sold more than 42 million copies worldwide, and it has been translated into 37 languages. The novel was adapted for the screen by Melissa Rosenburg in 2007. The popularity of the book series led to the overwhelmingly positive reception of the film. Following the books, the film was an immediate success; it grossed 70.5 million dollars on its opening weekend, and has since grossed over 310 million in box office sales (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twilight_(2008_film)).

The film has been very popular with young adults, and it has been marketed heavily to preteens and teenagers. Besides the usual movie marketing strategies, the marketers of *Twilight* invested heavily in online marketing that specifically targeted young adults. The advertising for *Twilight* was Web savvy, and it included easily accessible trailers of the movie, along with advertisements in heavily trafficked young adult online spaces such as Myspace, iTunes stores, Facebook, and YouTube. The age-specific marketing strategies, along with the popularity of the book series, have facilitated the tremendous popularity of the film. Indicative of its popularity among young adults, the film was nominated for seven MTV movie awards and won five of the awards in June of 2009. Given the film's popularity, and also its spawn of material goods and related products, we view the film as an important part of youth's lives and, thus, a site in need of critique. We need to understand the ways the film speaks to, for, and about youth. It is for these reasons we have chosen to review the film. We argue that, although this movie works to interrupt some stereotypical notions of gender, overall, it sexualizes violence. We see the movie as one way in which young girls are taught to romanticize sexualized violence and, as feminists within the field of Education, we believe it is vital for those of us working with youth to critically engage patriarchal messages being sold to young girls. In what follows, we articulate how popular culture is a site of education that has social and material consequences on youth's lives and how this film specifically bears dangerous lessons upon the lives of girls.

FILM SYNOPSIS

The *Twilight* Web site advertises the film as an "action-packed, modern day love story." It is the story of a 17-year-old White girl, Bella (played by Kristen Stewart), who moves to a small town in Washington to live with her dad (Billy Burke), who is the chief of police. She is immediately welcomed in her new high school by a diverse group of students who include her in a range of high school activities. Although she hangs out with her newly acquired friends, she is intrigued by the Cullen siblings, four White students who are mysterious and aloof. She meets Edward (Robert Pattinson), one of the brothers, in science class and she immediately feels an unexplainable attraction to him. Although Bella is captivated by Edward, he seems repulsed by her and avoids her. One morning before school, Bella is almost hit by a van in the parking lot, and Edward crosses the entire parking lot in seconds and, with his hand as a shield, stops the van from hitting her. Edward plays the classic hypermasculine hero in this scene and Bella is increasingly obsessed with him. In spite of his warnings to keep her distance, Bella starts to investigate how he saved her life. After much research, she discovers that

he is a vampire. Bella confronts Edward with her newly found knowledge and he opens up to her by disclosing details about his life as a vampire. They start to fall in love.

Edward introduces Bella to his family. His family is unique in that, as vegetarians, they refuse to drink the blood of humans; rather, they satisfy their need for blood by only consuming the blood of animals. Although Edward has committed himself to not hunting and killing humans, Bella's scent is very tempting to him and he has to forcibly resist his instincts to kill her. After Bella meets Edward's family, three nomadic vampires arrive on the scene, and one of them, James (Cam Gigandet), smells Bella's scent and immediately wants to kill her and drink her blood. The three vampires leave because they are outnumbered, and the rest of the film chronicles how Edward's family protects Bella from James. In the final scene, James lures Bella into an old building, where he proceeds to bite her wrist in an attempt to kill her. Before he can inflict any more injuries, Edward saves her by fighting and killing James. For Bella to survive, Edward must suck Bella's blood to remove James' venom. It is very hard for him to stop once he tastes human blood, but he does because of his love for her. Bella is taken to the hospital once Edward saves her, and after her release from the hospital, Edward and Bella attend prom together. The movie ends with Bella telling Edward that she wants to become a vampire to be with him forever, but he refuses her request.

POPULAR CULTURE AS A SITE OF EDUCATION

Popular culture texts are important sites that teach people about themselves and others (Kellner 1995; Lipsitz 1998; Esposito and Love 2008). It is often through popular culture that people gain knowledge about groups to which they do not normally have access. This is especially true for marginalized groups who may not be often represented in mainstream popular culture. For example, representations of Native Americans in Hollywood films are sparse. Exceptions include *Dances with Wolves* (1990), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992), and Disney's *Pocahontas* (1995). Because of the lack of representation of Native Americans, the representations in existence become that much more powerful as they educate viewers who may not have direct experience with particular marginalized populations. Popular culture, thus, serves as a source of information about things we may not learn about elsewhere.

From consumption of popular culture texts, we learn what it means to live particular identities like gender or race (Kellner 1995). These texts are crucial sites of education and, therefore, must be continually critiqued. Popular culture texts are constitutive (Hall 1988). These texts do not just reflect current understandings about the world. Instead, the texts help create the world. Consequently, as an institution, popular culture can exert tremendous power on creating particular versions of the world by privileging certain ideologies. It is, thus, imperative to continually critique films that have mass appeal especially to youth.

The popular culture text and its meaning do not stand alone (Fiske 1989). Thus, viewers are not passive in their consumption and interpretation of texts. The relationship between viewers and texts is an active process (Hall 1981) of negotiating one's view of the world with the text's views. We approach our reading of the film *Twilight* as feminist identified women. One author is White; one is Latina. Both are academics. We list these identities not to essentialize or fix meanings. For example, what exactly does it mean to live as a White feminist academic? Our identities are not stable, nor do they denote consistently particular ways of viewing the world. We divulge this information, however, to assert that our reading of the film is but one. In fact, youth may make entirely different interpretations of the text, thus, as Buckingham (1998) suggests, there are limitations to adult readings of youth culture. We recognize, however, that this reading is still crucial in an attempt to understand the power of popular culture texts.

POSTFEMINISM AND POPULAR CULTURE

There has always been contention within the feminist movement. When feminism is discussed in terms of a historical perspective, the movement

is often simplistically divided into 3 waves. Sheila Tobias (1998) distinguishes first wave feminism as the time period 1850–1919 which culminated in women gaining the right to vote. The second wave is often marked by the publication of Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* in 1963, and this wave has been deemed in popular culture as the *bra-burning* time of fighting against the objectification of women (1960s and 1970s). The third wave made claims to be a new generation of feminists. These women had benefited from their grandmother's and mother's activism and maintained that, because the political and social climate was different in the 1980s and 1990s than what it was during the 1960s and 1970s, their feminism espoused different goals and expectations. McRobbie (2004) articulates the 1990s as a period where feminists recognized the body as a site of political struggle. There was less focus on institutional apparatuses of power as feminists made claims to body politics. This turn away from political power structures (including patriarchy) has created what has been termed *postfeminism*. Although this term has wide variation depending upon discipline (and even within discipline), McRobbie (2004) defines postfeminism as:

> An active process by which feminist gains of the 1970s and 80s come to be undermined. It proposes that through an array of machinations, elements of contemporary popular culture are perniciously effective in regard to this undoing of feminism, while simultaneously appearing to be engaging in a well-informed and even well-intended response to feminism. (258)

Postfeminism suggests that the goals of feminism have been attained and, thus, there is no need for further collective mobilization around gender (Modleski 1991). Women are presumed to be free to articulate our desires for sex, power, and money without fear of retribution. The notion of choice discussed in terms of postfeminism takes the stance that women are free agents in their lives, thus, they are able to make choices free from sexist constraints and institutionalized oppression. The focus remains on the individual (the personal as split from the political), instead of how the individual is located within a heteropatriarchal culture (the personal is political). It is the institution of popular culture that helps disseminate the proliferation of postfeminism's ideologies (McRobbie 2004). Some popular culture texts deliberately examine the issue of feminism to only illustrate how it is no longer a useful concept and that, instead, women have moved beyond a feminist critique of woman as object to celebrate the notion of choice or of woman as subject (McRobbie 2004). Kinser (2004) claims that a postfeminist discourse is seductive to young women because they can simultaneously acknowledge feminism while expressing relief that the feminist movement is no longer necessary. We must be cognizant of the ways that postfeminism "co-opts the motivating discourse of feminism but accepts a *sense* of empowerment as a substitute for the work toward and evidence of *authentic* empowerment" (Kinser 2004, 134). We utilize this cautionary lens in our analysis of *Twilight* as we examine and critique its post-feminist messages.

SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE AS EMPOWERMENT?: FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF *TWILIGHT*

Regardless of the quality of representation, *Twilight* includes a variety of people of different races/ethnicities. We do not intend to operate from within a binary of *good* versus *bad* representations. Issues of representation are more complicated than such a binary allows. Instead, we posit that representations of race and gender should be complicated as those identities do not denote static states of being. Instead, race and gender are shaped, constructed, and performed in specific social contexts and historical moments. Although *Twilight* is problematic in its representation of gender roles, it does try to be transgressive in terms of destabilizing stereotypical (or nonexistent) Hollywood representations of marginalized populations. For example, although Bella, the main character, attends high school in a small town (population 3,000) in Washington State, subcharacters include a Native American (Jacob) who attends school on a reservation, as well as an Asian American (Eric). Native Americans and Asian Americans are rarely included in Hollywood productions or, if included, are represented in ways

that perpetuate stereotypes. *Twilight* also tried to destabilize the ways race is often coded as good versus evil. The "vegetarian" vampires (Edward and his family) are all White. The evil vampires are comprised of two White characters and one Black character. Although the Black man is hypersexualized (the only character shown with his shirt open to reveal his muscular body), he ultimately reveals a good side as he decides his two White vampire friends are just too evil to continue hanging around. He refuses to participate in the tracking of Bella and the fighting with Edward's family.

