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Ironic Feminism: Rhetorical Critique in Satirical News

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IRONIC FEMINISM: RHETORICAL CRITIQUE IN SATIRICAL NEWS

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design

by
Kathy Elrick
December 2016

Accepted by
Dr. David Blakesley, Committee Chair
Dr. Jeff Love
Dr. Brandon Turner
Dr. Victor J. Vitanza
ABSTRACT

*Ironic Feminism: Rhetorical Critique in Satirical News* aims to offer another perspective and style toward feminist theories of public discourse through satire. This study develops a model of ironist feminism to approach limitations of hegemonic language for women and minorities in U.S. public discourse. The model is built upon irony as a mode of perspective, and as a function in language, to ferret out and address political norms in dominant language. In comedy and satire, irony subverts dominant language for a laugh; concepts of irony and its relation to comedy situate the study’s focus on rhetorical contributions in joke telling. How are jokes crafted? Who crafts them? What is the motivation behind crafting them? To expand upon these questions, the study analyzes examples of a select group of popular U.S. feminist satires that wrote and presented news as well as comedy. Examples include the television show *Murphy Brown*, news satirist Molly Ivins, and particularly *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* for its longevity. Each of these examples provides operating principles and ideology toward a satirical approach to news. They have their own styles and relations to national events and public dialogues. They also all “punch up,” or critique those in power. This study focuses on *The Daily Show* also as an example of how to expand feminist discourse with non-feminist discourse. The show evolved over time from misogynist and non-feminist beginnings related to the comedy industry to a place that included feminist discourse and comedienes. The show also advocated catharsis from comedy. Overall, this study advocates dialogue between various orientations to critique hegemonic narratives and mechanisms, offer new styles of critique, and aim at methods of catharsis.
DEDICATION

To those who appreciate irony and are frustrated with the way things are, I
dedicate this work toward continuing to work for progress.

To the memory of Molly Ivins, her principled journalism and amazing side-eyed
wit.

To my family, many who are gone but not lost, for their stories, for their
encouragement, but most importantly, for their sense of humor.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project was a labor of love and laughs and would not have happened without the support of a stellar cast of accomplices. David Blakesley, my dissertation chair, offered enthusiasm and encouragement for this project and was always ready with a quote from Burke. Also, to the members of my committee, Victor Vitanza, Jeff Love, and Brandon Turner, our conversations gave foundation to what you will read here as well as inspired my investment to a serious study of comedy and irony. I want to shout out to my compatriots in RCID, and particularly the honey badgers. I would also like to acknowledge other professors and contacts with the Rhetorics, Communication and Information Design (RCID) program including Steve Katz, Camille Cooper, Tharon Howard, Jeannie Davis and Eduardo Nieves. Their support, friendship and professionalism has greatly influenced the completion of this project and touched my heart.

Because it is important to the greater historical context, I would like to acknowledge the Cubs winning the World Series. I also want to thank Rachel Grotheer and Jessica Lowe for listening to my research anecdotes, their enduring friendship and reminder of Northern Illinois. I want to acknowledge my family, living and deceased, who have been a source of support from the beginning. But mostly, I thank my mom, Maggie Elrick, for her support, tenacity, drive, and audience toward my work. This would not have been finished without her.
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CHAPTER 1

PERSPECTIVE, STYLE AND SOCIAL COMMENTARY:

WHY IRONIST FEMINISM MATTERS

Feminist Laughter and Social Commentary

For feminist studies, laughter is often broached with contradiction. On the one hand, women laughing is a sign of empowerment. In Hélène Cixous “Castration or Decapitation?” Cixous uses the king’s wives example from Sun Tse’s *Art of War* who laugh at being militarily trained. They stop laughing after two of the wives are decapitated (42). Their laughter was a sign of freedom from restraint; irreverent, mocking and misunderstanding on purpose until the situation changes.

On the other hand, in the same piece, Cixous explains another personality associated with laughter: the hysteric. The hysteric is the opposite of unencumbered wives.

The hysteric is a divine spirit that is always at the edge, the turning point, of making. She is one who does not make herself...she does not make herself but she does make the other. It is said that the hysteric ‘makes-believe’ the father, plays the father, ‘makes-believe’ the master….without the hysteric, no master, no analyst, no analysis! (47)

She is made from the oppression of her surroundings, especially the label given to her by the psychoanalyst. The hysteric emotes dark and paradoxical laughter. In a similar vein, Peter Sloterdijk highlights “Weimar laughter” as grave, morbid and soul shaking (529-
This laughter and associated humor share similarities with other modern and postmodern humor such as Irish humor from James Joyce to Martin McDonough. Another parallel comes from Lisa Colletta’s description of certain U.S. television audiences. In her article on postmodern irony, Colletta describes audiences who watch satires like *The Simpsons* as complicit, giving up and giving in to the frameworks that highlight disenfranchisement, cynicism, and general defeatism. “Despite the fact that television frequently mocks itself and its power in our lives, it—at the same time—keeps us entertained by the mockery” (857). Laughter comes from the individual; it is related to the framework of the joke and the sensibility of individuals to their situation.

However, the focus is laughter, not the individual. And the focus is also not solely laughter. These discussions generally lump it together with humor, comedy, and joke making. Rarely do these discussions focus on the construction of the joke, the references that are made, or the person who makes the joke. In *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, Freud explores the process of joke making and wit by separating wit from the comic. While the comic—as concept, series of references and situation—can be enjoyed alone, there is an urge from people to impart wit, as part of a social process (171-172). Freud also explains various tools related to the comic, especially with contrasting ideas and wordplay in puns (16). In this case, Freud turns to the poet, and rhetoric, to talk about constructing jokes and telling jokes.

Freud also speculated on motive beyond the immediate pleasure of telling the joke. In the above examples, the wit is imparted as social commentary. The situations the individuals were in were the immediate frame of reference. However, social commentary,
especially the examples mentioned above, is not straightforward and the references are embedded in a variety of ways. And for Irish humor, Weimar laughter or The Simpsons, irony is involved. Irony is not always comedy or a comeback, but rather deals in incongruities, juxtapositions, absurdities, contradictions and paradoxes. Irony is a tapestry of language in function and application.

The tapestry often focuses on what is perceived as missed, left out, or absent. In the case of a joke, what is left out affects the punchline. Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estes gives an anecdote about a husband and wife telling the story of “Coyote Dick.” The husband, Old Red, tells the main set-up. But Willowdean includes the punchline.

The moral is that those nettles, even once Coyote Dick got out of them, made his cock itch like crazy forever after. And that’s why men are always sliding up to women, and wanting to rub up against them with that ‘I’m so itchy’ look in their eyes. You know, that universal cock has been itching ever since that first time it ever ran away. (342)

Estes recounts the story and the way it was told after discussing the Greek “dirty goddess” Baubo. While jokes Baubo told were particularly carnal or obscene, Baubo told a joke to the goddess Demeter when she was downtrodden looking for her daughter Persephone. Baubo’s joke was unexpected, eliciting Demeter’s laughter, shifting her mood, and breaking the moment’s constraint.

A joke’s timing and its teller’s perspective are important, not only for style and delivery, but also for aim. How is the joke constructed? What is its situation? What are the joke-teller’s, or comic’s, references and ideological motivations? Linda Hutcheon
touches upon irony’s aim in *Irony’s Edge*; “the very long history of irony’s deployment in satire and invective might suggest the possibility, less of a defusing, than of an engaging of precisely that anger. Irony always has an edge” (14-15). Satire directs fire power through comedy, irony, and pointed social commentary that can be both angry and engaging in dialogue. Satire’s use of irony calls upon many perspectives. With those perspectives, irony has references and function of eviscerating a target (Hutcheon 15).

This dissertation approaches comedy, irony, and specifically satire, as a tool for what could be an ironist feminist social commentary and public discourse. The ironist feminist model includes various studies of feminism—the Anglo-American and Francophone traditions as well as Black, Third World and Postcolonial feminisms—to broaden perspectives, open up discourse to different voices and situations, and offer differential consciousness rather than a utopian community. As examples of different perspectives and their use, this study examines style of jokes and delivery of punchlines. Telling a joke is just as important as what the joke is about. This dissertation uses *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* as its central case of popular news satire. The show exemplifies style and growth through dialogue, its contributions to feminist satire, and as an example for ironist feminist discourse.

This chapter situates feminist discourse, irony and their surrounding arguments through examples used throughout the dissertation. This chapter introduces overlapping themes broached in the larger studies. Themes include feminist perspectives, sexed language in U.S. comedy, impacts of irony and its histories, as well as basic tenants of *The Daily Show’s* style. Satire’s rhetorical style is also broached, focusing on how satire
shifts referential frameworks of social commentary. Perspective remains central to irony and how it goads various contexts. For feminisms, perspective represents agonistic plurality, including with those who do not see themselves as feminist for a variety of reasons. Stewart and *The Daily Show* exemplify an evolving ironic viewpoint over many years, including non-feminist and feminist. Discussion with many perspectives offers different, important insights that open up the possibilities for changing patriarchal oppression.

**Feminist Perspectives and Comedy**

Feminisms address social and political concerns from a variety of vantage points. The plural of feminism is important because feminism has often been associated with a hegemonic narrative that only focuses on the male/female binary from a white, middle class view. “White feminism” (Sandoval 45) lacks inclusion of the differences in social categories such as race, class, gender and religion, and the ideal of women’s solidarity from the 2nd wave created sides, splitting the issues of sexism and racism (hooks 1-13). However, because the hegemonic narrative makes the case about various points of patriarchal oppression, other perspectives have fought to expand the binary through tools such as intersectionality (Crenshaw).

Feminisms overall have discussed the politics and violence of variations of patriarchal oppression. Feminisms have also addressed the oppression of language and how the style of discussion plays into the limitations of white feminism and patriarchy. In *Methodology of the Oppressed*, Chela Sandoval explains differential consciousness,
which is one means of using various styles of discussion in different situations with multiple perspectives. Intersectionality highlights the histories behind the different perspectives from which to argue a point. Yet as Audre Lorde argues, the different perspectives need not divide if we come together, but not under a heterogeneous universal, rather as equal in our differences.

Difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency of different strengths, acknowledged and equal, can the power to seek new ways to actively ‘be’ in the world generate, as well as the courage and sustenance to act where there are no charters. (Lorde 99)

Black feminism, Third World feminism, and postcolonial feminisms have and continue to bring up different points of oppressions and styles of deliberation that were lacking in the hegemonic feminism, and necessary to discuss how to move forward.

Comedy offers another means of social commentary as well as a style of approach to topics of oppression in public discourse. By 2016, popularized feminist humor has been trending due to the amount of misogynist legislation, actions, and words spoken by men in power. Yet popular feminist blogs bring up how white feminism is a barrier in comedy. Comedienne Tina Fey has been called out for her writing in *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* (Blay) and the movie *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot* (Petersen). Lena Dunham, creator, writer and star of the satire *Girls*, is pointed out as catering solely to the perspective of white millennial females in New York (Ayres-Deets). Comedienne Amy
Schumer received criticism for her clip “Milk, Milk, Lemonade” as exploiting the stereotype of black women’s bodies as sexual objects (Jusino). Both Dunham and Schumer have made implicitly racist comments, and Dunham has apologized (Hatchett).

Fey and Schumer’s comedy is not simply white feminist, and offers material for intersectional analysis. Both Teresa Jusino and Zeba Blay point out how Fey and Schumer’s comedy helps to identify both the limitations and strengths of white feminism in comedy. Blay mentioned her appreciation and consternation with Fey’s characters and backstories with *Kimmy Schmidt*:

> Tina Fey…has a knack for making spot-on observances about race (like in season 1 of *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, when Titus Andromedon realizes he’s treated better as a werewolf than a black man), but they’re almost always undercut by bizarrely tone-deaf moments that include everything from blackface to Geisha garb to sassy-black-female stereotypes. Add to that a few healthy dashes of transphobia and rape jokes, and you’ve got yourself a certified problematic fave.

Fey’s style of satire is her voice and perspective comprising moments of tone-deafness and the important observations; they are not necessarily contradictory.

They do however highlight ambiguity. Hutcheon talks about Madonna’s “tongue in cheek” style; while not necessarily satire or comedy, Madonna deals in similar social commentary and paradoxes. Madonna highlights a consumerist futility but is ambiguous and hard to decipher as ironic (34). Her lack of clarification is part of what makes her fascinating, as well as part of the larger conversation on female representation. In a
similar vein, Jusino pointed out the difficulty of calling out Schumer for using black
women’s bodies in “Milk, Milk Lemonade.” Instead of looking at Schumer alone,
Schumer potentially parodied other white female artists who often called themselves
feminist while appropriating black women’s bodies as sexual objects in their videos.
“…there are actual, real-life white female musicians appropriating black culture in music
videos, and Schumer’s video disapproves of that in addition to disapproval of women
being reduced to their posteriors.”

Sexed language

White feminism is situated in direct opposition to patriarchy, but implicitly it is
still working through the limitations of white privilege. Part of that privilege is not having
to deal with race issues; this privilege falls in line with the narrative of patriarchal
privilege as well, in the way that the other is objectified and marginalized. Solidarity as
homogeneity can be disquieting and in contradiction to opposition of patriarchal
oppressions. Many feminist scholars have made this point, as well as the importance of
different perspectives, including Luce Irigaray’s point on implicit standards in equality:

Demanding equality, as women, seems to me to be an erroneous
expression of a real issue. Demanding to be equal presupposes a term of
comparison. Equal to what? What do women want to be equal to? Men? A
vaguely rigorous analysis of claims to equality shows that they are
justified at the level of a superficial critique of culture, and utopian as a means to women’s liberation. (32)

In order to realistically work together, the ideals of community need to be rethought from the verbiage that a hegemonic feminism would espouse, such as Audre Lorde pointed out.

Again, that verbiage is sexed. Irigaray also questioned the perspective of language, how people pose their words, the style of their arguments, but also who is using that style for what reason (Irigaray and Carlston 191). One popularized account comes from Rebecca Solnit, who helped coin the phrase “mansplaining.” The terms alludes to the way men condescend to women in order to assert dominance in a situation as well as silence the woman’s authority and gaslight women into doubting their ability. The act is an extension of a violence in language, not necessarily toward women, but wielded by patriarchy. An act like mansplaining is definitely not a new phenomenon, rather one nearly as old as language.

Yet again, like white feminism, analyzing patriarchal messages uncover not only their style and delivery of their argument, but also the means to diffuse them, or at least satirize them. For instance, Christopher Hitchens’s article “Why Women Aren’t Funny” will be addressed in the following chapters. Here the title alone is an example a style of patriarchal condemnation, one that makes an explicit jab to elicit response, one that plays into the claim rather than offering an alternative.

Yet Hitchens offers only one type of patriarchal or non-feminist perspective, being opposed to feminism or women in comedy. There are many patriarchal ways to
include women in comedy as well as non-feminist perspectives that could offer means to improve feminist comedy. For example, Hannah Arendt was not a feminist. But feminist scholars used her critiques to enhance the arguments and broaden the scope of feminist scholarship, especially in philosophy and political theory (Honig). Comedian Jon Stewart, host of *The Daily Show*, was also not a feminist, at least when he started the show. Yet over his tenure with *The Daily Show*, the style of the show’s comedy moved away from moments of misogyny to supporting feminist fights. In light of these points, Stewart and *The Daily Show*, as well as Arendt, offer many examples in the coming chapters. Here they are important to emphasizing the philosophical and popular critiques from ironic perspectives.

**Irony, Satire, and *The Daily Show***

*The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* offers 16 years of an ironic perspective. The show interpreted current events through news satire, but its essayist style and aim of critique was unlike any other at the time. This study focuses on how the mechanics of the show’s ironic approach changed, specifically in relation to topics and perspectives concerning feminism. How were the jokes told? What topics were made fun of, and which ones were dropped? Who told and wrote them?

Lisa Colletta remarked upon its particular satire and situation,

Satire, through its irony, complicates and problematizes the way we see things, and therefore it can challenge viewers in unexpected ways. As a result, the informed satire of Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert can,
arguably, be considered some of the most bracing and engaging commentary on the television landscape. (872)

The focus then is the aim of the satire, to open discussion from different perspectives. In a way it is as much a function from news as it is satire. Yet satire can use the tools of comedy, “such as parody, exaggeration, slapstick, etc. to get its laughs. Humor is satire’s art and its power and what saves it from the banality of mere editorial, but its wit, as Meredith noted, ‘is warlike’ (7)” (860).

However, irony and satire are not always for the different perspectives or outside of oppression. Hutcheon mentions suspicions about where irony lands its eye and critique (10). An audience can be insecure about the use of irony, especially if they do not understand it. A blind spot can be due to the framework of the irony, their limited perspective, the way the irony is delivered, or something else stopping the moment of understanding. Irony and its elusiveness happen to be central to philosopher Martin Heidegger’s style, although Heidegger does use irony comically. His readers are forced to appreciate his application of irony in order to interpret his writings, whether or not they agree with his general ideology or philosophy.

There is a stylistic rigidity to some authors who do not understand satire and irony but argue against them regardless. Their rigidity comes from an absolutist ideological purity. Besides being normative and generally obtuse, the absolutism makes their critique largely irrelevant. In part because their purity creates a paradox, or what Kenneth Burke explained as a paradox of purity (35). Purists are unable to see the double standard they set through absolutist principles, creating ready material for a satirist’s mocking.
Hutcheon gives a great example of this rigidity from “Regulations for Literary Criticism in the 1990s” Regulation VII, “No irony” (7). Literary theorists with a literal mindset looked down on irony, attempting to give a moral warning to anyone who would use it. The example also included former vice president, Dan Quayle. Quayle’s reputation for dimwitted comments offered ready material for many comics, including the news satire *Murphy Brown*, which will be discussed in later chapters.

The counter-reaction is part of satire’s style, the comedic tools are part of the style, and so is the question of pastiche that Fredric Jameson raises. “…without any of parody’s ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed … Pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs” (17). Is the satire aiming at something, or is its parody eristic nonsense? Context can continually be referred to and built upon, but how does the form get past the ambiguity mentioned before with Madonna and Tina Fey?

Transideological Humor is an openness to different interpretations of meaning and value, and, as Freud argued, it is a time-out from the demands of rationality. Satire is an attack on vice that exploits comedic strategies; it partakes of both the pleasures of humor and the moral confidence of social critique, so it is necessarily ambivalent. Therefore, its efficacy as an agent of immediate change cannot be guaranteed, if indeed it ever was, but its
ambivalence might ultimately be its most powerful attribute. (Colletta 872)

Satire is suspect, as Hutcheon also pointed out. Yet satire is a form of social critique; it is a transideological one. As a style and language trope, irony is indifferent to who uses it, how, or for what purpose; this indifference and multifaceted use is generally what Hutcheon means with the term transideological. Yet satire is effective when used by those who wish to make a point and take down a target, often for the good of one or the many.

Satire’s ambivalence may be both antithetical and imperative for a feminist comic. For instance, calling a person a comic rather than a comedian or comedienne is not simply a gimmick, but rather a way to differentiate between gendered and neutral pronouns as a means of changing the format of the language being used. The act is one means of changing the gendered language for transgendered individuals, but it also relates to Irigaray’s point of equality. The act is a means of notating different perspectives in comedy as well as offering a new reference point other than hegemonic language or stereotypes.

Stereotypes have been integral to comedy and have been used in a variety of ways. For example, Margaret Cho uses stereotypes of race, gender and sexuality. Her use focuses on making the audience question their own positions and definitions rather than whether or not she gets a laugh or simply offends. In contrast, Daniel Tosh uses stereotypes for shock, offense, and even instances of complexly implicit intimidation. One female audience member recounted heckling Tosh’s rape joke, but Tosh
aggressively counter-heckled (Bassist). The ambiguity of other accounts surrounding the situation and the credibility of the original account also would usually make the example suspect. But the way in which the female audience member was discredited, and disappeared from her blog, makes the situation important to note.

Cho’s use of stereotypes is a means of questioning the hegemonic context surrounding the stereotypes rather than necessarily reinforcing them. But not reinforcing stereotypes is tricky, and a big hurdle with irony and satire. Hutcheon gives an examples of Randy Newman’s song against short people, “Short People Should Die” (176). The title itself is an odd remark, targeting a group of already disenfranchised people. However, due to the context of the time and focus on absurdity in itself, the aim comes across as for the sake of art. Newman makes fun of the medium and shows his rhetorical skills, whether or not he actually agreed with his premise. The question of “what is the aim” is important to explain content and its use in irony and satire.

Social Ironies: Mansplaining, Elliot Rodgers

The style of mansplaining parallels the tone-deafness in Newman’s targeting, white feminist targeting, as well as the misogynist tone throughout comedy. The topics and style of mansplaining condescension tells women how they should think, slut-shames, inaccurately explains to women how women’s bodies work, and many, many more topics. The topics fall among things mansplainers think they know yet simultaneously show their ignorance and hubris the moment they open their mouths. But the key is in part due to the power dynamic and the assertive, aggressive style of the
misinformation and authoritative tone. Somehow, the other person doubts their own thoughts and merit because they are not heteronormative white men.

Mansplaining can also be used as a counterattack, where men are still the subject of the conversation, even though the topic is about a trauma to another group or person. A particularly heated exchange was the hashtag battle Not All Men. The social media-wide conversation started after the killing of 7 victims near Santa Barbara in May 2014 by Elliot Rodgers. Rodgers targeted a sorority and hated women (Rosenberg). After the event, women started to accumulate similar or related horrendous statistics and happenings under the hashtag Yes All Women. The hashtag immediately garnered the response of the following hashtag, Not All Men. Many people objected to the second hashtag, explaining how the male-focused rebuttal was not taking women into account. A second strain of objections raised questions on the relation between the percentage of mass murders done by white men and their ill regard of women. In response to both hashtags, there was a third hashtag, All Men Can. The third hashtag offered various shows of support for women and taking down misogynist talk and patriarchal violence. The three hashtags highlight first giving women a space to label acts of patriarchal oppression, but also how men have actively contributed to patriarchal oppression as well as offered a counter.

These hashtags were about the style of argument; mansplaining is a style of argument and a part of various approaches to comedy. Again, comedy and satire can also be aimed back at these individuals as well as make fun of the style. The style is precisely what makes The Daily Show an appealing tool for showing these individuals up without
necessarily targeting them personally. For example, *Daily Show* correspondent Samantha Bee took on the argument of abortion with participants of the 2012 RNC. Instead of taking the argument by usual pro-life/pro-choice binary, Bee took the pro-choice style of argument and instead used it to talk about civil liberties, and women’s bodies as included in those civil liberties. The switching of topics was disorienting to participants who reasoned the argument through with Bee to come to a different conclusion from where they started, even if they still would not agree with a conceived ideal of what pro-choice meant (“Abortion Law & the Republican Platform”).

Hutcheon discusses further about the potential of irony to open up language,

> Irony’s intimacy with the dominant discourses it contests—it uses their very language as its said—is its strength, for it allows ironic discourse both to buy time (to be permitted and even listened to, even if not understood) and also to ‘relativize the [dominant’s] authority and stability’ (Terdiman 1985:15), in part by appropriating its power (Chambers 1991: xvi). (Hutcheon 47)

Irony offers another reason to use the discourse of men against men; men listen to men, as Jessica Williams satirized with four other comedians on *The Daily Show*, in “Jon Stewart’s Eye on the Ladies.” While the men mansplained women’s body functions, Williams was only listened to when she put on a fake mustache and talked in a husky voice.
Irony and Tropes on the Ground

*The Daily Show* offers many examples of potshots taken at men, their hubris, and their condescension. But this study focuses on the way in which the show skewers the behavior. For instance, Nikki Glaser offers another example of feminist satire that has on occasion lampooned other comics. Glaser took on the popular web series from comedian Jerry Seinfeld called “Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee” with a spoof she called “Comedians Sitting on Vibrators Getting Coffee.” Although in a public setting, the spoof shared similarities with a *YouTube* series of women reading poetry in front of a camera while orgasming. Glaser and guest attempted the Seinfeld-inspired philosophical meandering through simultaneous intermittent vibrations and their ensuing reactions.

An example of a public feminist snarking is after CNN host Piers Morgan told the celebrity-phenomenon Kardashian sisters to cover up after posting a topless selfie. Morgan definitively tweeted on March 30, 2016 “RIP feminism,” and aligned the image of the shameful selfie alongside an English suffragette (“Feminism Dead”). The satirical website and blog, *The Onion*, shared the news on Facebook via their entertainment news, *Starwipe.com*, which does a satirical take on actual entertainment news. While in feminism, there is a tug between whether or not a woman would like to cover herself. However, as Morgan helps to point out, the point is not whether the woman does or does not, but whether the woman chooses rather than is told by a man. The irony here is that while Morgan was mansplaining, he is defending feminism. However, Morgan chose not only white feminism, but a non-U.S. feminist from the first wave. Women took to his tweet, to also point out the irony.
As Morgan points out as a representative of the news media, even with some knowledge, society is often ill-equipped to discuss gender dynamics. But Morgan’s gaff only breaches the surface of dangerous misunderstandings or aggressive patriarchal politics. Go back to the issue of abortion; for instance, in April 2016, governors from Arizona, Florida and Indiana—all male—signed into law restrictions on abortions and contraceptive rights. GOP presidential candidate Donald Trump proposed the extreme stance on punishing women for illegal abortions, yet he still remained in the running. There has also been a massive reduction of abortion and women’s health care clinics, mostly due to inane building code regulations, such as comedian John Oliver pointed out in his segment on Last Week Tonight, “Abortion Laws.”

Women have not been silent, however, even with continual blowbacks. In fact, many have taken to Twitter, inundating politicians and misogynists with snarky hashtags and retorts. One such campaign that immediately started after Indiana Governor Pence (R) signed a law limiting abortions was “Periods for Pence” (Domonoske). Women tweet, call, and email the Indiana governor-turned-GOP-vice-presidential-candidate with questions about menstrual cycles. The U.S. is not alone in either misogynist politicians or cheeky women; British PM Cameron blamed “traditionally submissive” Muslim women for ISIS. Muslim women in the UK immediately responded with tweets under the hashtag “traditionallysumissive” where they trolled Cameron with upbeat selfies and a list of their accomplishments that would not fall under the stereotype (Rodriguez). These public ironic retorts irony’s potential for subversion and efficacy in public discourse, including through social media.
**Style: The Daily Show with Jon Stewart**

*The Daily Show* touched upon subversion through pointed critique, tools of comedy as well as being timely. Since *The Daily Show* parodied news, the writers focused on satirizing perspectives of current events as well as the news itself. The show offered highly contextual social commentary, where part of the commentary was how the joke was delivered. For example, Jon Stewart parodied Fox News host Glenn Beck’s style of delivery and argument in a 2010 segment, “The Conservative Libertarian.” Stewart stood in front of a chalkboard, flailed his arms in wild gesticulation and wove fictitious connections of conspiracy. The connections were so extreme as to be laughably absurd. However, the segment somewhat closely spoofed the format and delivery of the Glenn Beck program. The segment was well received, even by Beck himself (Barrett; “Jon Stewart Demolishes;” Simpson).

*The Daily Show’s* topics were impactful because they were timely but also fleeting. Between 1999 and 2015, *The Daily Show* crafted long running segments that addressed and skewered heavy issues like two wars, national bank fraud, systemic political corruption, police violence, elections and general hypocrisy in mainstream news media. While the issues are not completely gone, the situations have changed. Stewart remarked on the fleeting nature of their work at the 2012 Emmy’s. “We make topical comedy, which has the shelf life of egg salad. Nobody cares after five days. So to do this for fifteen years, and to have tangible proof that what we made wasn’t just ephemeral, is wonderful” (“Jon Stewart Unedited”).

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*The Daily Show* is tied to the social commentary tradition of comedians George Carlin, Lenny Bruce and Richard Pryor. The social commentary is not only sharp but carries the potential for legal opposition, such as Lenny Bruce struggling against obscenity laws (*Lenny Bruce*). With a similar zeal, *The Daily Show* addresses multiple issues. While the show is founded upon the principle of free speech being a right, the sting of *The Daily Show* is the purpose of satire. As Colletta and Hutcheon point out, the underlying principle of the show is more than just getting a laugh, but rather highlighting absurdities as a means of holding those in power accountable.

The style of *The Daily Show* is primarily wrapped up in its focus as a news parody and interests in social commentary. However, these relate to what Stewart claimed was an element of humanity, closely linked with the show’s capability of catharsis. The show weathered tough topics and tough times, but it generally was an example of public engagement, even if it did not know all the answers. The show did not skimp on fact checking and research, in part because of the format it was parodying, but also to stay true to building the framework for the joke. The flux of the show, its content, context and process allowed for a change of perspective and aim of the satire.

**News Parody**

*The Daily Show* focused on the news as aesthetic and fuel for their content. Few contemporary satires used the news to parody in format besides *Weekend Update* on *Saturday Night Live*. In *Strange Bedfellows: How Late-Night Comedy Turns Democracy into a Joke*, Russell Peterson points out how *Saturday Night Live* did not focus on the
same principles or motives as *The Daily Show*. *SNL* focused on the bombastic potential of absurd examples to hyperbolize upon. Their critique is of human foibles and traits rather than on a political stance, and their segments use format to highlight punchlines rather than construct a narrative for insight.

*The Daily Show* utilizes tools such as snark, sarcasm, euphemisms, understatement, hyperbole, dead-panning, black and blue humor, puns and quick wit. But these tools are accompanied by investigative research and professional-grade video editing to create the narrative. In order to parody the news, Stewart explained that they took on the news’s “logistics and mechanics” ("Jon Stewart: The Interview"). The focus on both the content and the aesthetic are a large part of what differentiates *The Daily Show* from *Weekend Update*. The mechanics go beyond having an anchor desk, a captions box and a green screen. *The Daily Show* propagates constant use and subversion of these props, adding new props, and the historical use of props in the show as an added in-joke. The props themselves are also a common target of the social commentary on the show. *The Daily Show* is literally daily or four times a week. They have more opportunities than the once-a-week *Weekend Update*. The shows are shaped as much by what they critique as the parameters of how they can critique.

Stewart also addressed how crafting the show relates to news media not distinguishing news from satire.

I feel more of a kinship to Jerry Seinfeld than I do to, you know, what you guys do…he’s able to comedically articulate an intangible for people. When they see it, they go, gah, that’s been in my head…I know it’s been
in there, but I’ve never put it together with that kind of rhythm, and four levels—and that’s hilarious that you were able to articulate that…he’s the best at being able to craft those moments of sort of these intangible, esoteric things and put them together into something that really connects with people. We try and do the same thing, but with a more political, social avenue…if you were to look at our process, he’s much more our process than the news is. (“Jon Stewart: The Interview”)

The process is key to *The Daily Show’s* style, but Stewart cites the different histories between news and satire, which are important to note. History of news, especially the shift from broadcast to cable and 24-hour news coverage, is the premise and aim of *The Daily Show*. But *The Daily Show*, as satire, is outside of the news. *The Daily Show* operates with the tools of comedy to mock the objective style of news presentation as a means of critique. As satire, *The Daily Show* is not beholden to the same history, including principles, audience, or business model.

Yet because *The Daily Show* is the parody closest to news-like, many people would get their news from it. In 2015, Pew reported that 12% of audiences reported their main source of news was *The Daily Show* (Gottfried et al.). It did not matter that Stewart time and again refuted producing a news show, or that he was primarily a comedian (“Jon Stewart: The Interview;” “Exclusive;” “Jon Stewart & Stephen Colbert”). However, these accusations are important to a framework surrounding the shift of news. That while Stewart continuously tried to explain what he did was satire, he also speculated that the news was shifting closer to satire (“Jon Stewart: The Interview”). The shift goes beyond
anchors and news personalities practicing snark, such as Rachel Maddow points out as well as exemplifies. The history of broadcast news, as Geoffrey Baym explores in *From Cronkite to Colbert* seems to corroborate Stewart’s speculation, points to a move toward the delivery and motive of comedic, or at least ironic, social commentary over an older model of broadcast news objectivity.

Stewart also pointed out the broader perspective of satire in comparison to the news, framing that what *The Daily Show* did was a climate view, rather than the news focusing on the weather (“Jon Stewart: The Interview”). The implication is that *The Daily Show* looks at thematic shifts of social and political situations over time rather than simply reporting what happened at the moment, or reporting it through a specific ideological filter. On one side, the different perspective is another stylistic difference, but it is also a difference in principles. Stewart explains how *The Daily Show* does not argue from or about partisan labels and does not view the world through the lens of a left-right axis. Stewart views these labels as a form of distraction, hype, a Washington mentality, starting with CNN (“Jon Stewart: The Interview”).

However, these labels become the perfect target of satirical critique. The critique generally offers a way to make a gestalt switch or get the audience to see the absurdity of an absolute argument. An example of how blind people are to the left-right axis is *The Daily Show* field piece that covered the 2012 DNC and RNC conventions “Hope and Change 2.” In the piece, correspondents Jason Jones and Samantha Bee interviewed convention participants, illustrating bigotry and hate language from the left as well as the right. The left turned out to look at least as extreme if not more so with just as many
moral justifications. Part of their tactic was simply to let people speak about the other side and wait to see if the people would catch the irony in what they said (“Hope and Change 2”).

The tactic often works in a variety of their field pieces because people do not see the difference between ideology and style of argument, often conflating motive and perspective with the way an argument is constructed. Similarly, news personalities often do not see the difference between ideology and style, which is another part of why news personalities and audiences insist that *The Daily Show* is like the news. Interviewing Stewart on *Fox News Sunday*, host Chris Wallace focused on Stewart’s consistent aim at FOX News and affiliated GOP politicians, arguing that Stewart was disingenuous. Wallace gave the example of a clip from *The Daily Show* using an ad featuring Sarah Palin, former governor of Alaska. In the ad, the actors would finish each other’s sentences, and Stewart likened it to a herpes medication ad (“Exclusive”). In the interview, Stewart explained how the style of the ad was the joke rather than any speculated implications concerning Palin’s character. The joke was absurdity by juxtaposition, rather than a smear of Palin or the GOP; the Palin ad had the same narrative organization commonly used at the time with ads on STD medication. Stewart has not denied the writers have an ideology. What Stewart has continually pointed out is the differentiating between uses of style in relation to ideological perspective and the motive behind the aim of the arguments.

Stewart’s 2004 *Crossfire* interview highlights his critique on style and motive in argument. *Crossfire* was a roundtable debate show on CNN with pundit hosts and guests
from the Democratic and Republican parties or sides. The style of the back-and-forth was largely a Russian roulette of speculation and ad hominem slights, with certain segments shifting topics at a speed more akin to a gameshow than news. As their first non-partisan guest, literally a third side of the table, Stewart cut through the banter of the show’s format to directly address the hosts and their style. Stewart dropped the guise of comedy from *The Daily Show* to make the plea, “stop hurting America” (Begala et al). Depending on how the audience viewed the show, that particular episode was either painful to watch because of Stewart going against the grain and the hosts’ awkward attempts at humor, or a triumph for the same reasons. The show went off the air soon after. The president of CNN cited Stewart as the death knell that had been long coming (Carter). Stewart’s actions on *Crossfire* related to his point on climate. While he forced an awareness to how the show worked, and how it impacted the left-right bubble that it perpetuated, he attempted to bring what was outside the bubble in. Because CNN’s president and audience were receptive to Stewart’s actions, Stewart just so happened to burst that bubble.

**Humanity, Punching Up, and Situation**

Besides targeting corruption for the sake of exposing social ills, satire also works toward a social catharsis in particularly trying times. *The Daily Show* offers a particular example with the beginning of Stewart’s tenure when 9/11 struck. Stewart was among the many late night comedy hosts working through the trauma and how that impacted comedy and the way it was addressed. Ted Gournelos and Viveca Greene cover the many
different ways in which comedians overall used irony, satire, and dark humor to work through the many impacts of 9/11 in *A Decade of Dark Humor: How Comedy, Irony and Satire Shaped Post-9/11 America*. But that kind of engaged working-through stood *The Daily Show* in good stead over its time for other national traumas. The show’s message on relevant topics, the familiarity of Stewart, and the style of the satire evolved into a kind of mechanism for coping, especially after the formative eight years during the Bush Administration. It became a place of catharsis for both audience and those working at *The Daily Show* alike.

That process that Stewart mentioned earlier consisted of the atmosphere of working at *The Daily Show*. The writers and the crew have what Stewart calls their “morning cup of sadness” (“Catie Lazarus’s;” Rogak 124). The process includes grasping at intangibles, the joy of a moment, the talent of the writers and crew, but also their humanity. “Humanity” is an important part of what Stewart remarked that he would miss in the show (“Catie Lazarus’s”). Humanity can mean a lot of things; but in this case, it is a motive.

In order to utilize snark in the way that came across in *The Daily Show*, there needed to be an awareness of style, situations, and perspectives that is often related to experience, empathy and compassion. These traits do not have to share ideological lenses, but rather allow for different perspectives to be explained in different situations. This flexibility also allows for an easier grasp of how to create the juxtapositions that were a prevalent mark of the show. Hutcheon overall points out how irony, and satire, do not always have to follow a particular view or style; her point is part of why humanity as
a motive is an important distinction for *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* than *The Daily Show*, or any other news satire.

Another part of the humanity aspect is what Stewart would labeled as joy ("Jon Stewart & Stephen Colbert;" "Catie Lazarus’s") Joy was the collective horseplay/creativity of the situation, where in the instance of The Rally, he remarked upon a moment of resounding chaos between performers ranging from the band The Roots to Ozzi Osborne to Egyptian satirist Bassem Youssef, and Stewart said, “I could just see on their faces, just this pure, we all felt like 12 year olds. Just playing in this little trailer…it was purely joy. And that to me was the best, and the hardest thing, to pull off and put together” (“Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert”). Joy was just as communal as sadness, and pathos was integral to the show’s style.

Stewart’s points on humanity also related to what Colletta, Hutcheon and Peterson all discuss the limitations of satire’s efficacy for social change, especially over long periods of time. Stewart himself remarked on the impotence of satire, and that he’s okay with that for *The Daily Show* (“Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert”). That part of the show was not just for laughs, but offered a kind of catharsis to the writers and the audience. While the “morning cup of sadness” is not something that would provoke any widespread shift, it was part of the principle of the show.

However, Stewart also mentioned circumstances when satire grasped exigence in a way that promoted social change. Stewart explained on Egyptian satirist host Bassem Youssef’s program that satire could be effective when government is precarious and
freedom of speech is not guaranteed. Then satire was not only relevant but empowering (“28 Jon Stewart”).

Stewart generally refrained from using the show primarily as a platform, but he was not averse to helping people. Outside of *The Daily Show*, Stewart offered help to veterans to get jobs in television behind the scenes of *The Daily Show* (Phillips). On the show, Stewart did occasionally lobby on behalf of a policy, such as the Zadroga Act from 2010 (“9/11 First Responders”). Not only did he have petitioners on the show, but when the bill was being questioned in 2016, he went on Trevor Noah’s *Daily Show* for a bit to bring light to the bill’s status (“Jon Stewart Returns”). Stewart also showed a clip of going around the halls of Congress with the petitioners. Stewart then went on *The Late Night with Stephen Colbert* in 2016 to play a be-Cheeto-ed Trump impersonator to make a plea on behalf of the bill (“Jon Stewart Takes Over”).

