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**Euphoria Twitter: Collectively Effervescing Criticism**

Last winter, millions of young people gathered on a weekly basis. Impossible otherwise, this gathering did not abide by the laws of physics or social distancing mandates or maritime law. Instead, this gathering took place in another realm: digital space. Here, folks met on a common ground because of a common captivation[a conversation that spans geopolitical conflicts and socioeconomic strata] [common captivation with a piece of media, artwork, product.]

“Euphoria” first premiered in summer of 2019 and was an instant hit. The characters were compelling, the shots were pretty, and it presented a new image of American high school that depicted and appealed to a new generation and their relationships to substances and each other. High school drama as the instantiatino of the American dream a moment of internalizing positioning yourself in relation to the values of the dominant culture

The secret life of the American teenager but its 2020. Youth as dangerous , deviant,

Euphoria Twitter is where watchers of the show go to circulate memes, talk about the shows plot and production, and air grievances about its creator, Sam Levinson. [give a basic gist of what I’m going to be arguing] The show’s avid twitter base is simultaneously separate from and an extension of the show itself. Twitter was an experiential space out of the control of the creators.

Of course, there are people watch “Euphoria” without engaging with it on Twitter, but that’s kind of like taking the PSAT and not looking at the memes about the test afterwards on Reddit. That analogy may be hyper specific to my age and background, but I think American teenagers are a large cohort of the folks who watched Euphoria too. In both cases, the media serves as an inside joke that everybody’s in on. [If you didn’t watch the latest episode, you would avoid checking twitter because it would inevitably contain spoilers]

I want to situate Euphoria twitter in the context of Durkheim’s concept of collective effervescence and Latour’s critique of criticism. I think Latour and Durkheim give us two allegories to understand the times we live in and how we interface with technology and eachother. [bio of Durkheim] [bio of Latour] [quote defining collective effervescence] [explain how collective effervescence can occur on digital platforms] I think Latour’s essay, “Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?” is relevant to this discussion of Euphoria Twitter because of its discussion of thing and object. With the advent of twitter, anyone and everyone can be a critic. Moreover, criticism happens in real time and is collective. The collective effervescence generated by the show’s audience on social platforms is what transformed “Euphoria” from televised object to hypermediated Thing. The creators of the show were aware of this feedback loop tried to use this to their advantage, extracting more digital labor from a Euphoric workforce.

**Sunday Service**

Repetitive, ceremonial, and sacrosanct in American media culture, there is something undeniably ritualistic about the television release format. To a certain extent, whenever we watch television or a movie, we believe in it; the fictional characters we form attachments to and the entirely made-up universe presented to us through a script and a screen. In order to engage meaningfully with television, we suspend our disbelief. In the last decade we’ve seen the ascension of streaming platforms as the dominant mode of consuming movies and shows. Television on streaming platforms used to be released a season at a time, but recently we’ve witnessed a return to the tried-and-true weekly episode. This format elongates disbelief from the short time it would take to binge an entire season to months of anticipation.

Collective effervescence is the idea that when humans gather in groups to perform rituals, a vibe is created––a special energy that transcends any individual and is unique to the presence of everyone. It is *effervescent* in that it fizzles, fickles and fades when the group doesn’t convene. It’s fleeting, but that’s what makes it special. In Durkheim’s own words, “it is through common action that society becomes conscious of and affirms itself; society is above all an active cooperation” (Durkheim). The pandemic altered how we experience collective effervescence.

[another quote from Durkheim about collective effervescence]

Benjamin argues that the technology of reproduction “may leave the artwork's other properties untouched, but they certainly devalue the *here and now* of the artwork” (Benjamin). However, experiencing a work of art inside the arena replicates the here and now in reproducibility itself. It repilicates here and now through the circulation of images and tweets and the instantaneity.

**#Euphoria: A Story Told Through Twitter Analytics**

Euphoria’s success is both found in and due to its popularity online. This season, everyone from Drake to your mutuals from middle school has tweeted about the show. “According to Twitter, there have been 34 million tweets since “Euphoria” returned in January, marking a 51% increase in activity since the first season premiered in 2019” (Bergeson). Celebrities and influencers embracing the show only made it even more popular. There’s over 300k tweets just about Sam Levinson (Shanspeare).

This rapid circulation of content related to the show on Twitter began in the weeks leading up to the premiere of the new season and didn’t even finish afterthe finale. Even when the show was over, the hype wasn’t really over. Today is Thursday, June 2nd and it is 02:36 AM CST and there were 420 tweets within the last hour. Zendaya is trending. Teen Vouge said “Zendaya’s Birthday Message for Tom Holland Is Instant Serotonin” And to be honest, I’m conflicted whether to use the past or present tense when talking about Euphoria twitter. It’s still alive but not nearly as vivacious as it was during the season’s release. Notably, the show got renewed for a third season. [the show was memeified and mummified online.] The season finale drew 6.6 million viewers. This was the most tweeted about show in the past decade in the U.S. This season, the most tweeted about characters were Fez, Rue, and Nate.