Twilight also is transgressive to a degree with its feminist messages. For example, a female friend of Bella's says, "I'm thinking Eric will ask me to the prom but he never does." Bella tells the girl to ask Eric herself, "Take control. You are a strong independent woman." The female friend asks incredulously, "I am?" A few weeks later, she tells Bella, "I'm going to the prom with Eric. I just asked him. I took control." Here, in true postfeminist fashion, the notion that a woman can choose to take control and be an agent of her own life is taken for granted. It is something Bella reminds us to do yet it is framed as if women should already know this and be taking charge of their own lives in this way. Yet, in one of the next scenes, viewers witness the girls shopping for prom dresses as the boys view them through the store window. The girls are being objectified, but it is only Bella who recognizes the problem with it as she says, "That's disgusting." Her friends, on the other hand, do not seem to mind being objectified. The lack of discussion of male privilege helps position Bella as a feminist who is taking things all too seriously. This is an excellent example of popular culture contributing to the postfeminist message that equality has already been achieved, so women really do not need to mobilize anymore least of all complain about being looked at by men.

However, the film shows us the sometimes brutal cost of unequal gendered relations in the next scene. Bella walks back from a bookstore by herself that night while her friends still shop for prom dresses. It appears there is a price to pay for her being smart and seeking knowledge. She happens upon four drunk boys who circle around her. Viewers brace themselves for what appears will be a rape. Bella is stunned and voiceless at first. Then she yells, "Don't touch me!" Before she starts to fight off the boys, Edward comes to her rescue. He tells her to get into the car and then shows his fangs to the boys, who instantly cower and back away. Bella's friends are genuinely concerned about her and believe something might have happened to her. When she and Edward pull up in his car, he takes responsibility for Bella and tells her friends it was his fault Bella is late. Her friends giggle and tell him, "It happens." Although it is implied by her friends' fears that something terrible might have happened to Bella, her friends seem jovial that Bella was spending time with Edward instead of them. Here, it seems as if it is okay for girls to give up their female friends to spend time with a boy.

Although there are, arguably, complicated messages concerning female power and agency within the movie, we argue that its basic premise upholds patriarchal ideology while employing certain assumptions of postfeminism. *Twilight's* main theme, Bella's love for a boy who wants to kill her, sexualizes violence. Throughout the movie, Edward warns Bella about the dangers of being around both him and his family, yet she continues to put her life in jeopardy because of her love for him. The movie is consistently sensual, and the eroticism seems to be heightened during scenes involving violence. Bella's body language during violent scenes throughout the movie is noticeably sexual; she often appears breathing heavily with her mouth open and her cheeks flushed. Also, the movie suggests that there is a correlation between her love for Edward, and how dangerous he is to her. This sexualization of violence is related to postfeminism in that postfeminism claims that women have the power and agency to choose any kind of relationship for themselves, even relationships that have the potential for danger and/or violence. Postfeminism's insistence on individualism and assumed equality is the foundation for the audience to view Bella's relationship with Edward as an innocuous choice that does not need to be contextualized in histories of violence against women. This ahistorical and decontextualized presentation of sexualized violence through the employment of postfeminism actually serves to uphold and perpetuate patriarchal (and highly dangerous)

notions about love, sexuality, and gender roles. Because postfeminism assumes that women have already fought for equality and won, Bella's choice to be with Edward is seen as a personal choice that was made autonomously, and therefore should be respected and not challenged.

IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH

Twilight was released on November 21, 2008, only months before two popular hip hop/R&B artists, Chris Brown and Rihanna, were part of a domestic dispute that led to Brown threatening Rihanna with death and beating her almost unconscious. Brown's attack caused multiple contusions and bruises on Rihanna's body. Rumors circulated in the media that Rihanna ultimately forgave Brown, went back to the relationship, and even asked a judge to not issue a "No contact" order against Brown. Whether this is true or not does not matter. What matters is what young girls believed about the outcome of the incident. The media examined this case from a variety of different angles, including the fact that, given that Rihanna was a role model to so many young girls, some were concerned about what the incident might have taught them (and young boys) about domestic violence. Sadly, we think that the Chris Brown and Rihanna incident teaches girls the old adage that "boys will be boys." Like Belle in Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, the incident encourages girls to help tame their beast, to make him into a better man. We believe *Twilight* encourages a similar message.

Within the United States, there are alarming rates of physical and sexual violence against both women and girls. According to the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network, the largest antisexual assault organization in the United States, one in six women will be a victim of sexual assault, and someone is sexually assaulted every two minutes within the United States (http://www.rainn.org/statistics). Although the producers of movies such as *Twilight* assumedly seek to provide harmless entertainment while also providing a seemingly innocuous message of girl power, we argue that the movie, instead, perpetuates notions of feminized helplessness and sexualized violence. Bella is tough and smart when she is not in danger, but when her life is in jeopardy, Edward intervenes on multiple occasions for the classic masculine rescue. Also, throughout the movie, Bella is obsessed with a boy who wants to literally kill her, and the audience is encouraged to romanticize this. Instead of raising concern about domestic and sexual violence through a feminist storyline, the movie instead sexualizes violence by making Edward's killer instincts sexy and Bella's irrational intrigue understandable and even condoned by friends and family.

Because we understand education as broadly conceived, we believe that it is important to engage with messages that youth are receiving both inside and outside of the actual school walls. We believe that it is important for educators and parents to understand what is happening in students' lives, and popular culture is an important educative site for many students of all ages. The walls of the school building are porous, and there is a dialectical relationship between what is learned inside of the classroom, and what lessons are learned outside of the classroom. To reach and connect with students, educators must be critically engaged with various messages and texts that students are consuming (Kellner and Share 2006), and we believe it is crucial for adults to critically engage with potentially problematic texts that promote harmful messages and ideologies. Critical engagement with and through popular culture is an important way for educators to better understand and relate to their students.

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READING 45

Don't Act Crazy, Mindy

Heather Havrilesky (2013)

At first glance, this looks like a great moment for women on television. Many smart and confident female characters have paraded onto the small screen over the past few years. But I'm bothered by one persistent caveat: that the more astute and capable many of these women are, the more likely it is that they're also completely nuts.

I don't mean complicated, difficult, thorny or complex. I mean that these women are portrayed as volcanoes that could blow at any minute. Worse, the very abilities and skills that make them singular and interesting come coupled with some hideous psychic deficiency.

On "Nurse Jackie," for example, the main character is an excellent R.N. in part because she's self-medicated into a state of extreme calm. On "The Killing," Detective Linden, the world-weary, cold-souled cop, is a tenacious investigator in part because she's obsessive and damaged and a pretty terrible mother. And then there's "Homeland," on which Carrie Mathison, the nearly clairvoyant C.I.A. agent, is bipolar, unhinged and has proved, in her pursuit of an undercover terrorist, to be recklessly promiscuous.

These aren't just complicating characteristics like, say, Don Draper's narcissism. The suggestion in all of these shows is that a female character's flaws are inextricably linked to her strengths. Take away this pill problem or that personality disorder, and the exceptional qualities vanish as well. And this is not always viewed as a tragedy—when Carrie undergoes electroconvulsive therapy, we breathe a sigh of relief and draw closer. Look how restful it is for her, enjoying a nice sandwich and sleeping peacefully in her childhood bed.

You'd think the outlook would be sunnier on some of the lighter TV dramas and comedies, which have also lately offered several strong and inspiring (if neurotic) female protagonists, from Annie Edison of "Community" to Leslie Knope of "Parks and Recreation." Yet here, too, an alarming number of accomplished women are also portrayed as spending most of their waking hours swooning like lovesick tweens —whether it's Emily on "Emily Owens, M.D." (a knowledgeable doctor who loses focus whenever her super-dreamy crush enters the room), the title character of "Whitney" (a garrulous photographer who is nonetheless fixated on her looks and

her ability to keep attractive romantic rivals away from her man), or Mindy of "The Mindy Project" (a highly paid ob-gyn who's obsessed with being too old and not pretty enough to land a husband). Even a classical comedic heroine like Liz Lemon on "30 Rock" is frequently reduced to flailing and squirming like an overcaffeinated adolescent. The moral of many of these shows doesn't seem so far off from that of those fatalistic female-centric magazine features that seem to run every few months; something along the lines of, "You can't have it all, ladies, and you'll run yourself ragged if you even try."

We could take heart that at least women are depicted as being just as reckless and promiscuous and demanding and intense as their male counterparts, if their bad behavior weren't so often accompanied by a horror soundtrack and dizzying camera angles that encourage us to view them as unhinged. The crazed antics of male characters like Don Draper, Walter White or Dr. Gregory House are reliably treated as bold, fearless and even ultimately heroic (a daring remark saves the big account; a lunatic gesture scares off a murderous thug; an abrasive approach miraculously yields the answer that saves a young girl's life). Female characters rarely enjoy such romantic spin.

Their flaws are fatal, or at least obviously self-destructive, and they seem designed to invite censure. Time and again, we, the audience, are cast in the role of morally superior observers to these nut jobs. At times we might relate to a flash of anger, a fit of tears, a sudden urge to seduce a stranger in a bar, but we're constantly being warned that these behaviors aren't normal. They render these women out of step with the sane world.