*The Daily Show* also educated the audience on policy, like during the 2007 writer’s strike about labor issues (“Introducing”). While educating the audience on policy was not out of the ordinary, the fact the show ran through the strike gave extra context to the explanation. Or, when Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius was as a guest after the Affordable Health Care Act, aka “Obamacare,” was first launched online (“Kathleen Sebelius.”). Also, Stewart collaborated with Stephen Colbert often besides *The Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear*, such as when the two went on each other’s shows to talk about crafting Super PACs. And Stewart even collaborated with non-comedian, FOX News host Bill O’Reilly, to hold *The Rumble in the Air Conditioned Auditorium* as a mock presidential debate (O’Reilly and Stewart).
Punching up is the key to *The Daily Show* premise. News satirist Molly Ivins explained it as part of with her take on humor and satire; "Satire is traditionally the weapon of the powerless against the powerful. I only aim at the powerful. When satire is aimed at the powerless, it is not only cruel—it's vulgar" (Ivins). One of the most searing examples of punching up from former *Daily Show* correspondent and host of *The Colbert Report* Stephen Colbert was not well received: his speech at the White House Correspondents Dinner in 2006. Both Colletta and Peterson use the example of how then-host of *The Colbert Report*, performed his show’s personae to a tepid audience, largely because they were the target of his critique. It was unclear whether President Bush knew what Colbert was doing by his expression, but Colbert delivered his monologue in full, pulling no punches, like:

> I stand by this man because he stands for things. Not only for things, he stands on things. Things like aircraft carriers and rubble and recently flooded city squares. And that sends a strong message: that no matter what happens to America, she will always rebound—with the most powerfully staged photo ops in the world. (“Clip”)

Colbert’s speech is precisely what Stewart means when he explains free speech as a comedian to the audience of Egyptian satirist Bassem Youssef’s show (28 Jon Stewart). Colbert was not seized, imprisoned, stopped, silenced, or anything to endanger him or his message. His poking fun at such an administration was not interpreted as treason. But it was, and still is, tense. Colbert does not coddle anyone in the room. He is not necessarily mean, but he was scathing and direct, even through wordplay. Colbert here, and Stewart
on *Crossfire*, did not pander to the format of the event or the people there, and both are still incredibly tense and cringe-worthy because of the dynamic of the context, as well as was absolutely thrilling.

The impact of situation upon the context of the satire and whether the satire is done at all is huge. For something like 9/11, the context dominated the news, how it was told, and how comedy did or did not happen in late night. However, in relation, late night’s pastiche offered more than just distraction. During the immediate aftermath of 9/11, comedy shows were offering alternative ways of looking at the situation and figuring out how to go through the trauma, grief and fear. But mostly the situation stripped away part of the previous set of pastiche. There was a gap and shift in the way irony was used from pre-9/11 and post-9/11, if nothing else than for how it was written about. The event captivated audiences for 24-hour news like never before, the cable news provided information, even at high levels of saturation, and it provided context for the political situation that would ensue.

In *The Daily Show’s* Sept. 20, 2001 piece, most focus on the monologue, where he broke character and worked through an emotional response. However, Stewart’s choice of what aired after was just as important. “Republican National Convention – Jennings and Stewart” was a field piece that originally aired Aug. 4, 2000, where Stewart got to see behind the scenes of the 2000 RNC with *ABC News* anchor Peter Jennings. Yet right after Stewart introduced the piece, he praised the 24-hour networks for “exercising judgment and restraint” (“Republican National Convention”) for not showing more graphic images from 9/11.
Right after Stewart signed off in his the final show—which just so happened to be the day before the 10th anniversary of Jennings’s death—former president of ABC remembered Jennings introducing him to Stewart in 2000 in Los Angeles. “In introducing the two of us, Peter told me how much he admired what Jon was doing” (Westin).

Stewart would also have other news anchor legends like Dan Rather, Sam Donaldson, Ted Koppel, and Tom Brokaw give support to *The Daily Show* through interviews or aiding in comedic bits. While Koppel went on the show in 2002 to talk about the structure of news going to the 24-hour model (Koppel), one absurd “Moment of Zen” has Dan Rather using a fire extinguisher on Stewart who runs away in jubilant panic (“Moment of Zen”).

### Misogyny and Ironist Feminism

Another part of the show’s style is also how it worked through a historically misogynist situation in the comedy industry. The show participated more in the beginning through belittling or judging women, taking part in the public bullying of Monica Lewinsky, and only male correspondents lasted more than a year or two. However, there were a lot of outside factors that created those factors as context for the early style of the show’s satire. *The Daily Show* never was full feminist or antifeminist, but there were scripted as well as unscripted moments of Stewart and other comics participating in sexist language, stereotypes and perspectives.

A minor unscripted example was during the 2012 elections. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) discussed women’s capabilities of women in positions of power,
especially getting things done in Congress. Stewart seems to be bracing her exuberance, and quips, “Hey, somebody’s gotta change the lightbulbs” (“Kirsten Gillibrand”). The audience responded with mixed laughter and boos. Stewart retorted back, “Wait a minute. She just shit on men as being able to find consensus and compromise, and I make a joke about, well at least we can change the light bulbs, and you’re like, that’s sexist” (“Kirsten Gillibrand”). Stewart seemed incredulous, emphasizing the last two words by changing his voice.

While rare for Stewart to be booed, the example also highlights what Irigaray points out for language and a primary subtext throughout comedy: patriarchal hegemonic dominance. Stewart is by no means as extreme as comedians like Lenny Bruce, Bill Cosby, Woody Allen or Howard Stern. Also, many women defend Stewart, such as the 2010 retort from “The Women of The Daily Show” (O’Neal). But Stewart and The Daily Show still have more misogynistic examples, which will be discussed in later chapters.

However, Stewart’s lack of focus or use of sexism as a consistent or overall part of the style of The Daily Show is important to note. The show and Stewart were not inherently feminist, but rather they were not complicit in the patriarchal hegemonic narrative. With a focus on social justice, as well as a cast that diversified over time, the show offers an alternative to some of the snags or short comings in white feminism. Instead, the show’s style is another way to focus on the discourse outside of the hegemonic feminism as well as challenging patriarchal hegemony. Because of this focus, the show is a very unique example of a kind of ironist feminism, a feminism based on context, style of discourse, and certain non-feminist perspectives.
Research

‘Even while provoking laughter, irony invokes notions of hierarchy and subordination, judgment and perhaps even moral superiority’ (Chamberlain 1989: 98). More is at stake here, in other words, than may be the case with other discursive strategies, and that ‘more’ has a lot to do with power. This is why the language used to talk about irony—here, as elsewhere—is so often the language of risk: irony is ‘dangerous’ and ‘tricky’ (Lejeune 1989: 64)—for ironist, interpreter, and target alike. (Hutcheon 33)

Irony is based on perspective, one that is not fixed or necessarily in line with hegemonic narratives, even as it uses the narrative for reference. These facets of irony make it one of many potential approaches toward agonistic public discourse through social commentary. However, instead of speculating too far ahead, this study focuses on the nuts and bolts of how that has happened and what it has looked like in the case of The Daily Show with Jon Stewart.

In chapter two, the groundwork of irony is laid. What is it, especially historically; and how has it changed? But what parts of style—how it has been used and for what motivations—impact the topic or the situation in which the irony is used? Irony is associated with Nazism, Romanticism, and Ancient Greece; so literary functions as well as violence, ideology, and political hierarchies are discussed. Socrates is a primary example to illustrate the way Plato used irony for philosophical quandary and political commentary. Discussions of political ideology highlight the impact of different
perspectives, which will be addressed by Chantal Mouffe, Jacques Rancière, J.S. Mill and Arendt. Arendt is also a primary example because of her insightful account of Eichmann’s trial in Jerusalem in 1961. She often not only discussed incongruities and ironies of the trial but consistently labeled the situation a comedy of grotesque and absurd proportions.

Chapter three constructs a model of ironist feminism. The model offers one interpretation of irony relating to feminist perspectives, providing examples within comedy and satire. The chapter address in more detail the variety of perspectives and methods that various feminisms have pointed out for public discourse and social commentary. The concepts are couched with examples from various comedies and satires. News parody is generally the style of the satire. Sadly, the examples are mostly white or white women, but not necessarily only white feminism. Or, white feminism is both appreciated and made fun of in *Murphy Brown*. Molly Ivins is a primarily example due to the decisions and ideological perspective behind her style. In a luncheon for C-SPAN, she offers a third view to the “left-right” axis of U.S. politics, but she goes beyond that by exposing that particular bubble to the importance of style in journalism and satire. *The Daily Show*’s style is also addressed and the end for its use of comic tools. This part highlights the way in which the tools are used and the emphasis of context with the show; of all the topics the show has addressed, pizza is a substantial example of in-jokes and merits its own sub section in the chapter.

However, the style of *The Daily Show* is a large topic, even when specifically focusing on its relation to feminism. To start, chapter four briefly addresses main
situations impacting the culmination of the style of *The Daily Show* under Stewart’s editorial authority. The chapter then progresses to how that style in turn was a particular pedestal for women’s issues and female representation. The focus on style explains the importance of context and timeliness, particularly how the show was a product of late night comedy, stand-up and the news. National events impacted the show due to the location as well as how the news discussed the topics. The chapter goes into the show’s misogynist beginnings and how having regular female correspondents, starting with Samantha Bee, marked a change in the show’s content and approach, but how more women shifted the show even more. Stewart was also part of the change, giving monologues focusing on women’s issues and the absurdity of male-generated legislation. However, Stewart’s impact is of special interest because of his non-feminist start with the show. That while he seems in favor of certain popular feminist endeavors, his style about how to support them is key. These factors are culminated in the example of how the show addressed abortion legislation.

Chapter five is not quite a conclusion. It addresses how comedy, and even specifically news satire, offers more than what this beginning model offers. One of the important factors of using irony is irrationality, how it is prevalent in public discourse in a variety of ways, as Sharon Crowley points out in chapter two. Social media and other technological advances, including in its legislation, impact the way in which the conversation goes, relating back to chapter three. And *The Daily Show* is a particularly important model to point out the coexistence of both thorough fact-checking, style and delivery, as well as *pathos*. Its endurance as well as thriving on national events points out
the way in which the show was not simply vampiric, but part of a larger social processing. Stewart focused on the humanity of the staff as well as the catharsis of the show for the staff, which in turn translated for the audience as well. While he never asked for agreement and often dismissed superfluous popular arguments, Stewart’s style of presentation in the show, in his public arguments, and his interest in civic affairs offered a rich example from which to draw. The chapter does not end so much as points to how *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* impacted the careers and continuation of that style of satire. Samantha Bee’s success, Larry Wilmore’s cancelation and Jessica Williams’s next project yet to be announced is just a small part of what is to come.
CHAPTER 2
IRONIC PERSPECTIVES AND APPROACHES

“Will Rodgers said, you know, how crazy is it when politicians...are a joke and comedians are taken seriously? I’ve existed forever...I’d like to know what I’m doing that’s really different than what you’ve seen previously from satirical comedians that work in the political milieu. What is different about it that makes you so perplexed?”

Jon Stewart to Chris Wallace

“It’s harder to make humor when there’s no framework already in place, when there’s no issue that has galvanized a decent amount of mind space. If you have to spend the first five minutes of a bit going, ‘There’s this thing called “corporate inversions”,’ you can still create something, but the synapses fire much quicker when people are already focused on something.”

Jon Stewart to Catie Lazarus

The previous chapter introduced satire and comedy as means of social commentary. Part of that analysis addressed misogyny in language, including in comedy. This chapter addresses how that is part of the function of context with language, the importance of perspective and motive behind language, and the use of irony as a means of awareness as well as ideological critique. This chapter focuses on components of rhetorical style and context in irony and an ironic perspective. Instead of repeating a complete etymology and history of irony, this chapter highlights main themes from Linda Hutcheon, Kenneth Burke and Joseph Dane relating to perspective, language and context. The chapter also brings back Hutcheon and Lisa Colletta’s points on irony’s influence on public discourse through satire.
The chapter addresses the impact of irony for social discourse in a variety of ways. The chapter explores the examples of Plato’s *Symposium, Euthyphro*, and *Republic* and the satiric and comic Greek character *eiron* as part of irony’s history. Social orientation and perspective will be addressed with an example from Freud and Donna Haraway’s omnipresent and absent subject in “the god-trick.” To explain ironies in a politicized event, Hannah Arendt’s account of *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* offers a representative anecdote. Sharon Crowley explains the complexity of irrationality in liberal public discourse. Orientations of liberal thought are addressed through J.S. Mill, Jacques Rancière, and Chantal Mouffe as well as a focus on hubris and contradiction. The point about comedy is focused on last, through Burke’s explanation of the comic frame and how that relates to satire and social commentary.

**Irony**

Irony reveals complexities of language we often taken for granted such as metaphor, cliché, and juxtaposition. Irony also demonstrates the difficulty of defining a trope that defies a traditional, absolutist definition. Irony also exposes how situated we are within our own time through references and context. Besides the function of irony in language, the history of how irony has been used, and by who, doubles down on the importance of context and how irony uses it.

M.H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham list ten different kinds of irony that are often referenced: verbal, structural, stable, unstable, sarcasm, Socratic, dramatic, tragic, cosmic and Romantic (165-66). Linda Hutcheon pointed out there were over 1445 entries
for irony in the *MLA Bibliography* surrounding the decade around 1995 alone (1).

However, Abrams and Harpham’s definition of verbal irony offers a base orientation:

Verbal irony…is a statement in which the meaning that a speaker implies differs sharply from the meaning that is ostensibly expressed. The ironic statement usually involves the explicit expression of one attitude or evaluation, but with indications in the overall speech-situation that the speaker intends a very different, and often opposite, attitude or evaluation.

(165)

As verbal irony, Abrams and Harpham expand on how irony is used as a language trope, or a function of language, like metaphor. Quintilian and Kenneth Burke (*Grammar* 503) also list irony as a language trope.

As a trope, irony is related to metaphor. Both use juxtaposition to provide new meaning and insight. Kenneth Burke defines metaphor as, “a device for seeing something *in terms* of something else” (*Grammar* 503). The metaphor expands our frame of reference to perceive something new or a new angle on how to interpret a series of references and their relations. Aristotle explains “seeing” the metaphor, or what the metaphor does, in a way that also applies to the function of irony as well. “Urbanities in most cases come through metaphor and from an added surprise; for it becomes clearer [to the listener] that he learned something different from what he believed, and his mind seems to say, ‘How true, and I was wrong’” (III 11.6). Yet instead of necessarily being wrong, the relation was either missed or is a new reference and relation.
Burke explains how irony functions as dialectic and is even a master trope. Burke explains the irony-dialectic through irony’s link to perspective and metaphor:

Irony arises when one tries, by the interaction of terms upon one another, to produce a development which uses all the terms. Hence, from the standpoint of this total form (this “perspective of perspectives”), none of the participating “sub-perspectives” can be treated as either precisely right or precisely wrong. They are all voices, or personalities, or positions, integrally affecting one another. When the dialectic is properly formed, they are the number of characters needed to produce the total development. (Grammar 512)

Burke highlights perspective as part of irony and how perspectives affect each other as a dialectic.

The way Burke describes the interaction of the perspectives also leads to Hutcheon’s description of irony as transideological and, as a scene, it “happens” (12). If irony “is” anything, it is best explained as a “happening:” a timely scene, one comprised of various levels of contexts, how they are understood, and absurdities or incongruities relate to how they are understood. As a trope, irony exposes absurd juxtapositions of language, and the incongruities are based upon a previously implied frame of references.

Irony is layered with a variety of contexts and mines language through the undoings and manipulations of language. Quintilian and Joseph Dane call it dissembling (Dane 1). Irony rebuffs standardized language boundaries placed upon it (de Man 164), definitions especially. For instance, asking ‘what is irony?’ the question itself is ironic;
assumption lies in the way the question is asked. The key is the context of “is” in the question. The “is” is essence, and the “what” before it seeks the stuffs, the material that comprises the being of that essence. As a methodological approach, definition works against the way irony functions in language. By not addressing the method of definition, scholars impose another framework around irony. They become a target of their own prey; their own construction is a loophole that irony points out and mocks, which is part of what makes irony what it is, ironically.

How scholars seek, both methodology and aim, impact their definition. First, by focusing on seeking definition, they dismiss the framework of how they seek it. How is it viewed? How is it categorized? And for what reasons? By focusing on an outcome, scholars essentialize it. Literal or absolutist perspectives impose their perspectives in their methodologies. They either end up with nothing more than their own construction or, at best, back to how irony is a language trope. These constructions and pursuits also highlight not essence but the scholar’s agenda. Attempting to essentialize explains less about irony directly than the politics and power dynamics of language. These scholars seek some thing, or form, to track—a kind of hunting of the snark.

Irony defies and mocks definition because irony has no intrinsic value nor essence. As a language trope, irony is a container. Because there is nothing intrinsic to irony, applying definition to irony implies outside motivation and aim. The act of applying definition points out the agenda behind irony’s application.

Hutcheon points out how irony can be used by any ideology. She emphasizes Hayden White’s explanation from *Metahistory* that irony is transideological (10). Those
who know what irony does, and use it, also impose upon it with their values. Joseph Dane ruminates in *The Critical Mythology of Irony* that, “irony is defined as that on which the critic’s eye falls” (2). The “on which” is the ideological basis that can then use irony as a transideological trope. Paul de Man highlights their approach being counter to how irony works, but does so with ironic aplomb in his “The Concept of Irony.” However, Fredric Jameson explained how particular works of de Man’s irony were misinterpreted, and de Man ended up teaching others how to interpret his approach, or rather the basics of irony’s application (Hutcheon 16).

*Eiron* and Socratic Irony

The negative connotations of irony (deception, disparagement, destabilization), which enter theoretical discourse with the word and its derivation from the Greek *eiron* figure, are never totally absent from these discussions of irony’s normative politics, but their force depends upon the evaluation of whether this conservatism is a good or bad thing. (Hutcheon 28)

Irony has several histories of being used in those negative connotations, or being perceived as negative. Context is key then for further explaining the functions of irony as a trope. The history of the Greek *eiron* offers one way to approach both the political situation of the term’s etymology as well as its relation to comedy tropes and figures.

Quintilian’s list of irony’s function corresponds with Burke’s point about the dialectic; that, like metaphor, irony’s link to scene description makes it great for drama as
well as poetry. Dramatic irony is where audiences know something characters do not (Grammar 512) and is often generically labeled Shakespearean irony. Dramatic irony can be more intertwined in the overall narrative as well as part of characters’ traits, in this instance, the Greek comedic character eiron. The eiron’s key characteristic is being pessimistic with a slow kind of deceit that the audience can see through (Gooch 95; Lane 53). The eiron is different than current concepts of irony, but it plays a part.

When dissecting or applying irony, character traits as tropes offer important insight. For example, take Socratic irony, which Melissa Lane points out, was first coined by Aristotle. Aristotle, Quintilian, and Kierkegaard describe the brand of Socratic irony as quasi-tactic as well as characteristic which can be seen as pedagogy as well as deceit. Lane explores how Eironikos, translated as irony from Plato, could be a combination of these traits (“Evaluation of Eironeia” 50-3). Richard Rorty describes his perspective of ironism as an ironist with particular traits (Contingency 76). Burke’s ironist is a solitary, mostly hermit-like individual who struggles with themselves, society, or most often both (Counter-Statement 102). Hayden White describes irony as world view (38), Peter Sloterdijk explains the kynics along similar traits, or there is also J.S. Mill’s eccentric from On Liberty. As Hutcheon pointed out, why not utilize both figures and trope (10)?

However, when the label of eiron or the ironist is placed by those other than the eiron or ironist, the context should be just as suspect as those who have been labeled. The act of labeling brings attention away from those who cast the label or their motivations. Are those labeled an ironist one in name only? Or, is the ironist a scapegoat or a beacon for someone or something else? Can one chose to be an ironist, and if so, what would that
choice entail? Again, as de Man rebukes, those who attempt to uncover an essence do so through imposing examples and their own arguments and theoretical structures upon something else.

Melissa Lane provides a background for how the word irony itself changes over time. Contextually, *eironeia* (irony/ironic) is distinct from *eironikos*, which was used in Plato’s description of Socrates. These are also distinct from Aristotle’s explanation of Socratic irony, which comes later. Plato and Aristotle’s uses differ because of how they were used. Due to the context of the separate uses, Lane concludes that Aristotle “made *eironeia* mean ‘irony’ for his own rhetorical purposes rather than in consonance with any prior ascriptions of it to Socrates” (“Evaluation of *Eironeia*” 51). Or, that since there is a lack of interpretation by Plato about his own style, Aristotle’s clarifying reduction of Plato’s style superseded Plato’s application. Aristotle abstracts and summarizes the context of Plato’s move, the overall narrative, the character of Socrates, and some sort of distilled essence (“Evaluation of *Eironeia*”).

But Aristotle coins irony for his own purposes. While Aristotle’s action is not inherently dubious, nor is it out of the ordinary, it is a strategy. *Eironikos* is still something separate, yet the etymology offers context. Aristotle’s definition of Socratic irony is indirectly built around *eironikos* and *eiron* to help explain the move Plato makes with his style. It is important to note the differences, due to the point about the way irony, as trope or individual, is defined—and by who.
Plato’s dialogues overall are great examples from which to mine irony. The example of *Symposium* offers a great look into the application of irony in the character traits, the pedagogy of the overall piece, and the overall style as a type of irony. In *Symposium*, Socrates is late to the symposium, speaks next to last, and what he says is not timely. He barely addresses the topic of love and instead gives a radical proposition of an unattainable ideal. In turn, Alcibiades warns the group of Socrates lures. Alcibiades sounds like a heartbroken and rejected lover as he addresses the topic of love and labels Socrates *eironikos* (Lane; Jowett).

Outside of the immediate context, the situation is layered with irony is in how the players act the situation out. First is the context of Alcibiades: historically, he was a leader seemingly as out of reach as Socrates’s ideal. Yet in *Symposium*, Alcibiades becomes an almost Sophoclean prophet as well as tragic hero. Juxtaposed to the real Alcibiades, the context is absurd. However, the reader needs to know Alcibiades context, otherwise his actions would not be perceived as ludicrous, bizarre, or even humorous. Context provides motives of the characters and a set-up for the audience.

The audience is already set-up with the framework of the *eiron*, as Greek stock comedy character. The *eiron* is identified as deceiver. The audience understands the author’s direction through examples of deceit, lying, and feigning, often pointed out by those not doing them. Lane differentiates between feigning concealment to hide something and feigning concealment without hiding anything (“Evaluation of Eironeia” 52). For instance, Socrates is typified as the “holder” of the wisdom. One could ascertain
that Socrates wants to see where others go with the dialogue if you, as audience, believe
that as his motivation. Rather than actually holding a piece of knowledge, or end goal, the
way Socrates discusses a topic dangles the absence of that knowledge in front of the other
participants. Socrates teases. But, if you are not convinced Socrates would do that, or
think that Socrates is not hiding anything, the focus goes to dissecting Socrates’s
approach.

If you do not grasp Socrates approach, or what he was trying to explain, what
would you do? Would you blame yourself for not getting it, or would you suspect the
arguer of being false? Or, would you automatically question the motives or lens of the
arguer, not merely as false, but deceptive and even for their own gain? Plato marks
Thrasymachus as pointing at Socrates for engaging in irony as an act of disdain (Republic
13, 15n). This disdain is a label from the perspective of another participant. Socrates is
portrayed by that point rather than acting disdainful, painted by suspected motive. The
motive may or may not be true, but the suspicion originates from someone not Socrates.
Plato plays participants like Thrasymachus as kinds of alazons, or other Greek stock
comic characters. Alazons seem pompous yet heroic, often pursuing their own ideals.
Thrasymachus cues the audience as well as Socrates does through his questions; the
audience is lead to assume Socrates to be toying with them.

What Socrates is supposed to know becomes the focus rather than how he draws
his conclusions. Plato’s use of characters draws attention to their traits and motivations,
as well as how these play against Socrates. For example, political strategists such as
Alcibiades can be assumed to treasure craftiness that can easily outwit other participants.
The other characters both offer contrast as well as highlight Socrates’ moves. *Euthyphro* also offers a good example of context in the framework of the situation. Socrates poses his pursuit to Euthyphro as defining piety. Socrates then proceeds to give situations as examples that would alter a base or stable definition for piety and disrupts a single linear narrative from effectively forming.

SOCRATES. …I’m afraid, Euthyphro, that when you were asked what piety is, you did not wish to make its nature clear to me, but you told me an affect of quality of it, that the pious has the quality of being loved by all the gods, but you have not yet told me what the pious is. Now, if you will, do not hide things from me but tell me again from the beginning what piety is, whether being loved by the gods of having some other quality – we shall not quarrel about that – but be keen to tell me what the pious and the impious are.

EUTHYRPHO. But Socrates, I have no way of telling you what I have in mind, for whatever proposition we put forward goes around and refuses to stay put where we establish it. (*Euthyphro* 11a-b)

The audience already assumes Socrates may very well know more than we can see. Socrates’s tactic aligns with Alcibiades’s warning from *Symposium*. Instead of seeing irony in what Socrates is doing, the paradoxical failure comes from Euthyphro.

In this example, irony is a continual thread of relations, or dialectic, of language and context. Dialectic takes the act of definition to task. Or, as Nietzsche mentions in *Twilight of the Idols*,

47
As a dialectician you have a merciless tool in your hand; you can play the tyrant with it; you reveal by conquering. The dialectician leaves it to his opponent to prove he is not an idiot; he infuriates him and makes him helpless at the same time. The dialectician disempowers his opponent’s intellect (13).

Arguably, the opponent in *Euthyphro* is not Euthyphro, but rationalism or permanence. The dialectic of irony addresses the absurdity of both.

**Perspective, Reference and Timing**

In order to see Socrates’s irony, you need to see the layers and context behind what Socrates is doing with his questions and dialectic. You also need to have a basic understanding of the framework that Socrates is working in, in order to see how he disrupts it, or switches the orientation of perspective. Go back to Aristotle and Burke’s points about metaphor, where terms are used to describe something different in a new light. The reorientation is generally a gestalt switch, which Wittgenstein explains the mechanics of in *Philosophical Investigations*. The gestalt is our framework of understanding, and the framework consists of how we interpret relations between references. Wittgenstein gives an example of Jastrow’s duck-rabbit drawing (166), where you generally either see the duck or the rabbit, depending on your framework of reference.

The description of what is got immediately, i.e. of the visual experience, by means of an interpretation—is an indirect description. “I see the figure
as a box” means: I have a particular visual experience which I have found that I always have when I interpret the figure as a box or when I look at a box. But if it meant this I ought to know it. (165-66)

Wittgenstein identifies how we construct our understanding through perceived references and their relations to other references. Our framework of knowledge is through a constant change and update of orientation to various references. The gestalt switch is that change of orientation, or the added references, to that framework.

Wittgenstein explains the method of construction as well as the improbability of simultaneously seeing duck and rabbit in Jastrow’s drawing. Part of the psychological conundrum is due to the way we tag our references. However, the inability of seeing duck and rabbit also refers to our difficulties with perceived contradictions. The perceived contradictions goes back to the way we refer to the duck-rabbit drawing. We say we see a rabbit rather than a picture of a rabbit. In this context, when we say we see a rabbit, the picture is inferred but left out.

**Kairos** is integral to context. Our referential frameworks are influenced by the situation of time and place we live in, and **kairos** seizes a moment. John Poulakos mentions **kairos** as “the opportune moment” (36). Patricia Bizzell and Bruch Herzberg add that **kairos** is “the idea that the elements of a situation, its cultural and political contexts, rather than transcendent unchanging laws, will produce both the best solutions to problems and the best verbal means of presenting them persuasively” (24).

Jane Donawerth mentions **kairos** as important for women during the Renaissance. Donawerth explains how women used **kairos** in private conversations just as influentially
as men in public and politics. That their wit was topical, relational or contextual, contingent upon the opportune time to speak.

Appropriate topics of conversation at times include what colors of cloth best suit one’s complexion and how well one’s children are doing, as well as gallantry and science. Although one might argue that shifting the field of rhetoric from public discourse to private conversation is giving up power for women, de Scudéry’s aim is not conservative: she appropriates rhetoric for women as a means of political power—the right to speak and, so, to influence others. (187-188)

Generally, Donawerth’s point does not stop at the Renaissance. The context of women’s speech in Western culture has been traditionally designated by societal norms, especially higher status. For instance, in Freud’s social circles in Europe, women’s actions were dictated in various social settings yet they could still navigate social circles via rhetoric. Yet when it came to psychoanalysis, they would be taken out of the social context. On the contrary, women were often silenced, or their script was written for them.

The Omnipresent Subject and Freud’s Footnote

In Joel Fineman’s chapter “The Pas de Calais': Freud, the Transference and the Sense of Woman's Humor,” Fineman expanded upon an anecdote of Freud’s relation to women and humor. Fineman’s focuses particularly on how Freud discusses humor and the creation of it. However, Fineman also points out the way in which Freud’s method is obtuse toward the women he studies. Freud’s speculated inferences short change his own
study of transference and countertransference between the (generally) male psychotherapist and the female patient.

Lacan developed his ideas about the transference in the course of a polemical attack on the analytic practice of ego psychology, where the stress on an interpersonal relation between two potentially autonomous egos, along with an accompanying concern for a neat—Lacan thought an inane—symmetry or complementarity between the patient’s transference and the analyst’s countertransference, provokes and secures, according to Lacan, an imaginary identification between patient and analyst that, of necessity, orients the direction of the treatment toward an exercise of power. For Lacan, such a regime of power is the inevitable result of an inability to sustain a praxis, specifically an analytic practice, ‘in an authentic manner’, and it is possible of course, to see evidence of Lacan’s claim—i.e., an instance of a psychoanalytic rush to power that derives its motivation from an inauthentic psychoanalytic practice—in Freud’s treatment of Dora. At any rate, Freud’s manhandling of Dora’s transference has often been criticized on just these grounds. (100-01)

Cixous example of the hysteric parallels Lacan’s sentiment here. The relationship between the psychoanalyst and patient are a power dynamic, but the method of how that dynamic is carried out depends on the ego of the one in power: the psychiatrist. Yet, as Cixous points out, the hysteric is also contributing to this seemingly closed system. Her actions become definitions, such as in the case of Dora.
Fineman expands on Freud’s example of the “skeptical lady,” a footnote in Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Freud recounts studying a woman’s joke about a dream she had as well as how she reacted to his analysis. Fineman explains how Freud interprets and perceives the content of the woman’s joke from that footnote. Fineman points to Freud’s misunderstanding as a psychotherapist’s countertransference on to the object of study (105).

Why Fineman’s account is particularly relevant is because both Freud and Fineman narrow their view to the point of minute obscurity without seeing the irony or pointing it out. Their studies are exercises of one-sided methodology. The subject is distanced from the world and performs what Donna Haraway calls the “god-trick” (“Situated Knowledges” 581). The researcher is above reproach, authoritarian, and omnipresent in the liberal empirical tradition. Freud’s footnote also reduces a larger experience. People and social situations are simplified or left out, and the woman’s joke contains pieces of memory and other components to categorize and label. The woman is an object of examination.

One interesting point about the way Freud labeled the woman was by calling her “skeptical.” Freud calling the woman the “skeptical lady” isn’t merely continuing to say that she is necessarily something of any nature, but rather that Freud is calling her skeptical due to how she reacts to him. Change the point of view to the woman’s perspective. With that, the god-trick can be pointed out, and the picture can be addressed as well as the rabbit. Potentially the woman’s response could be trying to get Freud change his behavior. Considering Freud was not aware of how he would be perceived by
the woman, also part of the god-trick, the woman may have been apprehensive rather than skeptical or shy. The way Freud explains the woman’s response, he was not paying attention to inferences in her words other than those he wanted to see. Or, as Fineman points out, Freud thinks he can explain her behavior as a complex and extensive set of implications from an instant relayed in a footnote (103).

The woman most likely was conscious of Freud’s eagerness, generally attempting to be polite, trained to bite her tongue. Or, better yet, she was witty, which is part of why she was originally included in the footnote. Jane Austen is a ready example of a woman witty concerning social circle etiquette, but her depth went beyond surface associations that could simply be explained. Donawerth’s women from the Renaissance also apply. The women’s motivation would be just as much figuring out their way around men’s condescension, blind or not, as it was to keep them safe or heighten their status.

Buzzfeed’s satirical sketch of “When A Woman Has An Opinion” is a current day situation paralleling a similar subject. A woman goes to see a male general practitioner, he diagnoses her with having an opinion. He explains what that means, symptoms she may exhibit, the consequences of having one, and the ways to get rid of it. She then starts spouting opinions in response to his polite condescension. She frantically tries to squelch them to also be polite. However, she fails and leaves the office. As she leaves, she utters “fuck you,” apologizes, and shuts the door.

Haraway’s point of the “god-trick” explains a frame of reference as well as an act. First, the trick enforces the power dynamic Fineman brings up from Lacan, an act of gastlighting. The term “gaslight” is from the 1944 movie where Ingrid Bergman’s
character is slowly driven mad by her husband played by Charles Boyer. Boyer had murdered Bergman’s aunt, but Bergman did not know this. In fact, she married Boyer to get away from the trauma. However, Boyer still wants the aunt’s hidden jewels, and drives Bergman slowly mad by persuading her she forgets items he hides. But every night as he goes to look for the jewels, he lowers the gaslight, and no one else notices but Bergman. Isolated in that house, and under Boyer’s persistent narrative, Bergman slowly doubts her own mind.

Bergman is as much manipulated as Boyer is the manipulator. In the same light, the act of the god-trick also turns the attention to the object of the study, that of the manipulated, rather than the manipulator. Luce Irigaray turns the focus back on the manipulator in this instance of analysis in “The Language of Man.”

Man, as an animal gifted with the language (langage), as rational animal, has always represented the only possible subject of discourse, the only possible subject. And his language (langue) appears to be the universal itself. The mode(s) of predication, the categories of discourse, the forms of judgment, the dominion of the concept…have never been interrogated as determined by a sexed being. (191)

Irigaray highlights a trait as much as the construct of the language, how the language is spoken or used and by who. The context is seeing the picture frame surrounding Jastrow’s drawing of the duck-rabbit. Argumentation is generally not seen as sexed, language is shared by all in our species. Yet if it is only men who argue, why is this rule not pointed to or questioned as part of the context? By not seeing men as the default
public arguers, men are missed; men are the absent subject. The absent subject again is part god-trick.

TED talks speaker Jackson Katz addresses the absent subject in how syntax is used to gaslight the rape victim. Katz exposes the key to language that victimizes women is through the construct of the absent subject. The sentence focuses solely on the victim as object. The victim is the only one present to judge. In part, the act is then not associated with the subject, the rapist. Katz goes word by word to highlight how syntax gets summarized and shortened and a particular style comes forth; a style that does not make men or their violent actions the focus. Instead, women are placed as a thing to be protected and what a shame if they are not.

In Chaste Rape, Victor Vitanza pulls from the violence of specific instances of rape in Greek myths as well as a specific case study from Kate Millet. “Subjects rape, making for objects and abjects. Subjects legitimize rape in a community through the exchange of rape narratives. The myths of transcendence that communities put forth instruct subjects of their ‘proper’ actions toward others” (32). Vitanza continues to go so far as to label this action as it is coined in law; “These myths, since they are in the realm of transcendence, are canonized. Made into a chaste law, giving communities Chaste Rape” (32-3). Vitanza also points out the assumption that goes into who makes the claim about rape. If the speaker is a woman: she was raped. If a man discusses rape: he is thinking about it, if he has not already raped. Both are more than a double-edged sword about broaching the topic.
Arendt’s Report

Narrative is also important to building context and delving into irony. The previous sections built into discussions of sexed language and perspective, all the while building momentum and even anger. They dealt with different examples following the same subject in short bursts, yet they could be folded together. In contrast, Hannah Arendt’s article-turned-book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* offers an example of analysis that gives a sustained situation mired with a variety of ironies. The continuity adds depth and context to her critique. The context—an historic, horrible, and terribly complex situation—offers rich examples of irony.

Arendt provides an investigative account and ethical quandary surrounding the 1961 trial of former Nazi officer, Adolf Eichmann. Arendt judiciously points out absurdities of the trial, surrounding perspective of the trial, but also an intricate narrative of Eichmann’s past. Arendt’s attention to detail highlights both Eichmann’s faults and mundanities as well as how he was treated as a scapegoat for the holocaust. While overall Arendt describes the scene of the trial as one of tragic irony, one of the suspicious parts of the trial was an overarching ambiguity. There was question of whether Eichmann was necessarily at a particular event within that series of events or not, including doubts from Eichmann himself (7).

For it was history that, as far as the prosecution was concerned, stood in the center of the trial. ‘It is not an individual that is in the dock at this historic trial, and not the Nazi regime alone, but anti-Semitism throughout history.’ This was the tone set by Ben-Gurion and faithfully followed by
Mr. Hausner, who began his opening address (which lasted through three sessions) with the Pharaoh in Egypt and Haman’s decree ‘to destroy, to slay, and to cause them to perish.’ He then proceeded to quote Ezekiel: ‘And when I [the Lord] passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto the: In thy blood, live,’ explaining that these words must be understood as ‘the imperative that has confronted this nation ever since its first appearance on the stage of history.’ It was bad history and cheap rhetoric; worse, it was clearly at cross-purposes with putting Eichmann on trial, suggesting that perhaps he was only an innocent executor of some mysteriously foreordained destiny, or, for that matter, even of anti-Semitism, which perhaps was necessary to blaze the trail of the ‘bloodstained road traveled by this people’ to fulfill destiny. (19)

Arendt’s account of this particular moment gives a taste of the overall situation of the case: hyperbolic statements, unrelated moral language, vague to minor focus on evidence, odd facts of Eichmann’s particular involvement, glossing over of Eichmann’s involvement, and indictments of certain Jewish leaders. The way the narratives were being framed at that moment, the trial was already steeped in hyperbole. However, the main problem was that the hyperbole being used was unwarranted; it did not relate to the evidence.

Arendt’s style of narrative is a constant ebb and flow between telling stories of Eichmann’s past, the series of events that caused his main indictment, and other persons involved. From the very beginning, Arendt calls the trial a grotesque play. “Yet no matter
how consistently the judges shunned the limelight, there they were, seated at the top of the raised platform, facing the audience as from the stage in a play. The audience was supposed to represent the whole world…” (6) She also points out Eichmann’s relatively unexpected benevolence toward Jews, despite his having shipped a large population to death camps.