The existence of a live forum in which the public can react to and criticize a TV show is something relatively new that fundamentally altersthe media’s topological map. Twitter has been around for a while [argue that twitter is a forum of criticism, a place to criticize and say what you like and don’t like about a piece of media] What does it mean to make a piece of art for a highly online audience? [quote latour] “As Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello say, the new spirit of capitalism has put to good use the artistic critique that was supposed to destroy it” (Latour). [the metamorphosis of objects into things: how euphoria was just a tv show and could have just been a tv show but it transformed into a cultural phenomenon]

Because the latest season was soo chock full of viral moments, memetic vingettes, and eye candy that served no narrative purpose, I think that the makers of the show are aware of the viral nature of their creation and the instantaneous feedback loop between them and Euphoria’s audience; and, have tried leveraging it to their advantage. In the first season, Euphoria’s beautiful cinematography served a narrative purpose. Each episode had a clear focus: it gave the backstory of one of the characters. [insert a tidbit about Sam Levinson’s beef with Barbie Fierra] It should come as no surprise that this beef was itself a large portion of the discourse surrounding “Euphoria.” [it was strange to watch something so live] The show also deals with extremely heavy topics—addiction, sexual assault, death of loved ones—in a way that was once deep cut and intimate but now in the last season the way “Euphoria” has dealt with these themes has been irresponsible. This season, the story, Rue’s story, was not prioritized.

Part of the appeal of memes is their seeming arbitrariness but I suspect they were planted there by the shows creators. After the first season, the creators of Euphoria knew the hold they had on young people so knew they could leverage it how they want.

How did the show try to leverage the collective effervescence it had inspired?

**Thinging Euphoria**

How did “Euphoria” manage to transcend television and become a cultural fixation? Collective effervescence is what Thinged “Euphoria;” it’s the buzz of the community. Why has “Euphoria” stuck?

Why is it such a Thing? [introduce object and thing] In Latour’s essay, he spends a while expanding on Heiddegar’s distinction between object and Thing. “The handmade jug can be a thing, while the industrially made can of Coke remains an object” (Latour).

Collective effervescence and reproduction The sociology of reproduction

And according to Durkheim, moments of collective effervescence are what legitimize and coagulate into a religion. Euphoria’s cult following.

**A Euphoric Laborforce**

When we talk about something online, our ideas don’t exist inside a vacuum, they reverberate off arena walls. Euphoria Twitter was not just a bunch of teens logging on to do a little discourse; it was millions clocking in to perform digital labor that benefitted the “Euphoria” brand, HBO and Twitter itself. Though, if you asked participants if they thought of their digital actions as work, most would hesitate to call their retweets labor since this was something they did for fun. Regardless of how much dopamine was generated in the process, “all products of digital labor (comments, texts, books, images, videos) are being harvested by content platforms and a multitude of different capture agents. Each web page or other piece of content that is being captured ‘in the wild’ is rendered and analyzed” (Joler). Maybe that’s what’s so genius about Euphoria Twitter. Live-tweeting an episode, users feel as though they’re a part of something bigger than themselves. And they are. But during the action, we’re so in the moment, so invested with what’s happening on screen, that we’re blind to the fact that something is actually being extracted from us. How can fun and seemingly benign engagement in socialization be extractive? In the gig economy, the line between leisure and labor is perhaps the thinnest it has ever been.

“Collected content and extracted data become a permanent corporate resource for creating multidimensional, dynamic, complex topologies in which every piece of data becomes an object that is contextually linked to other objects” (Joler).

**Fostering and Manufacturing Hype**

Imagine you are a television distribution company. How amazing would it be your show had an enthusiastic online fanbase? What if they were constantly hyping your show up for free? Moreover, this engagement is genuine. People are actually excited to watch and talk about your show. Moreover, this hype is dynamic, influenced by each ne episode. HBO advertised Euphoria, but they really didn’t have to. Its fanbase was doing that work for them. In order to keep this momentum going, HBO fostered this hype by [examples].

Even when tweets about the show were negative, it still helped Euphoria. No press is bad press.

“To see marginalized characters deal with experiences that can be further affected by their specific marginalization while simultaneously knowing these stories are coming from the solitary perspective of one cis, white, assumingly-hetero male feels strange to talbot––especially when that perspective is primarily speaking on the struggles of sexuality in the lives of young girls” (Shanspeare).

Euphoria is a show that reifies harmful stereotypes about addiction and youth culture.

I think future shows will attempt to replicate Euphoria’s digital presence by manufacturing hype and hoping that it takes in the digital commons. However, a true sensation is organic, and nothing is more embarrassing than a failed corporate hashtag. Actually, that’s not even true. For all the reasons I’ve listed today, Euphoria is truly a masterpiece in and of the age of technological reproductivity. This is important because it gives us a glimse into the dynamics companies and people co-author to compel us to consume and advertise their media. Sam Levinson and the creators of Euphoria did not just make a TV show, they created a cult following; just like HBO doesn’t merely release episodes of the show, they feed rations to their hive mind.

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