When Nurse Jackie chokes down pills and cavorts with the pharmacist while her perfectly good husband waits around at home with the kids, we can see clearly where too much sass and independence might lead. When Detective Linden dumps her son in a hotel room for the umpteenth time and then he goes missing, or Dr. Yang's emotional frigidity on "Grey's Anatomy" leaves her stranded at the altar, or Nancy Botwin of "Weeds" sleeps with (and eventually marries) a Mexican drug boss, thereby endangering her kids, we're cued to shake our heads at the woeful choices of these otherwise-impressive women. When Carrie on "Homeland" chugs a tumbler of white wine, then fetches one of her black sequined tops out of the closet, we're meant to lament her knee-jerk lasciviousness. Her mania is something she needs to be cured of, or freed from —unlike, say, Monk, whose psychological tics are portrayed as the adorable kernel of his genius.

So why should instability in men and women be treated so differently? "If you don't pull it together, no one will ever love you," a talking Barbie doll tells Mindy during a fantasy on "The Mindy Project," reminding us exactly what's on the line here.

Don't act crazy, Mindy. Men don't like crazy.

Some would argue that we've come a long way since Desi treated Lucy like a petulant child or June Cleaver smiled beatifically at her plucky spawn. "Mary Tyler Moore," "Murphy Brown" and "Roseanne" all demonstrated that a smart woman can have a life outside of cooking, cleaning and begging to be put in her husband's show. They offered us female characters who failed to blend seamlessly with their surroundings—because they were willing to voice their doubts, confess their crushes, seek out sex and openly confront others.

But right around the time "Ally McBeal" hit the air, the attempts to unveil the truth of the female experience started to sail far past the intended mark. The independent woman took on a hysterical edge; she was not only opinionated but also wildly insecure, sexually ravenous or panic-stricken over her waning fertility. Surprising as it was that McBeal was once heralded as a post-feminist hero on the cover of Time in 1998, what's more surprising is that since then, we haven't come all that much further, baby.

Sure, there are lots of exceptions, like Tami Taylor, the self-possessed working mom of "Friday Night Lights," or Hannah Horvath, the outspoken memoirist of "Girls," or the intelligent women of "Mad Men," whose struggles and flaws at least parallel those of the men swarming around them. But alongside every coolheaded Peggy Olson, we get hotheaded train-wreck characters like Ivy Lynn of "Smash"—women who, like the ballerinas with lead weights around their ankles in Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s short story "Harrison Bergeron," can show no strength without an accompanying

impediment to weigh them down, whether it's self-destructive urges, tittering self-consciousness or compulsive pill-popping. Where Roseanne and Mary and Murphy matter-of-factly admitted and often even flaunted their flaws, these characters are too ashamed and apologetic (and repeatedly demeaned) to be taken seriously.

"Women have often felt insane when cleaving to the truth of our experience," Adrienne Rich once wrote. There's truth in these images of women, from the neurotic ob-gyn fixated on finding Mr. Right to the workaholic C.I.A. agent who feels adrift when she isn't obsessing about issues of national security 18 hours a day. But why must these characters also be certifiable? Give Mindy a tiny slice of Louis C.K.'s poker-faced smugness. Give Carrie Mathison one-tenth of Jack Bauer's overconfidence and irreproachability. Where's the taboo in that?

Women, with their tendency to "ask uncomfortable questions and make uncomfortable connections," as Rich puts it, are pathologized for the very traits that make them so formidable. Or as Emily Dickinson wrote:

Much Madness is divinest Sense—

To a discerning Eye—

Much Sense—the starkest Madness—

'Tis the Majority

In this, as All, prevail—

Assent—and you are sane—

Demur—you're straightway dangerous—

And handled with a Chain—

"All smart women are crazy," I once told an ex-boyfriend in a heated moment, in an attempt to depict his future options as split down the middle between easygoing dimwits and sharp women who were basically just me with different hairstyles. By "crazy," I only meant "opinionated" and "moody" and "not always as pliant as one might hope." I was translating my personality into language he might understand—he who used "psycho-chick" as a stand-in for "noncompliant female" and he whose idea of helpful counsel was "You're too smart for your own good," "my own good" presumably being some semivegetative state of acceptance which precluded uncomfortable discussions about our relationship.

Over the years, "crazy" became my own reductive shorthand for every complicated, strong-willed woman I met. "Crazy" summed up the good and the bad in me and in all of my friends. Whereas I might have started to recognize that we were no more crazy than anyone else in the world, instead I simply drew a larger and larger circle of crazy around us, lumping together anyone unafraid of confrontation, anyone who openly admitted her weaknesses, anyone who pursued agendas that might be out of step with the dominant cultural noise of the moment. "Crazy" became code for "interesting" and "courageous" and "worth knowing." I was trying to have a sense of humor about myself and those around me, trying to make room for stubbornness and vulnerability and uncomfortable questions.

But I realize now, after watching these crazy characters parade across my TV screen, that there's self-hatred in this act of self-subterfuge. "Our future depends on the sanity of each of us," Rich writes, "and we have a profound stake, beyond the personal, in the project of describing our reality as candidly and fully as we can to each other."

Maybe this era of "crazy" women on TV is an unfortunate way-station on the road from placid compliance to something more complex—something more like real life. Many so-called crazy women are just smart, that's all. They're not too smart for their own good, or for ours.

Beyoncé: Feminist Icon?

Sophie Weiner (2013)

Beyoncé has become an icon, and in no small part this is due to her willingness to use her gender as a creative tool. The argument over whether the singer is a bona fide feminist or just a pop star cashing in on "girl power" has raged for years, but whatever side of the debate you land on, her message of empowerment, commitment to her craft, and control over her image and performance are undeniable. In celebration of her latest feat—that flawless halftime performance in which she was backed by an all-female band—here's a collection of Beyoncé's most feminist moments to date.

BEYONCÉ'S SUPER BOWL HALFTIME SHOW

The most recent and relevant example of Beyoncé's feminism was her performance at the all-American spectacle of Sunday's Super Bowl. With its massive budget and Beyoncé's overpowering stage presence, the show delivered. Along with her solo songs, the reunion of her original group, Destiny's Child, highlighted the progress she's made as an artist. The foregrounding of female musicians was incredible as a symbol of resistance against an industry where male musicians are still the norm. At the paean to male achievement that is the Super Bowl, it was impossible to see the performance and not feel Beyoncé had somehow won the whole thing.

BEYONCÉ IN *GQ*

Beyoncé's recent *GQ* feature and cover are a great example of the dichotomy of her public existence. While the sexy cover agitated many by-the-book feminists, the article itself complicated her image and demonstrated her in-depth understanding of gender inequality, particularly within the music industry. The most on-point quote in the article addresses the economic inequality that affects women at every socio-economic level (and even more so for African American women):

> You know, equality is a myth, and for some reason, everyone accepts the fact that women don't make as much money as men do. I don't understand that. Why do we have to take a backseat?" she says in her film, which begins with her 2011 decision to sever her business relationship with her father. "I truly believe that women should be financially independent from their men. And let's face it, money gives men the power to run the show. It gives men the power to define value. They define what's sexy. And men define what's feminine. It's ridiculous.

"INDEPENDENT WOMAN PART 1"

Possibly the most obvious musical example of Beyoncé's support of female empowerment is the song her former girl group Destiny's Child recorded for the 2000 film version of *Charlie's Angels*, "Independent Woman Part 1." In a matter-of-fact manner, the song states the benefits of being a woman who isn't beholden to a male breadwinner—a theme that repeats itself throughout Beyoncé's work. In a remake of a TV show that originally glorified female submissiveness, this was a great fuck-you to the misogynist subject matter, and a pop song that has endured.

TELEPHONE

A frequently noted and frustrating tendency of our patriarchal society is its tendency to encourage women, or any minority in a competitive field, to undermine each other in order to be the example of their demographic in the American mainstream. Though "Telephone" is neither Beyoncé's nor Lady

Gaga's best song, it's a great example of two female artists refusing to accept that women in the cutthroat world of pop stardom cannot work together. The allusions to both *Thelma & Louise* and a gender-inverted *Pulp Fiction* reinforce the video's premise that girl power can reign supreme.

RUN THE WORLD (GIRLS)

Another on the list of feminist-Beyoncé controversies is her song that proclaims that girls run the world. Though she herself acknowledges in her *GQ* article and other places that this isn't our reality, art has its own impact, and releasing a song that carries this message, with the intention of having it played on every dance floor around the world, is a ballsy political step.

BEYONCÉ ACCEPTS THE FEMINIST LABEL

"I think I am a feminist, in a way," Beyoncé told *The Daily Mail* in 2010. "It's not something I consciously decided I was going to be; perhaps it's because I grew up in a singing group with other women, and that was so helpful to me," she told the magazine. "It kept me out of so much trouble and out of bad relationships. My friendships with my girls are just so much a part of me that there are things I am never going to do that would upset that bond. I never want to betray that friendship, because I love being a woman and I love being a friend to other women."

Feminist actions speak louder than labels, so to us, this quote says it all: Beyoncé arrived at her definition of feminism out of genuine concern for the situation of herself and the women around her. If living by her own morals is what has defined Beyoncé's feminism, we are all for it.