Throughout the trial, Eichmann tried to clarify, mostly without success, this second point in his plea of ‘not guilty in the sense of the indictment.’ The indictment implied not only that he had acted on purpose, which he did not deny, but out of base motives and in full knowledge of the criminal nature of his deeds. As for the base motives, he was perfectly sure that he was not what he called an innerer Schweinehund, a dirty bastard in the depths of his heart; and as for his conscience, he remembered perfectly well that he would have had a bad conscience only if he had not done what he had been ordered to do—to ship millions of men, women, and children to their death with great zeal and the most meticulous care. This, admittedly, was hard to take. Half a dozen psychiatrists had certified him as ‘normal’—‘More normal, at any rate, than I am after having examined him,’ one of them was said to have exclaimed, while another had found that his whole psychological outlook, his attitude toward his wife and children, mother and father, brothers, sisters, friends, was ‘not only normal but most desireable”—and finally the minister who had paid regular visits to him in prison after the Supreme Court had finished hearing his appeal
reassured everybody by declaring Eichmann to be ‘a man with very positives ideas.’ Behind the comedy of the soul experts lay the hard fact that his was obviously not case of moral let alone legal insanity. (25-6)

The “dirty bastard” part was a stepping stone toward Eichmann’s testimony and background in the event. Eichmann’s interest lay in doing his job, what he was asked to do, and anything else was somewhat arbitrary. Although, he argues that he himself was not necessarily anti-Semitic and even slightly benevolent toward at least some Jews compared to his colleagues. Overall, Eichmann’s mentality shows less a psychosis, but rather the complex series of events that took place to create his outlook and set of ethics.

Because of these kinds of sentiments, Eichmann’s mental state was an interesting point of return in Arendt’s analysis. The information reported by the psychiatrists was somewhat superfluous, except it set the tone of absurdity in the trial; trying to look from the vantage point of the aftermath to explain the situation. The trial was out of context and out of time. The main proverb Arendt brings up that was circulating the trial fits. “Nothing’s as hot when you eat it as when it’s being cooked” (39). Eichmann is the anchor, he is the example of kairos, taken out of context. What is most absurd about his mentality, much less the circumstances, is how Eichmann is deemed “normal” by the psychiatrists, as well as Arendt’s observations. Any normalcy in that situation sticks out like a sore thumb and seem horrifically absurd. Arendt further explains the state of the psychiatrists in a way that emphasizes that the psychiatrists attempting to grapple their orientation, like when Eichmann was deemed “more normal…than I am after having
examined him.” However, it is how Eichmann is the example of the circumstances, rather than Eichmann himself, that places overwhelming influence to the tone of the situation.

There would be a different sense of the situation if they had analyzed Eichmann during the war. During the trial, Eichmann was mentally in another world, a reality crafted by the rhetoric and ideology of the Nazi party. As Arendt pointed out, one way to work through any situation within that constructed reality was lying to one’s self on a regular basis not just as denial, but as survival (52). The ideological soundness—as in impenetrability—resembled descriptions of cult mentality. The denial was part of a reinforced way of living. The way it was internalized, the way it prompted a certain mentality, took away any cut-and-dried, good vs. evil part of the trial.

The situation continued in that convoluted direction throughout Arendt’s account. The trial did not focus on a sense of justice for all involved. There was no culpable account about the involvement of certain parties to the atrocities, including a group of Jewish Zionists and high powered Jewish leaders. The whole thing was a farce, but on a far darker and more contextually disturbing matter. “Now and then, the comedy breaks into the horror itself, and results in the stories, presumably true enough, whose macabre humor easily surpasses that of any Surrealist invention” (50). A different kind of Weimar laughter, or humor, is implied but not forthcoming.

After reading through the account, what becomes largely difficult to understand is the reaction to it, as if Arendt herself is put on trial for the credibility of her witness. Arendt becomes the scapegoat for audience reactions rather than the trial, Eichmann, or even the views of the holocaust. A large audience to Arendt’s work rejected it and would
not accept the premises that Arendt proposed (Benhabib). Yet the majority of Arendt’s account is primarily retelling the evidence of the case in a way that reads like an entrenching non-fiction history. Audiences either did not see, or refused to see, the ironies Arendt had uncovered. This reaction was not simply people misunderstanding her sentence structure or stylistic narrative nuances. But how does one grasp, in an ethical or rational sense, the scores of complex relations and incongruities Arendt laid out concerning an international tragedy on a scale the world had never known before? This response was laden with shock and overwhelmed.

One of the arguments of irony is that it affords distance from its topic. Hutcheon pointed out distancing can be seen as a new perspective, “refusing the tyranny of explicit judgments, especially at a time when such judgments might not be either appropriate or desirable (Kaufer 1981a:33)” (47). While aware of irony and strategically distanced through the careful choice of her words, Arendt was not dispassionate nor disconnected. Her position behind the account includes another layer of context; Arendt was journalist, political theorist, with ties to the war and the holocaust. She survived time in a concentration camp, persecuted for being both Jewish and German. Arendt was acutely aware of the situation and reported as such through committed explanations of deep interconnections concerning the war, using Eichmann’s story and the trial surrounding it.

However, due to Arendt’s description of the trial’s tone, her own context offers an interesting point about her follow through on the events. What she accomplishes with the narrative and tone of her account is detail that most people would not spend the time on. They would look away, or simply would not be able to grasp it. Or many would not wish
to understand the trial because of an overwhelming wish for justice, for vengeance, for reparations, for their loved ones back from the overall situation that the trial represents, or all of the above. The situation is so mired in *pathos* as to be incomprehensible to rationality or a historical frame of reference. Irony’s rhetorical style and motivations provides insights otherwise generally difficult to describe through a specifically liberal, rational public discourse.

**Situations and *Pathos***

These coming subsections focus on how to break down Arendt’s approach. First, the emotional and pathetic components of a larger situation need to be addressed. Examples of how public figures interact with them are one illustration. In the next subsection, Sharon Crowley, Hutcheon and Nietzsche provide explanations of irrational approaches to public discourse. The motivation behind them—the exigence and ideological impulses—are addressed, arguably as the context of such a situation itself. Violence is an irrational approach, and is generally placed outside of discourse; but the arguments leading up to, and including, Arendt’s example point out how language is not purely rational. Language is ideological and built on particular frames of reference, and language is violence. With its “edge,” as Hutcheon mentions, irony follows suit. It also offers a wider breadth of approaches than a liberal or rational one, which Hutcheon, Burke and Cynthia Willet help explain.

Hutcheon, Burke and Willett describe the importance of scene and its relation to irony. Due to a situation like World War II, dramatic or Shakespearean irony is
insufficient to cover the point of perspective of individuals or an overlooking of history. Willet critiques Martha Nussbaum’s approach as too limited in focusing on tragedy, that tragedy is linked to comedy by the inversion of the narrative structure. Willet advocates including historians on the comic frame as well, such as Northrop Frye, Hayden White and Kenneth Burke, but Willet applies the frame to perspectives on global events, as Nussbaum had with tragedy.

Arendt also described the trial in terms of a play;

A trial resembles a play in that both begin and end with the doer, not the victim. A show trial needs even more urgently than an ordinary trial a limited and well-defined outline of what was done and how it was done. In the center of a trial can only be the one who did—in this respect, he is like the hero in the play—and if he suffers, he must suffer for what he has done, not for what he has caused others to suffer. … (Eichmann 10)

Arendt’s insight in tern also aligns with Burke’s dramatism. The insight also reveals the same structure of thought pattern in relation to Socrates and especially Haraway, Katz and Vitanza’s point on the way the subject is seen. Yet Arendt offers an opposite narrative structure. In Arendt’s description, the play blatantly silences the victim, focusing on the act and its perpetrator. The silencing can be seen as reinforcing the violence narrative, it can be seen as the unspoken, irrationality of the moment, but these are components of the pathos of the moment. Yet related are the grotesque actions described, which perversely validates them, but points out the problem of the victim narrative.
Most importantly, Arendt’s entire account demonstrates her variety of approaches, or points of argument, and different orientations to thinking about the event. These orientations offer a different kind of cohesion than a singular narrative. Here what Arendt points out about the trial is how it affords a sort of functionality. For a situation mired in the heavy context of *pathos*, a trial offers a kind of detached mechanism that can work independently, outside the situation’s context. The situation affords little logic, evidence, or grand words of *logos*, yet functionality of a process, or some mechanism, is not inherently value laden. The trial offers a vehicle for that value, in the way irony is described as transideological.

9/11 does not hold the same context as World War II, but the heavy *pathos* corresponds with the audience’s emotional, irrational responses deeply rooted in a stance. After 9/11, the national atmosphere was tense and laden with fear. The fear was mostly manufactured but capitalized on the lingering trauma of 9/11. The reaction from the audience to this atmosphere also includes academics who felt their *ethos* being questioned in a threatening way. The Bush administration and supporters emitted an overwhelming sense of anti-intellectualism that can be inferred from the tone of William Connolly’s personal defense in his introduction of *Pluralism*. In his introduction, Connolly tells the narrative of how his family was intertwined in the community, pluralism, this country; questioning his nationalism was a joke. At the time, the defense was a serious matter, responding not only to the anti-intellectualism, but a terrorist witch hunt. By early 2002, the prison base at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba had already been established, and government-defined terrorist detainees were being shipped in. Most
citizens were unaware of any of the criteria for what qualified someone to be detained, and the threat was easily felt among those who dissented against the Bush administration. The situation echoed other historical events when arbitrary suspicion from those in power lead to witch hunts, such as the 1950’s McCarthy era, the concentration camps from World War II or Japanese internment camps, much less the Salem trials themselves.

One of the main differences between Arendt’s report and Connolly’s response is due to when the situations were “cooked,” as the proverb said. Arendt reported more than a decade after the war. Arendt’s difficulties with those who responded to her account were affected by different influences. Kenneth Burke offers another example closer to Connolly’s, based on timing, as someone writing about sensitive material at the time of growing public sensitivity. When Burke critiqued Mein Kampf after it came out, he stated:

> There are other ways of burning books than on the pyre—and the favorite method of the hasty reviewer is to deprive himself and his readers by inattention . . . If the reviewer but knocks off a few adverse attitudinizings and calls it a day, with a guaranty in advance that his article will have a favorable reception among the decent members of our population, he is contributing more to our gratification than to our enlightenment. (“The Rhetoric” 191)

Burke had definite judgment that did, in part, reflect popular opinion. But he also attempted to extract the literary critique that he deemed necessary due to the exigency of the situation. Whether or not Burke’s point of the critic’s plight was appreciated by the
audience, it demonstrated a response to the larger swell of the audience interest to an event of mass importance.

Defining Applications of Irrationality

Sharon Crowley addresses audiences’ irrational responses by offering rhetoric as a way to breach the liberal, rational focus of public discourse. Wittgenstein commented on rhetoric’s involvement beyond reason as,

Where two principles really do meet which cannot be reconciled with one another, then each man declares the other a fool and a heretic. I said I would ‘combat the other man,—but wouldn’t I give him reasons? Certainly; but how far do they go? At the end of reasons comes persuasion. (On Certainty, 611-12)

Crowley introduces the first chapter of Toward a Civil Discourse, situated in the second Bush administration, with the example of a man shouting at people participating in a peace vigil during the Iraq invasion. “‘Traitor! Why don’t you go to Iraq and suck Saddam’s dick?’” (1) Crowley goes on to discuss other yelling fundamentalists and their frameworks. These particular fundamentalists show visceral anti-intellectualism using words for force rather than toward discourse. Some are call and response at best, which carries another particular rhetorical effect. However, as Crowley then points out, along with various histories of rhetoric (Kennedy) and political science (Marone), the church is vastly connected to rhetoric and its uses. The styles and their effects are not contingent
upon logical dialectic or rationality; they are contingent upon speaker, medium and response.

However, more importantly, they get their framework of context from elites. The information is delivered as a kind of “trickle-down” rhetoric, based on the effect of elites on particular groups (Gramsci; Stimson). Conservative fundamentalist intellectuals come from Fox News or specific independent outlets that included hosts such as Glenn Beck, Alex Jones and Rush Limbaugh. Audiences absorb their argument, often mimicking them in fractured narratives, but highlighting the source of the audiences’ information. But they are not educated by facts, rather a framework of instinct, values, and a highly structured set of beliefs, of which fundamentalists will protect.

Defenders of fundamentalisms do not evaluate the ideals that drive them; were they to do so, they would risk discovering incoherence and other flaws. Rather, they invest their energy in protecting those ideals from assault by unbelievers. In the present political context, then, the term fundamentalist delineates a particular strategy (and tone) that permeates defenses of political and religious belief systems: a desire to preserve one’s own founding beliefs from threat at any cost. (Crowley 14)

Audiences are trained to be skeptical toward persons and arguments they are told to fear or scapegoat. The tactic targets ethos and pathos, which the audience then parrots.

The anger expressed in Crowley’s example, alongside where it generally came from, consists of a framework not well approached by any rational, liberalism-shaped discourse. There need to be more tools in which to both comprehend the fundamentalists,
the way in which conservative media informs, and the way rhetoric is used in those situations as well as to offer a counter.

Rhetorical argumentation, I believe, is superior to the theory of argument inherent in liberalism because rhetoric does not depend solely on appeals to reason and evidence for its persuasive efficacy…it offers a more comprehensive range of appeals, many of which are considered inappropriate in liberal thought. (4)

What Crowley mentions as appeals considered “inappropriate” opens a Pandora’s Box of possibilities. Yet first they highlight the mechanisms and restrictions of liberalism toward behavior and established status quo. Arendt’s point about how the Eichmann trial came off as a play addresses Crowley’s point about a different approach, and Willett echoes these sentiments as well. “The rational autonomous agent favored by philosophical liberalism…does not reflect the ways in which ordinary persons, like literary characters, orient much of their lives through the claims and challenges of others” (7). Addressing the non-liberal needs a non-liberal, or potentially beyond-liberal, approach.

Crowley acknowledges that the “possibilities” are still limited due to the restrictions on discussion or argument. However, they may not be as limited as Crowley would suggest. Part of Crowley’s point on limitation carries an assumption largely indebted to the impact of liberalism. Crowley’s point highlights how rhetoric opens up liberalism. But the focus is on liberalism rather than rhetoric, or what viewing rhetoric as transideological can do beyond the two poles of anti-intellectualism and liberalism.
Crowley offers rhetoric as a mechanism to approach irrationalities. The spectrum of irrationality ranges from the fundamentalist—and those who inform them—to a kind of hyper rationality, or an irrationality beyond rationality. Nietzsche is a prime example of the hyper side of the spectrum, and Crowley does mention him in the lineage of rhetoric and sophists who would help to reassess the limitations of liberal argumentation. Nietzsche’s explanations of Socrates, Socratic irony and irony are part of his constant critique of rationality as an ideology and fixation.

Nietzsche’s critique of rationality throughout his works, but especially Beyond Good and Evil, and Twilight of the Idols, shed light on the assumptions of rationality as a standard without question, or rather, without opposition.

If it is necessary to make a tyrant out of reason, as Socrates did, then there must be no little danger that something else might play the tyrant. At that time people sensed in rationality a deliverance; neither Socrates nor his ‘invalids’ were free to be rational—it was de rigueur, it was their last available means. The fanaticism with which the whole of Greek thought throws itself on rationality betrays a crisis; they were in danger, they had just one choice: either perish or—be absurdly rational…The moralism of Greek philosophers from Plato onwards is pathologically conditioned: likewise their appreciation of dialectics. Reason = virtue = happiness means simply: we must imitate Socrates and establish permanent daylight to combat the dark desires—the daylight of reason. We must be clever,
clear, bright at all costs: any yielding to the instincts, to the unconscious, leads *downwards*. (*Twilight* 14-5)

Nietzsche disorients the liberal standard by putting rationality as a last resort. Instead, Nietzsche highlights Socrates’ arguments as outside of the confinements of the rational, such as the earlier example from *Euthyphro*. Socrates was not necessarily looking to set a definition, otherwise that would be the end of the dialogue. Instead, he was getting at the way in which definition was highly contextual, and could be construed more as a starting point than a stopping point.

Nietzsche’s style also points to how unquestioned rationality colors how we view other non-rational structures. His style also points out how we conflate two disparate things if they are used enough together, much less we are told they are used within a certain context. Or, more directly, that we do not understand the definition that we seem to desire, which Socrates mocked in *Euthyphro*. In liberalism, rationality is assumed as good or a methodology, yet not necessarily both, as ideology. This limitation is similar to how Chantal Mouffe separates democracy as a structure from liberalism’s value system in *The Democratic Paradox*;

[I]t is vital for democratic politics to understand that liberal democracy results from the articulation of two logics which are incompatible in the last instance and that there is no way in which they could be perfectly reconciled. Or, to put it in a Wittgensteinian way, that there is a constitutive tension between their corresponding ‘grammars’, a tension that can never be overcome but only negotiated in different ways. (5)
Willett makes the argument that egalitarian properties and aims of democracy align with comedy and irony as a means of publically leveling out hubris of the U.S. empire (13). Willett uses Richard Rorty’s example of an ironist to make the point, yet does not address the liberal aspect of Rorty’s model. But Willett’s focus was on public discourse rather than particular ideological implications.

*Parmenides*

Before going into ideology and irony just yet, Mouffe’s splitting democracy and liberalism goes back to the theme of transideology, and the importance of intent or motive behind language. And, that the language itself expresses the ideology, like in Irigaray’s point about sexed language, Haraway’s point about the god-trick, or Katz and Vitanza’s points about the absent subject. Syntax has more behind it than it tells on the surface by the way it is constructed as well as how it is used and for what reason.

To begin with the premise of *Parmenides*, take Arendt’s example on common sense. Arendt points out how the framework of common sense exists around those who would otherwise think they are not participating in it. Regardless, they are still subject to the same kinds of referential relations in that framework.

From Parmenides till philosophy’s end, all thinkers were agreed that, in order to deal with such matters, man had to detach his mind from the senses by detaching it both from the world as given by them and from the sensations—or passions—aroused by sense-objects. The philosopher, to the extent that he is a philosopher and not (what of course he also is) ‘a
man like you and me,’ withdraws from the world of appearances, and the region he then moves in has always, since philosophy’s beginning, been described as the world of the few. (Life 12-3)

Arendt addresses the move toward abstraction by detachment, but she also sets the scene for how Parmenides plays on that detachment and its relation to how we use language.

Nietzsche makes a similar point on the historical evolution of language and philosophical thought:

Language is assigned by its emergence to the time of the most rudimentary form of psychology…it believes in the ‘I’, in the I as Being, in the I as substance, and projects the belief in the I-substance onto all things only then does it create the concept ‘thing’…Very much later, in a world a thousand times more enlightened, philosophers were surprised to realized how assured, how subjectively certain they were in handling the categories of reason—which, they concluded, could not come from the empirical world, since the empirical world stands in contradiction to them. (Twilight 18)

Language evolves, as does how we think. The framework of references is key. Since language is not permanent, context offers a sense of orientation and perspective, which is part of what gives us this sense of permanence, as Arendt also describes it in Life of the Mind. This sense provides concepts of reality and concreteness.

Parmenides discusses our pursuit of an ideal or essence that is generally impossible for us to actually know. In the dialogue, Parmenides imparts his wisdom to a
younger Socrates who is obsessed with forming the concept which would later be his forms. However, Parmenides plays with Socrates’s emerging concept in the first two deductions. First: One is. This deduction questions our existence, and things we may never fully understand or grasp, outside of the knowable knowledge as an abstract One. The second: we realize we cannot partake in the abstract where One is. So we need a system that helps to explain what One is not in order to know something more about One (137d-155e). The second deduction focuses on what we do know and how we can contrive systems of knowledge, because we accept we will never have an outcome from the first deduction.

If possible, what purpose would you want as an outcome from the first deduction? Or why would you focus on the separation between the two deductions at all? Plato’s context was Socrates’s drive to find Truth via the forms. Yet the figure Parmenides offers a critique of those forms through a paradox of language. Parmenides brings the object of Socrates’s pursuit back to the confines of language; One is impossible to talk about, even as we continue to talk about it. Yet we talk about how One is impossible to talk about; the deduction demonstrates how language can offer us positive knowledge through the negative. Through trying various hypotheses, we know that we cannot know, and that is something, or at least worth something.

Language builds a structure of understanding as we know it, which Aristotle explains and champions in his analysis of “Substance” in the *Metaphysics*. Heidegger’s critique of *Parmenides* explains an ebb and flow of how language builds, falls away, and generally changes over time. But the function of language itself relates to that motion,
both obfuscating and revealing insights, depending on their use. In *Power/Knowledge*, Foucault addresses a particular obfuscation of oppression, explaining our systems of knowledges as subjugated. “Subjugated knowledges are thus those blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematising theory” (82). Various frames of references have oppressive contexts, even if an act is not seized upon. The way the situation is viewed relates to that act as a sense of social structure. However, Foucault’s point is not a singular time or definition, but follows the ebb and flow, where we are no long aware of what could have been an origin of these knowledges. Nietzsche’s attention in *Twilight* to how philosophy switched from one orientation to another points out that it did not necessarily switch, but the later orientation was related to the evolution of the beginning orientation.

Heidegger addresses the disorientation with his example of the Greek temple (“Origin” 167), where taken out of time and place, the pieces of marble are alien relics. Yet within the time the temple is used, it is a temple, bustling with life, the promise of a god, and meaning put into and taken from that place (170). The temple is a site of context, it is *kairotic*, much like Hutcheon describes later with irony as it “happens” (13). The context offers boundaries and freedoms, dependent on relations of references. Go back to Eichmann, and you have someone who seems disoriented, but it is because the dominant framework of references shifted. His frame of reference is outside of the one that shifts. The disparate perspectives act according to Einstein’s premise of relativity; those within the shift do not understand those outside of the shift, and those outside of the shift doubt themselves because they are not a part of the shift.
Political Perspectives

The shift is not as present at what Arendt mentioned as a sense of permanence. We see consistencies because it fits with our frame of reference, like Burke’s terministic screen (*Language* 47). We update and build upon our frameworks. To a certain degree, we are already building a “final vocabulary,” what Richard Rorty had said an ironist would do (73). The motivation behind our frameworks is what is important. Rorty’s placing liberalism with ironism follows the point of liberalism with democracy. Crowley’s focus on expanding or going beyond liberalism with rhetoric, or Willet’s focus on the timely events related to neoliberalism, neoconservatism and liberalism. Liberalism is the frame of reference. This section briefly looks at the negative knowledge, such as we know of the One, associated with this frame. The focus of the explanation is pointing out absurdities and areas for discussion.

Jacque Rancière, Paulo Freire, J.S. Mill, Chela Sandoval and others scholars address the restrictions of the liberal tradition mentioned earlier by Crowley and Mouffe. Like Parmenides’s One, the verbiage of equality (*Irigaray Reader*) or freedom (Willett) can be explained by a symbolic system based off of negative knowledge. Mill offers an etymology of liberalism and its restriction, and Rancière points out how “wrong” structures our shared principals. Tying in with Kimberle Crenshaw’s concept of intersectionality, and Chela Sandoval’s differential consciousness, Freire goes into the power dynamic of the oppressed.
Privileged Blindness

Mill’s start of *On Liberty* especially points out the parts of liberty that come from what we do not know, or even what we do not want to know. This premise does affect how we see liberty, especially because most of the time, we “see” liberty by not seeing it. Liberty is what is supposed to be in place so that we should not have to worry about it. Yet, ironically, unincluded minority groups are made to see the non-liberty. The claim of liberty becomes absurd to outside groups when it only favors a specific group. The U.S. blindness, or not having to see the non-liberty, is the privilege of power. Because you want everyone else to see what you do, which is impossible. It makes you look like an idiot, if not at least blind. Privileged blindness does not mean lack of compassion or even empathy, but the lack is with the frame of reference.

Liberal democracy is historically imbedded in the assumptions of the U.S. system of democracy. However it is not, nor can it be, equated to the democracy of ancient Athens. One main reason is liberalism; besides being newer, as Mouffe and Crowley point out, the infusion of liberalism to democracy affects its rhetorical style and ideology. As Nietzsche pointed out, the orientation of philosophy also changed. Our relation to the current context affects our perspective on liberalism. Even addressing liberalism in the U.S., we must be specific that it is not the leftist political ideology but rather the larger concept of a value system.

Privileged persons may want to see what they were originally blind to, but they do not have to. Privileged complicity relates to Rancière point on narratives of power dynamic; there is no reason for those in power to have to do that which makes them
aware of the non-liberty narrative in the first place, unless they are put in a position that brings a gestalt switch. And if they are not in that position, they can just reinforce the status quo, that which is “right.” Right in this context is not necessarily ascending to an ideal, but rather punishing what is wrong; Mill’s point of negation in ideology is reinforced. Rancière points out in *Disagreement* how the principle of wrong is enacted as part of the political process, such as in the case of class differences. Somewhat opposite to Mill, Rancière looks at those in power, usually the rich, as those who have the ruling structure to begin with. Rules are made that satisfy the rich, they name the rules of the game and the way things work. Principles and actions are put in place that favor the rich and allow them the decadence of blindness; they do not see their actions as wrong (9).

Feminist scholar Shulamith Firestone pointed out the way in which patriarchy has no reason to be given up for those who are in power:

Though man is increasingly capable of freeing himself from the biological conditions that created his tyranny over women and children, he has little reason to want to give this tyranny up. As Engles said, in the context of economic revolution: ‘It is the law of division of labor that lies at the basis of the division into classes … But this does not prevent the ruling class, once having the upper hand, from consolidating its power at the expense of the working class, from turning its social leadership into an intensified exploitation of the masses. (10-11)

Men have no need to pay women mind unless there is benefit to do so. There may be some sort of ideal about helping or listening to women, or they are cornered by a gestalt
switch and see the absurdities that women face. For example, one such “believe it or not”
moment common in blogs and viral videos are men who originally do not believe their sisters, girlfriends or female friends about sexual harassment received online. These men go undercover themselves with female avatars and immediately get hit on, harassed, and generally threatened, repeatedly. In another example, men see their female relation go out in the city and be catcalled and generally harassed by men pretty much everywhere they go. The Daily Show correspondent Jessica Williams did a satire on the situation of street harassment in a bit called “Jessica’s Feminized Atmosphere.”

Orientation of the oppressed is key in Paulo Freire’s approach in Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Interplay of intersections upon perspective opens up a space to view the absurdities of ideals. The oppressed are the opposing perspective to Rancière of non-hegemons, Irigaray on sexed language, and Sandoval’s point from Third World feminism mentioned last chapter. Society tells women what women are, primarily by their relation to men. Intersectionality points out how the framework is already in place, relating to race, class, gender, and religion. Identity means you are of the time. How do you think outside of the framework?

Embracing identity, for better or worse, plays into the political gambit of identitarianism. Friere battles identitarianism, or identity politics, where people take their assigned label yet invest it with a standard that is somehow their own. Every minority battles the framework and the political choices, and the struggle plays into a conservative, purity-seeking ideal of representation. Who would be woman enough, feminist enough; but what is enough? What is the pinnacle?
But really, why does that matter? Question the framework: the definition is contingent upon a label from the system we are defined against. Identitarianism is an extreme performance related to subjugated knowledges and hegemonic language. Instead of going against, identitarianism plays into the irrationality of privilege. The main issue with women and minorities’ voices and representation are that they are questioned while the white male more consistently is not. Or, as in Vitanza’s example of Brownmiller, women are questioned in a way that men are not. Women are asked if they were raped, men are asked if they would or have raped.

Matthew Stratton in his book *The Politics of Irony in American Modernism* also touches upon a framework of women’s place during the Victorian era. Women were assumed to have a particular role of the sensibilities, or a kind of irrationality that was supposed to be moral. Yet the sensibility was in contrast to men, an extra-standard imposed putting women in a particular place. Women should not be smart, have an opinion, be witty, or expound upon ironies. In Stratton’s example, irony was contextually part of the realm of men, just as much as wit and being funny were also gendered. However, just because the framework is there does not meant people fall in line. Most of the time they cannot because the standards are absurd and hypocritical, much less restricting or generally impossible. Stratton the gives examples from modernist literature, particularly focusing on Southern writer Ellen Glasgow and her proclivities toward irony as well as the generally euphemistic and positive responses to her. Women think outside of the patriarchal status quo, explain the absurdities of it, and arguably better than men have.
Legitimate *Alazons*: Not All Men

The other Greek stock comedy character was the *alazon*, the hubristic buffoon who countered the solemn aloofness of the *eiron*. *Alazons* present absurdity even if they do not see them. Mansplainers are blind to their mansplaining, being stuck in an argumentative vortex that proves the point of their label (Solnit). The case with Not All Men against the premise of Yes All Women is another tactic of absurd, often hyperbolic, defense. These particular men chose an active defense against women that is ideology-bound, irrational, and hypocritical in relation to the topic they are arguing upon.

Attacks from specific men and masculine behavior circles around hubris or conquest but have a subtext of patriarchal violence. Thus the reason why the *alazon*, typically associated with ancient wars and military, offers an appropriate representation. For instance, Christopher Hitchens’s argument about women not being funny is a perfect example of being precisely right. But right in a negative way, or rather an ironic way; he is hubristic, the situation he explains is grotesquely absurd, and his scope is small. Hitchens describes men needing women to laugh. Yet violence is the underpinning point of patriarchy that keeps the women from laughing, or trained to laugh on command. Hitchens points out how, in a certain framework, men need control of the situation. Women’s controlled laughter is one expression patriarchal control. If women laugh unexpectedly, or when they should not—such as in Cixous example of the wives of the king—the power situation is compromised, which is bad. Men lack as men because women are something other than what men define them as. Women should not speak a script not given to them, or they are suspect. The motivation for legitimacy behind the
mechanism of patriarchy creates an absurd, topsy-turvy power of women as the patriarchal scapegoat. Because women need to be controlled, it is okay, or not wrong, to hurt, blame, or enact upon women in order to be a man, much less stay one.

Giorgio Agamben uses a point from Walter Benjamin to highlight the need for control as a kind of crisis of legitimacy for those in power, but the standard for everyone else;

“The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the ‘state of emergency’ in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We just attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight.” Walter Benjamin’s diagnosis, which by now is more than fifty years old, has lost none of its relevance. And that is so not really or not only because power no longer has today any form of legitimization other than emergency, and because power everywhere and continuously refers and appeals to emergency as well as laboring secretly to produce it. (How could we not think that a system that can no longer function at all except on the basis of emergency would not also be interested in preserving such an emergency at any price?) (Agamben 5)

More specifically, men should either stay to fight or run for the hills! Theoretically they are constantly under threat by their subordinates, such as hordes of tall women bounding around mountain-tops like Finn McCool with breasts, or something absurd. The scapegoat masks the plight of patriarchy’s crisis of legitimacy. Extreme misogynists cling to the absurd narrative as deflecting from their panic, or the death drive of hubris (Willet
25). The example of the Elliot Roger’s incident in Santa Barbara is one of many, but the ensuing argument from the Not All Men hashtags offer more insight.

In the Yes All Women hashtag after Elliot Rodgers’ mass shooting in 2014 (Hess), men react to the Yes All Women hashtag with Not All Men. The circle pointed out in the first hashtag is completed; if the man attempts to defend “himself,” he is actually defending the larger concept of masculine identity. He exemplifies the self-fulfilling prophecy as the person in power in that power dynamic. In order to subvert that context of the original hashtag, a “correct” response sprouts up, less defensive and more progressive. All Men Can attempted to address the problem presented by the original hashtag.

Not All Men participates in self-fulfilling prophecy because a) it reorients the argument to the individual male rather than the women speaking out b) the arguments silence the women and state that they do not know anything and c) the arguments do not disprove the original argument, and generally, only make it stronger. Unless you attempt to subvert the premise of absurdity, and instead engage in it, irony’s negation creates an effect similar to trying to put out a flaming paper bag on your porch with your shoe instead of throwing water on it.

Another point of this example is that extremists’ arguments against women are specifically focused not on dialogue, or necessarily even shouting obscenities like Crowley’s example, but rather a particular focus on stating ethos, or credibility. The credibility of women comes up often in comment sections on a swath of social media. Their mention inversely reflects back upon a crisis of credibility or legitimacy on men,
particularly extremists against women. Not All Men, much less Katz’s TED talk, explain a struggle with how to communicate across what is a framework of power dynamic. The different styles as well as perceptions concerning the styles and the context of how they are used are part of seeing the framework.

These different views are impacted from the context of the entirety of the situation, not just gender. Kimberle Crenshaw’s explanation of intersectionality points out the way in which our contexts are situated, our identities are shaped by subjugated knowledges. Patriarchy enforces an identitarian crisis for men; patriarchy is an unstable masculine ideal that is contingent upon its relation to its subordinates. While the crisis is part of patriarchy, the awareness is heightened under the terministic screen of the *alazon*.

**Women Contradiction**

Patriarchy is an overall system of contradictions, yet the system favors men over others. The favoritism creates patriarchal hubris (Willett). The absurdity comes from its privileged blindness that, theoretically, men do not have to pay attention what the law does to the others. Feminism, and specifically intersectionality, point out the absurdity of the situation. One way is through the negative knowledge of patriarchy through feminism, which Julia Kristeva highlighted by her remark that feminism would never be outside of the shadow of patriarchy (71). What Kristeva was mentioning was the framework of the situation, the subjugated knowledge feminism was pointing out, and the effect of references upon varying terministic screens. Yet, like Mills on liberty, Kristeva
is also pointing out the negative knowledge of feminism, especially Anglo and Francophone feminisms.

Irigaray addresses *Parmenides* point of the One as imbedded in the subjugated structure of the language of man. Part of the negative knowledge is bound to a law of non-contradiction that perpetuates opposition through binary. Binaries like yes/no remain the oppositions in terms of which the subject enters into language (*langage*), though not without their bending to language (*langue*), to the *principle of non-contradiction*: yes or no, net yes and no at the same time, at least ostensibly…The substantial consistency of the one of the subject)—capable of surmounting, within itself, its own antagonisms: the rational animal…--is founded on this bipolar dismemberment…its denegation, and the master of the contradictories. (196)

The set-up of the One is suspect; not only is there the question of why would the One be set up that way, but also going back to Nietzsche’s point of distancing from the objects, viewing the One as Plato premises it, there is a shift. The shift is not without intent, which in turn relates to the way the shift is stylistically carried out.

So women’s relation to their role within this set of contradictions looks as nonsensical as Cixous highlights in “Castration or Decapitation?”:

What psychoanalysis points to as defining women is that she lacks lack. She lacks lack? Curious to put it in so contradictory, so extremely paradoxical, a manner: she lacks lack. To say she lacks lack is also, after all, to say she doesn’t miss lack…since she doesn’t miss the lack of lack.
Yes, they say, but the point is ‘she lacks The Lack,’ The Lack, lack of the Phallus. And so, supposedly, she misses the great lack, so that without man she would be indefinite, indefinable, nonsexed, unable to recognize herself: outside the Symbolic. (46)

She is outside the framework, or understanding, of patriarchy. She is not a contradiction unless she is framed in reference to the terministic screen of patriarchy. Yet if women take on this label, such as Cixous’s point about the hysteric, she is the embodiment of those contradictions and their immediate repercussions.

However, generally, those under the framework of patriarchy are blind to the contradictions they are situated in, not unlike the way the duck-rabbit drawing works. Or how the contradictions are related and why their relations are important; perversely, we only grasp a single narrative or opposing narratives and generally the contradictions are those of our own making and perpetuation. For example, The Daily Show correspondent Samantha Bee went to the 2012 RNC to talk to participants about abortion. The context is, abortion discussions in the U.S. have historically been reduced to two main arguments that do not have the same stasis. They are actually not contradictory, they are two separate arguments that use different origins for their arguments. They also use different tactics because of these origins; the pro-life movement focuses on morality, pathos and the child rather than the woman or her rights to her own body. The pro-choice argument focuses on rights and empirical reasoning. Neither use these tactics exclusively, but rather these tactics are the main styles to fit a certain terministic screen.
At the RNC, Bee upends the appropriated styles, focusing on going beyond the pro-life stance and using an argument structure that relates to the conservative terministic screen. Bee chooses the perspective on civil liberties, a topic that generally Republicans are for, and argues that rather than the pro-choice argument. By offering an alternative construction, she disorients the stalemate of the historical arguments and the way they are currently perceived.

These limitations of perspective and argument are trenched in subjugated knowledges, histories like Mill’s point on liberty. Yet go back to Irigaray’s question of “equal to what?” and the question can be reoriented away from patriarchy, and toward unknowns. What else can this potential of equality do that challenges the assumptions of women being simply equal to men? Reorienting the question not only takes it out of the context of patriarchy, but also the burden of patriarchal constructions. If men are the standard of equality, how is this concept not just as unfair to men as Stratton’s example of women being the moral standard?

And, how does this concept of the standard not only continue the absurd hypocrisy of the orientation? In 2016, three main male politicians who were part of the opposition in former president Bill Clinton’s impeachment trial have been exposed, and even indicted, for sexual misconduct. The irony is Clinton was impeached for perjuring his testimony concerning his relation to Monica Lewinsky. These men have been exposed as unfaithful to their wives and even of, in the case of former Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert, charges for his arrest as a sexual offender (Akin). What may sound to some like just deserts for these politicians’ hubris, what it shows is the context of the time
between now and Clinton’s trial as well as the relation of these men to restrictions of
gender binaries and behaviors. Men in higher positions of power should learn from
feminism; the structure of patriarchy contains ridiculous restrictions that create these
kinds of situations that can be terribly tragic, while the hoards see comedy. For them, the
perspective sees the felling of the King.

Violence and Legitimacy

Back to the *alazon*, Willet’s connection between hubris, empire and war is
particularly important. The psychological impact of war on masculinity is intense, and a
large topic of discussion during heightened periods of conflict, such as World War II or
9/11’s aftermath and then again in Iraq and Afghanistan. Audrey Wick addresses the
impact of war on how men see women or women are treated by men in her piece, “The
Feminist Sophistic Enterprise: From Euripides to the Vietnam War.” Women’s statuses
are contingent upon the changes of the overall situation when it comes to war at its
aftermath. For example, in the case of World War II, personal freedoms gained, such as
jobs in the military, shift after the war is over. World War II was an unprecedented
advancement for white women outside of the home, even though non-white women and
other minorities had another history, such as retold through the story of Rosie the Riveter
(Magistad).

The historical situation of 2\textsuperscript{nd} wave feminism in particular is in part a response to
the backlash of men having a backlash to women after the war. In this case, the main
backlash was toward deemphasizing the workforce and emphasizing domesticity. As
Wick points out for Vietnam, the conservative and radical patriarchal backlash at women from men coming home from the war impacted views of women who already “liberated” by the effects of men’s deployment. Deployment was an immediate absence of a larger patriarchal society, and wars generally the disbursement and concentration of populations. The situation shifts for social structures and impacts kinds of systemic violence.

Arendt paraphrases Max Weber’s definition of the state as, “the rule of men over men based on the means of legitimate, that is allegedly legitimate, violence” (“On Violence” 3). Punishment is for wrong. And when violence is in the state’s hands, violence is not wrong. This Hobbesian point covers the definition of the state, an entity that keeps the order through the method of violence. Anyone outside of that order literally risks their lives. But by accepting this definition, using violence is not questioned, much less the wrong that elicits punishment. This system is what liberalism generally turns a blind eye to. However, these points are brought out to define other welders of power and their systems, because power is assumed to be linked to, if not equivalent to violence. Liberal violence is okay for liberals and liberalism.