SURVIVOR

A rock-solid breakup jam and feminist anthem, "Survivor," the title track off Destiny's Child's 2001 album, gave hope to a generation that was growing up in an era with few alternatives to the simplistic and stereotypical gender roles presented by Britney Spears and N*Sync. The lyrics show a belief in women's ability to solve their own problems, assuring us that whatever rough situation we're in, we'll get through it—something we could all stand to be reminded of from time to time.

JAY-Z TOOK BEYONCÉ'S NAME, TOO

Finally, and most confoundingly, Beyoncé has just announced that her next world tour will be called the "Mrs. Carter Show," taking its name from her husband, Jay-Z. Though seen as a step backward by many feminist fans, others interpreted this decision as one of marketing savvy, pooling the massive fan base that both artists possess, or just as a winking dedication to the husband she very publicly loves—and who has taken her name as she has taken his.

Cyberactivism and the Role of Women in the Arab Uprisings

Courtney C. Radsch (2012)

"I, a girl, am going down to Tahrir Square, and I will stand alone. And I'll hold up a banner. Perhaps people will show some honor. I even wrote my number so maybe people will come down with me. No one came except . . . three guys and three armored cars of riot police . . . I'm making this video to give you one simply message: We want to go down to Tahrir Square on January 25. If we still have honor and want to live with dignity on this land, we have to go down on January 25. We'll go down and demand our rights, our fundamental human rights . . . If you think yourself a man, come with me on January 25th. Whoever says a women shouldn't go to protests because they will get beaten, let him have some honor and manhood and come with me on January 25th . . . Sitting at home and just following us on news or Facebook leads to our humiliation, leads to my own humiliation. If you have honor and dignity as a man, come . . . If you stay home, you deserve what will happen to you . . . and you'll be guilty, before your nation and your people . . . Go down to the street, send SMSs, post it post it on the 'net. Make people aware . . . It will make a difference, a big difference . . . never say there's no hope . . . so long you come down with us, there will be hope . . . don't think you can be safe any more! None of us are! Come down with us and demand your rights my rights, your family's rights."

Thus was the call to action that 26-year-old Asmaa Mahfouz made in a video she posted to YouTube on January 18, 2011, which went viral and turned her into a symbol of the Egyptian revolution. A day later, 32-year-old Tawakkol Karman organized a protest in solidarity with the Tunisian people in downtown Sana'a that drew thousands to the streets in an unprecedented public demonstration by women. Young women have been at the forefront of the revolutionary uprisings that have toppled regimes in Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen, along with the more protracted struggles in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. They were among the Twitterati and citizen journalists who became leading news sources—the protesters who took to the streets and the cybersphere to demand that their entrenched leaders step down, and the citizens who paid the ultimate price, being beaten to death and murdered in those regimes' desperate attempts to cling to power.

This research . . . explores how young women used social media and cyberactivism to help shape the "Arab Spring" and its aftermath. The engagement of women with social media has coincided with a shift in the political landscape of the Middle East, and it is unlikely that they will ever retreat from the new arenas they have carved out for themselves. Throughout the region, women have taken to the streets in unprecedented numbers, translating digital advocacy and organization into physical mobilization and occupation of public spaces in a dialectic of online and offline activism that is particular to this era. They have used citizen journalism and social networking to counter the state-dominated media in their countries and influence mainstream media around the world. In the process, they are reconfiguring the public sphere in their countries, as well as the expectations of the public about the role women can and should play in the political lives of their countries.

Several of the women who participated in and led the Arab uprisings were cyberactivists prior to the convulsions of 2011, but many more were inspired to become activists by the events happening around them. Although women young and old took part, it was the younger generation that led the way online.

They helped organize virtual protests as well as street demonstrations and played bridging roles with the mainstream media, helping to ensure that the 24-hour news cycle always had a source at the ready. Twitter became a real-time newsfeed, connecting journalists directly with activists and becoming a key tool in the battle to frame the protests and set the news agenda, particularly in the international media like Al Jazeera and elite Western outlets. Media outlets repurposed citizen-generated videos on YouTube and photos on Flikr, while Facebook provided a platform for aggregating, organizing, disseminating, and building solidarity.

Women have played a central role in the creation of a virtual public sphere online via social media and blogs, but have also demanded greater access, representation, and participation in the physical public sphere, epitomized by the physical squares that represent the imaginary center of political life in their countries: Tahrir Square in Egypt and Benghazi, Libya; Taghir Square in Yemen; and the Pearl Roundabout in Bahrain. They tore down physical and social barriers between men and women, challenging cultural and religious norms and taboos and putting women's empowerment at the center of the struggle for political change. As one blogger put it, "The most encouraging feature of the current upheaval is the massive participation of women; not only the young educated women who uses (sic) the Internet but also the grassroots uneducated older women from rural cities."*

Among the iconic figures of these Arab revolutionary uprisings are several women who are inextricably linked with the new media platforms that have fundamentally shifted the balance of power. Not only have cyberactivism and social media platforms shifted the power dynamics of authoritarian Arab governments and their citizenry, but they have also reconfigured power relations between the youth who make up the majority of the population and the older generation of political elites who were overwhelmingly male and often implicated in the perpetuation of the status quo.

While women and men struggle valiantly to bring about political change, the cyberactivists stand out for their use of new media technologies and access to platforms that transcended national boundaries and created bridges with transnational media and activists groups. The importance of these cyberactivist platforms could be seen in the way they became part of the lexicon of dissent. Esraa Abdel Fattah was known as "Facebook girl" for her role in launching one of the most important opposition youth groups in Egypt, the April 6 Movement. Egypt's Mona Eltahawy, Libya's Danya Bashir, Bahrain's Zeinab al-Khawaja and Maryam al-Khawaja, and many others became known as the "Twitterrati" as influential media and pundits dubbed their Twitter accounts as "must-follows.". . .

CITIZEN JOURNALISM AND SYMBIOSIS WITH MAINSTREAM MEDIA

Many of these women cyberactivists chose citizen journalism as the primary mode of contestation in their battles with entrenched regimes. One young woman named Fatima, but better known by her blog name Arabicca, labeled 2011 the "Year of Citizen Journalism."[1] Citizen journalists radically shifted the media ecosystem and informational status quo by witnessing, putting on record, and imbuing political meaning to symbolic struggles to define quotidian resistance against social injustice, harassment, and censorship as part of a broader movement for political reform. As sociologist Pierre Bourdieu aptly observed, "The simple report, the very fact of reporting, of putting on record as a reporter, always implies a social construction of reality that can mobilize (or demobilize) individuals or groups."[2] Information and events do not inherently have political meaning or importance, but rather must be interpreted, framed, and contextualized before becoming imbued with significance and import, a process in which journalists play a central role. As one of Egypt's leading cyberactivists and citizen journalists astutely notes on the front page of his blog: "In a dictatorship,

* Dalia Ziada, "Egypt's Revolution—How Does It All Start?" *Dalia Ziada* (blog), February 3, 2011, http://daliaziada.blogspot.com/2011/02/jan25-egypts-revolution-how-does-it-all.html.

independent journalism by default becomes a form of activism, and the spread of information is essentially an act of agitation."[3]

Cyberactivists sought to influence domestic media and counter the pro-regime framing of the uprisings. Indeed, one of the primary goals and successes of citizen journalism in the lead-up to the Arab uprisings was creating awareness among people about their rights and the excesses of the Arab regimes. In Egypt, the state-run media refused to even cover the uprising in the early days or would blatantly misreport information, while in Bahrain the lack of independent media meant that the regime's framing of the conflict as sectarian in nature had no counterpoint except for citizen media. Because of lingering distrust of the mainstream media in Libya, cultivated over the 42 years of Ghaddafi's rule in which he controlled and manipulated the media, people rely on personal connections and relationships in assessing the trustworthiness of news and information. "Facebook is more trustworthy than the media," one young Libyan woman told me. Bahraini writer Lamees Dhaif embodies this shifting typology of journalism, blurring the lines between professional and citizen journalist as she continues to speak out in the media against the abuses of her government, even as she blogs and tweets to an audience far bigger than the largest circulation newspaper in her home country. She dismissed the Bahraini authorities' attempts to silence her, noting that she has almost 60,000 followers on Twitter and 43,000 subscribers to her blog, whereas the largest circulation newspaper in Bahrain prints only 12,000 copies daily. "So if they don't want me to write in newspapers, who cares," said Dhaif.

In Tunisia, bloggers like 27-year-old Lina Ben Mhenni played a critical role in breaking the mainstream media blackout on the protests that erupted around the country after the self-immolation of a fruit vendor in the southern city of Sidi Bouzid. She was one of the first people to write about the incident and turned her blog, Twitter, and Facebook page into a virtual newsroom.

On December 17, 2010, tweets about Tunisia started appearing following the death of 26-year-old Mohamed Bouazizi, who had set himself on fire in protest against the humiliation and harassment he suffered at the hands of police as he tended to his stand; his story was familiar to many young men and women who heard about it via social media networks. Ben Mhenni, who blogs in Arabic, English, French, and German at *A Tunisian Girl*, called her friends for updates she then posted on social media and ended up deciding to go there herself to report. "I decided to share the grief of the inhabitants of Sidi Bouzid," she wrote on her blog.[4] Over the next several weeks she travelled the country, posting pictures and reports about the outbreak of street demonstrations and the violent responses by the regime. She relied on Twitter, Facebook, and her blog because, as she noted, only citizen media was covering the protests since the mainstream media only concerned itself with such uncontroversial news as the activities of the president and sports.[5]

Several Facebook pages were created in the wake of Bouazizi's suicide, such as the Arabic page "Mr. President, Tunisians are Setting Themselves on Fire," which garnered 2,500 fans within a day of its creation and 10,000 more a week later, helping to spread information about protests and providing an outlet for young Tunisians to express their anger.[6]

There were few foreign media in Tunisia at that time: *Al Jazeera* had one foreign correspondent on the ground, as did France24, while the U.S. media were completely absent. There were no American channels, and even the Arab and French channels heavily depended on social media content and YouTube video. There were reports that *Al Jazeera* relied on citizen-generated videos for more than 60 percent of its content during the weeks leading up to President Zine al-Abedine Ben Ali's ouster on January 14, 2011, although one senior media executive told me that in fact the station was 100 percent dependent on such content in the first couple of weeks of the uprising. Citizen journalists and bloggers like Ben Mhenni, therefore, played a critical role in reporting on the uprising and providing content to mainstream media.

As the uprising gathered strength, the regime engaged in a counter-information campaign and sought to discredit citizen media. Ben Mhenni, whose father was also a political activist, started blogging in 2007 and had already earned a reputation covering human rights issues and freedom of

expression, so her credibility was established. She also knew how to bypass the censorship that rendered key social media sites, including YouTube and Flikr, inaccessible to those who were not as adroit at using circumvention tools. "The Tunisian government did not find another solution but to censor the websites disseminating the story and imposing a blockade on the city of Sidi Bouzid, where people are expressing their anger by protesting in the streets," she wrote on the activist blog Global Voices.[7] Tunisia was among the most sophisticated Internet censors in the world, leading Reporters without Borders to put the country on its list of "Internet Enemies" and Freedom House[8] to characterize its multilayered Internet censorship apparatus as "one of the world's most repressive."[9]

By 2011, 3.6 million Tunisians had Internet access and more than 1.8 million of them had a Facebook account. As one Tunisan *bloguese*[10] put it: "Everything happened on Facebook."[11] Twitter was also an important tool; the Tunisian share-of-voice among MENA Twitter users rose significantly as protests erupted throughout the country, rising from about five percent on December 17, 2010, to more than 70 percent the day before Ben Ali fled the country.[12] That is, everything that happened in the streets was recorded and posted online, which flooded social media networks with news of the uprising. "Women were present in every stage and each action of the uprising," Ben Mhenni told me. "They were present on the street [and] behind their screens."

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Linking Cyberactivism with the Street

Cyberactivists recognize that their activism does not end at the computer screen, but must go hand-in-hand with other forms of political engagement and be translated into physical manifestations of political protest. "Cyberactivism is not just work behind the screen, it is also smelling the tear gas and facing the security forces live ammunition," noted Ben Mhenni in an interview. Many explicitly credited social media with changing the dynamics in authoritarian countries throughout the region, but acknowledged the offline work that must also go into human rights and political reform work. Throughout the region people took to the streets to demand change in unprecedented numbers, and in each case women figured prominently.

According to reports about previous protests in Egypt, women only accounted for about 10 percent of the protesters, whereas they accounted for about 40 to 50 percent in Tahrir Square in the days leading up to the fall of Mubarak.[13] Since 2004, Egyptian women have actively staked a claim in cyberspace, even as they took to the streets as part of the Kefaya movement in 2004-2006, the April 6 Youth Movement in 2008, and others—but never in the numbers that participated in the revolution. The 18-day uprising included women on a scale not seen before, and in many ways the cyberactivist movement helped lay the groundwork and change the mindset of a new generation of Egyptian youth. Veiled and unveiled women participated in the protests, provided support to the hungry and the wounded, led chants against the regime and more recently against the ruling military Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), opened their homes to protesters and cyberactivists, and slept in Tahrir Square together with their male compatriots. These women were not only secularists or liberals; the Muslim Sisters, the female wing of the *Ikhwan Muslimeen* (The Muslim Brotherhood), were also active. Muslim Sisters joined in the protests, discussing their ideas and leading collective actions, using their social media accounts to communicate their experiences and fight for their political ideals. As one activist noted: "The women of the Muslim Brotherhood, who are traditionally a silent group walking behind the chanting men, were joining with other people, discussing and exchanging with them—they were even up there, right at the front, leading cheers and chants. That is a radical shift."[14]

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Inspiration and Mobilization

Women played a pivotal role in inspiring their fellow citizens to take part in the uprisings, whether through admiration or confrontation. In her YouTube message (quoted at the beginning of this paper), for example, Egypt's Asmaa Mahfouz

played on the male sense of honor in calling for men to join her in the street, deriding men who stayed at home while "the more vulnerable sex" took to the streets and faced the riot police.

As they watched the fall of regimes in Tunisia and Egypt, Libyan youth started talking on Facebook about the need for revolution in their country. They wrote on each other's walls and started groups to inspire each other and build support for collective action. On February 17, 2011, a video of the protest in Benghazi spread like wildfire among the connected youth of Libya, who made sure it also got to the international media. "I must say that without Facebook and social media, there would not have been a revolution," one 23-year-old blogger from Misrata told me. "It was a revolution started on Facebook." Others inspired their fellow citizens with their fearlessness in the face of repression and willingness to traverse red lines.

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SEXUAL VIOLENCE AS A FORM OF INTIMIDATION

Women face specific threats and violence that their male counterparts for the most part do not, and they have paid a steep price as regime defenders and authorities have used sexual violence in an attempt to silence and intimidate them. Gender-specific threats and sexual violence—including brutal beatings during protests, so-called "virginity tests,"[15] degrading and brutal treatment including torture during detainment, and character assassination—specifically exploit cultural taboos in which female victims are seen as having brought dishonor upon themselves. Sexual assault, including rape, has become a defining feature of the uprisings in Egypt and Libya, but has also been used by regimes throughout the region as a tactic against the women who participate in protests and seek to break down gender barriers and cultural taboos. Cyberactivists also face intimidation and sexual harassment in the virtual public sphere, as they become the subject of virulent reputation assassinations and defamation campaigns, and receive threats on their social media profiles and blogs. Online defamation campaigns against women cyberactivists have been seen in Bahrain and Tunisia as well as Egypt. As women have come to play a central role in the uprisings, they have also become a target of the regime, which seeks to delegitimize their participation and calls for political reform by disparaging them and raising the potential costs of involvement.

In Egypt, for example, the police, security forces, and thugs harassed and assaulted women during the uprising, continuing the trend of targeting women that goes back to at least 2005, when there was a marked turn by the Egyptian government toward the use of violence against women. During the 2005 demonstrations against a proposed constitutional amendment, gangs of men allegedly hired by a member of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) attacked women journalists, including cyberactivists like Nora Younis, and female journalists, specifically targeting them in what Younis called a "sexist approach."[16]

"A woman is just a body and [the regime] felt that a woman, she will never go back to the streets and men would feel humiliated and not go out," she explained. But women stayed in the streets from 2005 onward, and during the protests were beaten and tear-gassed just like everyone else. One woman said the police were "particularly vicious to women. They target us. I've had my veil pulled off by one of them. In my own town of Menoufeya, a certain police officer would tell women who got arrested, 'You come in as virgins, and I'll make sure you leave as real women.'"[17] Thugs attacked, beat, and ripped the clothes off of professor Noha Radwan during a mass demonstration in Cairo and killed protester Sally Zahran by clubbing her with a baseball bat; police killed a woman named Amira and ran over Liza Mohamed Hasan.[18] Samira Ibrahim, 25, was the only one of at least seven women subjected to "virginity tests" by the military in spring 2011 who filed a case against her perpetrators.[19] In December 2011, amateur mobile phone videos captured the beating of a woman by Egyptian security forces, who tore off her abaya and exposed her blue bra. Video and photos of the assault quickly went viral and the "blue bra" girl became a symbol of the continuing military repression and violence against women as people tweeted and Facebooked

the attack. U.S. journalist Lara Logan was sexually assaulted while covering the protests in Tahrir, and during the November 2011 parliamentary elections, Egyptian commentator Mona Eltahawy was arrested and sexually assaulted by police. But rather than remain silent, these women and their compatriots who lived to bear witness have taken to the airwaves and cyberspace to tell their stories, refusing to back down. "Oppression begets solidarity," one woman in Tahrir astutely observed.

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In Egypt, a group of volunteers created Harassmap,[20] a crowdsource mapping project launched in 2010 to track incidents of sexual harassment in the streets of Cairo by location, type, and frequency and provide real-time information about areas women should avoid, and to change attitudes toward the problem in local communities.[21] Many people used this platform in the months following the uprising as sexual assaults became more common with the breakdown in security. In 2010, draft legislation that would criminalize sexual harassment was put in front of the Egyptian Parliament, but it was dissolved and replaced in the post-Mubarak era. Without the concerted effort by citizen journalists, cyberactivists, and women's rights organizations to document these cases and bring attention to the issue while building alliances with other concerned groups in the human rights community, it seems unlikely that Egypt would have made much progress in either changing mindsets or legal frameworks.