All political institutions are manifestations and materializations of power; they petrify and decay as soon as the living power of the people ceases to uphold them. This is what Madison meant when he said ‘all governments rest on opinion,’ a word no less true for the various forms of monarchy than for democracies…Even the tyrant, the One who rules against all,
needs helpers in the business of violence, though their number may be rather restricted. (‘On Violence’ 5)

Public opinion and perception plays into the hegemony. Foucault also points out that subjugating knowledges decenters the role of the One, not that there are not hierarchies, but that there is an active role by all. Without that fleeting coming together of persons in a certain way, much less have values they may connect with others, there is no government, society, or contract. The institutions are Greek temples, kairotic.

Again, such is the case with Eichmann. The situation of post war, the situation of losing legitimacy, and speaking in terms of hubris and constant self-denial are part of his existence outside of the Nazi regime. His relation to one system of government makes him wrong in the eyes of others. But not necessarily for the violence, rather he represents a way in which the violence was carried out. The public opinion during and after are based on that context.

**Comic Frame**

An ironic perspective sees the absurdities of a targeted single narrative through the contradictions that the target narrative sets up for itself. For those who do not fit the hegemonic narrative, the absurdities are in plain view. Burke talks about a comic frame in *Attitudes Toward History*, in literary comedy and tragedy, as well as a world view. With so many instrumentalities now on the side of privilege, we hold, a comic frame must detect the lure of such incentives, must make people conscious of their operation, if they are not to be victimized by such
magic. It is because people must respect themselves, that the cult of Kings is always in the offing. (Attitudes 167n-8)

The comic frame offers perspective, it offers an avenue for irrationality both understood and contrived. David Blakesley also points out from Burke how instead of being distanced or blind to the context of the situation, the comic frame is very much invested. They offer an alternative to nihilism in postmodernism (90), and as Burke appreciated about William James, “James’s constant bursting into metaphor was not a mere trick of embellishment for popular consumption. It arose from the fact that he lived very close to an awareness of the emotional overtones associated with his ideas” (Attitudes 11). A comic frame also offers catharsis, either through macabre humor like Weimar laughter, or the cutting edge of irony.

Throughout, this chapter has addressed the non-comedic part of irony, an ironic perspective, and the absurdities that lay within hegemonic narratives. While some examples have been comedic or talk about comedy, including Arendt’s account of the trial, comedy has been left until now. Burke’s comic frame is the traditional termnistic screen for specific applications of irony or seeing ironically. Yet the ironist perspective does not have to be focused on humor for humor in itself. As Lisa Colletta mentioned, satire, “is a critique—but it uses comedic devices such as parody, exaggeration, slapstick, etc. to get its laughs. Humor is satire’s art and its power and what saves it from the banality of mere editorial, but its wit, as Meredith noted, ‘is warlike’ (7)” (Colletta 860). The “warlike” part is its edge, which Hutcheon used as the premise of her analysis of
irony. Irony is a weapon, it is cutting, and it can be scathing, depending upon its target. Satire uses irony as main part of its arsenal of critique.

In light of Burke’s point of the comic frame, this last section covers satire: current explanations of what it is, how it is used and abused, and how irony and an ironic outlook impacts social critique. Not a lot of time is spent going over satire here since it is a focus in chapters three and four. However, the situation of it, the importance of context in the construction, the problems of satire, and the implications of social commentary are addressed.

Satire

Satire is as much a style of joke telling as it is critique, and the two are not mutually exclusive. However, in order to talk about the construction of the jokes, the aim and motivations of those telling the jokes are just as important as the style and narrative. The aim of the humor is rooted in social context, “it always has a deeper meaning and a social signification beyond that of the humor” (Colletta 860). The aim is generally holding up human shortcomings to ridicule through jokes, but particularly, “M.H. Abrams notes that satire ‘differs from the comic in that comedy evokes laughter mainly as an end in itself, while satire ‘derides;’ that is, it uses laughter as a weapon, and against a butt existing outside the work itself’ (166)” (Colletta 859).

Motive plays into the satire’s emphasis of target. In Satire: Spirit and Art, George Test explicates how ritual satire has the potential to substitute destructive violence as a means of trial (Test 69). Test gives the example of Alexander Pope’s use of satire as a
means of touching upon antisocial behavior not covered by the legal system. The fruit of approaching the antisocial behavior depends on what “antisocial behavior” is defined as, and by who. Hutcheon’s point on irony’s use makes it suspect, depending on what behaviors and persons it targets and for what reason.

Burke generally points out how irony can be used in various rhetorical styles to targeting social fears and hegemonic primness (Rhetoric 149). Burke highlights several forms of dramatic irony in Rhetoric of Motives, but he also remarked upon Marx (190) and Thorstein Veblen (127) using satire and irony. Instead of using them in a primarily literary focus, the pieces were social critique. Satire and irony are tools to express the irrational argument that can be used for public trial;

An individual may be unleashing frustration and anger...usually directed against other individuals or groups who have violated or transgressed fundamental social acts or behavior, displayed greed, arrogance, or other shameful antisocial conduct...it provides a break or pause in the ordinary routine of everyday life...there is an increased sense of community. (Test 68-69)

Test uses examples from Horace to exemplify Greek style in literature as well as Greek iamb meter (121), as well as Roman oratory (104). From these and a variety of examples of satire, Test points out several different fundamental comedic tropes. In a chapter named “Verbal Aggression,” Test offers examples of specific tools of satire like lampoon. Lampoon targets an individual with insults and mimicry, yet in particular poetry or some specifically syntactical delivery. For a Saturnalian lampoon, revenge is a
motive, as well as sets the target. Insults are also the basis for other styles and deliveries, such as flyting, invective, diatribe, the curse and roasts (Test 100).

Two commonly used tropes on *The Daily Show* are invective and diatribe. Test defines invective in relation to verbal abuse, but is more “’refined swearing’ (Montagu, *Anatomy*, 97) or ‘inspired vituperation’ (Feinberg, *Intro*, 112)…verbal gyrations and emotional intensity of invective may...arouse ironic amusement by incongruity of spent emotion” (103). Examples of invective are “flytings, pasquins, the Arabic *hija*, the Ashanti *apo*, Eskimo drum mathces, and the black American ‘dozens’”(104). Test also points out how Cicero recommends invective in *De Inventione*.

However, arguably the main style *The Daily Show* generally uses is what Test points to as diatribe, “against a group, an institution, or a kind of behavior. It is often abusive or at least bitter or polemical” (116). Test marks the lineage from a Greek cynic philosopher, Bion of Borysthenes, mentioned by satirists Lucilius and Horace. Bion “presented anecdote, animal imagery, parody, character sketch, and a rich wordplay of pun, paradox, and wit in a mixture of tones ranging from the mocking to the serious, a conglomeration of styles from the lofty to the colloquial” (116). While the term’s use is generally taken to mean a lengthy polemic or rant, but Gilbert Highet’s *Anatomy of Satire* covers monologues and formal verse from Horace, Jonathan Swift’s “A Modest Proposal” and others (116).

A prime example of diatribe is Stewart’s response to FOX News contributor Bernie Goldberg in “Bernie Goldberg Fires Back.” Goldberg had previously claimed that Stewart did not have the “guts” to be a social commentator. Stewart’s sarcastic
introductory remark addressed Goldberg’s own position within FOX News, “not all of us have your guts, Bernie. It takes a tough man to walk in O’Reilly’s lion’s den and criticize liberal elites.” Stewart’s remark highlights the hypocrisy of Goldberg’s ethos. Goldberg is on the same conservative news network with the standards and morals that align instead of contrast with O’Reilly. Goldberg’s own guts, much less his standards of them, are the opposite of what he was saying. However, the context of the joke plays into Stewart’s larger narrative decrying the hypocrisy of Goldberg and FOX News commentators for their offensive-defense tactic, especially against comedy and satire.

The overall piece is based upon two things; one is debunking Goldberg’s claim with a clarifying statement. Stewart pointed out,

To say that comedians have to decide whether they’re comedians or social commentators, uh…comedians do social commentary through comedy. That’s how it worked for thousands of years. I have not moved out of the comedian’s box into the news box. The news box is movin’ toward me. But I assume I’m just doing’ what idiots like me have done for thousands of years.

The second point of the diatribe is to draw out Stewart’s argument as a larger insult. Part of Stewart’s tactic was the use of a traditional black church choir who sang obscenities back at Goldberg while Stewart proselytized about the hypocrisy of FOX News.

However, satire may not necessarily be understood as satire due to preexisting associations of references and ambiguity of how those references are used to target
behaviors, groups, institutions or persons. Colletta points out the example of Stephen Colbert in *The Colbert Report*, and focuses on his style.

The rhetorical strategies of O’Reilly and Colbert are identical: reference to anecdote not facts, appeals to emotion rather than reason, use of “everyman” language and syntax (including a racial slur), and the spinning of a probably racist agenda into something that appears caring and courageous… (Colletta 862)

Alongside the point in the last chapter about why news persons would be confused about what Stewart was doing, audiences generally could be confused by Colbert’s personae. His parody of O’Reilly’s style was part of the critique on O’Reilly’s terministic screen as well as other FOX News commentators. Within the framework, the particular absurdities that Colbert would focus on were not grasped by some of his audience. Conversely, *The Daily Show* was more centered on the essayist narrative style akin to a news piece.

**Curses and Rotten Tomatoes**

However, intent trumps style when it comes to satire’s application. Take the example of the cartoons by a Danish artist depicting the prophet Mohammed. Willet points out Ronald Dworkin being in favor of the cartoon’s publication, due to free speech, in his article, “The Right to Ridicule.” That the cartoons had been used to “inflame passions and incite violence among fanatical Islamic groups.” (Willet 9)

However, Dworkin’s stance “obscures equally significant dangers to democracy, including racism and ethnic prejudice” (Willet 10). Specifically, that the context of
another side to the story keeps privilege blind as well as offers a specific, stereotyped narrative about those who are raising an argument outside of our context.

Without an appreciation of the power dynamic of types of speech such as ridicule together with the symbolic terrain of politics, we are likely to view oppressed groups as made up of easily deceived and impassioned people who haven’t learned as have the rational races the stoic virtues necessary for freedom (Willett 11)

As Hutcheon pointed out about irony’s potential use as a transideological vehicle, irony need not be on the side of the other. Irony and satire can be used to reinforce the status quo, it can be bigoted, it can be obscure and irrelevant. It can also be dangerous, as Burke pointed out with a point of a cult-like mentality.

Though such an ironist may, if he is a man of imagination, also extend the ironic principle in ways that transcend its local motivation...the more richly universal such irony becomes, the more thoroughly may it be in the effect the ‘universalizing of inequality’ (a subtle variant of the original injustice, with those who propound ‘race supremacy’ as a ‘universal doctrine). (Rhetoric 312-313)

Critics who find irony and satire suspect often then obscure the difference between intent and style. Besides making a snowball fallacy that blankets all irony and satire as being malicious, they do not see the specific harm that particularly mean satire can do versus how satire can be beneficial to the audience. E.B. White noted, “humorists fatten on trouble. They have always made trouble pay. They struggle along with a good
will and endure pain cheerfully, knowing how well it will serve theme in the sweet by and by” (102). Stewart himself has agreed with this remark. In 2015, he rubbed his hands with glee when his last election cycle to cover would include GOP candidate and millionaire Donald Trump. However, additionally, Stewart has made appearances after *The Daily Show*, roasting Trump. In his appearance on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, Stewart further illustrated how Trump is more of a topic than a stance he agrees or disagrees with.

Identity has been used as a means of dictating who can and cannot tell certain kinds of jokes. Context is linked to perspective, and generally if the joke is derogatory in its aim, unless you are in the group being picked on, it is taboo. The taboo is the power dynamic and punching down rather than punching up. That instead of drawing upon community, the joke is bigoted. Willett pointed out an instance where a white boy told a joke about Mexicans to comedian Jeff Garlin, and Garlin told the kid to never tell the joke again. The kid defended his joke, saying that comedian Carlos Mencia made that kind of joke all the time. Garlin remarked, “If a white guy does it, it’s not funny” (Willett 10-11). Alternatively, men who would generally be targeted for airplane security screening after 9/11 came up with a comedy tour named the “Axis of Evil Comedy Tour.” They did talk about experiences related to their ethnicity and religion, but had a different approach as well as perspective about the jokes. “We make fun of our own situation and the things we have to go through. We never make fun of the victims. We make fun of the people that say and do things that don’t make sense” (11).
Hecklers are not a comic’s friend. For women and minorities, threats and harassment inside the comedy industry bring out the worst of societal pressures from a diverse, yet anonymous, population. Or, there are even widely-reported violent incidents like the Louisiana theater shooting for Amy Schumer’s movie *Trainwreck* (Siemaszko). While Schumer was not present, her audience became a target. Schumer had no contact with the shooter or did anything to instigate a shooting but produce the movie. She later teamed up with her cousin, Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY), to draft a gun restrictions bill. The Louisianan shooter is more complex, U.S. representation of systemic, violent misogyny.

Ironic Social Commentary

That being said, Hutcheon, Haraway and Willett offer some of the initial benefits of irony as a mode of social commentary, perspective, and approach toward discourse. Irony is a part of discourse in a way that its, semantic and syntactic dimensions cannot be considered separately from the social, historical and cultural aspects of its contexts of deployment and attribution. Issues of authority and power are encoded in that notion of ‘discourse’ today in much the same way that, in earlier times, they were encoded in the word ‘rhetoric’ (Burke 1969b: 50). (Hutcheon 16)

Haraway commented that “irony is about humour and serious play. It is also a rhetorical strategy and a political method” (“Cyborg Manifesto” 149). Much like Irigaray’s irreverence and focus on contradiction, Haraway’s premise offers a point of
opposition to liberalism and patriarchal “god-tricks.” Irony offers an important style of feminist discourse.

Willett highlights ridicule the same way Crowley points toward rhetoric as an alternative to liberalist limitations for a democratic politics, but also that “laughter is contagious, and sometimes disarmingly so…Laughter can capture us from outside and reveal aspects of ourselves even against our own will. And, strangely, this experience can be emancipatory” (Willett 3), and, “the leveling impulse of comedy seems well suited for egalitarian democracies. And this is especially true in an age of empire, for what could more effectively unmask the ignorance and hubris of imperialism than comedy?” (Willett 13)

In her article “‘Joking Isn’t Safe’;: Fanny Fen, Irony, and Signifyin(g),” Elizabethada Wright also gives a background of satire and irony for social discourse. Wright starts off with the account of a popular author, Jedediah Purdy, who had condemned irony as protection from fear, betrayal and humiliation. “Purdy overlooks the importance of irony for those who do not have a privileged background. Irony…can be a marker of people who know that their words cannot be accepted by those in power” (91-92).

Satire can be used for a variety of reasons, by a variety of ideologies. This study focuses on The Daily Show overall as a particularly rich example of punching up as well as ideological blindness. The Daily Show evolves into traditional aspirations of satire over time, but it also shed some of the blinders of privilege; both change the trajectory of the show. The direction is directly related to who was on the show as well as the
situations surrounding the show. The next chapter looks to explore one model of ironist feminism through delving deeper into machinations of ideological principles with rhetorical styles, including by examples with *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart.*
CHAPTER 3

PERSPECTIVES: IRONIST FEMINISM WITH NEWS SATIRE

“There’s no question that I don’t tell the full story….But I don’t not tell the full story based on a purely ideological partisan agenda…. I’m pushing comedy and my ideological agenda informs it, at all times….But it’s about absurdity….That is the agenda that we push. It is anti-corruption, anti-lack of authenticity, anti-contrivance. And if I see that more in one area than I do in another, well then. But I will defend every single thing that we put on that show, and I’m not dodging you in any way by suggesting that our main thrust is comedic.” – Jon Stewart to Chris Wallace

As part of Jon Stewart’s opening remark at The Rumble in the Air Conditioned Auditorium, Stewart declared, “What is wrong with this country is not that we face problems that we have not faced before, we face a deficiency in our problem solving mechanism.” The mechanism Stewart alludes to is not only the state of our democracy, but also an observation on the state of American public discourse. At The Rumble, Stewart focused on the “alternative universe” constructed by right-wing analysts at FOX News. Or as he called it, “Bullshit Mountain.” But Stewart’s critique went further. The Daily Show with Jon Stewart often targeted the 24-hour news. The show’s critique emphasized how this branch of news poorly exemplified thinking about or discussing important current events and their repercussions.

In the meantime, The Daily Show itself also offered an alternative to the 24-hour news as a way to be informed, as well as entertained, through satire. The Daily Show’s approach toward news offered access to information that did not shut down discussion.
Rather the presentation showed awareness, empathy and stylistic tactics of hyperbole, irony and comedic timing. Drawing from these tactics and the motivation of Stewart outlined from his statement at *The Rumble*, this chapter builds a model of ironist feminism by analyzing examples of irony and fake news satires. The examples are not restricted to *The Daily Show*, and include those from satirical news writer Molly Ivins and the feminist news satire *Murphy Brown*.

To illustrate what an ironist feminism would look like, this chapter takes the theoretical basis of perspective, irony and feminism from the last chapter and uses the examples of satire and fake news. The examples illustrate principles of the model such as spotting and explaining absurdities from systems of oppression; spotting and sidestepping claims with oppressive frameworks in discussion; and opening up to others’ perspectives and backgrounds, especially when they highlight oppression. The main sections include establishing an ironist feminist ideological framework; what that looks like in popular representation with examples from *Murphy Brown*, ways to utilize an ironist feminism in satire, the example of Molly Ivins’s satire; and a cursory examination of *The Daily Show*’s application of satire to examine common tactics.

**Ironist Feminism: Building Perspective**

This section addresses the ideological premise of an ironist feminism. To explain this premise, the history of various feminisms needs to be outlined briefly. Pairing feminism with irroism opens up analysis of subjugated knowledges and pursues their foundational arguments. An ironist feminist continually learns and reinterprets how
theories associated with these knowledges, or histories, work, and how the theories apply to larger situations beyond academic abstraction. An ironist feminist pays attention to incongruities of various feminisms as well as how they correspond to her own application. And, instead of rejecting them or attempting to smooth them over, she uses them for further understanding.

While generally this outline is reminiscent of Richard Rorty’s ironist (76), the similarities end there. The premise of ironist feminism comes from the influences of Foucault on subjugated knowledges, Alison Jaggar’s political theory-based taxonomy of feminisms, with Luce Irigaray on defining equality, Naomi Zack’s addition of inclusive feminism, and Chela Sandoval on differential consciousness. Each of these premises point to the importance of context, the importance of orientation, and the importance of being open to new knowledges as a way to circumvent oppression as the status quo. The ideological premise gears toward finding ways of breaking concentrations of oppressive mechanisms, as well as building an agonistic community. The point is to explain other current ideological premises at work in public discourse, as well as how to engage them in a way both knowledgably irreverent and offers something new.

Subjugated Knowledges and the Boys Club

The histories of feminism are that of the struggle, primarily of women, with patriarchy. The histories are both illuminating on the effects of patriarchy, but also the limitations of feminism. Before getting into the particulars of feminism or patriarchy, the point of struggle is an important framework to begin with. Foucault describes subjugation
in *Power/Knowledge* as a series of histories or genealogies of struggle. Each genealogy is a framework based on interpretations of conflicts, power relations, and questions of what is right that predate the current situation. Foucault labels these genealogies subjugated knowledges (81-82).

These knowledges are important because they offer insight into the mechanisms of the current situation. Foucault explicates,

> Let us not, therefore, ask why certain people want to dominate, what they seek, what is their overall strategy. Let us ask, instead, how things work at the level of on-going subjugation, at the level of those continuous and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviors etc. In other words, rather than ask ourselves how the sovereign appears to us in his lofty isolation, we should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts, etc. (97)

In order to understand how our current situation works, we need to take a step back and analyze components of exercised power, the mechanisms at work, and what they imply. Subjugated knowledges explain a series of interwoven frameworks that demonstrate not a hierarchy of power, but rather how individuals are intertwined in mechanisms they help perpetuate. Individuals’ motivations are not taken away, but rather individuals’ use of language in arguments over what is right are not necessarily based on something essential. Rather, individuals’ understanding is a framework of historical narratives.
Foucault uses perceptions of Marxism as an example for analysis: whether Marxism applies as a science or not. Whether it is or it is not is not the real focus. For Foucault, the perspective behind the question is important. Posing the question implicitly categorizes Marxism as a science, or as a non-science. Yet why would posing the question be important?

[I]t is not that they are concerned to deny knowledge or that they esteem the virtues of direct cognition and base their practice upon an immediate experience that escapes encapsulation in knowledge…We are concerned, rather, with the insurrection of knowledges that are opposed primarily not to the contents, methods or concepts of science, but to the effects of the centralizing powers which are linked to the institution and functioning of an organised scientific discourse within a society such as ours…for it is really against the effects of the power of a discourse that is considered to be scientific that the genealogy must wage its struggle. (84)

The label is not the problem, it is the insistence of applying that label, and the framework the insistence takes. The question demonstrates the framework, and those who see the framework can undermine it and bring attention to it. Those who see the framework can press upon implications, how people ask the question, the exigence of the question, and the motivations behind the question. The premise of the question is determined by implicit demands of previous struggle rather than the moment someone asks the question. While the focus is immediate rather than historical for what the words could potentially mean, context skews toward the implicit inference rather than “demonstrating once and
for all that Marxism has a rational structure and that therefore its propositions are the outcome of verifiable procedures” (85).

Kenneth Burke adds to Foucault’s concept by highlighting the terministic screens of the questioner, or audience of the question, their ideological lens. We then look further into what using specific language does, as a symbolic act. “Even if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality” (45). Burke explicates different uses, even proper uses, depending on what the terminology does. Foucault’s concept points out the history of how language is used culminates also into how we use it. Burke distinguishes between how the terms originate and how they develop, and he chose the description of the latter (44). The terministic screen comprises struggles long before its framework is put into use, or how it is put into use. Stewart’s point about seeing the left-right axis of Washington, or the hubris of Washington and Los Angeles reflects the being and development of the framework; the cities themselves are locus of the regionality Foucault describes (96).

In the case of feminism, focus on concepts of feminism, women or patriarchy divert from how these labels are used and by whom. As a specific example of subjugated knowledges, take the label, “boys club.” This was the theme of the Murphy Brown season 1 episode “Soul Man.” The concept is simply keeping women out of a group, such as an example in the episode of an all-boys tree house. The episode’s dilemma is how women are kept out of gentlemen’s clubs. While FYI anchor Jim Dial idealizes the nostalgia of
full service gas stations and milk in bottles, he will not stand for his male colleagues dismissing his co-anchor Murphy Brown.

If you measure right to membership to courage, and integrity, and sheer professionalism, this woman has more right to be here than anybody. I’ve spent more time with her, than with any of you. And I can tell you she’s as good a reporter as you’ll ever find. And a good friend, and she shoots a damn fine game of billiards to boot. And I’ll step outside with anybody that says otherwise. Right here, right now.

Dial’s ideal of the gentleman’s club was at odds with the history of feminist struggle Dial generally sympathized with. Dial would rather avoid how his male colleagues enforced the struggle. Yet their reaction dampened Dial’s nostalgia and highlighted the struggle. Patriarchy exists through behaviors like theirs, through a radical nostalgia, as well as various means of keeping women out of positions of power.

In comedy, women have always been funny. In *We Killed: the Rise of Women in American Comedy* 300 pages devote to little more than listing a short history of U.S. comedienne, and the list is still largely incomplete. Conversely, the situation of television, movies or areas where men outnumber women, or generally have excelled for a certain period of time, make it appear as if these comedienne are few and far between.

In scholarly research, framing research about women in comedy, female humor, and comedienne is either poorly done, somewhat ambiguous, or slightly more antiquated and condescending. Yet in the light of subjugated knowledge, this research is rich with insights on our own cultural lens. For instance, Mahadev L. Apte’s anthropological
approach toward women’s humor and groups of women in 1985 explained why women were averse to behaviors of slapstick as individuals and a group. “Just as verbal aggressive humor and practical jokes seem much less prevalent among women, there is little ethnographic evidence to suggest that women individually participate in slapstick or other similar kinds of humor in which physical roughhousing or horseplay are involved” (71). The statement looks at demographics and general exhibited behaviors by larger groups and a diverse amount of groups. However, as in Foucault’s example, the framing of the point comes off as practically a challenge. Because few popular instances are on record, implicitly an underlying reason exists. What is implied? Is there an essence of female comedy, is it a learned or biological behavior? These questions follow in the perspective of Apte’s mechanism, pointing out complications to the framework of the research. Also, compare the number of women to the number of men who exhibits these behaviors. By percentage, men are more prone toward these behaviors. Apte’s statement also takes the focus away from women who are in the spotlight because they are fewer.

Apte does point out examples of the counter-boys club within segregated women’s humor, the inter-patriarchal phenomenon of women’s comedy. This niche is important to the idea of a type of feminist satire since it springs from segregation based on sex.

In Sicily, ribaldry as a form of humor occurs frequently among women’s groups…Such women become famous for their expertise in satire, teasing, joking, ridicule, and impersonation. Men are never permitted to participate
in the humor-creating activities of these women but know of them and are afraid of becoming the subject of such ‘female dramas.’ (77)

Other situations Apte mentions also include other special circumstances that are involved with mostly bodily humor, but the variation of its delivery depends on the culture. Social context is as much a part of the audience’s framework as it is within the joke material and its delivery. And within certain social contexts, women have been allowed to be funny.

Women contend with other obstacles in order to break out of that mold. Often the obstacles are women themselves, waging the battle of eternal internal critique. Safety is also an issue for women, such as Vitanza and Katz explained about implicit violence in the prevalent narrative of victimhood. These issues are generally not readdressed in a different light, doubling down on a particular subjugated knowledge around female behavior.

Blogger Irene Merrow starts off her article “Boys Club: How Female Comedians Struggle with Feminism and Acceptance” with a massive image of Amy Schumer leaning on a counter top with a fixed smile and the phrase, “Oh my God, it’s a woman!” The first impression of that line alone is a problem. Should the exclamation be taken sarcastically? Who says this line, Merrow or Schumer? The tone of the remark is snarky and unpleasant, and Schumer’s presence amplifies the ambiguity. If one is aware of the context of Schumer’s brand of delivery, the reader may wonder if Schumer herself made the remark. Merrow addresses the statement and its unpleasantness as she continues; it actually was a heckler that made the remark at a comedy club.
The ambiguity of Merrow’s narrative does not stop there. While Merrow’s points are important, they are laced with unclear inferences and intent. Her style of writing leans toward politically correct public service announcements and standing up for victimhood; her focus on it however reifies victimhood and the components which comprise it. This problem overlaps with the traps of second wave feminism which Julia Kristeva pointed out in “Women Can Never Be Defined,” but also reconnects with Foucault’s point on mechanisms. Feminism falls under the shadow of patriarchy, showing a negative definition of women under men. Yet women can redefine, or offer an alternative discourse than patriarchal definition, as Irigaray points out. Irigaray refocuses on the importance of language to shape women in a positive direction, or creative and not related as object under men.

Feminist Taxonomies and Equality

Clarity and direction of discussion is important, especially for feminist conceptions of social justice. The approach toward the discussion depends largely on the situation. These points are part of Chela Sandoval’s differential opposition, a method for switching between approaches of various ideologies, specifically the four other categories for which she describes in Methodologies of the Oppressed. These categories are of oppositional consciousness;

In enacting this new form of historical consciousness, U.S. third world feminism provided access to a different way of conceptualizing not just feminist consciousness but oppositional activity in general: it comprised a
formulation capable of aligning U.S. movements for social justice not only with each other, but with global movements toward decolonization. (41) Sandoval analyzes political theories for their historical situation in order to expand upon this mechanism, and uses the four other categories of consciousness as approaches toward social justice. The other four are equal-rights, revolutionary, supremacist, and separatists, all of which have their situation, but the fifth is the key for interpreting when. Taking from Gloria Anzaldúa’s premise of weaving, Sandoval writes that,

the differential mode of consciousness functions like the clutch of an automobile, the mechanism that permits the driver to select, engage, and disengage gears in a system for the transmission of power. The differential represents the variant; its presence emerges out of correlations, intensities, junctures, crises. Yet the differential depends on a form of agency that is self-consciously mobilized in order to enlist and secure influences; the differential is thus performative. (57)

Foucault also mentions a network of power in *Power/Knowledge* as he described an ebb and flow of power. Using Sandoval’s method, differential consciousness allows for the four other categories not to be dismissed or displaced as a hierarchy of history or separate ideologies, but rather to be used in “dialectical relation to one another…each ideology-praxis, is transformed into tactical weaponry for intervening in shifting currents of power” (57).

Alison Jaggar goes back to the situation where the mechanism of power can be seen. Jaggar takes a look at the situation that informed Sandoval’s discussion of U.S.
Third World feminism, or what Gayatri Spivak called “hegemonic feminism.”

Hegemonic feminism is the generally white, middle class, Anglo-American, as well as French, feminisms that dominated second wave academic discourse as well as incorporated grass-roots foci on issues of patriarchal oppression (Jaggar 7). Jaggar’s categories are more traditional in their chronological approach and definition: Liberal Feminist, Marxism, Radical Feminist and Socialist Feminist. However, Jaggar’s aim was to unearth the mechanism of how they focus on issues concerning social justice. “The emphasis on the process of struggle rather than on its end relieves those who advocate liberation from the need to attempt a complete characterization of the end at which they aim” (6).

Sandoval’s approach was influenced by Jaggar’s categories but went beyond them; “The differential form of U.S. third world feminism, however, functioned just outside the rationality of Jaggar’s four-phase hegemonic structure. But to recognize the differential would require of Jaggar, and of hegemonic feminism, a distinctive shift in paradigm” (51). Through her explanation of U.S. Third World feminism, Sandoval’s work brings in a theoretical history of subjugated knowledges. She adds an important factor above the usual definitions, such as those explained in depth by Jaggar, Zack and Spivak, by offering a change in the method of discourse. By explaining differential consciousness, Sandoval changes the game of how different approaches behind ideologies function and influence through discussion.
Naomi Zack took a different tactic toward a similar end to Sandoval, unwinding the theoretical frameworks of the Anglo-American and French feminist theories. But she also came out with an interesting point on language in her analysis on Irigaray.

This reliance on language to either account for gender differences or, in Irigaray’s case reconfigure them, is clearly not a form of biological determinism on its surface, although it would seem to be a kind of cultural determinism. The child learns a language and through that process acquires the gender that the linguistic system assigns to her. Once within the symbolic order, extraordinary liberatory efforts are required to resist stereotypes of gender—one would have to change the local language system, at least for oneself. (Zack 90)

Language and situation are sites of struggle for an individual from day one. How would one interpret the messages that they are receiving, not simply for how to judge others, but how to judge yourself? The questions posed are not simply whether one agrees with them or not, but how does language impact what happens to you? How you can live in or outside of that system?

Irigaray’s point from “The Language of Man” of sexed language relates to answering these questions. Language distinguishes sexes by the way it is used as well as the terminology used. The absence of men as subject has been pointed out previously, as well as who the language generally points to as an object. What about the mechanisms that support that direction, or the intent behind them? Irigaray’s point of sexed language is in the vein Foucault’s subjugated knowledges; how many would think to ask about
how language poses gender, the styles used to approach the situation at hand? Irigaray puts this question in terms for public address:

Women’s liberation has a dimension other than the search for equality between the sexes. That does not stop me joining and promoting public demonstrations to obtain this or that right for women…If, however, these struggles are to be waged other than by simply putting forward demands, if they are to result in the inscription of equal (but necessarily different) sexual rights before the law, women…must be allowed an other identity. Women can only take up these rights if they can find some value in being women, and not simply mothers. That means rethinking, transforming centuries of socio-cultural values. (Irigaray 31)

Again, Irigaray brings up the issue of equality. She does not define equality in terms of making women like men, but rather women having the same social and political standing. Necessarily, differences need to be addressed, especially in different circumstances explained from intersectionality. The *topos* of equality is what spurs the discussion between feminisms in such a way as Sandoval advocates. Her concept demands ways to explore various approaches to the *topos* from ideological differences.

**Satire: Comedy and Social Commentary**

Sandoval’s differential consciousness offers a venue for ironist feminism of social critique and how to use influence, as well as be influential, in public forums. Sandoval’s focus on style of approach and audience are important to note. In the election cycle of
2016 alone we have seen trends of spiked racism, sexism and favoritism in the news. Yet more importantly, the impact of each has shut down discussion and raised fear and panic across wider audiences. Responses in public discourse shifted toward new arguments often just as tumultuous and violence-inciting. This riotous scene is a larger scale of what Stewart touched upon in the beginning quote from *The Rumble*. We have seen these problems before.

Besides Sandoval’s ideological approaches, an ironist feminist may take numerous rhetorical approaches toward creating a public discourse. Irony is an orientation as well as an approach; irony is a function of language and can be used in comedy. Comedy offers an approach for a larger audience, broaching topics from a broader perspective. Stewart argues in a clip from 2010, “Bernie Goldberg Fires Back” that comedy is a form of social commentary. Goldberg argued on a FOX News segment how comedy was excluded from being social commentary. Stewart dedicated his monologue to dismantling Goldberg’s argument, giving the history of comedy to support Stewart’s claim. However, Stewart rebutted through a mixture of understated Socratic irony, editorial narrative, and the satirical use of a call-and-response choir.

Goldberg offers a clear mechanism to challenge through stating that comedy could not be social commentary. Feminists can utilize that mechanism, and Stewart’s response, as means toward crafting their own rebuttal. The main challenge, however, is how to get a seat at that table to make the rebuttal, to be in the public eye to influence the discussion. Women’s representation in U.S. public forums has changed, including in comedy. Besides seeing more women, more women are seen differently, such as the
example from *Murphy Brown*, as well as with more diversity. That show generally approached issues from what Jaggar described as Liberal and Radical Feminisms. The show also worked through the different perspectives besides Brown’s adamant feminism, such as her non-feminist female coworker Corky Sherwood. The character of Corky Sherwood relates back to Irigaray about battling stereotypes.

The show offered a narrative style of the sitcom to explore the characters and how they have the potential to be more three dimensional. While Sherwood was Brown’s foil as both the ready homemaker and blonde beauty queen, she was smart, could defend herself against Brown, and she grew as a character over time. All the while, she generally still held different views and beliefs than Brown in a way that continued the dialog between women and their representation in a professional workplace, as well as journalism specifically. Besides the fictional basis of the show, *Murphy Brown* had wider social implications and influences. At the time, U.S. journalists loved the show, and many made cameo appearances. Walter Cronkite cameoed in “And That’s the Way It Was?” Nationally renowned female journalists showed up to Brown’s baby show in the episode “A Chance of Showers.”

More importantly, the show made a feminist stance in the real political situation of the time as well. Candice Bergen, who played Brown, remarked upon one of the most controversial moments of the show, thanks to vice president Dan Quayle. In 1992, Quayle campaigned on a concept of family values as a nuclear family with two parents. Quayle focused on Brown as a poor example, choosing being a single parent. While Quayle’s campaign created controversy over Brown’s decision, it also spurred a response
from the show. *Murphy Brown* creator and writer Diane English penned a response from Murphy Brown herself in the 1992 episode named “You Say Potatoe, I Say Potato.” The episode showed real newspapers that headlined Brown with baby, and a highly disheveled Brown on the show talks back at her living room TV, “I’m glamorizing single motherhood? What planet is he on?” (Semigran) However, the show was aware enough of Brown’s social standing as a successful, white, rich single mother, to broaden Brown’s challenge to the nuclear family concept. Brown accompanied many non-traditional families on the set of FYI for a fuller response to Quayle. Bergen remarked later, “every week there was a piece about Dan Quayle and Murphy Brown. We just owe him so much.”

**Satirical Justice: Punching Up**

*Murphy Brown* offered one approach toward social commentary through comedy, but it also highlighted a certain *ethos* attributed to satire: punching up. The satire’s critique aims at social situations, those in power, and generally does not attack the oppressed. In chapter 1, Molly Ivins mentioned punching up as a means of social justice, targeting those in power rather than the disenfranchised, not being deliberately cruel. When she passed in 2007, economist Paul Krugman wrote about Ivins’ journalistic integrity and also remarked upon this sentiment. “Yes, she liked to poke fun at the powerful, and was very good at it. But her satire was only the means to an end: holding the powerful accountable.”
Punching up aligns with Sandoval’s oppositional consciousness as a means of orientation as well as targeting oppression. In order to make the argument, you have to be situated in the consciousness as well as privy to the history of the situation you make the argument from. In ironism you then take that context and broach the absurdities from that orientation. You also can the absurdities through irony. Punching up offers a target and an approach; target those in power, and arm yourself with insight from the situation, or criteria, to critique them by.

Part of the style of approach is to humanize targets. Take the powerful out of their context and situation that conflates their importance. The repositioning heightens absurdity, diminishes the seriousness of the situation, and keeps the satire’s narrative from becoming too preachy in its message. The majority of monologues in The Daily Show were laden with messages, but the meme-worthy ones retorted against specific injustices. Examples include any of the shootings since Newtown or narrow-minded responses against the Black Lives Matter movement.

A strong sense of community or dislike for the problem—or both—generally motivates the target’s aim. Stewart and The Daily Show writers adopted this strategy first in America (the Book): A Citizen’s Guide to Democracy Inaction, and then again in Earth (the Book): A Visitor’s Guide to the Human Race. In America, the writers mock a particular belief about the way a press should function, which is generally in line with what Stewart espouses on and off of The Daily Show:

The role of a free press is to be the people’s eyes and ears, providing not just information but access, insight, and most importantly context. It must
devote its time and resources to monitoring the government, permeating the halls of power to determine who is doing the people’s work, who is corrupting the process, and who will promise to be a mole in the State Department if their homosexuality is kept secret. Only after that—and only with time permitting—should it move on to high-speed freeway chases. (For an exciting example of one such chase, check out the flipbook at the bottom right of this chapter.) (133)

Stewart and his staff are interested in the press because of what it report; and since they watch a lot of it, how it reports. But their statement also reveals another reason why they critique the press: they believe in public discourse and how the press contributes to it. They believe news should keep the government in check. They also know mainstream media does not do that now, if news as an institution ever did.

Punching up for The Daily Show is not simply an ideology or a method but combine in their style and aim. The Daily Show mocks absurdities, generally large in situation and scope, as a form of critique. Their mocking reasserts principles of an ideological context and follows Foucault’s line of questioning the mechanism. Through their particular style of mockery, The Daily Show draws attention to the mechanism. They then exploit various inferences from the mechanism as their punchlines. Aware of what it attempts to pull off through its approach, the show then is capable both of hard critique and diversion.

In Grammar of Motives, Kenneth Burke points out that “true irony” adds humility as another impactful and somewhat unifying motive for irony. What can be gained from
punching up is not simply a laugh or an ethical high ground but empathizing with the target.