PUBLIC SPHERE

The Middle East is highly patriarchal, although the region varies in terms of women's formal participation in the public sphere. In Egypt, Bahrain, and Tunisia, women held parliamentary seats prior to the revolution and participated in economic life. In Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and Libya, however, women were largely relegated to the home and not visible in the public sphere. Mass participation by women in street protests and political demonstrations was rare if not unheard of prior to the 2011 uprisings, when women young and old took to the streets across the region, slept in the squares, and climbed atop of the shoulders of men to rally the public. Pictures of middle-aged women tending their children in tents and stories of older women refusing the youth's protestations to go inside where they would be safer have become part of the revolutions' story.

But while women were relatively less visible in the streets and public squares prior to the Arab uprisings, over the past several years, young women have carved out a robust, participatory, and leadership role for themselves in cyberspace. In more conservative societies, women were able to "leave the confines of the four walls of her home," as one young Libyan put it, by going online, where they could access information, communicate with people outside of their physical social circles (they were often constrained by social mores and familial expectations from intermixing with men), and engage in collective action, from "liking" a Facebook post to coordinating donations among friends. "Cyberactivism has made activism on the street more acceptable," explained Yemeni activist Maria al-Masani.

It also enabled young women in the more conservative countries of Libya and Yemen to participate in the revolutions because there are fewer strictures on gender mixing and female comportment online, and anonymity is an option—whereas it is not in most cities and villages, where extended family ties mean that it can be difficult to escape prying eyes and ears. Several Libyan and Yemeni women said that cyberactivism empowered them to be active in a way they could not be in the physical world. "Women are equal on the Internet," more than one person told me. "In cyberactivism, men don't get in physical contact with women, so a lot of women are in cyberactivism because their father says he would not want his daughter to go to a demonstration, but if she's anonymously online then no one's going to object to that," explained Mansani, in an observation echoed by several other young women. An activist who wished to remain anonymous said her cousins would object to her cyberactivism, so she used a pseudonym; another explained that they would use codes to discuss what was happening on the ground in Libya because certain words like "NATO" were under surveillance. Libyan activist Sarah al-Firgani said new media

pushed women to get involved more. "They were at home using Internet, they can speak freely and . . . it changed the look of women in their community, the men respect them more and see they have a role to play to beyond family and children," explained Firgani. "Women proved they can do what men can do, some women did more than what many men did."

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The role of women in the public sphere has inalterably shifted over the past several months as women translated gains made in the virtual sphere to the embodied public sphere, of which squares in the capital cities were emblematic. Women participated in the Arab uprisings and reconstituted the role and position women occupy in the public sphere. While some countries, like Bahrain, Egypt, and Tunisia, had a handful of women parliamentarians prior to the revolutionary uprisings, others like Yemen and Saudi Arabia were virtual black holes in terms of women's public participation in the public sphere. Similarly, in Bahrain, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia, the virtual instantiations of contentious politics—as well as the dialectic of the embodied and virtual public spheres that reconstituted women's role and image in Arab politics and society—provided new mechanisms for the articulation of their identities and brought new issues to the public agenda. Although Arab states have highly variable rates of Internet connectivity, social media—particularly Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube—have become central facets of young women's daily lives. Even in Yemen, where Internet penetration is a mere 10 percent, youth have clamored to join Facebook. "Everyone knows everyone else through Facebook," according to Yemeni blogger Afrah Nasser, noting that it helped connect youth in various provinces so that they could unite in the revolution.

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Cyberactivism is both reflexive and reactive. For many women, posting on Facebook or blogging was the first time they had ever expressed their personal feelings publicly. Cyberactivism was a form of empowerment, a way to exert control over one's personhood and identity, while gaining a sense of being able to *do* something in the face of a patriarchal hierarchy and an authoritarian state. "People are starting to say their views openly and freely because of social media, it has changed their mentality," according to Afrah Nasser. As a blogger named Israa explained in an interview prior to the Egyptian uprising, blogging was "a way to spread our ideas and concepts to people and make things that can change our facts and conditions." This sentiment was expressed by many women before, during, and after the revolutions. "The power of women is in their stories. They are not theories, they are real lives that, thanks to social networks, we are able to share and exchange," said Egyptian-American activist Mona Eltahawy.

New and alternative media have given women new tools for articulating their identity in the public sphere, putting issues that were of particular concern to them onto the public agenda, and making their opinions heard, from straightforward online blogging platforms in the mid-2000s to mobile and microblogging in 2007, to the explosive popularity of the social networking site Facebook by 2008. Women have even made gains within the conservative Muslim Brotherhood, as evidenced by the recent comments of Supreme Guide Mohamed Badie at an *Ikhwan* press conference entitled "Woman: From the Revolution to the Prosperity." "No one can deny the vital role the women played during the January 25 Revolution, whether as activists, mothers, or wives," he said in his opening speech, noting that they "partook with men in everything." Women, he said, "made history, and with their success they gave the whole world a lesson about how to fight injustice and tyranny."

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POST-REVOLUTION: ORGANIZING, ELECTING, AND PARTICIPATING

Zeinab al-Khawaja, best known by her Twitter handle @AngryArabiya, is another iconic figure who has been active from the start of the uprising and continues to push the limits of political expression in Bahrain, earning her the wrath of the authorities and the admiration of people around the world who interact with her on Twitter. Her sister, Maryam al-Khawaja, went into exile and shuttles between Europe and Washington, D.C., as advocacy director

of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, the leading human rights monitoring group in the country. Their father was beaten, tortured, and sentenced to life in prison at a sham military trial and eventually went on a hunger strike that at this writing had been going on for more than a month. Yet they both continue their advocacy, one from inside the country and one from outside, using cyberactivism to ensure the world does not forget about the ongoing protest movement in Bahrain.

In Libya, women seem to be more active than men in building civil society and, in particular, using social media to do so. New nongovernmental organizations, coalitions, and Facebook groups are sprouting up everywhere to deal with problems as local as the sewage in Lake Benghazi to those as complicated as the issue of federalism and elections. In many cases, young women said their organizations grew out of Facebook pages or groups they started with friends.

Ibtihad, a 26-year-old activist from Tripoli who was forced to leave Libya during the war, created a Facebook page with her friends because she felt she could not just sit and do nothing—she needed to take action. They began to lay the groundwork for an organization so that when she and her friends were able to return to Libya, they would have the foundation for a registered NGO. The Facebook group, which was open only to friends, adopted a policy of complete transparency and democracy. The 100 or so members of the group voted on everything, from the name to the logo to the program of work. They wrote a mission statement and bylaws, and when she returned in August 2011 they registered their new organization, which they named Phoenix, after the bird that rises again from the ashes, and the Arabic term that refers to beauty. They raised money from friends and acquaintances and posted an accounting online with pictures of everything they purchased with donated funds. After Ghaddafi's fall, as the country entered the transitional phase, Phoenix created a fan page that was open to all and took its online activism offline, holding information sessions and establishing a women's resource center. Such examples are common in Libya, where the youth have been inspired to lead their country to a better future in the post-Ghaddafi era. "We started Phoenix because our parents didn't let us interact with anyone, and we were just trying to help, so we started this Facebook group and we started adding trusted friends" who had gone abroad to collect donations of money and clothes, Ibtihad said.

Young women throughout the region agree that a fundamental mind shift must take place in order for women to make real gains, as for some women, authoritarianism is experienced in the private as well as the public sphere. Dalia Ziada underscored the challenges that still remain in Egypt, noting that a poll of more than 1400 people she helped conduct revealed that not a single one wanted to see a woman president one day. In their personal lives, young women must juggle their studies and family responsibilities (some of them are mothers and wives), and negotiate cultural expectations about women's roles. Carving out time for cyberactivism seems to have taken on more importance as social media use expanded, and as the uprisings spread. . . .

The diminutive 15-year-old Arwa al-Taweel was among the first *Ikhwan* sisters to create a blog in 2005, and helped pave the way for its members to participate in the blogosphere, having encouraged and trained dozens, if not hundreds, of her fellow Ikhwan to blog, including several who participated in the revolution. Her blog, *Ana Keda*—an expression that she translated as meaning something to the effect of "That's How I Am" or "I Am Enough"—and later her tweets and Facebook updates became a venue for political activism and articulation of her Islamic faith and in many ways defined her, she told me. She became known as a blogger and cyberactivist, recognizable to strangers because she posted a photo on her blog. Blogging was both personal and political, but she shied away from the public critique of the *Ikhwan's* 2007 party platform in favor of more personal reflections on life, love, and poetry. But given her father's reputation and her own activism as a citizen journalist for *Al Jazeera Talk* and *Al Destor* and her active support for Gaza, the former could hardly be separated from the latter. In 2008 she told me she would refuse to stop being a cyberactivist if and when she got married, a promise she ended up keeping when she broke off her engagement with a man who wanted her to stay at home more often. Defying the traditional role of

Muslim Sister as stay-at-home wife, she vowed to travel and remain politically active, and last year found a husband who would support her. In the wake of the revolution she even professed an interest in running for parliament when she turned 30.[22]

The translation of online experiences and relationships into the "real world" blurred the lines between public and private life, and provided new and varied opportunities for women to expand their circles and interact with people they never could have otherwise. Such translation also contributed to attempts to claim control over the articulation of the female identity. Feminist reinterpretations clashed with conservative traditionalists seeking to maintain hegemonic control over the representation of women and their proper roles in society. Blogs and social media made the invisible visible, gave voice to the voiceless, and embodied a commitment to free expression and *itjihad*, or independent judgment. "This is a revolution of making our voice heard," said Afrah Nasser, noting that half of Yemen's population is under 18. "We are now creating a new form of political awareness in Yemen that has never been talked about before, [a] new form of politics," she added, pointing out that the fact she had been invited to speak at an international conference on Arab women and cyberactivism was proof of such change. In her country, women played an unprecedented leadership role in the uprisings, recognized by the awarding of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize to Yemeni journalist and human rights activist Tawakkol Karman for her role in inspiring the democratic uprising in her country, which grew from 20 women journalists who gathered to protest the day Tunisia's president Ben Ali fled the country to tens of thousands in the weeks and months that followed.