True irony, however, irony that really does justify the attribute of “humility,” is not “superior” to the enemy. True irony, humble irony, is based upon a sense of fundamental kinship with the enemy, as one...is indebted to him…This is the irony of Flaubert, when he recognizes that Madame Bovary is himself…Folly and villainy are integral motives, necessary to wisdom or virtue. (514-515)

Stewart exemplifies a democratizing humility through his relationship with O’Reilly, as does Ivins with O’Reilly. These people do not simply deal in contraries; they identify with characteristics most tend to distance from as a way to avoid conflict. However, avoidance is only part of why people distance from them. By dealing with these people or characteristics, Stewart, Ivins and O’Reilly reveal that moment of cringing, the repercussions of your own judgment. Humility then is not passive as it bridges discomfortability and engages with several stances. Humility applied in and through comedy can exploit the absurdity of fear, the anxiety over hypothetical conflict, or demonstrate how to get through conflict that is not yet physically violent.

Diverse Voices

Punching up is not merely the style of how it is done, but who is the target, and who is punching. Representation in comedy is an especially important means of disrupting the mechanism, much less continues to add diverse perspectives. Diverse
voices invoke more layers with their delivery; who is delivering the punchline, much less how it is delivered, and how the audience responds. Representation is also one simple way to situate intersectionality; have more, and various, women and non-white men shown in national venues of comedy. The differences help to explain the larger situation and fixate less on stereotypes. For instance, when The Daily Show with Jon Stewart used more female correspondents over the years, the material of the show shifted away from judgment in “Who Wants to Be a Princess?” to inviting public discussion on catcalling in “Jessica’s Feminized Atmosphere.”

The scene of comedy offers more examples of diversity in representation, in identity as well as style. For example, Margaret Cho is more than simply a stand-up comedienne, she is an artist. She does stand-up, sings, makes music videos, and generally pushes the styles of comedic genres, including more straightforward, and male, satires. She unapologetically aggressive; her jokes with male late night comedy hosts can come across as confrontational and one of her recent songs is “I Wanna Kill My Rapist.” Since the early years of her stand-up, she cornered the market on Asian jokes. And she collaborated on works with musical parodist Weird Al Yankovic and Awkwafina. Cho pushes boundaries of both what people think is funny as well as the boundaries of the socially acceptable.

Comedian Ricky Gervais wrote a piece in 2011 for Time describing the differences between English and American attitudes and how that reflects into the style of comedy. Gervais points out that while the history of British comedy is longstanding, it is not necessarily for all audiences, and the difference of perspective plays a large part.
Americans say, “have a nice day” whether they mean it or not. Brits are terrified to say this. We tell ourselves it’s because we don’t want to sound insincere but I think it might be for the opposite reason. We don’t want to celebrate anything too soon. Failure and disappointment lurk around every corner. This is due to our upbringing.

While using a white man from Britain may seem off-point for intersectionality, Gervais highlights style to the historical ideological differences between countries. To a certain extent, like with Cho, the British style of comedy demonstrates a different style of approach.

Another alum of The Daily Show, John Oliver comes not only from that British attitude but also of British satire. Oliver’s style, especially with the Sr. Mapsalot bit, was aggressively non-American absurdist and highly self-deprecating. Oliver’s inspiration includes the group Monty Python, the show Fawlty Towers, and the early 90s British news satire, On the Hour. On the Hour also inspired the premise for shows like the original British The Office and The Thick of It; the latter of which inspired the current political satire Veep. Oliver was cited in comedy blog Splitsider as explicitly stating On the Hour as an inspiration for his role in The Daily Show with Jon Stewart (Ess).

Other Irony

Irrory and satire do not have to punch up. An irony can still be ironic as well as be mean or nihilistic; punching up is part of the aim as well as also the style of approach. For instance, when all male bands use some female noun in their band name, yes, it is
ironic that none of them are women. The question however arises, why are there no women in the band? Are the bands being sexist, or just ambiguously so?

Where someone is situated impacts the motive of the irony or satire as well as their approach. For instance, if you are a white male, you are not obligated to see women or minorities as equal. You do not have to acknowledge their problems or as having problems that could surpass your own. You do not need to care about being complicit in those problems; you are not complicit, as far as it concerns you. Your problems can be argued as much a part of the larger system of patriarchy as women and minorites. While patriarchy puts white males on a pedestal, it does so for a price, naturalizing certain types of masculinity.

Yet the benefit of being a white male in comedy, minorities—and stereotypes of them—are an easy target. Targeting minorities is generally shooting fish in a barrel, taking aim at a group of persons who already get plenty of undue flack or hatred. Targeting them exploits how they may have no means of retorting, particularly if you do not care about anything other than your jokes. Instead of challenging the mechanism of the subjugated knowledge, you use it. Making fun of these groups is easy when you have no stake in the consequences of your words other than reaffirming your status as the one in power.

Take for instance Jimmy Kimmel and Adam Carolla’s *The Man Show*. While the show offered irony about man-ness, the situation was men attempting to make fun of man-ness at the expense of women. Women were objectified to demonstrate the absurdity of what the show’s concept of man-ness would ogle. Another explicit example of this
type of man-ness is Howard Stern’s radio show. However, audience members who do not see this representation of men or women as a problem simply laugh. They see the show as both stating and mocking the situation at hand. However, that laughter reifies the presentation of man-ness which Kimmel and others satirized rather than offers an alternative.

When Schumer and Fey take on female stereotypes, they do something similar. As mentioned in chapter 1, their style is orientated in the white feminist tradition. As Jaggar and Sandoval describe from the 2nd wave, the “white feminist” highlights racist and classist perspectives that are out of touch with the realities of minority situations or representation. Audre Lorde, bell hooks and a whole host of other non-2nd wave feminists have pointed this perspective out, extending into the blogosphere, as noted in 2008 from blogger dearwhitefeminist:

Because feminism is not merely a movement about middle-class white women and their interests; it is about queer women and straight women and women of all colors. It is about making the world a better place for women and men alike, and it is a cause that should unite all of us….That’s basically the rhetoric of inclusion we like to think we espouse, right?

Zack also includes a description of limited perspective in her eighth chapter of Inclusive Feminisms. Zack highlights the traditions of 2nd wave with the input that Sandoval, U.S. Third World feminism, and other feminist movements outside of the hegemonic feminisms reflect in both academic and grass-roots, popular discourses. The distinction
between situational orientations is important largely because the situation affects the message and the style of the commentary, not just ideology behind it.

Reaction to, or being, a white feminist plays into the style and delivery of Fey and Schumer’s comedy, as well as how they react to their audiences. And recall how white feminism is paradoxical, not only with patriarchy, but also with race and class. While they point out the irony of a racist stereotype, how they point it out may be the complication. Or, if they tend to point out certain absurdities well, they are not consistent, or their point is ambiguous and potentially offensive.

Their approach toward feminism is also not as strictly 2\textsuperscript{nd} wave in how they either exemplify or mock women’s body issues. They generally continue within the mechanisms. Apte provides an anthropological study of general ticks of women’s humor that in some way reflect their situation:

Women’s humor reflects the existing inequality between the sexes not so much in its substance as in the constraints imposed on its occurrence, on the techniques used, on the social settings in which it occurs, and on the kind of audience that appreciates it…These constraints generally, but not universally, stem from the prevalent cultural values that emphasize male superiority and dominance together with female passivity and create role models for women in keeping with such values and attitudes. (69)

Apte looks at a variety of patriarchal cultures where women are generally secluded from most men and public places, but also how women weave particular bonds, their relation
to each other, men, and the general situation of the societal hierarchies. In so doing, they are both confined by and propelled to use that as material for their performances.

However, the question then is whether they mock their situation or reify it. Does the audience know? Do they care? In both *The Man Show* and Schumer and Fey’s works, what is mocked is ambiguously reified again by audiences who generally do not see the difference. The comic tactic of reinforcing a position while also critiquing it demonstrates the transideological application of irony in satire. Anyone can use irony, satire, and even social commentary for whatever purpose and style they choose.

**Seeing Fish in a Barrel**

As an ironist feminist, the aim is challenging the mechanisms of oppression. Ironist feminism may not always punch up, but it has the means available to be aware how it does not. *The Daily Show* is touted for punching up, yet there are cases where they have not. An example of *The Daily Show* attempting to punch up, yet the approach overshadowed the target, concerned CNBC financial reporter Jim Cramer. Cramer’s advice and his message exemplified the mainstream media’s problematic Wall-Street-mentality that contributed to the financial crisis of 2009. On his show, Cramer portrayed information he received in a bombastic style, coming off as a kind of a clown. But he had enough of an audience and said enough disreputable information that he became an easy target of critique. Stewart reflected later to Howard Stern that he regretted the amplification of the pieces surrounding Cramer. He did not explicitly remark whether he felt sorry for Cramer. In 2009, aware of the amplification of the situation, Stewart
interviewed Cramer and gingerly laid out his argument (“Interview Pt. 1”). Stewart showed video clip “210” in the beginning to situate the discussion, but soon started throwing up clip after clip, saying to his production team “roll 212,” “roll 214,” (“Interview Pt. 2”) with a grim expression. The moments were temporarily immortalized as a popular catch phrase, “roll 212,” that Stewart himself often mocked on the show.

There was one aftereffect that Stewart also mentioned in the interview to Howard Stern in relation to both Cramer and Rumsfeld, “You begin to believe your own responsibility to ‘get this guy’–even though that’s complete bullshit.” Stewart often mentioned Rumsfeld as the interview that got away. Stewart wished Rumsfeld would see his responsibility in going to war. The situation was much like Stewart’s befuddlement with Bush administration lawyer John Yoo, who had helped define waterboarding as within the limits of interrogative methods (“Intro”). Yet in the end, Stewart did give the one-to-one, Rumsfeld saying something contrary to what he had just said, and Stewart somewhat rejoiced. He admitted the feeling was hollow. He ended that segment saying,

Is it feudal to try to pin these people down? Yes. Would it be easier just to give up and let Rumsfeld go—preferably on an ice-flow into the North Atlantic? Yes. Because no matter what evidence, no matter arguments or historical fact you put in front of these people, they think learning curves are for pussies. And even if they did learn, it wouldn’t change the past, or prevent the same mistakes in the future. Which is why I want to say to you, in the future, please. Never stop trying anyway. Because there’s always hope that one day, they’ll think, just for a second. And in that
second will be enough time for us to shove these motherfuckers onto that ice-flow. (“Return of the Rummy”)

While Rumsfeld did not repent the way Stewart would hope, the timing of the one-to-one also seemed late, missing the *kairos* of the Iraq war. Technically the Rumsfeld example is more beating a dead horse than shooting fish in a barrel. The topic was an easy mark because Stewart had approached it many times before, but the situation was also past. The context was fixed. However, *The Daily Show* offered the piece to highlight insights from what seemed like a delayed moment.

For feminist comics, the fish in the barrel is allied with punching up. You have to deal with how punch up, be relevant, engage an audience that may be hostile to certain conceptions of feminism, and then put a funny spin on what is often a horrific nightmare. And there are comedians who are opposed to feminism as a comic perspective, not because women are not funny, but because feminism itself is often seen as self-righteous, politically correct, absolutist stance. George Carlin argued that feminists are the natural enemies of comedians (*George Carlin*). An ironist feminist questions the mechanism of Carlin’s accusation. Carlin’s premise sets the main approach of feminists toward men under patriarchy as confrontation. Carlin’s premise sets the main approach of feminists toward men under patriarchy as confrontation. Carlin does not discuss how comedians approach feminists. He also does not approach blue humor concerning dick jokes, raping women, and other gendered ideas. However, Carlin’s monologues contain some ambiguous favor toward some parts of feminism. When he said, “Women are crazy,” he continues, “and men are stupid. Women are crazy because men are stupid” (“On Patriarchy”). He then
roasts patriarchy, giving plenty of statistics about horrible living conditions for women from domestic abuse to general fear for their lives.

This study does not tackle the ambiguities of blue humor, but instead points out how misogynist mechanisms use the cover of blue humor to obfuscate meaning. In some cases *The Daily Show* reflected similar tendencies to *The Man Show*, with clips like “Who Wants to Be a Princess?” “Laura After Hours,” “Miss American Spy” and “Look Who’s Talking.” Stewart and correspondents also took potshots at scandals or specific persons such as Monica Lewinsky when Stewart started at *The Daily Show*.

Take the premise of the 2001 television special named, “Who Wants to Be a Princess?” Women competed to be the wife of an unknown prince. The contestants were mostly beautiful and also relatively intelligent. At the end, the prince was revealed to be also fairly attractive, but quiet, and shorter than most of the women. After Stewart generally gave a play-by-play commentary of clips from the show, Stewart and correspondent Stephen Colbert critiqued the prince’s choice as being solely on his ability to reach up to play with the woman’s breasts, which Colbert pantomimed (Stewart and Colbert).

*The Daily Show* did not necessarily draw attention to the sensationalism of demeaning women, which is an important point to note about their overall approach. For instance, when Chris Wallace pointed out *The Daily Show* making fun of Sarah Palin, Stewart clarified what he was making fun of was the form of Palin’s ad. Stewart did not support Wallace’s accusation that the piece attacked Palin herself, or anything about her
as a woman. That kind of clarification, a point about definition of delivery and style, would start to falter the moment it concedes to Wallace’s point. But Stewart stood firm.

Stewart also focused on the situation surrounding Palin rather than Palin herself. Tina Fey targeted Palin for being a woman, which then puts into question how Fey was using a framework akin to “Girls Gone Wild” to impersonate Palin during the 2016 campaign season. In the impression, Fey-Palin commented about speaking alongside faux-Donald Trump, “I’m just here because he offered me a place in his cabinet. And I belong in a cabinet, because I’m full of spice and I have a great rack” (“Palin Endorsement”). Her delivery was spot-on. Her voice, overall physical representation and timing of her statements were both comedic and eerily similar to Palin’s style. But the target was more on the person rather than situation.

**One Satirical Approach: Molly Ivins**

Molly Ivins challenges argument frameworks and makes sure to offer a new point. For example, at a 2004 C-SPAN luncheon, Molly Ivins explained her project in *Bushwacked* of uncovering how “Doug Jones,” rather than the DOW Jones, was doing. She shifted journalistic focus to the average citizen to illustrate how the Bush administration policies affected the day-to-day of the everyday citizen, Doug Jones. Part of her intent was to put the focus back on the state of the citizen. Ivins believed that situation was a pivotal part of political journalism in the first place. Also, Doug was not necessarily male. Ivins’ main story at the luncheon was about some women who worked at a catfish factory in Mississippi.
They had never heard of the people in Washington who killed off ergonomic regulations, they had no idea who Eugene Scalia was, or that he’d been a lobbyist of the Trade Association before Bush appointed him to top lawyer at the Labor department. And when we told them about it…the thing about Americans is that they are sassy, and funny, and irreverent, and you cannot keep ‘em down. And we told these ladies about what had happened on the ergonomics regulation and they would say things like, “he said that’d be junk science? Well, you tell him I want his ass next to me on the cut and gut line and I’ll show junk science.”

Ivins’ attention to the situation—to someone else’s wit as well as her own timing of the speech—emphasized the point and punchline of the anecdote. Ivins offers just one example of how satirists can both create and capture absurdity for a punchline that drives home the critique.

Stewart and *Murphy Brown* writer Diane English pointed out the difficulty of how to both write news and utilize it, offering new frameworks based on new information. As both *The Daily Show* and Molly Ivins demonstrate, while the news is often serious information, the way it is told does not have to be serious. Besides a different style and delivery holding people’s attention, the approach offers a way to simplify how the news is received. However, doing so generally makes more work for the satirist.

Ivins offers an example of a feminist satirist who works with the news. Ivins is highly diligent in her work and retained a large audience and respect from her peers. She was also highly principled, and her manifesto can be utilized for a model of ironist
feminism. Ivins emphasizes research as a way to situate yourself and how not to be lazy, or what she labels as a kind of cynicism. She and Bill O’Reilly also expand upon the concept of advocacy journalism. Yet examples from the 2004 C-SPAN luncheon with FOX News host, Bill O’Reilly, and comedian Al Franken, illustrate her deliberative style.

Research and Cynicism

For Ivins, research broadens context as well as perspective. Research is integral to what makes a good journalist.

Read, read, read. At least one good paper every day…Better yet, all of them every day, plus the major papers in Texas. You should be reading every good magazine you’ve ever heard of and most of the bad ones. Concentrate on opening your mind…I’m not joking about any of this. You have got to stretch your mind, further and further. The alternative is letting it congeal, harden, and contract. You must be able to see more and understand more than most folks or you’re never going to be able to explain what you do see to most folks. This isn’t elitist; it’s just part of the basic job requirement. (Ivins 237)

In *Molly Ivins Can’t Say That, Can She?* Ivins generally explains not only her approach, but what she views as effective journalistic practice. A journalist should be able to comprehend all available information, explain the history of situations, and seek out information as much as possible to fill in the gaps. Ivins’s points aligns with Sandoval’s premise for discourse, and an ironist who continually looks to broaden perspective.
Ivins offers a rhetorical outcome for punching up. When you have the floor, people will tend to believe what you say. Or, they will at least give it some merit, especially when it relates back to them and their situation. Ivins explains how to use that platform as a teaching tool and a space for encouragement. The platform also highlights the power of mechanisms in place:

Any good teacher will tell you that aiming at the lowest common denominator is poor practice. In communicating anything, you do better if you aim slightly above the heads of your audience. If you make them stretch a little, they respond better. If you keep aiming at the dumb ones, you never challenge them and you bore the hell out of the bright ones. You also commit the grievous and pernicious error of thinking that the people is dumb…One of the most horrific results is that the people start to think so themselves. (Ivins 235)

Ivins warns against seeing the people as dumb because that lens impacts your own perception and rigor for research as well as end product. More than simply describing a moral pitfall, acknowledging the stereotype feeds a vicious cycle. Ivins is also highlighting the importance of stance. For instance, if you frame an argument in a way that condescends to your opponent rather than focuses on a topic, the argument is not about a topic, it is about the ethos of the opponent. The same could be said of placement of an argument as well as the way the language of the argument is framed.
Ivins’s point then also addresses cynicism in relation to the intent of a journalist’s approach. Not only does the lens of cynicism affect the style of the approach, but the use and perspective from it affects the mechanism and hegemony afterwards;

It is my considered opinion that Hildy has done more harm to American journalism than Frank Munsey, Spiro Agnew, and Everett Collier, combined. Generation after generation of pimply-faced kids have come staggering out of J schools and into city rooms pretending to be characters out of The Front Page. At least young reporters just pretend to be cynical. With most older reporters, cynicism is a habit. A stupid, vitiating habit sustained by sloth. (Ivins 234)

Ivins’s kind of cynicism is less focused on rigorous research and instead reinforces a closing of the mind. Research is cherry-picked or viewed through a narrow ideological lens. Evidence that does not already coincide with the existing stance is dismissed or repurposed.

One positive point should be made about the Hildy Johnson example, however. In the 1940’s, there was a slew of strong, savvy and comedic female characters written into major Hollywood movie scripts. Some movies include Meet John Doe, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, Mr. Deeds Goes to Town, Woman of the Year, It Happened One Night, and Farmer’s Daughter. The leading ladies included Barbara Stanwyck, Jean Arthur, Katharine Hepburn, Claudette Colbert, and Loretta Young respectively. These are only a handful of examples, largely just from director Frank Capra. But director Howard
Hawks’s *His Girl Friday* with Rosalind Russell—a revamping of the stage play *The Front Page*—is where the character Hildy Johnson is found.

Hildy Johnson represents a unique moment in the 1940’s for women’s role between home and work. In the movie, Hildy comes across as strong, capable, and somehow an odd candidate for domestic life due to her talents, bravado, and yes, cynicism. She demonstrates savvy dealing with an alleged murderer and his girlfriend at a peak point of the plot. The moment highlights Hildy’s gentile approach to the story as counter to the stereotyped rough and judgmental approach of her male counterparts.

Hildy also comes across as having a certain *ethos* to her writing that the men she works with admire. Her writing pull out the humanity of her subjects in a time when others might not notice it. Hildy is a phenomenal example of a snarky female journalist who is respected by her male peers, not completely unlike Ivins, or Murphy Brown.

Ivins questions cynicism in journalism because it is a mechanism. And the style of the mechanism shuts down or shuts out certain stories and perspectives. However, Ivins is not simply focusing on cynicism as a mechanism at this point, but links it to practices of objectivism in journalism as well. Practices include praising retorts as a sign that objective presentation is working.

I don’t believe in the stuff myself—I’ve seen the truth murdered too many times in the name of objectivity—but I’m open to the argument that what we really need is a better definition of objectivity…To look around the newsroom is to see living tragedy in terms of wasted talent…the Channels of Communication are silted up with corpses of stories that never got
covered and ideas that were never pursued. Some reporters quit and others quit trying… Some reporters pointed to letters attacking us as communists and letters attacking us as Birchers and claim they must be doing something right. On any given controversy, they print what A said and then what B said and think they’ve produced an adequate piece of journalism. (Minutaglio and Smith 108)

Reductive journalism tells two sides simply by telling the two sides, the end, rather than beginning further analysis and investigation. Yet they also only see two sides. Most likely there are more, and they are more nuanced, which would bring more to the explanation of the situation than stating two potentially contrary points.

Ivins differentiates objectivism from knowledge and research, that ignorance can be addressed outside of an objective method or perspective. Ivins irreverently pointed out,

I believe that ignorance is the root of all evil. And that no one knows the truth. I believe that the people is not dumb. Ignorant, bigoted, and mean-minded maybe, but not stupid. I just think it helps, anything and everything, if the people know. Know what the hell is going on. What they do about it once they know is not my problem. (Ivins 234)

Here Ivins points out how educating the masses needs not be tied to objectivism, and that people are not tied to objectivism or even a pursuit of the truth. A journalist focuses on the pursuit, how truth is pursued, as well as how it is presented, but what the masses do with it is another story. Ivins’s points are not unlike Kenneth Burke’s when he advocated
reading *Mein Kampf*. Without that diversity of thought, resistance to diversity congeals. President Obama once remarked he did not agree with persons on college campuses boycotting books because students did not agree with their ideological point of view. “I’ve heard some college campuses where they don’t want to have a guest speaker who is too conservative or they don’t want to read a book if it has language that is offensive…I don’t agree that you, when you become students at colleges, have to be coddled and protected from different points of view” (Obama).

*The Daily Show* mocked faux balance by trying to explain stereotypes back to people who used them. In the field piece, “Hope and Change 2 – The Party of Inclusion,” participants at the 2012 Democratic National Convention showed the same tendencies of exclusion, distrust, and moral high-ground reported of Republican Party members. *Daily Show* correspondents coaxed interviewees to revel in their mockery of the GOP as well as see the hypocrisy of their own actions. The piece worked to expose absurdities of both divisive behaviors of political ideology and the way news attempts to balance their coverage of political conventions.

**Mechanisms and Deliberation**

Balance can also be listening to or discussing with more voices, including those who incite and heighten divisions. FOX News host Bill O’Reilly of *The O’Reilly Factor* is arguably one such voice. O’Reilly’s strong personality, delivery and bravado either makes him loved or hated. O’Reilly has stated that, like Ivins, he too is an advocate journalist, analyst, or watchdog. His comments from the C-SPAN luncheon provide an
interesting insight into his methodology as an advocate. “Now when you get blinded by your ideology…you’re trying to find facts to fit your hypothesis….You gotta look at it tough and hard: what the truth is, how you arrive at the conclusions.”

At the 2004 luncheon, Ivins, O’Reilly and comedian Al Franken discussed their books for C-SPAN. On YouTube, the discussion was largely tagged for the interplay between Franken and O’Reilly, due Franken’s aggressive approach to O’Reilly and his views. Keep in mind the situation for the discussion’s context: besides being held in Washington DC, 2004 was during George W. Bush’s administration. Like William Connolly’s response in the previous chapter, Franken engaged O’Reilly as part of the larger situation. Distinguishing issues and arguing a point from wanting to harm the other person is still part of Franken’s style, including in his book where he repeatedly calls O’Reilly a liar. Ivins pointed the blurring of this distinction when she explained the difference between ideologues and politicians.

The meanness of political discussion today…there are lots of villains. It’s not just Rush Limbaugh, and it’s not just whoever you want to name. There is a nastiness about it, and I was really appalled to see Grover Norquist, who is an extremely well-known figure on the right, and the…people who call themselves the movement conservative, and he said that their goal was to bring Washington level vituperation and partisanship to state houses around the county. They’re saying is that bipartisanship is like being seduced, they have an ugly way of saying it. To find somebody actually saying, you know, we want more anger, we want more hatred
expressed—when you talk to people who get so angry about politics that their faces turn red and the veins stand out on their necks, and they shake their waddles like a turkey gobbler, so angry about it—you know, you just want to go most real politicians are far less passionate than that.

Ivins described the larger climate that Franken’s book—and at the luncheon, Franken—had missed. Franken focused on explaining obscure situational minutiae and went with material to prove his point. While Franken was not a journalist like Ivins, O’Reilly, or Rather, his point followed another perspective of that situational vituperation; like Connolly, Franken was blinded by the larger national situational narrative. Yet that narrative was generally the red herring—albeit a large, and highly emotional one—and Franken dodged engaging O’Reilly on his beliefs.

Ivins coined the situation, the views surrounding it, and her own unique point as a journalist who was also involved. Considering the extremes that Franken was reacting to in left-right discourse during the Bush administration, Ivins’s style and behavior are important to highlight.

When I write about the issue of possible weapons of mass destruction, the first thing I know is I have no way in hell of knowing whether or not there are any WMDs over there…there’s an implication that people who opposed this war did so for any reason other than that we thought it would be terrible for the country. What I did before the war was predict a short, easy war and the peace from hell. And so far, I think I’m 2 for 2. I didn’t want us to go into Iraq not because I didn’t understand that Saddam
Hussein was a miserable son-of-a-bitch. I’ve been active in human rights work for 35 years. I knew he was a miserable son-of-a-bitch when the Reagan administration was sending him weapons. And I said from the beginning that you could make a case for going in on humanitarian grounds alone. But, that’s not the case the Bush administration made.

Ivins pointed out that no one was necessarily without their motives, including the US, when it forgot the participation of the Reagan administration with sending Hussein weapons in the first place. But the situation had been reduced to two sides. The situation was more nuanced than simply being inevitable, or being an ad homonym-based, self-righteous political argument.

By addressing O’Reilly’s points, Ivins circumvented a simple trade of insults and instead explained a more global view of the situation. Ivins continued to engage O’Reilly on his argument, even when she disagreed. But she was able to do so amicably as well as with evidence from her interpretation of the constitution and the meaning of general welfare. Ivins responses to O’Reilly generally were thoughtful, in the moment, and not necessarily pushing her book.

Ivins did call out O’Reilly when he placed Ivins in a liberal camp, much like when Franken called O’Reilly a sycophant of the Bush administration. Before that, Ivins highlighted the situation of the left-right axis and needing to point out another perspective outside of that.

In our ongoing efforts to achieve civil discourse, one of the things that I notice is that we do tend—and I know Bill specifically says he tries not to
do this—but we do tend to lump everybody, you know, the left, the right, and then accuse the left says this or that. And it’s interesting to me because what I keep saying to people is I ain’t the left, I ain’t populism, my name is Molly Ivins.

Ivins provided a third option. What she offered was the attempt of separating from the narrative of left-right and expressing the point of not only herself, but a journalist with a history of contextualizing the insulation of a left-right narrative. Her style is not the only third option.

Another Satirical Approach: The Daily Show with Jon Stewart

As a third voice, and satirical, Ivins and The Daily Show are on the same page. They reject being pigeon-holed by a dominant narrative. They do that through approach, through having a receptive audience to their style, as well as their own ideology. Part of Ivins approach is simply because it is part of her, she has quick wit. But Ivins is also keenly aware of behaviors of others, and remarked that was a reason she used humor in her journalism.

I work with political humor a lot. Because I find that if you can get people to start by laughing about something, it sort of clears out the cobwebs in their mind and they focus on whatever you have to say rather than whatever it was they were thinking of before. Which, according to studies of college students is sex in 95% of the cases.
Stewart commented in opening monologues that Ivins’s description was his main audience, as well as what they were focusing on. Coincidentally, during the sexting scandal of former Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-NY), one of Weiner’s messages expressly discussed *The Daily Show* as something to watch during a sexual encounter. Stewart pointed out the irony that the guest that night was President Bill Clinton (“The Wangover”).

Jon Stewart and *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* offer a case for a more nuts-and-bolts analysis of rhetorical style honed through the conventions of satire and news. The show aimed at public discourse above contextual irreverence, making the audience question things, as a debate tactic. Stewart generally exemplified with this, but in his interview with former presidential aide David Axelrod, host of *The Axe Files*, Stewart would not cede to Axelrod’s stance for the sake of peace. In one light, their discussion could be interpreted as heated disagreement, but Stewart clarified to the audience his tactics were to further examine the topic. Stewart then continued to push making his point clear to Axelrod.

*The Daily Show* offers the plethora of comedic tropes, gags, puns, hyperbole, and juxtapositioning. The show also exemplified a framework over time, a kind of spine, not only of the way the show worked per episode, but the show overall. And due to the mass quantity of clips to choose from, four main categories offer a general guideline from a research audience’s interpretation: ideology and aim, style, catharsis and distraction, and an important note on the representation of food. The categories came from episodes popular with audiences as well as offered interesting points toward explaining the
rhetorical strategies in satire. The best way to represent the categories of these sections is by a select group of examples—because there are many—but also because they are largely contextual. And the examples chosen were chosen to highlight the main themes that comprised the framework of *The Daily Show*. The next chapter will better illustrate the gravity of how that framework existed in, as well as impacted, the larger situation.

**Ideology and Aim**

In a variety of interviews where Stewart is actually the interviewee, Stewart has pressed that he is not a journalist. He is a comedian, a satirist. He has no main political agenda. *The Daily Show’s* satire is a process developed off of the study of the news for its good, bad, and absurd functions and content. Stewart explains the mechanism of the left-right axis, and also calls the mainstream media “tribal” (“Jon Stewart Interview”). It vies for conflict and sensationalism rather than offers tools for public discourse and debate. Stewart gives an example that could be any general day in Washington DC, and how the news covers it:

STEWART. So here’s my example of what news bias is…Fox, CNN, MSNBC are going live to the Nancy Pelosi news conference because they are sure, coming on the heels of Anthony Weiner resigning, that she is going to make some sort of incredible statement about, “I’m disappointed in Anthony Weiner”…So they’re all locked on it. And the whole time, there’s hand-wringing…the American people don’t care about this, they care about jobs, they care about the
economy...We’re about to go live to Speaker Pelosi...she steps up to the podium, and says, what? I’m not going to comment about Anthony Weiner, I’m going to talk about jobs, and I’m going to talk about the economy, and what did everybody do?

WALLACE. Left.

STEWART. So what’s your proof again about the partisan agenda? And what I do? That’s the embarrassment. The embarrassment is, that I’m given credibility in this world, because of the disappointment that the public has, and what the news media does. (“Exclusive: Jon Stewart”)

Stewart differentiates comedy and journalism due to a difference in ethics. Comedy is known for its low-brow, vulgar and even cynical role. Journalism generally aspired to something loftier in terms of public service and objectivity, but more what Ivins mentioned as paying attention than turning cynical. For instance, journalism should stay for the press conference and report on issues rather than leave because the story was about something other than what news companies wanted to hear.

This cynicism exemplifies what Stewart had commented on many times about both sides of the left-right axis. Stewart explains the axis as a hegemonic narrative that sucks in the audience with an illusion and provides a certain rubric of terminology. Stewart highlighted the rubric and insulation of the illusion in his Crossfire appearance in 2004. He then repeated his point when he talked to reporters after The Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear.
We’ve all bought into that the conflict in this country is left and right. Liberal, conservative, red blue; and all the news networks have bought into that…What it does is it amplifies a division that I actually don’t think is the right fight. But, if what you’re asking me is do I believe that, what he’s saying that’s what he thinks I believe, no. But what I do believe is, both sides have their way of shutting down debate. And the news networks have allowed these two sides to become the fight in the country. And I think the fight in the country is corruption versus not-corruption. Extremists versus regular.” (“Jon Stewart Interview”)

Stewart’s comedic acumen, including what he cultivated with others on The Daily Show, hinges in part on how Stewart pays attention to others’ rhetorical tactics and motives. Stewart figures out the mechanism supporting their perspective and what he can do with that. Generally, he does not debate to win. He debates to open up the issues that have been closed for discussion and assigned to unyielding sides. While Stewart is not devoid of his own side, he argues beliefs as a way to open up the other side to think about another possibility rather than to shut them down. His interpretation of others is not simply judgmental, but rather highlights whether others can debate and what perspective they may debate from.

The best examples of Stewart’s deliberative tactic come from public discussions with Bill O’Reilly. Since before 9/11, Stewart interviewed O’Reilly several times on The Daily Show. Their discussions opened up quirks in O’Reilly’s arguments that otherwise would be assigned a side, much like Franken lumped O’Reilly in the C-SPAN luncheon.
O’Reilly’s observations were thoughtful, in line with Ivins’s style of observations, more specifically because of his time in industry and paying attention to the changing overall situation. Stewart repeatedly makes the point that while he respects O’Reilly and his different outlook, he does not have to agree with O’Reilly. Stewart starts off his introductory statements in *The Rumble in the Air Conditioned Auditorium* with:

> My friend, Bill O’Reilly, is completely full of shit. Now, he and I agree, this country does face some problems. We do have some issues. What we disagree on is the scope of these issues and the cause of these issues, and the timing of these issues…until we can agree on a reality that exists in this country, you and those denizens believe that we face a cataclysm, a societal cataclysm, between freedom and socialism…I believe tonight, we will take you down from the mountain. And you can come live amongst the people once again.

Stewart’s statement demonstrates an adherence to the effort toward civility that Ivins mentioned, even though it is—if not perhaps because, it is—delivered tongue-in-cheek. Stewart’s belief of that civility is not overshadowed by his passions.

Stewart points out inconsistencies, inadequacies and incompetencies by using provided situational context and studying different viewpoints. Outside of *The Daily Show*, Stewart can make the same arguments with or without the humor. Stewart’s 2004 CNN *Crossfire* appearance is one example. Stewart would not participate in the usual banter with the hosts, and he refused to pick a political side. Instead, Stewart pushed that the show used eristic arguments and were “hurting America.” Stewart’s stance did not
shut down argument, but rather brought up another side than that of the show. Stewart pointed out the show provided no substantial discussion, and the “hurt” could refer in part to the hosts’ plethora of ad hominem attacks or attacks on the other’s political party. The hosts’ blatant speculation were insulated within the U.S. left-right argument, and the illusion was to make CNN look like a knowledgeable political insiders.

Style, Context and Tactic

After The Rally, Stewart remarked to The National Press Club, “I’m really proud that I’m a comedian. I think it’s hard. I think it’s hard to steel your most valued thoughts into comedy and let things that you feel most strongly about be the subtext for what you create” (Stewart and Colbert). The Daily Show steeled their thoughts through a highly scripted process. Their process worked with the situation of others’ stances and broke down the way they were argued. They then utilized absurd tools of comedy to emphasize a message and parodied the news through actively avoiding engagement with others’ stances to offer their own.

Over time, The Daily Show came to have three main acts of the show: the monologue, the correspondent piece, and the interview. Generally these pieces were interchangeable. Stewart could extend his monologue. The interview might be with an important politician or speaker, and needed more time. Correspondents’ pieces could be field pieces, roundtables, green-screen, or their own monologue. Other news-mimicked bits included what became “meet me at camera 3” as an extra editorial aside directly addressing someone; Stewart’s earpiece, where he would abruptly stop a statement to
either clarify, add new information, or simply interrupt to add to the punchline; the video montages to give context; and the puns offered in both the banner graphics and the box to Stewart’s left.

Each of these segments played with the way they approached content, not simply as a spoof on news styles, but occasionally restructuring themselves to illustrate a point. For example, look at the skit in “Hosting Duties” with Stewart, Kristen Schaal, and Samantha Bee. The three played upon Stewart’s clout at the anchor desk, and his age, to liken him to then GOP presidential candidate John McCain. Schaal wore glasses and remarked about how she could run the show. Schaal’s stance referenced the situation with former Alaska governor Sarah Palin when she was picked as McCain’s running mate. Samantha Bee was hovering over Schaal, reminding Schaal that Bee had come first, like Hillary Clinton before Palin. This kind of skit was rare, highly contextual, yet also along the lines of Stewart’s Glenn Beck impersonation.

Stewart has also remarked generally upon how the show’s writers’ interests drive the material and being correct on context. Research is not only part of gathering material, it is about making sure the material will stick. Stewart remarked to Terry Goss in an interview,

People don’t laugh when they know you’re full of shit about what you’re saying. So we fact check so that when we tell a joke, it hits you at sort of a guttural level as opposed to not—it’s not because we have a journalistic integrity, hopefully we have a comedic integrity that we don’t want to violate. (“Jon Stewart in Conversation”)
Fact checking also contributes to the show’s foundation of context, being able to both build it as well as use it. As mentioned by Stewart in the previous chapters, “the synapses fire much quicker when people are already focused on something.” Comics’ materials are based on a framework of current events, but the comic’s invocation of that common substance becomes the subject matter for satire and irony.

What Stewart called the “process” of The Daily Show often dealt with how to work the style of a piece, or how a piece played with elements of a news broadcast. The nuts-and-bolts of delivery decided whether the attitude going to be juvenile and mocking, would it feign Socratic irony, or would Stewart break away from the desk mid-sketch by means of some slapstick gesture? These questions depend on the approach of the topic. How do you explain something that is of interest to you to someone with no knowledge of what you are referring to? What do you say, what do you leave out, and how do you present your point? Stewart explained one part of the process through the example of advocating for Veterans on the show;

Satire is a process, and when we do the bits on the Veteran’s Affairs, we don’t put it through a separate process. In other words, we don’t tag it as this is activism, and we’re going to use the tools that we use in satire of hyperbole, and juxtaposition, and puns, and ridicule…but everything we do…that comes from a point of view is advocating a position or an argument…It’s just that they could attribute a more direct plea, maybe…Just because you would say, fix this. (“Catie Lazarus’s Uncircumcised Interview”)
The aim and ideology are an embedded part of this process. There needs to be an opinion, an interest, to be the roots for the tools that Stewart mentions of hyperbole, pun and juxtaposition.

Stewart often re-directed an argument through a kind of active non-engagement of someone else’s stance. He drew attention to the way the argument was being set up, almost as a strawman argument and would not continue their claim. Instead, he either offered a different stance, explained the mechanism behind the premise the other person was making, or disagreed in order to offer an alternative stance. Stewart would bring out his interest that paralleled the discussion as another point. Stewart used this method with political guests, reiterating points for his own clarification. Or, he would calmly disagree with the premise in order to clarify what the other person was doing with their point, like in his interview with David Axelrod. Stewart would not placate since placation would play into the stance of the other person. For instance, when Axelrod wanted Stewart’s input on the 2016 presidential candidates, specifically former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Stewart responded with,

What I think about Hillary Clinton is, I imagine to be a very bright woman without the courage of her convictions. ‘Cause I’m not even sure what they are. When I watch her campaign…she reminds me of Magic Johnson’s talk show...Magic Johnson was a charming individual, but he wasn’t a talk show host. And when you watched his show, you could almost see Arsenio’s advice to him in real-time rendering...But it never seemed authentic and real to his personality, it seemed like he was
wearing an outfit designed by someone else, for someone else, to be someone else. (“Live Taping”)

Stewart explains his references to the audience in a way that both explains them and points out their relevance to the discussion. They also highlight Stewart’s bag of references.

Gags

Stewart warned Axelrod’s audience those kinds of references would continue. The *Daily Show with Jon Stewart* employs hosts of references for gags that run the gambit of comic tropes. The most memorable and repeated were from Stewart’s personal quirks, puns in captions, different uses of irony, correspondents pushing hyperbole, Stewart’s bullshit metaphor, and dick jokes. A large portion of gags on the show were Stewart’s quirks, his interactions with the audience, different versions of self-deprecation, as well as his overall monologue. His impressions ranged from: New Jersey in explosive or understated mobster, Jewish grandmother or Chuck Schumer, southern belle, George W. Bush, angry German, old-timey news reporter, Woody Allen, Jerry Seinfeld, Jerry Lewis, a duck (Dick Cheney), valley girl, the Queen of England, random Russian, and a puppet named Gitmo among others. Stewart also used phrases like “meet me at camera 3,” “roll 212,” or the constant phrase “go on” emphasized in a variety of ways. Stewart is also known for using gestures, noises, and faces so much so the show created a variety of mash-ups. The “Exclusive – A Look Back” series originally airing during Stewart’s last month: “Accents,” “Super-Sized Accents,” “Uncensored - Exclusive - A Look Back –
Impressions,” “Jon’s Earpiece,” “Uncensored - Exclusive - A Look Back - Passionate Rants,” and “A Pericles for America.” At the end of his tenure, Stewart also did an entire segment solely compiled of simple grunts, squeaks, stunned expressions and movement during a series of clips to guide the narrative of “Democalypse 2016 – Mike Huckabee’s Nonstop Commentary.”

The show used puns in a variety of formats but usually with graphics, either in the bottom scroll on the screen or in the box to Stewart’s left. One of the “Look Back” series showed clips of questionable graphics, largely filled with double-entendres. However, in the monologue, “A Measured Discussion of the Prohibition of Wordplay in the People’s Republic of China,” Stewart addressed when China banned puns. The accompanying news montage provided the reason as “word jokes confuse and mislead the public, and could lead to, quote, ‘cultural and linguistic chaos.’” Throughout the monologue, Stewart mock-attempted to be cordial. “The great chairman says from now on, all meanings must be literal, and all entendre must be single. Single, I say! There will be no puns!” In contrast, the graphics box to Stewart’s left showed the captions, “Chinese Zinger Trap,” “The Great LOL of China,” and “Puns of Anarchy.” After the caption “Attila the Pun,” Stewart made a historical clarification of why that pun was irrelevant to China. Stewart also threw in a mock-serious moment, where he made the argument for keeping the pun due to its literary tradition.

But China, consider for a moment what you might be losing. The pun is a rich literary tradition, one embraced, honed and perfected by the likes of Shakespeare, John Dunn, James Joyce. The pun is a linguistic dance, wit
pirouetting in the space where sound meets meaning. Especially elegant in a language as subtle and as elegant as Chinese, where a simple adjustment in tone can up-end the entire essence of a phrase.

Stewart’s statement was not the end of the piece. One more news clip showed a news caster making a pun, and Stewart mocked exasperated defeat.

During the monologue, Stewart also used Socratic irony to guide the audience through the scripted narrative. Stewart juxtaposed examples as he explained them for immediate reference. Through his feigning and questions, the audience saw the absurdity of the situation mainstream media would describe in the accompanying video montage. Stewart had a long-standing focus on FOX News for their absurdities and ideological premises of the government or the world being against them. FOX News used inflammatory titles of their segments like the “War on Christmas” that was almost as fixed in The Daily Show critique as the elections. Stewart’s reply by 2011 was the label of “bullshit mountain” to FOX News and their fear-based hyperbole.

For example, in “Chaos on Bulls**t Mountain - The Entitlement Society,” Stewart explained a different kind of welfare queen, a reference back to a narrative in the 1990’s of poor persons gaming the system for luxury items and money, to person who were receiving large tax breaks for corporations, such as Exxon Mobile and AT&T, as well as individual investors, usually persons in the higher tax bracket. Stewart then commented, “Boy, I wish we had a posterboy for that element of the mooch-ocracy.” They then show a picture of Mitt Romney, presidential candidate and successful businessman, and Stewart reads off information from Romney’s tax dossier.
Stewart continued the bullshit narrative into his final speech on *The Daily Show*, “Uncensored - Three Different Kinds of Bullshit.” Stewart explained first that there was a good kind, one that helps people and is good for society, “But then there’s the more pernicious bullshit. Your premeditated, institutional bullshit, designed to obscure and distract. Designed by whom? The bullshitocracy.” He listed three different examples of how to spot the mechanisms used by the “bullshitocracy.” The first was “making bad things sound like good things.” He used the example of the Patriot Act, and anything that had an alarming amount of jingoistic language should be suspect. The second was, “hiding the bad things under mountains of bullshit.” He used the example of the iTunes agreement, and how that generally could procure obscene actions with your family since you did not read the entire length of the legalistic language. The third was “the bullshit of infinite possibility. These bullshitters cover their unwillingness to act under the guise of unending inquiry.” Since we cannot know what we cannot know, we should study until we know more. But in the meantime, we should guard against what we do not know. His concluding statement was, “The best defense against bullshit is vigilance. So if you smell something, say something.”

In terms of style and delivery, hyperbole in *The Daily Show* is generally the most pointed with correspondent segments. The premise of the green screen, field piece or roundtable is often that the situation is already horrible, why not be in favor of the oppressors? Or why do we not see the brilliance of what the oppressors are doing? In so doing, the bits push a version of the oppressing viewpoint, action or event to absurd extremes. Even in natural disasters such as blizzards, hurricanes, droughts or flooding,
the correspondents are often throwing off the guise of a fake journalist for that of opportunism or survival. When different parts of NYC had been hit by a blizzard in 2014, incoming NYC mayor Bill De Blasio’s snow clean was the story. In the clip “Snow Cleanup,” Samantha Bee was pictured in front of Time Square on a green screen, and she remarked how the area looked pleasant. Jessica Williams was supposedly in Brooklyn, but the green screen showed a sunny tropical beach. Aasif Mandvi was actually outside, buried in snow. Mandvi had to sign out when there was the sound of effect of gunfire signifying the increasing chaos between Somalian warlords and polar bears (“Snow Cleanup”).

Correspondents pushed the boundaries of pieces’ structure, the hyperbole of their statements, or even costumes as gags. In the segment, “Even Stevphen,” Stephen Colbert and Steven Carell took sides on current events and made tautological and absurd claims. Their arguments largely focused around how idiotic it was not to simply agree with them; everyone already knew that their side was right. In the segment “Supperbad & Guardians of the Gala,” Jessica Williams was dressed audaciously as a citizen of Capital City from *The Hunger Games*. Williams was dressed as a nun in “No Money for Bold Men - The Shame-O-Meter,” then in a Kevlar bathing suit in “Assault Swim,” covered with citations supposedly standing in front of the Ferguson Missouri police house in “System of a Town - The F.E.A. Party,” and as Abraham Lincoln in “The Weakest Lincoln.”

The show also utilized discussion of the shock and blue humor of male genitalia through double-entendre, puns, photoshopped images, exclamations, but also in the form of props. One such example is from during the Rep. Anthony Weiner sexting scandal that
was generally referred to as “Weinergate.” Stewart used the congressman’s last name as more than simply a symbolic guide to talk about other news; in other words, Stewart made a wheel to spin with different news topics with it, and the pointer was a dildo.

For the past two weeks, the news has been dominated by scandal of a particularly prurient nature. I for one believe we lift our gaze from the gossip-filled gutter. The real challenge for a news program such as ours is not how best to indulge our most base and callow instincts, but rather how best to choose which important yet now overlooked story of importance to do first. Simple; a little editorial authority, with the help of our friend, the giant carnival wheel with a dick nailed to it. I give you now, The Daily Show “C#@k-Blocked Stories Roundup”…By the way, less you think me crass, this is the exact penis wheel Edward R. Murrow used. (“C#@k-Blocked”)

They photoshopped an image of Edward R. Murrow with a similar looking wheel in a black and white image in the left graphic box.

The emphasis of the show’s bits ranged in relation to their exigence, and how they focused on distraction, catharsis or both through tough situations. Overall, they were absurd, highly constructed, and backed by performers that would follow that script. After several emotionally-wearing situations, The Daily Show provided large quantities of kitten and cute animal clips, both mimicking the internet and creating another level of absurdity through random juxtaposition. The absurdity toned down serious content and stacked references for punchlines. Yet there is one style of segment that came up just
enough, and showed off some of the key elements explained here, that it offers a particular example worth highlighting: Stewart’s regionalist, righteous pizza-anger.

The Pizza Narratives

In Nov. 2013, Stewart led a segment on the finished Freedom Tower, built atop the area where the two World Trade Center towers had once stood. The tower was dubbed the tallest building in the country due to its spire. Stewart mentioned how it had taken the place of the Willis Tower, formerly Sears Tower, in Chicago. All the while, Stewart built the momentum of the piece, seeming to declare that there need not be competition between the two cities. But one news castor happened to also mention pizza, and Stewart exploded. Stewart described Chicago style pizza thusly:

This is not pizza! This is tomato soup in a bread bowl. This is an above-ground, marinara swimming pool for rats. Let me tell you something about your fucking-not-pizza. I wanna know when I get drunk and pass out on my pizza that I’m not gonna drown. Let me tell you something; I look at this--you sonuvabitch--I look at this--gabagool--when I look at your deep dish pizza I don’t know whether to eat it or throw a coin in it and make a wish. And if I made a wish, it would be that I wish for some real, fucking pizza…Here’s how I know I’m right. You call it Chicago-style pizza, you call it deep-dish pizza. Stuffed pizza. You know what we call it? You know what we call this? [holds up NY style pizza] Pizza. [takes a bite]
Stewart was not simply ranting, he was giving a roast. Insults are generally one liners, but told in succession, in the interest of a kind of throw down for the sake of exercising rhetorical prowess. The roast is a contest, not only of towers, but of how long the comic can go on coming up with new, and better, jibes at the topic or person.

“Tower Record” was not the first time Stewart tiraded on food, much less Chicago style pizza. Stewart even did an entire episode follow up to the piece a week later under the label “Strife of Pie.” The entire episode responded in a continued “sorry-not sorry” series of insults, where Stewart started off what sounded like an apology or a take back. Instead he said,

I may have mentioned something about Chicago-style pizza, and how it tended to be less pizza-ish than pizza...In articulating that sentiment, I may have implied that deep-dish pizza tastes like a string cheese that had been baked for two hours inside of Mike Dikta’s ass. So I said that on my program, and apparently Chicago has television. (“Strife of Pie”)

After Stewart’s monologue, correspondent Jason Jones went out on the streets of New York and interviewed prominent New York actors and comedians to talk about the magic of New York pizza. Performers cajoled the audience and showed off community. All the while they built the hyperbole of NY’s pizza as magic, they simultaneously preened and made fun of themselves. Stewart’s following segment was a “pizza truce,” where the owner of Lou Malnati’s pizza, Marc Malnati, personally delivered Stewart a Chicago-style pizza from his restaurant. Malnati brought non-paper plates and silverware, which Stewart gently put to the side. Stewart picked up the slice, took at least one bite, and as he
chewed, wagged his finger to Malnati’s argument to let him finish. Stewart then remarked, “Let me tell you this, let me tell you this! Very tasty.”

Both “Tower Records” and “Strife of Pie” display all the gag components and *Daily Show ethos* from Stewart: his regionality, his judgment, his accent, his editorial narrative, his love of pizza. The pizza pieces were also part of a long-running joke with *The Daily Show*. The pieces give ample regional context through descriptions, not just stereotypes, but images of actual places, traditions, people, and events, all of which can be used for absurd juxtaposition. Both the regional descriptors and the stereotypes are immediate references that audiences can access.

Including, for instance, Stewart’s response to Donald Trump’s random pick of pizza places to dine with a guest in “Me Lover’s Pizza with Crazy Broad.” Stewart judges Donald Trump’s choice of NY pizza chain for a place to show Sarah Palin NY pizza. Stewart then provides a list of places that would be more authentic and show off the city. Stewart shows news coverage of the two politicians eating, where Trump eats his pizza: stacked slices and with a fork. Stewart then angrily rants, uses obscenities and phrased curses in a fake New York-Italian accent with a modicum of Italian. He then says, “Donald Trump, why don’t you just take that fork and stick it right in New York’s eye.”

There was also the clip “Grimm Shady,” a monologue leading with the corruption charges against a NY Politician who funneled money through a health food restaurant. Stewart expressed mock disappointment, having described a scene out of movies like *The Godfather* or *Goodfellas*. To play out how to update the iconic scene of corruption,
Stewart did a finger puppet re-interpretation of the GoodFellas as “Glutenfellas,” He then suggested names for new restaurants like “Kale to the Chief,” and “Miso Healthy.”

Most of Stewart’s food rants were focused on restaurant chains as part of popular studies reported in the news. In the clip, “The Snacks of Life” Stewart takes on the U.S. restaurant industry’s onslaught of promotions to sell more food or nearly unending food. In the end of one advertising montage, Olive Garden had a deal where you could buy dinner, and take one for later. With a shocked and bemused look on his face, Stewart asks, “Later? You went there for dinner. Are you worried you’ll get lightheaded unless you have a spare dinner for the ride home?” (“The Snacks of Life”) Arby’s became an in-joke taken to long-running heights of absurdity, including Stewart trying to sweet-talk a graphic on the screen after trash-talking Pizza Hut’s hotdog stuffed crust pizzas in “Wayward Pies.” Arby’s not only sent Daily Show staff food after the continual insults, but Arby’s also offered Stewart a Job after The Daily Show, which Stewart covered in a segment “Jon’s Job Offer.”

These clips covered more than fluff and often were for political purposes. One example was covering the pizza place in Indiana, Memories Pizza who decided not to serve the LGBTQ community. The clip showed the aftereffects of their decision, where Memories Pizza was both harassed in person as well as crowdfunded online. Correspondent Jordan Klepper attempted to see if he could capitalize on a hate niche market (“Pizza Hate”). Stewart addressed Papa John’s franchise when its owner vocalized disgust of the Affordable Health Care Act, putting the cost of health care into the price of their pizzas. Stewart remarked, “You mean I’m gonna pay an extra 11 to 14
cents so the guy who makes my pizza can get antibiotics to keep him from hacking up lung tissue onto my pizza? Outrageous!” (“It’s Not Delivery”). A longer segment akin to the “Strife of Pie” pieces covered a potential ban on extra-large soda New York City considered at one point. Stewart’s introductory comment was, “I love this idea you have of banning sodas larger than 16 ounces. It combines the draconian government overreach people love with the probable lack of results they expect” (“Drink Different”).

Food is a quick and handy gag. Food can be used for its appeal to disgust, for its ability to be smashed or spit-taked, or for its ability to be used for something else. Food can simply be used as metaphor, such as for the competition between NYC and Chicago. The Daily Show had everyone using food in a variety of ways, from Stewart eating Lou Malnati’s pizza to the occasional deli/ice cream/baconnaise/sausage-on-a-stick-wrapped-in-a-pancake/pizza. Stewart did once eat a plate of high-end Italian food on air for an interview rather than for a gag. The dish was prepared by master chef Mario Batali. Incidentally, Batali explained how one Italian food Stewart said he appreciated eating was a double entendre in Italian. Stewart laughed and continued eating.

Doug Jones: Fighting the Patriarchy

This study used examples of satirical approach to illustrate limitations of societal mechanisms, as explained by Foucault. Mechanisms have been used to shut down discussion as well as guide it. This chapter offered examples of various ways satire could circumvented shut down and offer alternative views and narratives. Satire’s offer of a third voice has been used as a means of engagement in U.S. public discourse, to wedge
open hegemonic narratives such as the left-right axis Stewart often discussed. Satire invigorates discussion, as well as reaches an audience news generally has not. It encourages their interest and participation, as well as opens up their concept of how to deliberate. Shows like The Daily Show are not simply venting frustration over the status quo, but offering an alternative perspective and set of tools to the “problem solving mechanism.” News satire specifically offers the potential for more trenchant discussion, based on its reliance on news for context as well as ironic analysis.

These examples are only a small amount of the larger impact of The Daily Show specifically as satire on public discourse, which is why an entire chapter is devoted to further examination of the show as a phenomenon not only in satire, but as a platform for women and minorities that other satires were not. The next chapter goes more in depth about the history that made The Daily Show, and Stewart’s influence on it, grow into the U.S. public discourse, utilizing stylistic tools summarized here. Examples from Murphy Brown and Daily Show correspondents Samantha Bee, Kristen Schaal and Jessica Williams will help highlight different feminist deliveries of satire. Murphy Brown creator Diane English talked about the success of the show being in part due to the savvy of the scripts, the effort put into the style, but also the way they did not talk down to the audience. The show was also self-aware, steered toward embracing the absurdity of 2nd wave feminism as well as offering its impact upon a fictitious news organization. English once remarked,

Because we were doing a show about the news, we never shied away from the real news. I go back, and I look at these, and I’m actually very proud
we never talked down to the audience. We never wrote down to them. Although, there were times when the network thought we were forcing people to read the newspaper before they settled down to watch the show. I really think it was a huge contributor to our success. (The Summer of ‘77)
CHAPTER 4
THE DAILY SHOW’S LINEAGE, SITUATION, AND HOW IT BECAME AN EFFECTIVE PLATFORM FOR COMEDIENNES

What we did on The Daily Show was we took a sort of short form content and we tried to create a more essayistic version of that, utilizing principles of argument and logic with comedy. What that requires at times is a certain balance of foundational material, background. And without that background, an essay doesn’t make much sense without its premise statements and things, so that’s where that comes from. –Jon Stewart

The previous chapter built a potential model for ironist feminism using satire. By the end of the chapter, the main example was the style from The Daily Show with Jon Stewart. This chapter focuses on how The Daily Show’s style became a platform for both comediennes and current events. The chapter breaks down the way social, political, and technological events impacted The Daily Show over time. This history establishes the basic platform first so that the contribution of women who joined The Daily Show can be understood and appreciated. Women joined The Daily Show as correspondents and writers, and they added style and perspective on women’s issues. As in the last chapter, I analyze examples from the show to illustrate how it evolved to become a showcase for the ironist and feminist style of satire.

This chapter focuses on three main themes: ideology, stand-up comedy, and misogyny. In his book From Cronkite to Colbert, communications scholar Geoffrey Baym explains how ideology shapes news media and thus how it also impacts satires like The Daily Show. Stand-up comics are a critical part of The Daily Show, including...
Stewart, so analyzing stand-up comedy can reveal the ways that ideology helps comics frame information in their jokes. Framing is an important component of The Daily Show’s process and includes Stewart’s editorial authority, the “morning cup of sadness” (Rogak 124) and how narrative and arguments are developed for the show, or “the spine” (217). The third theme in this chapter addresses misogyny in The Daily Show and the comedy industry more generally. In the beginning, The Daily Show belittled women in segments, and most female correspondents either quit or were let go. However, the show evolved, and that evolution offers more insight for feminist critique. Drawing from Sandoval and Foucault’s perspectives from Chapter 3, this chapter also reintroduces the example of Hannah Arendt as ironist to expand the discussion of feminism and to show how Jon Stewart and The Daily Show helped define contemporary feminist satire. Other feminist comedies and comediennes emerged from different contexts during Stewart’s tenure, but The Daily Show was a hub and catalyst for so many that its growth and popularity provides historical perspectives and insight.

The Daily Show with Jon Stewart: Comic Timing and Ethos

The Daily Show came to be through 1990s late night comedy television and national events. “Late night comedy television” refers to shows from cable network Comedy Central, late night comedy shows across broadcast networks, and the situation they entail. This section examines this situation alongside national events such as elections, natural and social disasters, and war. This section addresses how Stewart and The Daily Show won credibility for endurance, comedy and critique relating to these
events. The show’s style also shifted by expanding to new shows and projects like The Colbert Report and The Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear. And technology also impacted both the topics and the medium of The Daily Show. Overall, the show was very much a product of the time, in more ways than just topical punchlines.

Late Night Comedy

In 2004 on CNN’s Crossfire, Stewart explained that The Daily Show with Jon Stewart preceded a show called Crank Yankers, where “puppets mak[e] crank calls” (Begala, Tucker, Stewart). Both shows were part of Comedy Central’s line-up by the late 1990s and into the early 2000s. Comedy Central is a genre cable network. At that time, it generally showed stand-up specials, adult cartoons like South Park, improv-based shows like Who’s Line Is It Anyway and reruns of Kids in the Hall. By 1997, there was also the news-commentary comedy show, The Daily Show with host Craig Kilborn. Comedy Central is similar in style to MTV, and both are owned by parent company Viacom. Stewart had worked for both Comedy Central and MTV by the early 1990s as host and co-creator of venues such as Short Attention Span Theater on Comedy Central (Rogak 50) and the MTV show that bore his name, The Jon Stewart Show.

Comedy Central and MTV are cable networks; what they show is related to what is allowed to be shown by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Cable television channels are considered private companies and operate with a looser license on profanity (O’Malley) as well as civic purpose than the “big three” broadcast networks: ABC, CBS, and NBC. In the U.S., the big three have been around for the duration of
television, publically broadcast, and only later were included with cable television bundles. Their standards are more strictly regulated by the FCC. These standards play a part for what was allowed on the news, and the impacts of which will be addressed later.

Longevity of the big three also impacted late night comedy. NBC alone provided institutions such as *Saturday Night Live* since 1975 and *The Tonight Show*, starting with Johnny Carson, since 1962. Bill Carter’s book *The Late Shift* documented a particular shuffle of late night comedy hosts in the early 1990s due in part to Carson’s exit in 1992. Over his tenure, Carson had helped launch stand-up and television careers for a number of comics, including Eddie Murphy, Jerry Seinfeld, Ellen DeGeneres, and Jay Leno. At the time of the “shift,” Carson was still hosting *The Tonight Show*. David Letterman was hosting *Late Night with David Letterman* and followed Carson on NBC. When Carson retired, there was a public struggle between David Letterman and Jay Leno for Carson’s position. Leno won *The Tonight Show*, and Letterman was later signed to CBS for *The Late Show* (Carter). Stewart was indirectly part of the backlash of the shift when he was considered to take over for Letterman’s *Late Night* spot on NBC. However, Conan O’Brien ended up taking the position (Watson).

After his show ended with MTV, Stewart was the frequent guest host for CBS’s *The Late Late Show with Tom Snyder*. There was speculation Stewart would take over for Snyder, but Stewart hesitated taking on another show after *The Jon Stewart Show* ended. Stewart also remarked being a guest host, “it was like house-sitting…you’re still a little worried like, ‘Oh my God, I just got ashes on the couch. Now what am I going to do?’”
(Rogak 71) Craig Kilborn, then host of *The Daily Show*, took Snyder’s position. In 1999, Stewart took over for Kilborn on the newly retitled *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*.

People in the industry liked Stewart; after hiring Stewart, one MTV executive producer commented Stewart was, “sweet and funny…perfect for MTV without being too MTV” (Watson). More importantly, *The Daily Show* offered an open canvas to Stewart unlike *The Late Late Show*. *The Daily Show* was a cable show on a channel that spotlighted comedians, and Stewart was given a chance to change the direction of the show. However, soon after national events shifted the way comedy was done in the U.S. overall. And as Stewart mentioned to Howard Stern, there was no way to predict how *The Daily Show* would go, much less satire.

**Elections, Disasters, and War**

The 2000 presidential election was the first marked difference in how *The Daily Show* operated and handled civic events. After 2000, covering elections became a regular civic dedication on the show, and segments spanning several episodes were bi-annual, satirical celebrations. In 2000, *The Daily Show* capitalized on news media’s coverage of the presidential election in several *Indecision 2000* segments. *The Daily Show* followed news networks at the RNC convention, discussed hanging chads, and cracked jokes on the *Bush v. Gore* ruling. The day after the election, Stewart remarked on the show, “It’s been the craziest election any of us can remember. Calling this thing ‘Indecision 2000’ was at first, a bit of a light-hearted jab, perhaps an attempt at humor. We had no idea that people were going to run with that” (“Choose and Lose”).
While *The Daily Show* mocked anchors and field reporters, they also expressed mock frustrations aimed at the election. On the election night coverage panel, Stephen Colbert had a mock-breakdown where he lamented missing his daughter’s first steps (“Florida to Decide It”). The moment humanized newscasters and showcased the absurdity of objective coverage in extraordinary circumstances. These moments helped to establish the change of the show through Stewart and the new *The Daily Show* team. In a *Washington Post* interview, Ron Simon, a TV curator for the Paley Center for Media commented, “For many, Jon Stewart’s perspective was probably the only way to look at the surreal landscape of ‘We can’t determine who won this election. . . . But it was also important because it gave the show a voice” (Yahr).

*The Daily Show* received its first Peabody Award for *Indecision 2000*. The Peabody is an award honoring excellence in radio, television and then electronic media (“Origin of the Award”). *The Daily Show* received another for *Indecision 2004*, as well as the institutional award in 2015. The 2000 Peabody was the first award to note *The Daily Show* ushering in a new counter attack on the shifts of style in the news reporting and 24 hour news models. At that time, anchors Peter Jennings and Sam Donaldson supported *The Daily Show*’s efforts and even cameoed in the rare field piece with Stewart set in the 2000 RNC backlot (Jennings and Stewart).

Stewart’s 9/11 speech is the common example of his most memorable speech. However, the situation surrounding that speech is just as impactful on the style of the show. *The Daily Show* was in New York City, as was many late night shows. All of these shows were trying to figure out how to address the seriousness of the situation. How
could they either use, or avoid, the assault of incoming news? Or, what does the host do for his own fear, much less his audiences”?

On his September 17th broadcast, Letterman broke with comedy to address the situation with CBS anchor Dan Rather. Rather later commented, “not a very well-kept secret about David Letterman is he’s an excellent interviewer. And when he chooses to be serious on a serious subject, he’s good. He’s very good” (“Dan Rather Remembers”). Rather, however, worked through a momentary uncharacteristic break of objectivity: letting his emotions show. On that broadcast, after coming back from a break, Rather said, “I wanted to apologize, I’m a pro and I’m paid not to let it show” (Rather and Letterman).

After The Daily Show’s September 20th show, Stewart somewhat followed Letterman’s example. Many of Stewart’s guests in the weeks to follow would be experts, historians, and journalists. Stewart deviated from comedy to deliberate what to do in an unprecedented situation. For instance, Stewart asked journalist Jeff Greenfield about what the nation should do. Greenfield suggested that a terrorist attack was less probable or life-threatening than lung cancer or a car accident. The event was overblown because of the impact of the moment. Stewart reflected about people’s response; “we have always exaggerated things. Now we have something that actually fits our talent for hyperbole, and I think we don’t know what to do with it” (Greenfield and Stewart). Stewart would use this style of questioning and reflection later when grilling political guests. Overall, lessons taken from getting through 9/11 influenced how the show dealt with other disasters such as Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy.
Stewart’s beginning tenure was most shaped by coverage of the Bush administration. After 9/11, Stewart held a strong opinion about the central figure connected to the 9/11 attacks, Osama Bin Laden. *The Daily Show* unabashedly critiqued the absurdity of both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, especially in relation to finding Bin Laden. In 2008, on the five year anniversary of the Iraq invasion, Stewart surveyed remarks from Vice President Dick Cheney and President Bush. The segment ended with a parody of a jewelry ad, likening the silhouette of George W. Bush and the statue of liberty to a couple celebrating a marriage anniversary. Text at the end of the parody read, “The Iraq Invasion: an occupation is forever” (“Iraq: The First Five Years”). However, Bush and his administration were not the only ones ridiculed in the segment. War protesters who used theatrical approaches to protest in DC were still fodder for jokes.

*The Daily Show* provided a prolonged analysis of the wars escalating under Bush in the long-running segment “Mess O’ Potamia.” Stewart and *The Daily Show’s* continued critique was then not merely of the administration, but of the larger situation and the news organizations. Stewart and *The Daily Show* did approach their critique in the same way as Leno or Letterman, but *The Daily Show’s* coverage was more consistently focused. As a *New York Times* journalist remarked in 2004, it was like “a sustained argument with the president” (Zengerle).

Yet the focus is on the segments’ consistency rather than what they are about. Go back to Stewart’s comment about being generally against corruption, where Stewart admitted a liberal bias in an as unambiguous way as Molly Ivins. More clearly stated, ideology plays a factor in the direction of Stewart’s interest, but it does not mean
searching out stories that complement what he already believes. Instead, the volume of news stories on the activities of the Bush administration after 9/11 was high. They offered an opportunity for exigent critique, especially in comedy and news analysis.

Experimentation of *The Daily Show* Architecture

*The Daily Show* developed a distinct brand by honing the style and delivery of its jokes. *The Colbert Report* was the first notable shift to expand the brand in 2005. *The Colbert Report* differed with *The Daily Show* on structure and format, because they mocked different news genres. However, Colbert’s personae was an off-shoot from his correspondent on *The Daily Show*. He used opinion to develop his style, and further parodied specific institutions like FOX News and one of the main hosts, Bill O’Reilly. Colbert’s personae of bravado starkly contrasted Stewart’s irony-focused solemnity, as their image on the 2007 cover of *Rolling Stone* portrayed. Stewart was the traditional mask of tragedy, and Colbert was comedy.

In 2006, Colbert pushed the boundaries of satire at the White House Correspondents Dinner; through mockery, Colbert critiqued President Bush in his presence. The room was tense, but Colbert stayed on point. In *Strange Bedfellows: How Late-Night Comedy Turns Democracy into a Joke*, Russell Peterson pointed out how that example was different from the average political jokes from *The Tonight Show* or *Saturday Night Live*. Peterson defines late night comedy as a kind of pseudo-satire, or rather an “equal opportunity offender” (11). *SNL* would approach a presidential debate by picking characteristics of each candidate that make them human, if not even likeable,
such as the case of Will Ferrell’s impersonation of George W. Bush (37). These impersonations made fun of the political process for the sake of entertainment rather than to make a point. Peterson argues that “the critical distinction between genuine satire and pseudo-satire has less to do with content than with intent” (23). Peterson defines the satire of Colbert and *The Daily Show* as instead “sound[ing] the alarm,” (19) through opinion and critique.

However, attention should first be paid to the distinction between broadcast and cable network boundaries and how they play a role in shaping both kinds of comedy. For one, satire is seen as commercially risky; audience sizes, and maintaining them, are a factor (12, 26). Stewart and Colbert had comparatively smaller audiences compared to broadcast late night comedy. They could afford more artistic leeway if their parent company allowed it. As cable shows, Stewart and Colbert also had more freedom in obscenity and profanity under FCC regulations. The form of each comedy was affected by what they were allowed to do as well as what not to do.

The brand of *The Daily Show* satire expanded to cross-show collaborations on several projects. Small ones included skits during the Writer’s Guild of America strike in early 2008 (J. Steinberg), and large-scale projects included Super PAC segments during the 2012 election (Hardy, Gottfried, Winneg and Jamieson). The 2010 *Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear* was a live event and garnered an audience of over 215,000 people on the Washington Mall (Montopoli). Comparatively, this audience was larger than most stand-up venues. The range goes between a couple thousand to comedian Kevin Hart’s stadium performance, estimated at over 50,000 (D. Steinberg). The *Rally* was also larger
than FOX News host Glenn Beck’s *Rally to Restore Honor* which had gathered 87,000 in the Mall (Montopoli). After the rally, journalists latched onto political significance rather than entertainment value or social critique. Following the show, Stewart responded,

> Just understand, we’re on the metric system. I understand you guys have…it’s all about who’s winning and who’s losing and the strategy of this and the players in that, but we have TV shows. And we wanted to do a really good show for people that took the time to come out and see us. And I feel like we accomplished it. (“Jon Stewart & Stephen Colbert”)

*The Rumble in the Air Conditioned Auditorium* was another collaborative special in 2012, this time between Stewart and O’Reilly. The special was a mock presidential debate streamed online where Stewart and O’Reilly answered policy questions. Responses from both men were substantive, thoughtful, and also with humor. Entertainment blogs reviewed the show as “no replacement for the real debates between Obama and Romney, though it was a good bit of entertainment for the weekend” (Marin). Yet due to scope and focus on style, the special was unlike any other kind of comedic venue. *SNL*’s mock presidential debates generally were a bit, with moderated politics. Peterson pointed out that *SNL* would focus on presidential candidates’ traits rather than policy or the format of the debate itself. *The Rumble* used the ideological personalities of Stewart and O’Reilly to mock the debate format. Neither Stewart nor O’Reilly curbed their opinions for the sake of offering “equal opportunity” offending. Instead, they made points about policy and the way presidential debates are held and moderated.
Stewart took a moment away from the anchor chair in 2013, and his absence allowed for a temporary shift of style. Stewart directed the film *Rosewater*, and correspondent John Oliver filled in for Stewart. The film was a project with Iranian journalist Maziar Bahari over his incarceration concerning the Iranian presidential protests in 2009. Bahari had been a guest on the show prior to 2013, but part of the evidence brought against Bahari was from his interview with *The Daily Show* correspondent Jason Jones around the time of the protests. The project with Stewart started after Bahari’s release and the publication of Bahari’s memoir *Then They Came for Me*. *Rosewater* was filmed largely in the three months on location in Jordan, and the movie was released in later 2014.

As anchor, Oliver often made fun of himself to point out how he was not Stewart. This reminder was a way to address the temporariness of the situation as well as a stylized ribbing. Oliver remarked on *Charlie Rose* in 2013 that, “my main responsibility was not to destroy that machine in three months.” However, Oliver not only did not break the machine, the transition had been relatively smooth. Oliver was a student of Stewart’s style; Oliver even took the monologues farther in a more aggressive delivery with more research. Rose asked if Oliver had been offered any jobs because of being anchor, and Oliver remarked that he was not aware of any. Oliver’s response was less naiveté than dismissing the press’s hyperbole in any show review. “Those are of the many things Jon was helpful about before, he was like ‘just try and ignore the ripple effect of the show. You want to try and ignore that as much as possible because it becomes annoying’” (“John Oliver”).
However, within the year, Oliver left *The Daily Show* to craft and host *Last Week Tonight* on HBO. Oliver became the second *The Daily Show* correspondent to forge a successful spin-off fake news show. Other correspondents had left the show for other successful shows. Demetri Martin started *Important Things with Demetri Martin* on Comedy Central. Olivia Munn was snapped up by Aaron Sorkin for *The Newsroom*, and Michael Che barely started *The Daily Show* before he went to *SNL’s Weekend Update*. Yet Oliver’s *Last Week Tonight* is not another comedy show or parody, it is a variation on the structure of Stewart’s monologue.

Streaming: Audience, Research and John Oliver and the FCC

In the beginning of 2008, *The Daily Show* and other shows were affected by the Writers Guild of America (WGA) strike. The strike was between the Association of Motion Pictures and Television Producers and the WGA over payment for internet content. As Stewart explains,

How can Viacom, Time Warner or any of these companies be sure that he’s [figure sitting in front of a computer] not the guy that wrote that show while it’s going? Why should the producers pay for something that the viewer is writing themselves while they’re sitting there watching? That’s why the internet is free. (“Writers’ Strike Math”)

The underlying situation of the strike is particularly important to *The Daily Show*. During the strike, the strike impacted the quality of broadcast and cable late night comedy shows, and even whether the shows would return at all (Stevens). But later, the strike ended up
impacting the growth of *The Daily Show*’s audience online. When the strike occurred, *The Daily Show* was available to watch on iTunes for a price, as Stewart pointed out in “Writers’ Strike Math.” But by offering the show online, Comedy Central helped foster video playback. Audiences who missed a night’s performance could watch at any later time. Online video platforms like YouTube and iTunes were growing audiences and handling permissions legislation to show content. Scheduling became a thing of the past, but those who did not have cable now had access.

*The Daily Show* could also expand its own television content research online. *The Daily Show* utilized new playback technology like DVR, Tivo and later Roku. Devices like Tivo allow a user to digitally record multiple shows, and even multiple channels, to make it easier to search content. For *The Daily Show*, C-SPAN or any of the 24 hour news channels were easier to go through than with analogue devices like VCRs (Rogak 123). The Jim Cramer interview was an infamous example of having ample video evidence thanks to the new technology. Stewart and *The Daily Show* targeted 24 hour news about their coverage of the economic meltdown in 2009. Cramer was used as a scapegoat for anyone who talked about, much less participated in, the larger financial situation. Cramer had discussed many of the issues of what was happening, such as sub-prime loan trading and tax money used to pay the banks through the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP). Yet in that interview, Stewart was relentless, pinning-down blatant lies from Cramer in video playback. Showing the amount of coverage, and showing it live, was due to Tivo, video editing, cues from the video production, and Stewart continuing to say, “Roll 210” and “Roll 212.”
John Oliver’s first popular piece was about legislation concerning broadcasting technology and the internet. “Net Neutrality” described legislation that would privatize faster internet speeds under the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). At the end of the piece, Oliver plead with internet trolls to do something useful rather than mean; they should flood the FCC website with their comments. “We need you to get out there, and for once in your lives, focus your indiscriminate rage in a useful direction. Seize your moment, my lovely children. Turn on caps lock, and fly my pretties!” (“Net Neutrality”) The audience responded, crashing the FCC site (Roppolo).

**News: Ideology and Format**

For both style and content, *The Daily Show* does not follow trends in comedy the same way they follow news. Communications scholar Geoffrey Baym suggests in *From Cronkite to Colbert* that *The Daily Show* is in part a development in American public discourse away from traditional televised news. With Stewart, *The Daily Show* grew with the context it was critiquing: what was on the news, and the news itself. But *The Daily Show* also participated in shifts between broadcast journalism to cable, relying on print sources, and the impact of digital content.

This section addresses the influences of news on *The Daily Show*, including ideology, scheduling and technology, infotainment, and the power relations between these influences. These influences do not directly affect how much freedom comics have to speak. However, culminated, they helped make the right time and situation for *The Daily Show*’s rise in both comedy and public discourse.
High Modernism

In *From Cronkite to Colbert*, Baym discusses three main ideological differences in news and *The Daily Show*. Baym describes 24 hour news as a brand of relativity, *The Daily Show* as postmodern style, and the big three—ABC, CBS, and NBC—as a high-modernism. High modernism was the first, and sets the tone for the other two. It does not merely focus on facts through an objective lens, but rather finds news as a public service and venue of public discourse about current events (Baym 3). Baym bases high modernism’s ideals in broadcast legends like Edward R. Murrow (4) and how they relate to events like World War II and the McCarthy era in the 1950s. High modernism also follows the tradition of print journalism and a pursuit of the truth.

The format of the nightly news was just as impactful as its principles. Broadcast news was labeled a public service, but if you turned on the television at night, news was also unavoidable (Baym 13). Broadcast news was as much a service as it was a reflection of the limitations of broadcast technology. Scheduling was one way to manage that as well as exemplify ideals of public discourse. Baym claims scheduling, related to changes in public discourse, and technology impact the ideological lens of how news is presented in different formats. Baym uses the example of an interaction on *The Daily Show* between NBC anchor Brian Williams, former ABC *Nightline* anchor Ted Koppel and Jon Stewart to explain.