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Women have carved out new spaces for debate and discussion in the public sphere, both physically and rhetorically, through activism on the streets and online through agenda-setting and framing as they erased red lines that had previously kept topics like torture, political succession, and sexual harassment off limits. They are unlikely to retreat from the public sphere no matter the outcome of the revolutions. . . .

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Despite the region's democratic uprisings, many countries—including Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen—experienced backsliding in Freedom House's 2012 annual survey of political rights and civil liberties because of crackdowns on pro-reform activists. Tunisia was a bright spot in a region that continues to rank among the least free in the world, moving from "Not Free" to "Partly Free" on the Freedom House 2012 survey amid the successful democratic consolidation that took place in the wake of Ben Ali's ouster last year. Egypt continued to rank as "Not Free" amid continued repression by the ruling military power. Thus the struggle to consolidate revolution and enact meaningful reforms remains a challenge that young women will continue to be involved in; they will undoubtedly continue to use new media technologies to participate in and influence the future trajectory of their countries.

The Arab Spring is not just a political revolution; it is a social, sexual, and potentially religious one as well. Women cyberactivists are upending traditional hierarchies, reinterpreting religious dogma, breaking taboos, and bringing new issues into the public sphere even as they push to redefine the cultural mores between public and private spheres.

The tension between privacy versus publicity, activism versus journalism, professional versus amateur, physical versus virtual, and conformity versus *itjihad* are at the epicenter of the revolutionary transformations underway throughout the region. Social media and the Internet enabled young women to play a central role in the revolutionary struggles underway in their countries, whether as revolutionaries, citizen journalists, or organizers. As Internet access increases, as mobile phones are increasingly able to connect online, and as social networking expands, cyberactivism will continue to be a central form of contestation even as new platforms and strategies develop. Ensuring that women receive education and training, as well as expanding their legal and political rights, will help consolidate the sociopolitical gains of the Arab uprisings. With the widespread recognition of the role young women played in the uprisings, there is little doubt they will

work to secure their role in the post-authoritarian order that is in the process of emerging in the region.

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NOTES

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7. Ibid.
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9. *Freedom on the Net* (New York: Freedom House, 2011), 324; *Internet Enemies* (Paris: Reporters Sans Frontières 2009).
10. The French term used for a female blogger.
11. Quoted in "Sidi Bouzid ou la révolte tunisienne organisée sur Facebook," *Le nouvel observateur*, April 1, 2011, http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/vu-sur-le-web/20110104.OBS5680/sidi-bouzid-ou-la-revolte-tunisienne-organisee-sur-facebook.html, translation by the author.
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13. "Women Make Their Power Felt in Egypt's Revolution," *The National*, 2011, http://www.thenational.ae/news/worldwide/middle-east/women-make-their-power-felt-in-egypts-revolution.
14. See Mohamed el-Dahshan, *Egyptian Women Eye Revolutionary Role* (Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 2011).
15. This is a procedure in which a woman is forcefully penetrated to see whether she bleeds in order determine if she is a virgin. At least seven women in Egypt were subjected to these "tests" by military officers who were not doctors following their arrests in Tahrir Square in March 2011.
16. Radsch, "Core to Commonplace," 2008.
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Bad Girl, Good Girl: Zines Doing Feminism

Alison Piepmeier (2009)

Grrrl zines don't simply expose the dangers of being a girl or woman in a patriarchal culture. They also often engage with familiar configurations of girlishness and femininity—playfully reclaiming and reworking them. To a certain extent, this has become an identifiable grrrl zine visual style: the kinderwhore or "kitten with a whip" aesthetic, in which girlish images are given a twist or are recontextualized in ways that change their meaning, making them tough or resistant.[1] For example, Sarah Dyer's famous anarchist Hello Kitty became an almost ubiquitous image in grrrl zines in the 1990s. There are countless examples of this phenomenon, from the celebration of children's book protagonist Pippi Longstocking in numerous grrrl zines to Cindy Crabb's use of girlish doodles, such as hearts, stars, and flowers, in conjunction with discussions of weighty subjects such as sexual assault. . . .

These reframings of femininity are examples of zines' "insubordinate creativity," and they function as challenges to corporate culture industries that position girlhood in terms of passivity and consumption.

To be sure, many grrrl zines are fronting these challenges in ways that embrace certain aspects of femininity. Rather than simply rejecting sexist culture, many zines are engaged in the project of identifying the pleasures of femininity. This work is sometimes seen as "not feminist enough" because it can be understood as complicit with patriarchal gender roles and, indeed, corporate culture; during the early 1990s heyday of the Riot Grrrl movement, "girl power" quickly became a marketing strategy, even while it was being developed as a tool of resistance. Although I understand this sort of skepticism about reclaiming femininity, I contend that this skepticism can quickly lead to a flattening of feminist resistance. According to this approach, the only appropriate feminist response to patriarchal tropes of femininity is outright rejection. Bell hooks asks, "How do we create an oppositional worldview, a consciousness, an identity, a standpoint that exists not only as that struggle which also opposes dehumanization but as that movement which enables creative, expansive self-actualization?" She warns that in these efforts, "Opposition is not enough."[2] Like hooks, these zines and their creators suggest that a dichotomous framing of feminism's gender interventions, in which feminists are supposed to voice monolithic opposition to corporate culture, is inadequate. These zines are playing in the spaces between resistance and complicity and as such are creating third wave tactics.

One publication committed to the pleasures of femininity is *Bust* which began as a zine but is now a full-fledged professional magazine. Debbie Stoller, Laurie Henzel, and Marcelle Karp started the zine in 1993 because, as Stoller explained to me, they wanted a publication that was like *Sassy* for adult women. In particular, Stoller admired *Sassy*'s framing of girlhood as a positive space: "Whereas other teen girl magazines were saying things like, you're gonna get breasts and boys are gonna want to touch them and make sure they don't. You know, *Sassy* was kind of like, you're gonna get breasts and if someone touches them it's gonna feel really good, so pick a cute guy to do it, you know, just sort of embracing, trying to really show the positive things about being a teen girl and all the great new things you could do as a teen girl . . . rather than pretending it was always in such a negative light." She was well aware of the dangers and vulnerabilities that zines such as *Mend My Dress* (and magazines such as *Ms.*) documented, but she was searching for something different. She wanted *Bust* to create "an embraceable feminist culture that's positive, that gives us stuff that we can relate to, to talk about how difficult it is to be a woman and about how much culture is misogynist, but I wanna just try to present

an alternative, just try to create an alternative that you can read and be happy and feel good about."[3]

The pleasures of girlhood and womanhood have been a theme in *Bust* since its inception. The publication has featured articles that celebrate such stereotypically feminine acts as flirting, shopping, developing your own sense of style, and lipstick. However, *Bust* also tries to broaden the terrain of fun for women, emphasizing the pleasures of more stereotypically male activities such as nonmonogamous sex, physical aggression, and swearing. As *Bust* demands pleasure for women, it also documents the cultural tension between appropriately performed womanhood and female pleasure. For instance, the second issue focused on fun, and the editors' letter offered the question, "As women, is it even acceptable for us to want to have fun? . . . we are expected to undergo a kind of pleasure-ectomy so that we may become the selfless keepers of compassion, moderation, serenity, and responsibility that is the definition of 'womanhood.'"[4] A few years later, the editors upped the ante in the "Bad Girl" issue of *Bust,* an issue that came to set the thematic course for the publication. This issue discussed the pursuit of pleasure, and the editors argued that what really makes a bad girl bad is "simply doing the one thing that is truly un-feminine: *acting on your desires.*"[5] *Bust* leverages two available cultural categories—the bad girl and the good girl—against each other, and the good girl, the one who has experienced the "pleasure-ectomy," gets pushed off the page. The bad girl becomes the primary iconographic terrain for the publication.

The bad girl is an agent rather than simply an object of desire, and *Bust*'s covers often highlight this social identity. In so doing, however, they often illustrate the tension between competing notions of femininity, the fact that, as they noted in the "Bad Girl" issue, "female badness seems to only be acceptable as long as it remains *attractive*—as long as it benefits someone else.[6] The cover of the zine's second issue challenges this emphasis on the bad girl as attractive. This cover features a cartoon of a giant female dog (note: bitch) with bared breasts, carrying a stereo, a beer, sex toys, movies, comics, and junk food. She is stomping through a theme park called "Fun City," her booming feet crushing some of the tiny cartoon creatures below her who run for cover. She is not particularly attractive—she is, in fact, google-eyed, drooling, and dangerous—and this is at least partly the point. She is not the typical woman's magazine cover model, and therefore she doesn't function as an easily assimilable image for women to aspire to become. The discomfort this cover might produce in a reader is part of how zines work, keeping the reader from the passive consumption mindset produced by mainstream capitalist media.[7] It functions more specifically in this case to interrupt assumptions about femininity and force the reader to consider how femininity and pleasure interface.