Rejecting the residual high-modern logic that professional journalists should, or could, define an objective public interest, [Williams] instead insisted that ‘the American people have a funny way of deciding what
their reality is.’ With that Williams effectively expressed the assumptions that underlie a postmodern approach to the news—the epistemological relativism that rejects the possibility of objectivity while suspecting that all normative standards are culturally located and historically contingent. No longer striving to tell it ‘the way it is,’ the postmodern newscast instead tries to tell it the way the audience most wants to hear it. For critics, the clear danger of such a paradigm is that the absence of a commitment to truth, news too easily becomes mouthpiece for feel-good propaganda—for political proclamation such as ‘mission accomplished’ and ‘heckuva job, Brownie’ that bear little resemblance to the reality they claim to represent—in place of the kind of democratic insight of the high-modern paradigm promised. (Baym 14-15)

Critics, such as Stewart, highlight how 24 hour news specifically tells one side of a story, even if they show multiple sides. A seasoned reporter and high modernist such as Ted Koppel also critiques a narrowed approach. 24 hour news delivery ranges between a limited scope of a situation to a propaganda tactic. Yet they have a different audience, a different set of situational circumstances as well as a different approach toward style.

Part of the 24 hour news approach is based on their situational circumstances and the struggle of how to fill 24 hours. In an interview with Stewart in 2002, Koppel pointed out that 24 hour news channels value ratings over content. Journalists have long struggled with parent companies about a balance between ratings and content, but without the ideals of high modernism, ratings take on a different importance. Yet high modernism
was not simply the journalists’ ideals; it was embedded in the regulatory definitions from the FCC on “The Public and Broadcasting (July 2008).” The idea was that news would not be touched by the problems of ratings.

However, audiences changed during the rise of high modernism in broadcast news. Journalism also covered social and political events in increasingly different ways, and the events themselves would impact journalism. Baym’s main example is Watergate. He traces Williams’s cynicism back to events that would strain the high modernist approach, specifically the print investigations around Watergate with *The Washington Post*. The relation between news and government changed nationally due to President Nixon’s handling of the press core and the general investigation uncovering the Watergate Hotel break-in. Watergate investigator and *Washington Post* journalist Bob Woodward generally still writes about the impact upon power relations concerning the executive office. But his book *Shadow: Five Presidents and the Legacy of Watergate* parallels Baym’s points concerning Watergate. The effect of how national, public, and government information is handled on a national level of public discourse—or not—has long-lasting ramifications.

Changes in print journalism are also relevant to the evolutions in broadcast and cable news. In his August 7, 2016 piece titled “Journalism,” John Oliver explained how print journalism is a resource for broadcast journalism and the incoming digital formats. But print journalism also participated in the ideological struggle between ratings, high modernist objectivity, and new creative directions like Gonzno journalism, as Baym explained. Molly Ivins used the general label of subjective journalism as well as claimed
to be a satirist. And Ivins is also not the only news writer who uses humor; there are many examples, but one specific, longtime example of satire was *Washington Post* contributor Art Buchwald. In his 1973 book *I Never Danced At the White House*, he satirized the topic of Watergate in a narrative style similar to Woodward’s.

The difference of subjective journalism—much less satire—to objective high modernism is not the use of facts or a belief in truth, but rather a difference in style. Stewart addressed the difference in his interview with David Axelrod in 2016, “satire is an expression of my true beliefs…The reason why it’s not news is that the tools of satire are hyperbole and pun and denigration. You know, shit you can’t get away with, with news. But the expression of it may have a similar foundation” (“Live Taping”).

Scheduling, Print, and the Fall of High Modernism’s Reign

*The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* did not always criticize 24 hour news. As mentioned previously, Stewart praised CNN and other outlets for their tact and updates during 9/11 (Jennings and Stewart). 24 hour news would not be able to sustain what Stewart espoused, but rather because as Stewart put it later, “24 hour news networks are built for one thing – and that’s 9/11” (“Exclusive”). In other words, the constant coverage and assessment of such an event is what gives the cable news focus. They had plenty of content to work with, and they provided an important public service to help a fearful nation grapple with comprehending what was happening. What Stewart had seen as the potential of the 24 hour news channels were the old principles of the big three: being able
to quickly assess the information at hand when there was a lot coming in; being able to
do so dispassionately; and without an agenda or clear absurdity or corruption.

Yet saturation of news, especially when it is not focused, is part of the push back against the 24 hour model. As Ted Koppel commented to Stewart in 2002:

The problem is they get so stuck on a story, like the recent snipper story, that they can’t get off it anymore. So they stay on it hour, after hour, after hour, and instead of really putting stories in context and giving you the most important aspects of that story, they give you the latest news. Something happened three minutes ago, it immediately rises to the top of the pile, whether it’s important or not.

24 hour news is not simply poor content due to being on a loop for ratings, but finding the time to analyze or digest content is as difficult for journalists as it is for audiences. Dan Rather’s break in character on Letterman’s show after 9/11 demonstrated the strain of a crisis situation sustaining more than a few days. Koppel points out what Stewart does as well; sustained anxiety and the state of perpetual “now” are debilitating to the journalist—in endurance and ethos—and to public discourse and the audience’s understanding of context.

In “Journalism,” John Oliver pointed out that sources used by 24 hour news are often still quality, even if their delivery suffers. Oliver explained the way in which print media and local broadcasts were still an integral part of substantive investigative reports used by national broadcasts and digital news. Oliver also repeated throughout the piece that shows like his would not be able to function without actual information from print
and local journalists. Yet both print and local broadcasts are having a hard time of surviving due to trends online.

However, some of the better investigative stories are doing well as film interpretation. Oliver specifically mentioned two movies from 2015, *Truth* and *Spotlight*. *Truth* focused on former CBS producer Mary Mapes’s account of the news story surrounding Dan Rather stepping down as CBS anchor in 2004, and *Spotlight* focused on an investigative report from *The Boston Globe* that uncovered pederasty in the priesthood. At the end of Oliver’s piece, he presented a parody on *Spotlight* called *Stoplight*. The parody exemplified pressures that print and local media felt from the push toward digital content. Without the sensationalism of a raccoon-cat fight, or “rac-cat,” there would be no place for local journalists to be allowed to investigate corruption at City Hall. However, due to the rise of implementing stories like “rac-cat,” journalists are being pushed toward fluffy content that catches attention rather than informs, or “infotainment.”

**Infotainment: Murphy Brown and Morning Glory**

High modernism used the neologism “infotainment” to mark fears over a shift toward various sensationalist tactics and a shift away from the importance of truth. Mostly, the fear concerned style in the shift toward ratings over public service. Two examples that offer different perspectives on infotainment and the news are *Murphy Brown* and the movie *Morning Glory*. *Murphy Brown* covered tabloid sensationalism from the late 1980s and a pointed moral message
in their commentary against infotainment in “It’s How You Play the Game.” *Morning Glory* is a more lighthearted lampoon that gives the side of a television producer at a morning show dealing with an anchor out of time and place. Each example provides another way to look at the high modern ideals and the emphasis of style.

*Murphy Brown* is a news satire from the late 1980s. At that time, the issue of infotainment was brought up often in relation to broadcast journalism, and the show addressed it specifically in the first season episode “It’s How You Play the Game.” They framed infotainment as sensationalism found in tabloids in print and television. In that context, infotainment was low-brow, vulgar, confrontational and did not value truth, only ratings. In the episode, Brown and her fellow journalists at *FYI* did a show that capitalized on sex, hookers and political affairs in a way that mimicked real daytime talk shows including the extreme example of *Jerry Springer*. *FYI* was not simply shifting styles for ratings, but rather to make sure a well-crafted, high modernist report had an audience. After their show, ratings for *FYI* spiked. The characters were exhilarated. However, they then worried about the compromises made to the state of the high modernist model.

The *Murphy Brown* episodes relates to Ted Koppel’s point to Stewart. Coverage like that of the DC sniper in 2002 proved to be more keeping current than careful analysis. Journalists and audiences had little to no time to think about what was happening or what content was related to. Baym also brought up how different styles of sensationalism catered to cable companies’ interest to grow ratings. If news shows lacked
visual interest from video coverage of the actual event, they could create diversions of sorts through technological aesthetics.

Along with this aestheticization of the political-normative sphere, though, we also now are seeing the flip side of infotainment, the politicization of the aesthetic-expressive sphere…In a media era marked by the permeability of form and the fluidity of content, the political-normative has become interwoven with the aesthetic-expressive, while discourses of high-modernism and postmodernism, of rational-critical debate and aesthetic consumption, regularly collide. (Baym 17-18)

Over time, CNN gained holograms, green screens, larger interactive screens and interactive infographics while in turn distancing from a focus on rationality, facts and policy research.

Anchors and field reporters also operated on the hot-potato level of whoever saw something said something. Whether it was true or not; something happened. Stewart focused on a particularly absurd moment with CNN after the Boston marathon bombing. The screen was split between four different perspectives, and oftentimes one or more of the female reporters would wildly wave to get the attention of the producers. Stewart commented,

While all the other networks chose to have a, whatcha-call-it-there—a anchor, in the studio that kept the chaotic coverage from going adrift—CNN went with more of your sandlot football, “everyone go long!”
forcing their reporters to let the control room know when they were open for an on camera pass. (“This Is CNN?”)

Sensationalism is continually used as a dividing line for a program’s content as well as the ethos of the reporters. The question of ethos is part of why Stewart giggled when Brian Williams switched between euphemistically regarding Ted Koppel as a “big giant head” and explaining Iraq war coverage and investigations (Baym 4). Infotainment now is closer to John Oliver’s parody Stoplight. Digital content concerning animals is a viral, trending clickbait that pushes out investigating corruption at a city hall.

However, there is another side besides that in favor of the high modernist. Morning Glory, while a generally lighthearted comedy, also discusses the basic struggle between news and infotainment. Harrison Ford portrays a former anchor of the Koppel and Rather-vintage who still has a contract to fulfill for his parent company. He had been replaced as anchor by younger journalists who spent less time on investigative reports and more on the eternal-now. Rachel McAdams’s character is a new producer of a failing morning show who finds Ford’s contractual loophole and exploits it to get his ethos to lend the show credibility and hopefully help the ratings. Yet McAdam’s finds that Ford is not enough to boost ratings to keep the show from cancelation.

The plot makes light of the changing situation of news in regards to network relations and ratings. However, it also highlights the mesmerizing potential of unleashing the power of trending from sensational tactics, not unlike the Murphy Brown example. McAdam’s character is motivated to increase ratings to save the show, which is more important than the dignity of high modernism. Besides Ford’s character, no one is upset
using sensationalist tactics. Tactics include Ernie the weatherman skydiving with a go-cam and getting a tattoo on live television. But the plot does give Ford his “bran,” a reference in the movie about the dry and healthy aspect of the news. Ford leads a breaking news report during the morning show. However later, to keep McAdams as producer, Ford breaks character, ignoring high modern decorum, making a frittata on-air.

Vantage points in *Murphy Brown* and *Morning Glory* are just as important as message and style. Both comment on the *ethos* of news anchors and how that is linked to their experience, their high modernist situation and their work. When Ford shows up to the planning meeting for his first show, his defense to McAdams goes,

FORD. I’ve won eight Peabody’s. A Pulitzer. Sixteen Emmy’s. I was shot through the forearm in Bosnia. Pulled Colin Powell from a burning jeep. I laid a cool washcloth on Mother Teresa’s forehead during a cholera epidemic. I had lunch with Dick Cheney.

MCADAMS. You’re here for the money.

FORD. That is correct. (*Morning Glory*)

Infotainment does not follow one style, but it does immediately counter high modernism and its *ethos*. Yet as Baym pointed out, satires like *The Daily Show* do not, and generally happen to have similar ideals to high modernism, or at least differ from the infotainment of 24 hour news. But instead of high modernism’s marriage to a rigid style, objectivity and the truth, *The Daily Show* pursues its interest, its style of satire, and provides another kind of commentary.
Comedy and Commentary

Besides the ideological overlaps of news and national events, stand-up is another influence on *The Daily Show*. Stewart described the “morning cup of sadness” as a blend of going over the news, writers’ reactions to it, and how they would cultivate content for comedic bits. The process mined for absurdities in the news, a stance for each bit, and general contributions the “spine” of that night’s show. Examining the process helps explain how *The Daily Show* became a platform for issues, a diversity of opinions, and a model for changing public discourse via punchline.

Process and Stand-Up

Stewart and many of the writers and correspondents on *The Daily Show* crafted their process from years of stand-up comedy experience. Stand-up requires a certain basic understanding of rhetoric and its principles. Stephen Colbert’s final speech to Stewart on *The Daily Show* summed it up this way,

You said to me, and to many other people here years ago, never to thank you because we owe you nothing. It is one of the few times I’ve known you to be dead wrong. We owe you—and not just what you did for our career by employing us to come on this tremendous show that you made—we owe you because we learned from you. We learned from you, by example, how to do a show with intention, how to work with clarity, how to treat people with respect. You are infuriatingly good at your job…All of
us who got to work with you for 16 years are better at our jobs because we got to watch you do yours. (“A Send-Off”)

While the speech was touching, it hit the main facets of rhetoric Stewart explained in his interviews: intent, process, clarity, and also learning. Stewart explained these components from his own experiences and evolution on the show. Research for *The Daily Show* was as much learning through interacting with fellow comics as about the general situation of the world and changes in the news industry.

The 2010 documentary *I Am Comic* shows stand-up comedy through various interactions between comics, the comic community, and the audience. The documentary cuts between interviews with different comics who were nationally known around 2010 as well as follows comedian Ritch Shydner, a former headliner who performed on Johnny Carson’s *Tonight Show*. Shydner is encouraged to go back on stage and becomes the example of how to craft and revise a stand-up set, or series of jokes. The documentary follows Shydner getting past rocky shows and thinking of new material to try on new audiences. You are made aware of how Shydner uses certain jokes to either stretch them out or craft them into a more coherent joke.

The documentary interviews comics about working through their material with audiences. Like Colbert’s point to Stewart, comics figure out what material is relevant and how to present it through not only the interaction with audiences, but also with other comics. The rhetorical art, or *technē*, is learned through these kinds of repeated interactions as a foundation of being able to effectively land their jokes, as well as craft a style. Relevance then is in part awareness of the situation, both outside the stage as well
as right next to it. And being aware of the situation is also being able to tell where and when to craft the jokes and when to pull out the polished punchlines. So as a process, stand-up entails comprehending and interpreting events to cultivate concepts for comedic material necessary to pursue a particular kind of punchline.

Due to Stewart and the writers’ histories with stand-up, stand-up’s style of revision plays a role in honing their process, Stewart’s editorial authority, and the overall machine of the show. As John Oliver remarked, “The show is an amazing machine. And again, it’s a machine that Jon has very strategically and intricately built himself. You know he’s taught almost everyone in that building how to do a particular version of their job they do so skillfully” (“John Oliver”). The machine is generally a heavily scripted show, structured bits that address topical material, and fresh talent in the show’s production team. As mentioned in the last chapter, the show generally works around three structured bits: Stewart’s monologue, a bit with correspondents, and an interview. In each of these, the prep work involved heavy research on the topic, potential props, video montages, graphics and lighting work, and a variety of other jobs depending on the bits. Stewart documented the office space the production team inhabited at the end of his final show to represent his version of The Daily Show. People walked down corridors at the camera, watched 24 hour news until their eyes bled, were in costume or hauling props, or added one more version of scripted chaos (“Inside The Daily Show”).

Social Commentary. In I Am Comic, Roseanne Barr related stand-up comedy as “the last form of free speech.” Stewart often argued that The Daily Show was not simply comedy and defended it as a form of social commentary. In “Bernie Goldberg Fires Back,”
Stewart responds to comments from FOX News commentator Bernie Goldberg. Goldberg claimed satire was comedy but somehow was not social commentary.

Okay, two things. One, not all of us have your guts, Bernie. It takes a tough man to walk into O’Reilly’s lion’s den and criticize liberal elites. And two, to say that comedians have to decide whether they’re comedians or social commentators, uh, comedians do social commentary through comedy. That’s how it’s worked for thousands of years. I have not moved out of the comedian’s box into the news box. The news box is movin’ toward me. (‘Bernie Goldberg Fires Back’)

At the apex of his response, Stewart stood with church choir behind him, harmonizing a profane response back to Goldberg.

Russell Peterson also points out that social commentary is an integral part of The Daily Show’s satire. Writers’ perspectives are important to what they include and what they leave out. Stewart never shied away from having, or showing, opinion. Stewart influenced both Colbert and Samantha Bee to have an opinion as part of their comedy perspective. Bee said to Charlie Rose, “I think that he always encouraged me to dig deeper into my own point of view and I think that was very important” (“Samantha Bee”). Yet how the opinion was shown was just as important as having one. Both cultivated the style and humor of The Daily Show.

For example, Stewart occasionally focused on how the public defines ideals of American democracy. In his 2016 appearance on The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, at the end of a The Daily Show style monologue against GOP presidential candidate Donald
Trump, Stewart challenged the abstract ideal of equality. “‘We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal’…those fighting to be included in the ideal of equality are not being divisive. Those fighting to keep those people out are” (“John Stewart Takes Over”).

Stewart also appeared on the last show of The Nightly Show with Larry Wilmore on August 18, 2016. The cancelation of the show was abrupt and unexpected, especially since the show had a significant following after a year. Stewart spoke to former The Daily Show correspondent and host of The Nightly Show, Larry Wilmore:

You started a conversation that was not on television when you began.
And you worked with a group of people you invited to that conversation to collaborate with you, to sharpen that conversation. And what you don’t realize is, you walk out of this room and that conversation doesn’t end.
And all the people that you worked with are going to take what they learned here, and what they learned from you, and the beautiful experience that they had, and you’re going to start to see them doing things in the business as well, and taking that and taking other experiences. And you’re going to watch that flourish, and that’s going to have you on it. (“Jon Stewart”)

Stewart’s speech partially parallels the sentiment of Kenneth Burke’s parlor metaphor from The Philosophy of Literary Form. Burke describes a room filled with vibrant conversation about important topics. Stewart’s words highlight the importance of the one person who dipped the oar, as well as pointing out the relevance of the oar dipper to
where the oar was dipped. In general, the conversation is not only about a topic, but the
way in which the conversation was conducted. Style is just as important as the opinion
that supports it in order to have a resonating impact.

Wilmore relates to *The Daily Show* and social commentary because of Wilmore’s
connection with *The Daily Show* and its style. On *The Nightly Show*, Wilmore’s attention
to social commentary blended with his previous time on *The Daily Show*. Then Wilmore
offered his own take on how to address social commentary. The show was a place for
highly opinionated comedic talent in various segments like a roundtable discussion,
“keepin’ it 100,” and Wilmore’s own monologues leading the show.

*The Nightly Show* addressed topics differently in the show’s overall style and
delivery than *The Daily Show*. Wilmore did not focus on news media from the same
angle, used stereotypes more often, brought a different perspective and type of humor to
the exigence of race topics, and was not as highly scripted. However, a *The Daily Show*
script would generally still include discussion of the same range of topics such as dildos,
farts, racism and institutional corruption. Ideological perspective plays a key role not only
in topics chosen, but in how those topics are addressed.

**Political Correctness, Taboo and Dark Humor**

Social commentary of any sort addresses the politically correct, the politically
incorrect, and the taboo. The politically correct is generally what to do, the incorrect is
what not to do; they are very different and equally important, but both are part of
executing style in comedy. Comics generally address taboo content with the politically
incorrect style and do not necessarily address the politically correct. Either the politically correct is part of their ideology or style, or not. The audience either grasps the comic’s perspective or not based on the style. By why joke about a taboo subject, what is the purpose? Is the primary goal of the joke to shock or to illustrate a different perspective? This section examines examples from comics Jerry Seinfeld and Sarah Silverman focusing on topics such as 9/11 to highlight ways in which styles of political correctness and taboo topics overlap with social commentary.

Political correctness can be seen as a help or hindrance to comics and audiences. Jerry Seinfeld interpreted an audience’s reaction to his gay French king joke. “Comedy is kind of where you can feel like an opinion. They thought, what do you mean ‘gay’? What are you talking about ‘gay’?” (“Jerry Seinfeld”). Sarah Silverman also happened to often use “gay” in a derogatory way in her comedy. She later talked to Vanity Fair about her process of changing her habits (“Sarah Silverman Says”). In each case, the comic dealt with the impact of the audience and political correctness on their style. Yet the topic of each comic’s bit or process was invoking taboo and dark humor.

Dark, or black, humor deals with topics of taboo to make people cringe, shock them, or convey poor taste. Topics would include something like 9/11 or targeting specific groups of people such as women and minorities. Even in 2016, certain ways of using the topic of 9/11 are still seen as bad taste. One example is a comic’s homage both to the show Seinfeld as well as a literal example of bad taste. The scene of the script is set in New York City’s immediate aftermath of 9/11 (Domineau). The script is in the style of the show, focusing on the four main characters, and each of them deal with a facet of the
larger situation. Jerry is obsessed with getting away from the dust that is everywhere in
the city. Elaine wants to break up with a guy who survived the towers’ fall. George is
mistaken for a first responder and glories in getting free pastries. And Kramer lent his
box cutter to one of the hijackers and wants another one from the government. The
situation and the characters’ traits are accurate and darkly funny, yet fall under an
exercise in bad taste (Frucci).

In other instances, the style of the bad taste is in question. What is the intent of the
humor’s target, and why is the audience laughing? In I Am Comic, one comic reflected,
“did they laugh because the joke is funny, or did they laugh because the joke was
shocking?” Daniel Tosh’s rape joke is an example when it was not clear whether humor
or shock prompted people’s laughter. In dark humor especially, a joke’s intent is in
question. Does the joke highlight the style of bad taste, or is it a form of scapegoating?
For example, rape jokes are commonly dark humor because of the topic. Yet how are
they told? Is the comic talking about rape for shock value? And if they are, are rape
victims the butt of the joke? The joke can be told from the perspective of someone raped
or pick on the rapist. Dark humor is as much about perspective as style and taboo.

However, style is just as important as point of view in how the joke is told and
what the target is. The Jackson Katz TED talk spins the topic of rape to face the subject,
or the rapist as well as offers the perspective from rape victims and their allies. Comics
use the shift in perspective as part of their style, like Silverman from earlier, or Louis
C.K. on men and women; “globally and historically, we’re the number one cause of
injury and mayhem to women. We’re the worst thing that ever happens to them. That’s
true. You know what our number one threat is? Heart disease” (“There Is No Greater
Threat”).

Potentially, audiences could laugh at a joke about a gay French king swiping a
cell phone. The focus, however, would not be an essential framework behind the gesture;
the perspective needs to shift. Seinfeld’s complaint about political correctness is
important; it argues how the relevance of topic matter, style and intent are related. For
instance, Seinfeld’s rant itself was generally a series of repetitions of how Seinfeld
perceive the audience’s complaint, and Seinfeld did not engage the topic matter or the
way the joke was performed. He was not looking to learn from his own audience, the
style of his joke, or change his perspective. Instead, he used that audience as a scapegoat
for a rant against political correctness. In contrast, when Silverman changed her use of
gay, she was not focusing on political correctness but rather how her content was relevant
and how that impacted the style of her comedy.

Ideological frameworks of the comic and the audience can immediately shift due
to the intensity of the situation. Style is also affected and can ramp up or be tamed. In the
first post-9/11 Saturday Night Live, SNL creator Lorne Michaels’s timid question to NYC
mayor Rudi Giuliani demonstrated a sense of vulnerability and shaken-ness among the
comics as well as the nation. The intensity of the immediate aftermath impacted SNL, The
Daily Show and other late night venues because the majority of them hail in NYC. Lorne
Michaels could have said a lot more than he did, even in jest. However, in the moment,
he refrained. What punchlines are pulled and with what effect?
Rolling Stone just published in August 2016 that George Carlin refrained from using material he had recorded on a comedy album on Sept. 10, 2001. The album contained his line about hoping that a large meteor hit the planet and wiped a bunch of people out. He had said it before, but Carlin shelved the material for an upcoming special and then refrained from releasing the album (Grow). Carlin’s remarks may have elicited a severe backlash, but the topic of 9/11 at that time, much less now, is policed to how it is approached and for what purpose. Do you make a joke because you can? Do you make a well-crafted joke, even in bad taste, and hope the people get it?

The scope of events like 9/11 often sour general reactions toward dark humor. How comics and satirists use the events for material is not questioned so much as why use the even as material at all. When asked during the 2004 presidential campaign if Stewart would like to see President Bush reelected, Stewart quipped, “you believe that I would rather see the world go up in flames so that I have more to make jokes about?...I didn’t know that we appeared that soulless” (“Jon Stewart on Sky News”). The sentiment toward policing comedy also falls under Seinfeld’s complaint of political correctness. Political correctness can be used tyrannically especially when people are vulnerable and afraid. They avoid discussing the taboo, in a variety of ways. One way is by scapegoating comics. Comics can be hyperbolized like one of Stewart’s depictions of CNN’s Nancy Grace. Grace covered a particularly grizzly court case that had taken over 24 hour news outlets in May 2013, and Stewart inferred she may have been a tragedy succubus (“Nancy Grace”).

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However, the taboo still remains. Catharsis is also a motive for comedians to comment on relevant and tragic issues. The main theme of *A Decade of Dark Humor* and its focus on irony after 9/11 revolves around irony as a means of catharsis. During the Eric Garner grand jury decision, Stewart mentioned,

I know doin’ those bits helps no one, other than maybe us, at the show individually, as a creative outlet—a catharsis—a way of processing emotion that might otherwise be undigested. By the way, that process brought to you by Arby’s. Arby’s: you think pain and grief are hard to digest. (“Eric Garner”).

The Garner trial was particularly hard at a time when police violence against blacks had been more televised, yet the police were not being reprimanded or given jail time. Stewart also quoted Mark Twain, saying, “I honestly don’t know what to say. If comedy is tragedy plus time, then I need more fucking time. But I would really settle for less fucking tragedy to be honest with you.” (“Eric Garner”).

**Women’s Issues**

*The Daily Show*’s scene needed to be established before understanding how women factored in. Misogyny plagues comedy overall, but it plays a more nuanced role with the evolution of *The Daily Show*. While *The Daily Show* started out with blatant misogyny—in their style, no consistent female correspondents and generally avoiding women’s issues—that changed. But not simply because they added some obligatory talent, or shifted their terminology like Silverman,
but they changed their style.

2010 articles from feminist blog *Jezebel* help to explore how *The Daily Show* offered a unique example of female and minority representation during Stewart’s later tenure. The articles touched upon the small ratio of women to men in *The Daily Show*, which was common in comedy. Sexual harassment was noted as a reason for both a hostile work environment and the lower number of female comics. One main example uncovered was Letterman’s scandal in 2009. However, the articles are also important in how they did not address the quality and effect of who were there.

This section analyzes examples of how misogynist tone affects the style, delivery and content of jokes in stand-up, late night and *The Daily Show*. This section then addresses the shift of *The Daily Show* toward changing style and representation with pieces from Samantha Bee, Kristen Schaal and Jessica Williams. This section also examines the complexity of Stewart’s own stylistic shift toward a kind of feminism in the show, as well as the way *The Daily Show* broached women’s issues using the specific example of abortion.

Misogynist Tone in Comedy

In the book *The Late Shift*, Bill Carter’s account of late night hosts changing positions is more than a moment of animosity. The narrative is less simply about comic chops and a television tradition than territory and business. The situation offers a look at the patriarchal influences of the actions taken. There is a vicious, pseudo-masculinity that comes across as part of the atmosphere of the 1990s into the early 2000s, especially in
dark comedy, late night, and satire. Extreme performances of this style include, “shock jock” radio show, *The Howard Stern Show*, which cultivated the movie *Private Parts*, and Jimmy Kimmel and Adam Carolla’s *The Man Show*. Women were often highlighted on these shows for their stereotyped beauty and/or nakedness. Women could also be a snarky-side-kick who would tear down the objectified stereotype who was jumping on a trampoline (“Man Show”).

David Letterman faced a public sex scandal in 2009 that included women on *The Late Show*. Letterman carefully addressed the situation in a monologue on *The Late Show*, often mentioning many lawyers (Letterman). Letterman’s position as a comedy host on a broadcast network was opposed to that kind of controversy, at least because it was almost literally impossible to explain it on air under FCC regulations. Letterman also consistently harassed female guests. There was enough clips of Letterman’s actions to become a Youtube montage (Gawker). Letterman was also the literal butt of Tina Fey’s burlesque at the end of Letterman’s tenure on *The Late Show* (“Entertainment Tonight”).

Letterman’s situation or behavior were not unique. Amy Schumer’s sketch “Celebrity Interview” could draw from the history of late night behavior of belittling or objectifying female guests. Helen Mirren’s interview in 1974 is one explicit example outside the U.S. (Caesonia’s channel). Mirren was asked a series of questions that were generally rhetorical and essentialized her as a sex object. These questions were not unlike some of the comments from Letterman in the montage.

Irin Carmon’s *Jezebel* piece “The *Daily Show*’s Woman Problem” addressed a certain perspective of *The Daily Show*’s misogyny by looking at the ebb and flow of
comediennes until 2010. After Kilborn left *The Daily Show*, some women who stayed commented on being presented and treated in a similar way to Robin Quivers, Howard Stern’s sidekick: the pretty cynic who knows her place in the patriarchy. Early *The Daily Show* writer and correspondent Lauren Weedman remarked to Carmon upon the way in which the producers of *The Daily Show* at the time told them “it helped” to be pretty (“The *Daily Show’s* Woman Problem”), but generally their appearance did not impact their maintaining a position as correspondent. The article did not specify reasons why Beth Littlefield left in 2000, or Stacy Grenrock Woods stayed until 2003. Also, they were not the only correspondents to leave at that time, or have a short time with *The Daily Show*. However, their leaving left a gap in the show’s diversity.

Co-creator and correspondent Lizz Winstead left as well before 1999, but that was geared toward differences with Craig Kilborn (“The *Daily Show’s* Woman Problem”). His generally flippant, irreverent, and at times obnoxiously condescending tone, was in turn part of the comic tone of *The Daily Show* under Kilborn. However, Kilborn was also participating in the general framing and style of comedy at that time. Comic writer Nell Scovel discussed her brief time with Letterman, and wrote “Letterman and Me” for *Vanity Fair* when Letterman’s scandal broke to discuss issues of the lack of women in the comedy writers’ room of late night. She laid out the situation of power, of how not it was not just Letterman who would use status to make women’s jobs unstable if the women did not sleep with them, and how it affected the few women there to the point of creating a hostile work environment. Those conditions made it difficult to foster the talent of the women there, much less include any more. Scovell also started the piece by pointing out,
“At this moment, there are more females serving on the United States Supreme Court than are writing for *Late Show with David Letterman, The Jay Leno Show, and The Tonight Show with Conan O’Brien* combined. Out of the 50 or so comedy writers working on these programs, exactly zero are women. It would be funny if it weren’t true.”

The situation of these examples plays into the tone of the writing room as much as it does into the material. For instance, when Stewart came onto the show in 1999, the Monica Lewinsky trial was still fresh on people’s minds. Jokes about presidential blow jobs were recycled between all the late night circuits without a second thought; a collection of one-liners includes Leno, Letterman, Fey, O’Brien, and Stewart. Stewart offered,

Monica Lewinsky has returned to network TV. … I remember years ago she said she wanted her life back. Then I guess she got it back and said ‘Well, this sucks.’ … She’s hosting a show called *Mr. Personality* because apparently the new Fox show *Blow Jobs, Blow Jobs, Blow Jobs,* isn’t ready. (Kurtzman)

This kind of joke is included in the general term of “frat humor” that many articles labeled *The Daily Show* with prior to Stewart (Yahr).

Explicit—both clear and profane—examples of a patriarchal-hegemonic style are generally labeled as dark or blue comedy. These types of comedy are where differences between the sexes can be focused on as the main topics and part of the primary framework of the jokes. That framework often plays upon an essentialist perspective with
nuance in the approach. For a somewhat complex example, look to George Carlin’s “On Patriarchy.” Carlin plays with essentialism in the line, “Women are crazy, and men are stupid” (Carlin). As he sees them, these are inherent traits, yet not quite. It does not matter if he believes them or not, he is narrating a framework. He continues with, “Women are crazy because men are stupid” (Carlin). Carlin’s explanation here switches on the first statement, yet also reinforces it. People laugh in part because of the taboo of the statement; it is shocking due to the perspective, but also the delivery is blunt. The essential truths are constructed by the absurdities laid out by the premise of the statement; it is both stylistically syllogistic and silly.

In 2005, Stewart and Colbert used both taboo and style to work through a discussion of first lady Laura Bush’s comments on horse semen in “Laura After Hours.” Also in 2005, the piece “Look Who’s Talking” made obscure sexual inferences about Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s secret service name being changed to “Ping-Pong Balls.” In 2007, there was “Miss American Spy,” a piece that lampooned film noir and 40s pulp novels while talking about former CIA spy Valerie Plame Wilson. Stewart used outdated, objectifying terms, while attempting to turn titles and legal terms of her trial into a euphemism filled narrative.

In more pointed, patriarchal and condescending moments, style is seemingly not alluded to or discussed but blatantly stated. The situation is not quite what it seems, however. For instance, in “On Patriarchy,” Carlin expresses that he flat out hates feminists because they could not take a joke. The statement distracts with an implication, or implications can be made, like comedy is either too sophisticated or too outside of
feminists’ range of understanding because they are too morally frigid. But what Carlin’s declaration against feminists does is act as a rhetorical trigger. Carlin shuts down the conversation. There is no way to directly refute what he just said because if you attempt to refute it upon his grounds you just give validity to his claim.

However, for any feminist comic, instead of being a put down, Carlin’s declaration is a challenge. How do you best undermine the hubris of the claim? Offer an alternative claim. Offering alternative claims also works in situations with any patriarchal-based condescension, such as Molly Ivins’ interaction with Bill O’Reilly in the 2004 CSPAN luncheon. Ivins shuts down O’Reilly’s claims by offering another point of view rather than taking up his premise.

Intersectionality, Identitarianism and Style

What Ivins does is an issue of style. While she exemplifies how to fend off preconceived notions of personal traits or stereotypes about someone in a debate, she also diverts the direction of the discussion away from them. Similarly, feminists have offered a variety of approaches toward representation and identitarianism. The question is still how, or even whether, you respond to patriarchy at all. How do you guide the conversation into something different?

To situate the debate, first a refresher definition of identitarianism; in *Inclusive Feminism*, Naomi Zack defines limits of intersectionality in the extreme of identitarianism. While intersectionality helps to explain a current schema of the creation of social-political identities, identitarianism uses intersectionality, not as a talking point,
but rather as definitive essences of social-political determinism. In identitarianism, the individual essentializes traits of an identity that intersectionality has identified. Those traits are that person, much less define how they are to be understood by others. Identitarianism is isolationist and purist, but mostly it shuts down argument through competitions of essentialism. How feminist, how female, or how whatever are you? Identitarianism is only one way to take intersectionality, as Zack points out. Intersectionality generally explains the history of these characteristics as markers of definition that can be socially constructed. One alternative application is inclusivity, as mentioned in the previous chapter with Sandoval’s differential consciousness and Foucault’s subjugated knowledges. The mechanisms of the discussion need to be addressed and focus needs to be redirected from essentialism. Instead, experience offers a basis for the situation of the conversation, to address the mechanisms and go beyond those experiences.

Comedy can offer a setting for both the lenses of identitarianism and inclusivity. Stereotypes are a go-to for establishing the framework of jokes. But using them generally tends to only reinforce the stereotype rather than offer an alternative. For instance, Amy Schumer’s sketch on princesses, “Princess Amy – Uncensored” focuses on a mash-up between the fairytale and reality of being a princess. Schumer plays a seemingly naïve peasant initially dreaming about marrying the prince after going to a ball and wearing nice clothes. Yet the clothes are restrictive, the prince is her cousin, and not even fairy godfather Tim Gunn can save Schumer from being beheaded in the middle of a revolution. The escalation of the situation is absurd and ironic. But besides being well
researched, well edited, and darkly funny, there is no new way women are being viewed, rather much the opposite.

What the sketch does is precisely what feminism does with patriarchy. Schumer exposes the structure of patriarchy, but in so doing, reifies that structure in relation to feminism. Again, feminism’s relation to patriarchy can be seen as a negative framework of feminism, like Kristeva pointed out in “Women Can Never Be Defined.” Feminism has historically been a response to patriarchy, and for that reason, is negatively defined by patriarchy. To get out from under the shadow of patriarchy means finding an alternative to simply attempting to counter patriarchy.

Schumer’s is only one comedienne’s feminist style, and women who use the stereotypes generally are aware of how they use them and for what purpose. For instance, in the clip “Sex: A Journey of Love,” Ilana Glazer sits naked, yet censored, in front of the camera to point out things that can make someone sexy just being themselves, arguably in a way that is not focused on gender (Chronic Gamer Girl). The overall approach mocks objectification and male gaze while the audience enjoys Glazer smashing a cake in her face over a bubble bath.

Similarly, Nikki Glaser’s “Comedians Sitting on Vibrators Getting Coffee” pokes fun at the masculine stereotypes of Seinfeld’s “Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee.” While Glaser and her guest are women sitting on another commodified phallic symbol, their use of wands confronts the taboo of women having control over their own sexuality. While there is no inherent element to Glazer or Glaser’s examples, their approaches
toward the situations offer something new, and even redefining, for women as well as poking fun at patriarchy rather than patriarchy’s plight on women.

Schumer also pokes fun at patriarchy with a piece parodying *12 Angry Men*, “Debating the Chub.” The video is in black and white and focuses on several men grouped in a sparse room. The men look over evidence and make angry remarks. The remarks are geared toward judging Schumer’s appearance. The sketch is absurd because it is frivolous in relation to the original *12 Angry Men*, yet it addresses a reality that is still a hard mark against women. Women are still judged by their appearance rather than their character, especially in media representation. Schumer has dealt with impacts of the issue herself, not just as a topic in her comedy.

However, feminist negation, like identitarianism or inclusivity, is only one part or option of a feminist comedy style. Generally, Schumer can focus on history or personal traits or common current situations. But the main goal of Schumer’s sketch can be speculated upon; she can be educating, pushing the inclusiveness from political correctness, as well as reify a victim-personae under patriarchal oppression. Her topic is patriarchy-related and the style is satire, but her feminism does not offer something outside of the established, generally 2nd wave and white, feminist framework. Other comics and platforms such as *The Daily Show*, highlight different ways of pushing the feminist framework.
Jezebel, Samantha Bee and Shifts for The Daily Show

Irin Carmon’s “The Daily Show’s Women Problem” also addressed the lack of women in leading roles in The Daily Show. Co-creator and early executive producer Madeline Smithberg commented in the article, “‘The planet is sexist,’ Smithberg adds. ‘At least in comedy we don't have genital mutilation. That we know of.’” But Carmon did not note the change since the beginning of The Daily Show, including with women behind the scenes, or the way patriarchy impacted The Daily Show’s active search for female correspondents.