Many other *Bust* covers enhance this tension, as well, such as the cover of the first "Sex" issue, which features a woman's enormous pregnant stomach with the word "SEX" scrawled across it, in Riot Grrrl fashion.[8] This is the pregnant woman not as beatific, sanitized symbol of maternal instinct but as sexy, bikini-wearing, defiant girl, insurgent and owning up to the act that led to the pregnancy in the first place. Again, *Bust* celebrates the bad girl as a figure who is so colorful and dramatic—even uncomfortably so—that she completely overshadows and upstages the more familiar, palatable models of appropriate femininity.

The *Bust* editors see celebrating femininity and the pleasures of femininity as a tactical political move. Stoller explained:

> When men's magazines were starting to come out, like *Details* (there was no *Maxim* yet), there was always emphasis in those magazines about men's pleasure and how fun it is to be a guy and all the great things you can do as a guy, and so that was very consciously an important part of what shaped our ideas for how to do *Bust,* that we wanted it to keep emphasizing the pleasures of being female and feminist and making it feel like it was a great, cool club to be a part of.[9]

Pleasure is an energy, a generative force and a connective one. . . . Pleasure helps create the embodied community of grrrl zines, and *Bust* is using it intentionally, as a way to mobilize their community of readers. Certainly, there are benefits for the publication: *Bust* grew from a zine to

a magazine, in part, because the zine was fun to read and it promoted consumer culture as part of the enjoyment of being a woman. By the second year, the publication was running with glossy color covers, and by the time I spoke with Stoller and Henzel in 2006, they were selling nearly 100,000 copies per issue, with around 22,000 going to subscribers and the rest being sold in bookstores (the magazine is for sale in major retailers such as Barnes and Noble and Borders) and on newsstands. Even as it moved from zine to magazine status, *Bust* maintained much of its thematic focus—its celebration of the bad girl and of female pleasures in general.

Its magazine format is necessarily less intimate and inviting than the scruffy, informal publications that readers identify as "a present in the mail," and this has had consequences for the way the publication is perceived. One complication from *Bust*'s success came in 1999, when the publication was bought out by an Internet company that planned to grow the magazine but, as it turned out, "they weren't really that interested in running a magazine so the magazine was losing money with them even though it was looking great." When the stock market began to fall, the magazine's owners decided to find other investors to help grow *Bust,* but their big push for investment began with an article in the *New York Times,* which came out on September 10, 2001, the day before the terrorist attacks in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania. Stoller explained, "and then that was really kind of the end of it. Within a month, they closed the entire company down basically.[10]

Stoller, Henzel, and Karp were able to buy *Bust* back from its owners, a move they decided to make because they started receiving so many letters from readers expressing their love for the publication and asking what they could do to help. Stoller and Henzel explained what a frightening time that was: "We had nothing except for [the rights to publish a magazine called *Bust*]. We had no money in the bank, no money to publish the next magazine with," but their understanding of the publication and of their readership was so solid that, Stoller explained, "within six months we were able to start paying ourselves and our staff. Not very much at first, but it grew and grew."[11] It's worth noting here that, although *Bust* struggled financially due to their magazine status, they benefited from an embodied community of readers who felt such attachment to the publication that they helped bring it back from ruin.

Another complication the publication has faced is that, as a successful, visible publication, *Bust* has been a lightning rod for both praise and criticism from feminists and others in a way that seems less likely within the smaller zine community. This, however, is part of what Stoller was striving for with *Bust.* She explained to me, "I never wanted it to be some well-kept secret, some little underground thing, cause that wasn't the function, the function was to reach as many people as possible and to have, to try to have an actual cultural influence."[12] The pleasures of womanhood became a successful marketing strategy for *Bust* as the pleasures of "being a guy" were for men's magazines like *Maxim.*

More than this, though, *Bust*'s deployment of pleasure also helps alter the terrain of femininity, not to mention feminism. Stoller explicitly identifies this intervention in the terrain of femininity as a form of feminist activism: "I really believe that the thing that is incredibly influential to the way we live our lives and what restricts us and what we think about ourselves is our culture and our values, and that if you can change, those are the things that really need to change."[13] It may be worth noting here that one of the ways in which self-identified third wave feminists have sought to distinguish themselves from the second wave is via this emphasis on pleasure. Several grrrl zine creators said, on conditions of anonymity, that reading more mainstream feminist publications identified with the second wave, notably *Ms.* magazine, was akin to "eating your green vegetables" or "doing your homework"—in other words, not fun.[14] *Bust* has made tactical interventions into mainstream notions of girlhood and womanhood using pleasure—the idea that it should be fun to be a girl or a woman—as their barometer for accepting or rejecting the parts of the culture with which they come into contact.

Zines that reclaim femininity are sometimes identified as enacting a version of cultural feminism, but I don't think it's useful to frame them in these terms.[15] Cultural feminism, usually defined as a feminism that celebrates women's unique perspective, is a

somewhat outmoded category that doesn't capture the complexity of these zines' gender interventions. What these zines are doing is offering a contradictory stance: yes, girlhood and womanhood are dangerous, and, yes, they are culturally constructed for particular political ends, but I can do something different with them and enjoy them. On the one hand, this approach can be seen as politically suspect; indeed, in earlier writing I myself have labeled it "the feminist free-for-all" and have suggested that these sorts of actions represent the bankrupting of feminist politics.[16] But I question that stance now. Just because these zines don't offer a coherent political standpoint, just because they don't fully undermine mainstream gender performances, doesn't mean that they are complicit with cultures of domination. Again, I stress that the binary of resistant/complicit is inadequate to the task of assessing these zines (or texts more generally). In fact, I think the incompleteness I see in these zines, their "yes, but" approach to feminism and femininity, represents a valid theoretical stance, a tactical subjectivity that's keyed to this cultural moment and is characteristically third wave.

This "yes, but" approach encodes resistance and attempts to move the feminist discussion of female subjectivities beyond opposition. Johnson suggests that many young feminist scholars—and I would extend her insight to many grrrl zinesters as well—are so familiar with the discourses critical of racism, sexism, and homophobia that they do not mention them. She argues: "Our redirection does not constitute a turning away from . . . skepticism and critique . . . but a thoroughgoing acceptance of skepticism and critique as the givens of our approach, joined with a desire to go beyond them."[17] This is obviously not to say that young feminists or grrrl zinesters see racism, sexism, homophobia, or other oppressive systems as being gone; in fact, just the opposite. The cultural critique of these systems is the foundation on which they are building, but they don't necessarily stay in that space of critique, choosing, rather, to generate alternative subject positions and to tap into the pleasures of creation and cultural intervention.

There are potential problems with this approach, of course. One of the concerns regularly raised about third wave feminists is that, having come to consciousness in a hyperindividualistic backlash culture, they often don't recognize pervasive problems or know how to address them. A related concern is that white zinesters, who make up the majority of those producing zines, often give only lip service to racism, ultimately replicating societal hierarchies around race and ethnicity. Ultimately, though, I think it would be reductive (and condescending) to understand the celebration of femininity and pleasure as merely a form of false consciousness or denial. Better to take seriously the desire to create what Stoller calls "an embraceable feminist culture that's positive," a desire that helps animate a community.

NOTES

1. Lily Burana, "Grrrls, Grrrls, Grrrls," *Entertainment Weekly* 429 (May 1, 1998), 76.
2. bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 15.
3. Debbie Stoller, personal interview.
4. Letter to the Editor, *Bust,* 1.2 (fall 1993), 2.
5. Editorial, *Bust* 7 (spring/summer 1996), 2.
6. Ibid.
7. Duncombe, *Notes from Underground,* 123.
8. *Bust* 1.4 (summer/fall 1994).
9. Stoller, personal interview.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid. Circulation information from personal correspondence and Bust media kit, http://www.bust.com/2008mediakit.pdf. Interestingly, while Stoller always envisioned *Bust* as a magazine, Henzel, who has been the publication's creative director from the beginning, explained to me, "for the design part, I wasn't looking at real magazines as inspiration, I was really looking at zines. I was a big zine reader, so it had that feel because that's what I like. Obviously the early issues didn't look kind of the way they do now, and I wasn't looking at *Vanity Fair* and saying 'oooh,' it was a zine in my mind" (Henzel, personal interview).
13. Stoller, personal interview.
14. Personal interviews with four zine creators who asked not to be identified.
15. Kearney (*Girls Make Media*), in particular, labels grrrl zines in terms of cultural feminism.
16. Rory Dicker and Alison Piepmeier, "Introduction" to *Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century,* ed. Dicker and Piepmeier (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003), 17.

17. Merri Lisa Johnson, "Introduction: Ladies Love Your Box—The Rhetoric of Pleasure and Danger in Feminist Television Studies," in *Third Wave Feminism and Television: Jane Puts It in a Box,* ed. Johnson (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 13

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER 5

1. How do you think cultural forms shape gender? How might cultural forms function subversively to challenge traditional gender norms?
2. How is television an example of what Susan Douglas calls "enlightened sexism"? Give specific examples from current TV shows. How do these shows focus viewers' gaze away from continuing barriers to women's equality?
3. What pitfalls and possibilities do social media offer young women? How might social media be used for feminist activism?
4. How does pornography as a cultural form influence gender norms in U.S. society? How does race intersect with gender in pornography's representation of women?
5. Why do you think some critics suggest there has never been a female Shakespeare or a female da Vinci? Do you agree with this assessment? Why or why not?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

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