Carmon’s first article stirred a response from “The Women of The Daily Show” in an online letter originally posted on Comedy Central’s website. Fragments of the response remain in a New York Times blog post “In Open Letter, Women of ‘The Daily Show’ Respond to Charges of Sexism.” Both the response and the NYT article point out identitarian and classist strains of Carmon’s definition of representation for The Daily Show. The article focused solely on the women in front of the camera rather than behind. Also, the article focused on the number of women rather than the substance of those who were there. It also did not compare The Daily Show to the rest of late night comedy, which again, did not fare much better.

Carmon addressed pushback in a second article, “5 Unconvincing Excuses for Daily Show Sexism.” She responded to topics ranging from those who generally thought Stewart was a nice guy, glossed over all of comedy being like that, or that she was making a big deal for a comedy show. Carmon also addressed how the workplace is generally hostile to women due to accepted status quo and women’s own conception of
their abilities, much less problems with sexual harassment (“5 Unconvincing Excuses For Daily Show Sexism”).

Yet Carmon still did not address the women who were there, in front of the camera. Samantha Bee started The Daily Show in 2003. She was the first female correspondent to stay with The Daily Show, and also ended up being the longest running correspondent over Stewart’s entire tenure when she left in 2015. Bee was able to grow with the show in a way that only Stewart and some of the writers would have the opportunity to, simply based on longevity and the variety of pieces she participated in. Not all of her over 300 pieces on the show were dedicated to the category of women’s issues, but she provided one of the first consistent voices to remark upon them in a way that worked with Stewart’s editorial style.

Carmon pointed out another reason why Bee in particular was important in a statement from Weedman:

The writers want to be able to write for a female reporter — but not too female,” says Weedman. She says it was hard to figure out what that meant exactly. "I would pitch something like, can I do a segment on women's self-help or on fitness. And they didn't want anything like that…Ed Helms got to have his mole removed [in a segment], but they weren't going to do, a women goes to the gynecologist. They felt like at the time it wasn't their audience. (“The Daily Show’s Woman Problem”)

While the point about audience is important due to the shifting conversations on women generally, it does not impact the specific shift of how The Daily Show would work with
women. Not knowing what kind of a piece or what kind of a correspondent would be a “female reporter, but not too female,” is key to events that came after Weedman in *The Daily Show’s* shift. While for *Jezebel*, the ambiguity is inferred to be a sexist limitation due to the larger situation of comedy, for *The Daily Show* it is more an insight about women’s place in *The Daily Show* as a place of growth, even before 2010. How do these men approach women as comedienes when there are none in the writer’s den to begin with? Carmon makes the point in “5 Unconvincing Excuses” that having someone who is a longtime correspondent was crucial to building that kind of diversity that Carmon was pointing out as generally not there.

In early 2009, Bee and Stewart riffed on *The Daily Show’s* frat humor in “Changefest 2009: The End of Frat Boy Culture.” Bee was remarking upon Obama’s win of the white house as a shift from the Bush administration, but her remarks were a series of supposedly accidental double-entendres. Stewart giggled and repeated her unintended punchlines to Bee’s mock frustration. The commentary not only suggested that frat culture was not dead, but that *The Daily Show* was part of it whether Bee liked it or not. Bee ended the segment in a huff, “I work with children!” (Bee and Stewart) Yet the point of the piece proved part of the shift toward otherwise; there was an awareness, and the frat culture was being made fun of rather than simply being participated in.

Kristen Schaal’s entrance in 2008 offered not only another female voice, but another way to work out the style of sketches with more female voices. Schaal arrived soon after Sarah Palin had entered the 2008 presidential campaign as GOP candidate John McCain’s vice president pick. The kind of attention Palin had been getting often
focused on her appearance, her off-the-cuff speaking style, as well as that little was known about her governing style as mayor and governor of Alaska. In the bit “Hosting Duties,” Schaal decided to start a segment without Stewart and sat in his chair. Stewart came back onto the set to see Schaal there, and their conversation played out as a parody between McCain and Palin. Standing over Schaal’s shoulder, Bee mentioned how she had been at *The Daily Show* longer than Schaal and was the only woman who could effectively do the job. Bee was mocking Hillary Clinton’s position, as she had just lost the primary to Barack Obama.

The show addressed women’s issues more as more national political situations cropped up after 2008. Kristen Schaal’s “Burka Ban” in 2009 discussed the double standards of France’s decision to ban burkas. The decision was a political statement about ideological oppression and women’s dress, but it did not address the ideological oppression of beauty standards of the West. Schaal did not address islamophobia in France but rather opened up the debate on ideological restrictions of dress for women overall. As women were highlighted as a demographic for the 2010 election, in “Indecision 2010 - Primary Victory for Women” Stewart tried to celebrate with Bee. Bee was nonplused and seems tired from the overall situation with men. Bee’s husband and fellow *The Daily Show* correspondent Jason Jones helped illustrate a stereotype of male incompetence by not knowing his pants were in one hand as he looked at the other. Bee frames the point of the national political situation by saying, “I’m just saying it would be nice if voters turned to women when the country wasn’t waste deep in tar balls and hobos.”

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By the time Jessica Williams joined the show in 2012, women’s issues were more regularly addressed and by more correspondents than just Bee or Schaal. Part of that was in large part due to the shift toward women being discussed more on the news in relation to politics. Part of that was because more women who were being noticed in comedy talked about women’s issues. But arguably Williams, Schaal and Bee, along with some new women writers, provided more input for the show and the awareness of these issues. In Stewart’s monologues alone there were discussions of legislation on women’s health with “The Punnany State,” and Rep. Todd Akin’s definition of legitimate rape in “Todd Akin’s Media Problem & Mitt Romney’s Humor.” Stewart also did two segments, “Extremely Loud & Incredibly Gross,” and “The Vulgar Games” on radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh after Limbaugh had commented on Sandra Fluke’s congressional testimony about contraception. Stewart also tied in his own interest in FOX News themes with “The Battle for the War on Women.”

There are more examples in 2012 alone, yet Jessica Williams is the primary performer in all of these. After starting in January 2012, on February 20th, she immediately participated in “Jon Stewart’s Eye on the Ladies.” The piece was spoofing all male panels that discuss women’s health, such as the one that had just met for Sandra Fluke’s congressional hearing. The main thing that The Daily Show addressed through video montage, and then in the mock panel of the piece, is that men have opinions with no rational foundation about the way women’s bodies work. They also have no interest in hearing women talk about their bodies. Williams was ignored by the three other male correspondents and Stewart until she put on a fake mustache and altered her voice to
sound like a bad impersonation of a guy; only then could she have input. They repeated the style of bit with Williams later when she advocated having a white translator. A white person accompanied Williams to translate a black person to irrational white person actions in “Helper Whitey.”

Over Williams’s four year tenure on The Daily Show, she performed in over 100 segments, and covered topics ranging from women’s, race, LGBTQ as well as general topics addressed by The Daily Show. Some of the pieces include Williams on campus rape with Jordan Klepper “The Fault in Our Schools,” “Jessica’s Feminized Atmosphere,” on catcalls and sexual harassment in the city, the swimsuit Kevlar vest as response to police violence toward black teenagers in “Assault Swim,” and LGBTQ issues in “Hate Class of 2015.” These were only during Stewart’s tenure. She generally took on issues that were escalating with race and women in stories concerning police violence and legislation, she took on Beyoncé’s halftime show message in 2015, and even racist dogs in “Racism, Doggy Style.”

In addition, both Schaal and Bee continued to do their work to a broadening audience. Schaal was able to discuss Wendy Davis’s filibuster while Stewart was away in 2013 in “Talker Texas Senator.” Bee did a piece on rape victims sharing custody of their children with their rapist in “Parenting with the Enemy” in 2015. Bee and Williams also worked on “The R Word,” a piece addressing the difficulties of discussing race in the US. These are only some of the pieces that all three of the correspondents compiled over Stewart’s time at The Daily Show, including those specifically focused on women’s issues.
The audience that Weedman had pointed out, much less the platform of the show and the situation, shifted due to the change of the socio-political conversation, the conventions of comedy, and the inclusion of more diverse writers and comics. The entire situation had to be there for the comedienne to make points like what Bee, Schaal and Williams ended up making. The male writers, comics and comedy industry had to be ready and be willing to approach the conversation, but it was through mutual benefit that could then push *The Daily Show* specifically forward as a bulwark against misogynist societal influences. Without that kind of groundwork, these kinds of pieces would not have come to fruition, much less be as poignant as they were. Bee’s point of how you get a diverse comedy team—“Just hire people” (“Samantha Bee has the Solution”)—would only make sense outside of the hegemonic view. In order to do “just hire people,” you a responsive situation and the right timing. Bee and her *Full Frontal* team took advantage of that and created a blind applications process to invite not just women, but more people generally into comedy. The application “show[ed] them exactly how it needed to look so that their jokes could be taken on their own merits. Now, I can't tell you never worked in comedy before, I can't tell you're inexperienced. That was huge. It makes a big difference” (“Samantha Bee has the Solution”).

**Arendt, Stewart’s Feminist Shift**

Hannah Arendt is important to bring up at this point. Her piece on Eichmann and her sense of irony and explanation of comedy are the reason her style and critique made her a credible choice for this project overall. She did not consider herself a feminist; but,
in such a way that has helped foster new discussions in academic feminists since (Baehr xxxv). Instead, Arendt’s objection to the framing of feminism draws light to Kristeva’s point of negation specifically. Also, the overall approach of feminists was not far reaching enough when it came to perspectives of social organization and the political.

Since then, feminist scholars have taken from Arendt to deal with situations that feminism has helped define, such as identity. In the collection *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, Susan Bickford interprets Arendt’s concept of plurality toward intersectionality and identity. Bickford examines the ways that identity is forged in the public through traits and opinions, likening her discussion to the way Arendt discusses plurality (316). Bickford suggests that Arendt gives an existentialist rather than essentialist perspective of identity; representation can be seen then as pliable and dependent on the perspectives of others rather than some ideal of what is natural or an abstract concept of permanence.

The last section was evidence for a pliability of representation for women in comedy and how it can be utilized with *kairos*. The way pliability of women’s representation was utilized at that time rested on the style of *The Daily Show*, having women, and having intent and motivation. The style, however, was dependent on a man who was not stylistically initially a feminist, and neither was the show. The show focused on the overall conventions of satire and the style of news rather than how it was driven by ideology, or how that impacted something like feminist representation. As Carmon and Scovell’s articles highlight, the misogyny, or feminism, of the show were more generally
related to the situation of comedy and comic principles from stand-up, pushing taboo, as well as punching up.

That being said, however, along with offering space and time to the women of The Daily Show, Stewart himself offered a similar positive feminist change in his monologue and general style. By bringing topics up in a way to highlight absurdities surrounding them, Stewart was part of changing the conversation. He also offered different insights due to his perspective as a man. His monologue “The Battle of the War on Women” illustrated a coming together of Stewart’s common topics from FOX News’s general “War on” segments that utilized hyperbole for the sake of driving a narrative. Stewart generally returned to that material consistently enough that the “War on Women” was just as much a part of his history of interest, the timing of the segment, the timing of the relevance of the segment to the larger socio-political situation, as well as also generally feminist.

However, the “War on Women” example does not make Stewart’s approach inherently feminist in the way these components come together. But also, because Stewart’s approach is not necessarily feminist, it has more freedom to work outside of the negative complexities of feminism, much in the same way that Stewart does not work inside the left-right axis. It could be argued that Stewart provided a paradoxical perspective as a guiding editorial focus for comediennes and women’s issues because he was not a woman or with a feminist bias to start. He needed help from women when it came to the topic matter and perspective, yet could also offer help when it came to the platform and working outside of traditional frameworks in comedy, or feminism.
Generally the show was based on research of current issues as well as the interest of the writers; if women’s issues were relevant, assisting comediennes would also be mutually beneficial for a new trajectory of style for the show. It would not necessarily be smooth, such as dissent during an unscripted moment like that with Rep. Kristen Gillibrand. Or, like when Stewart was still working out the angle of blue comedy in relation to women, such as the overlap with “The Vulgar Games,” where he dimmed the studio lights, turned on funk music and let a gynecologist talk about birth control.

Yet Stewart’s male view could offer a turn on patriarchy as well, such as in the double standards on emotion toward Hillary Clinton in “The Broads Must Be Crazy.” The piece pointed out how accusations of women’s behaviors in politics, such as Hillary Clinton’s momentary tears on the campaign trail, were often also men’s various irrational behaviors in politics. Yet men were then congratulated for showing these behaviors in public, or as Stewart used the punchline, “it’s okay to be a pussy, as long as you’ve got a dick.”

Stewart’s main tactic in his approach is to take an argument, push it to its extremes, and use those extremes to point out further embedded absurdities of the situation. Also, they can infer another poignant situation through euphemism and obvious inferences, such as Bee’s point about men to Stewart in “Condescent of a Woman” about men always using their heads.

STEWART. But see, right there—turn-off. You would never hear a pundit say, ‘oh, I think men will find Romney’s tax plan a real turn-on. It
doesn’t bother you that these pundits are describing women’s reactions to a presidential debate in dating site terms, like turn-on and turn-off?

BEE. Of course it doesn’t bother me. Men need to be convinced by the candidate. Women need to be courted. Men are rational creatures and famously always make their decisions using just this organ, here. The one that I am pointing to [Bee points to her head].

The entirety of Bee’s commentary to Stewart points out the problematic double standard of men explaining women. The title of the bit literally puns off of the movie title Scent of a Woman as “Condescent of a Woman.”

Some of Schaal’s best bits were also when Stewart was the symbol of patriarchy to be shouted down, or made to feel like women do in situations of male dominance. In “The War on Ballsacks,” Schaal is mock-appalled by Stewart’s supposed submissiveness toward sharing subway seat space, or what was also called manspreading. She states, “Jon, can I talk directly to your testicles for a second? Because I think you’re holding them hostage.” She stands up, towers over Stewart who is grimacing and stiffly leaning back into his chair, and she proceeds to give a speech, downward. Stewart is struggling to keep character. In another segment, “Jon Stewart’s Thumbs Up, Women – The Job Interview,” Schaal pretends to be a man who harasses women in interviews. Stewart role plays the female part. Stewart follows through but then cuts the role play and apologizes about how bad things were. Schaal’s response was, “I never knew how thrilling it is to have all that power to abuse. I feel alive for the first time. My heart is pounding. I understand how upset men must be to lose all that.” Schaal mentioned later in an
interview when Stewart left the show, “Comedy is a powerful tool for putting everybody on the same page, and he’s a master at doing that with topics that are important to our whole country” (“Kristen Schaal”).

The Daily Show Addresses Abortion

In that same interview, Schaal discusses a piece titled “Mother F#@kers - Stork Bucks” that she and Stewart did in May 2011. Schaal came in after Stewart’s initial segment, “Mother F#@kers” where Stewart comments about GOP planning restrictions on abortions, even if the mother could die, “Wow. That’s so pro-life, even if it kills you.” Schaal continues the description of the situation of the legislation and how they were interpreting it on the show:

One piece we were both on board for was a segment about abortion funding. There was this bill that was getting passed that said federal funding wouldn’t pay for abortions, even if the woman was a victim of incest or rape. So I was discussing how much money the Republicans were saving by not protecting these victims and how it came down to two-tenths of a penny per taxpayer. That was the one where I thought, “Oh, this is what I’ve been working so hard for.” I think they even took the language out of the bill the next day, and I was like, “Whoa, this feels really powerful!"

But then they put it back a couple of weeks later.
This moment for Schaal, Stewart and *The Daily Show* was a big step after two segments in 2009 where Stewart himself addressed the issue of abortion, as well as his own opinion. In June 2009, Stewart interviewed former GOP presidential candidate and FOX News host Mike Huckabee. Stewart started the interview by bringing out a bottle of scotch and pitching a show based on their discussions, titled, “Jon Stewart and Mike Huckabee talk about issues where they will never be the protagonists.” Stewart took on the interview as an exercise in debate, where he addressed Huckabee’s asserted premise of pro-life through various ways, including the lack of empathy by the pro-choice side for life.

In May 2009, Stewart also generally did a miniature version of this exercise when he reported on President Obama’s commencement speech at Notre Dame under the title “Fetalmania.” At the commencement, Obama had been received by non-student pro-life protesters as well as he addressed ways to reduce abortion and ways to help mothers in need. Stewart’s first response was, “Stop making me think.” Stewart also addressed one of the pro-life protesters’ interviews where they explained their visual protest of baby dolls covered in stage blood being pushed in strollers by the protesters. Stewart looked mortified but then asked, “Why are the blood covered babies supporting Obama? Wouldn’t they have a McCain bumper sticker on their stroller?”

Starting in 2012, there was a wave of state legislation battles over transvaginal ultrasound mandates. Stewart addressed what those were in the February 2012 segment “the Punnany State:”
The law states basically that any woman seeking to have the legal procedure known as an abortion, must, whether she wants to or not, first, lay back in a chair, her spread legs, feet in stirrups, and have an eight to ten inch wand put inside her—even if the woman in question is pregnant as the result of a rape. I don’t really have a joke here. I just thought I’d tell ya.

The first mandate Stewart talked about in this piece was from Virginia, but it was also soon to be considered in North Carolina, Texas in 2013, and in South Carolina in 2015. Of these states, the legislation only passed in North Carolina, but the Supreme Court struck it down in 2015 (Wegman).

In March 2012, Kristin Schaal’s segment “Republican Policy Routine” addressed how women were talked about by men, but how that related to general views on women by men who used stereotypes. Schaal talked about transvaginal ultrasounds through the guise of male stand-up stereotypes, such as hyper-masculinized comedian Andrew Dice Clay. She performed jokes as a parody of a clichéd stand-up set like, “What’s the difference between a fertilized egg, a corporation and a woman? Ah? One of them isn’t considered a person in Oklahoma! Boom! Yeah. It’s the woman.”

Schaal would often cover the absurdity of the situation from the side of the oppressor, which was a common correspondent tactic. In the segment “Rape Victim Abortion Funding,” Schaal and Stewart discussed various definitions of rape under the law such as rape-rape and rapish, as well as the worst kind of rape.
SCHAAL. The important thing is that Congress is redefining rape to protect us from the worst kind of rape.

STEWART. And what is that?

SCHAAL. Money rape.

STEWART. What is money rape?

SCHAAL. That’s forcible taking of taxpayers money to pay for abortions. They have no say in the matter. They just have to lay back and take it while their bank accounts are violated over, and over, and over again.

Stewart later also brought in the way that with taxes and government spending, people usually have to pay for things they do not wish to. The question of legitimacy is not at issue when it comes to paying the taxes. Otherwise, Stewart noted, he would have not had to pay for the wars in Afghanistan or Iraq. They were not wars so much as “war-ish.”

Schaal further pushed the absurdity of opposition through referencing Wendy Davis’s filibuster right after it happened in 2013. In “Talker Texas Ranger,” examples of women in legislatures against abortion legislation came across as hyperbolic, idiotic, insensitive and simply ironic. Schaal focused in the bit on another Texas state rep. alongside Wendy Davis after her big speech, keeping with the topic:

[Texas state representative] Laubenburg stood up for a woman’s right to make stuff up about how a woman’s body works. That’s usually a man’s job! And that’s the final glass ceiling we had to break. It happened in the U.S. House last week...Aw, Marsha Blackburn is a role model. She’s sayin’, ‘Lady’s I’m taking control of my body—and also yours!’
Schaal parodied the repression of women’s rights under the GOP, including by women.

Both Schaal and Bee showed that they could take the absurdities of the moment to extremes. At the 2012 RNC, to show off the absurdity of the structure of an argument when it is taken absolutely, Bee flipped the argument’s content. In the last part of the segment, “Abortion Law & the Republican Platform,” Bee used the issue of civil liberties in the argument structure of choice normally used by women’s rights advocates. Bee was able to get the majority of the RNC participants to concede through that argument that women’s choice could not only be seen as a civil liberties, but that the argument was not necessarily offering a black-and-white resolution on the issue.

In 2015, Jessica Williams also did a field piece on lawyers who were arguing the personhood of the fetus “The Unborn Ultimatum.” Williams’s main point came when she addressed the lawyer not seeing the absurdity of only defending the fetus rather than the woman. Williams talked to Alabama ACLU executive director Susan Watson about the hypothetical case of a pregnant teenage girl put in trial against one of the fetus lawyers that would exist under the bill HR 494 in 2015.

WATSON. If the teen is allowed to access an abortion, the fetus lawyer can appeal and run up the clock. And if they do that, we’ve got a parent.

WILLIAMS. Oh [bleep] that’s how babies are made in Alabama.

Oliver and Bee continued to address the minutiae of abortion legislation in each of their own shows following The Daily Show. In February 2016, only a week after Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia died, on Last Week Tonight Oliver had the
segment, “Abortion Laws.” He discussed the relevance of the 1991 court decision

*Planned Parenthood v. Casey.* The ruling allows states to set up restrictions to women
seeking abortions, generally so long as abortions are still allowed. Yet the restrictions can
be as onerous as limiting the amount of abortion clinics in the state, raising wait times by
several days, as well as forcing ultrasounds on the women. Oliver also covered
restrictions called TRAP laws, or Targeted Restriction at Abortion Providers.

Samantha Bee also addressed Justice Scalia’s absence, targeting the specific set of
TRAP laws in Texas and who was drafting the legislation. Bee found state Rep. Dan
Flynn (R), and the end of her piece she had this back and forth with him:

FLYNN. I think you’re wrong. You think I’m wrong.

BEE. Hey. I think you’re wrong.

FLYNN. You think I’m wrong.

BEE. I think you’re the wrongiest.

FLYNN. I think you’re the wrongiest wrongiest.

BEE. I speak with the authority as one who has a uterus. I guess that’s
why I think that you’re the wrongiest, wrong-headedest wrong person.

FLYNN. Well, I can tell you some things about a man that you wouldn’t
understand. I need to do a better job of educating you.

BEE. That’s an awesome pep talk. [narrates] Next time I need to regulate
men’s bodies, I’ll be sure to get in touch.

Bee invoked the simplicity, the redundancy, and authority of identitarian arguments as a
way to exploit Flynn. Her end quip pointed out his shift in argument as a way to one-up a
man attempting to argue about women’s bodies with some inference of women’s inferiority, at least under legality. Bee continues to address women’s health issues with her show discussing rape kits, or the pitfalls of pregnancies centers through parodying the style of Orson Welles’s *F Is for Fake* as narrated by Patton Oswald.

*The Daily Show’s Woman Problem Continues*

As indirectly, yet correctly, stated by *Jezebel’s* critique of *The Daily Show*, the overall situation of *The Daily Show* was that they wanted something they could not initially describe that would fit with the evolving brand of the show. This search for something they could not quite explain is consistent with the way Stewart discussed the process and style of the show. But the potential for something new took Stewart’s awareness of mechanisms beyond his own perspective and the way *The Daily Show* started.

Misogyny may have been the starting point for what became three comediennes’ successes at *The Daily Show*. Their stories are not necessarily a bootstraps myth, but instead point toward a shift in the situation, being in the right place at the right time, and they had talent and insight. They were able to hone perspective and style changes to *The Daily Show* as part of a new experiment of style in feminist humor. *The Daily Show* offered an imperfect, yet non-absolutist platform, and there were no purely negative feminist perspectives. Working with a band of frat humorists, Bee, Schaal and Williams helped Stewart and Oliver gain new perspective, material, and direction in relation to women’s issues, comic style, and women in comedy generally.
Intersectionality and inclusivity can help to focus the style of jokes toward positive social commentary rather than negative reinforcement. Bee continues to grapple with current issues on a weekly basis through a more diverse lens of writers than the rest of late night on *Full Frontal*. The show is still based on news research and analysis, but her style and delivery are her own. She offered another way to deal with tragedies through utilizing exigency during the epidemic of the gun violence in 2016. By the time the Pulse nightclub shooting happened in Orlando in the summer of 2016, Bee did not try to be empathetic, but rather gave a call to action straight from the Bible (“Again? Again”).

Yet *The Daily Show*’s ability to deal with women’s issues was compromised after Bee and Stewart left. One of the main reasons to show Stewart’s influence on *The Daily Show* over time was to show how fleeting it was. Trevor Noah, while also having a history of misogynist style, is not at the same point that Stewart was when he left, and we do not know what he can do with *The Daily Show*. He also does not necessarily have the same kind of empathy toward the U.S. situation, or women in that situation, and even seems to be naïve about the state of *The Daily Show*’s news satire in relation to news, saying in an NPR interview, he “did not anticipate how much journalism” he would do as host of *The Daily Show*. Noah does not have the same editorial authority Stewart had, the writers are still predominantly men, and the show sends out tweets like the recent SCOTUS decision, “Celebrate the #SCOTUS ruling! Go knock someone up in Texas!” (Hill). Their follow up was also not quite grasping any rape or sexual abuse inferred by
the first tweet with, “Friends, we’re certainly not promoting abortions. Just excited about #SCOTUS reaffirming right to choose” (Hill).

Jessica Williams has also just left the show for another project with Comedy Central. She is currently doing the podcast called “2 Dope Queens” with fellow comedienne “Black Daria.” The state of The Daily Show in 2016 is not what it was, especially with Comedy Central’s decision about The Nightly Show with Larry Wilmore. But the careers of Samantha Bee, Kristen Schaal, John Oliver, Jessica Williams and Jon Stewart all especially have the added benefits of their collaborations on what is still a new and particular kind of feminist humor in news satire.
I always say that there is nothing more powerful than the power of two. If one person has an idea and you go, "This is what I think, but jeez, am I crazy? Everybody seems to be looking at it in a different way." And then you hear somebody else who says it sort of the way you were looking at it, and you go, "Hey! I'm not a crazy person, I'm just like that idiot on Comedy Central." – Jon Stewart

This study offered a model for ironist feminism. The model is a means to showcase irony and its application in relation to political contexts. The overall purpose was to begin to broach feminist discourse theories and their style of application, including irony, in a popular context. The popular context offered a different kind of feminist perspective, or rather the shift of a misogynist discourse toward feminist, in the satire of The Daily Show.

The study worked to integrate discussion from Third World feminism with the perspective of irony and the style of satire. An ironist feminism would be one way to continue to integrate theories surrounding intersectionality, perspective and discourse and how to apply them. Irony and satire offer social critique as the means to investigate, analyze, and openly discuss misogyny found in language and styles of public discourse as well as ways women and minorities can re-present themselves.

This study only began to work on the complications of how the discourses would come together, or what Hutcheon focuses on as community. Her application comes from Foucault, but also relates to Sandoval’s point on differential consciousness. Orientation
switches by looking at the situation of community rather than the participants. By switching the orientation, the way the participants respond to each other and the situation becomes more apparent. The style used by participants becomes the focus.

This chapter briefly touches upon Hutcheon’s application of community and its impact on further study related to an ironist feminism. Hutcheon’s application is not a utopia, it promotes a type of agonistic pluralism, and it expands on Sandoval’s focus on switching style based on situation. An ironist feminism is based on reorienting analysis of a situation to focus on the style of the participants to maximize outcomes of efficient and exigent public discourse.

This chapter also gives further short examples of Daily Show spin-offs continuing to revamp their styles in concordance with the aims of efficient and exigent public discourse. Another part of exigency is new platforms of satirical and comedic styles, so a section discusses potential routes of feminist satire and technological pursuits. The Daily Show came after both Molly Ivins and Murphy Brown, but there are other potential news satires that would offer other ways to address current events through an ironist feminist lens.

**Community, Hegemony**

In chapters two and three, this study focused largely on the application of Chela Sandoval’s concept of differential consciousness. Her concept was chosen because of its roots in Third World feminist discourses, intersectionality, and perspective. Such a concept advocated using your own point of view as a bridge between different
communities and discourses to arguments from personal contexts that could be understood in light of broader situations. Sandoval’s emphases argue for a unique approach to rhetorical style and delivery. What would these discourses look like? What are some of the ways they could take place? How would they develop into different dialectics over time? To set the discourse, the situation needs to be identified, including the aims behind the discourse; what are the motivations of the men who make laws on abortion? Analysts collect references of the situation; what does the proposed legislation entail, how many people are affected before or after it would be implemented and how, and what spurred that particular legislation to be composed and presented when it was? Ironist feminists would manage references through the tools of irony, comedy, and kairos.

Sandoval’s concept of differential consciousness and its history are dense. This study only briefly touches upon it for the sake of looking for a particular application of style and delivery: comedy, satire, and irony in a popular context. My pursuit largely focused upon identifying the situation and explaining its context with examples from The Daily Show. This study then focused on how to identify situations and their history, how we can see mechanisms integral to everyday language, and how the incongruities can be used to create insight from the application of irony.

For ironist feminism, Sandoval’s emphases can also expand Sharon Crowley’s focus on conservative rhetorical styles. Sandoval targeted types of discourses already within a particular feminist framework and situation, even with pseudo-non-feminists. To get more people to the table, more groups of non-feminists need to be included.
Crowley’s fundamentalists offer another way to look at anti-liberalist traditions, and the importance of variations on irrationality. The study also focused on comics rather than audiences, but laughter and audiences are a part of the community as well. Audiences also are an important part of Hutcheon’s narrative on community as she discusses how irony is perceived. While there are those who “get” the irony, there are others who are not necessarily victims of it, but rather are not privy to how references are applied in the irony, or even care (Hutcheon 90).

Applying Irony

Irony disorients the hegemonic perspective and illustrates Sandoval’s point that different perspectives create differential consciousness. Throughout Irony's Edge, Hutcheon remarked how amazing it is we understand each other at all with our different perspectives and variant references. While irony has a history of exclusive or elitist use, Hutcheon points out how it is not as outside of our normal miscommunications as some theorists often argue. Hutcheon explains how irony works in various mediums, it is nonhierarchical, and can be funny or not. Hutcheon suggested that irony be thought of as something that “happens,” (4) as a kind of situation or a moment of collective references coinciding. Hutcheon utilized examples from theory and pop culture to shift the focus from an exclusive or higher vantage point to make irony more about the language overall. Irony is not inherently elitist, and it is not inherently for the little guy. Irony has many uses, as does any other function or trope of language. The intent behind language then is
still important, but important outside of direct relation to irony. Irony can be used by anyone. It is transideological. Language fits the situation, and irony is highly contextual.

Yet irony fits into the blind spot of hegemonic perspective and style. Haraway pointed out problems of perspective with the “god-trick,” or the way language is focused on an object, and the subject is absent and omnipresent. Irigaray pointed out the sex of that god, how the perspective of the subject is unquestionably male. Hutcheon points to how blindness in hegemonic language is why someone would not “get” an act of irony. Irony’s context makes it specific to particular discursive communities, but that does not mean that others cannot be included in that sphere. Hutcheon argues that people can grasp the irony when the context is laid out, so the use of irony to reinforce hierarchy through in-jokes is unnecessary, unless the situation calls for it.

Those who engage the multiple said and unsaid meanings of irony are certainly interpreting differently than those who engage only the said; yet, for most theorists, there does seem to be more at stake here than simple difference, and the language in which the distinctions are regularly made is revealing of both implicit power relations and evaluative judgments.

(91)

Hutcheon takes Foucault’s discursive formations toward her concept of a discursive community. Hutcheon summarizes Foucault’s concept through “rules of exclusion, classification, ordering, and distribution, as well as rules determining who may speak, when, how, where, and on what topic” (86). Irony offers a particularly interesting
comparison to communities themselves, “like irony’s complex semantics, communities too are relationally defined, just as are people within them” (88).

One reason not everyone may be privy to certain ironies is not that people are incapable of perceiving them, but rather that their frame of reference is different, or more specifically, their discursive context.

My own sense, right or wrong, is that they simply have different cultural knowledge, and that their communities’ ironies are as often incomprehensible to me as mine (or Swift’s) are to them. But, the positive part of this is that we can learn—and be taught—enough of each other’s communal contexts to enable some comprehension, without the (often dubiously pleasurable, perhaps) privacy of those secret ironic in-jokes being totally lost” (Hutcheon 93).

Her approach overlaps Sandoval’s point, as well as Arendt’s and Mouffe’s as they discuss agonist pluralism. Hutcheon argues that “irony might not so much create communities as come into being because the communal values and beliefs already exist. It might, therefore, be less a matter of interpreter ‘competence’ than of shared assumptions on many different levels” (92). Irony offers a different perspective, then, of a community. Instead of focusing on one topic or the way people approach the topic, generally the focus toward is on what they already understand, which flavors the topic with their frame of references. Instead of looking at how someone is either put down by an argument tactic or is blind to a reference, the emphasis is on broadening the frame of reference and shared references.
The focus on community, then, is in part a reaction to potential elitism, exclusion, and utopian visions. Feminist theorists, including Sandoval, approach the issue of a utopian, or even whitewashed, feminist community. That kind of vision is based on a problematic equality, of “equal to what?” Iris Marion Young addresses that not-so-hidden standard in her chapter “The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference.” Kimberle Crenshaw addresses that with intersectionality and Spivak does with her concept of hegemonic feminism, as do many others in their own way. There are many different perspectives from which to argue a point due to the histories we are burdened with. But they need not divide if we come together, paradoxically enough. Instead of looking to community as homogeneous, the community offers an equality of a sort, one based on our differences, as Irigaray suggests. Equality becomes less about being the same and more about how orientations may be qualified nonhierarchically.

The focus then is less upon reemphasizing the extremes of identitarianism and hegemonic narrative. From this study, research could continue by looking at positive egalitarianism outside of U.S. liberalism, through models of other countries or even as part of other social structures, such as changes in the comedy industry. The models would offer insight into how to negotiate differences and how that could be adapted to a U.S. model in public discourse. Further research could also integrate critique from theorists like Mill, Mouffe and Laclau who focus on the impacts of language on ideology and hegemony. Their insights for public discourse apply to more stylistic applications than politics or news alone; pop culture and comedy could benefit. Further research could also look more into the effects of violence behind liberalism and ideological language or aims
of various animosities as part of discourse, such as Arendt and many others in political theory describe. Hegemony is also important to these narratives, both as the ideological orientation for the discourse communities, but also its own orientation, as Foucault and Hutcheon decenter it from a fixed hierarchical position. Sharon Crowley uses Mouffe and Laclau’s description of hegemony (5), which is a spreading of both discursive communities as well as subjugated knowledges.

Irrationality: The Conservative “Other”

One of the reasons why hegemonic discourse is prevalent seems to have less to do with a prevailing narrative than, as Crowley puts it, that they “construct and inform community experience to such an extent that their assumptions seem natural, ‘just the way things are.’ The very inarticulateness of hegemonic belief is a source of its power” (12). One main example is not being aware of the source of issues, like politicians who favor decisions that are not in the interest of the community, or a system of capitalism that does the same. Yet people continue to vote for these politicians, and instead blame elites; conservatives generally blame “liberals” or “government.”

Crowley points out the absurdities of Christian fundamentalists particularly. For instance, they watch entertainment marketed toward a Christian demographic, but the material, as Crowley puts it, is “quasi-pornographic” (12). Her examples come from the example of Thomas Franks and *What’s the Matter with Kansas?*

Contradictions like this are apparent to unbelievers like Franks, who can subject them to criticism because he is no longer informed by the
ideologies that give rise to them. But believers have little incentive to
examine their beliefs unless they encounter critical discourse that they can
both hear and grasp. (12)

Crowley also focuses on the context of a very particular part of the U.S. population with a
history that, while has roots in U.S. Christianity and its rhetoric, is particularly focused on
absolutism, but not literalism. The two are not mutually exclusive, but they are generally
taken for granted as intertwined, especially in the liberalist tradition. Crowley’s account
identifies a particular type of sub-group and situation that would continue to highlight a
transideological function of discursive communities. Fundamentalist Christian’s style is
as much a part of their frame of reference as it leaves out understanding others.

What Crowley describes is more than a style of specific religious irrationality in
this country, but it includes part of the general religious context as well. The community
of religions do not necessarily reach out to other religious discourses, if at all, or may
even speak of them intolerantly. The irrationality does not necessarily have to simply be
prejudice or hate, but it can also be a particular community filled with culture specific
stories or in-jokes. For instance, Stewart commonly gave the example of his Jewish
heritage on the show to the point of using it as yet another way to broach the FOX News
“War on” series, usually associated with their “War on Christmas.” Stewart’s argument
every year would focus on how prevalent Christmas is in the U.S., but Stewart also
pointed out FOX News would not do “War on” of, particularly Jewish holidays. In
“Crazy Stupid Dov,” Jessica Williams did a “War on Purim” skit with Stewart, using
many Yiddish terms to voice her frustration and explain the holiday. Stewart finally could
not hold back laughter and commented, “Somewhere, there is a rabbinical college laughing their asses off at this. Meanwhile, we have an audience of Lutherans going, ‘I don’t know. I thought they were going to talk about the Sequester.”

Crowley’s discussion of Christian fundamentalism offers a basis for a variety of fundamentalist conservative communities and styles of discourse because they operate from a non-liberal, absolutist, and non-rational, premise. Crowley pointed out a particular kind of approach of the fundamentalists that is important to note. How they do not agree to liberal principles of tolerance are not only not tolerated by liberal practices, but they speak upon the different tactics used by fundamentalists. In Crowley’s example of fundamentalists protesting children being exposed to various subjects at school, parents protest against the materials to protect their beliefs rather than to negotiate them, like liberals.

Liberals sometimes feel that religious fundamentalists are intolerant because the latter refuse to adopt their preferred, rational approach to negotiation and adjudication of disagreements. But liberals can be equally intolerant when they refuse to negotiated their demand that argument be rational in their sense of that term…And while tolerance ordinarily restrains liberals from characterizing those who oppose them as enemies, their acceptance of reason as a primary mode of argument nonetheless devalues any appeal to divine authority. Hence liberal argumentative strategy discounts the very grounds from which Christian fundamentalists mount claims and proofs. Christian fundamentalists are irritated in turn not
only by rejection of their primary authority but by liberals’ refusal to prioritize arguments according to their quality, or, more precisely, to measure the worth of arguments against a standard. (16)

In the 2016 election cycle, Trump supporters fit Crowley’s premise of a non-liberal ideology, as well as arguably the Tea Party before them. While the current incarnation of Trump supporters may vary from Crowley’s framework, the point of Salena Zito’s Atlantic article “Taking Trump Seriously, Not Literally,” offers a similar premise to Crowley’s view of Christian fundamentalists. Trump’s audience does not follow the literalness of the argument because they do not follow the words in the same way. Zito suggests that one way to look at what Trump says is less about following his words and instead taking in his overall inferred argument. His words are less about fact than tapping an inarticulate anger and frustration of constituents with “the government” and “liberals.”

The Trump supporters, the Tea Party and Crowley’s fundamentalists function on a different style of rhetoric than liberalism. They are irrational, emotional, skeptical, cynical, and identitarian. Liberals, in the various forms of leftism and the blanket liberalism, take these actions and behaviors as moral flaws rather than a mode of communication, as in Crowley’s example of the fundamentalist parents protesting for intolerance (16). Liberal perspectives are limited; the conservative irrationality counters the liberals’ faith of objectivity and fact. Crowley also explained how any system of belief, including liberalism, is foundational; yet the way the system is approached denotes whether it is fundamental (14). If liberalists keep making the same mistake and not
acknowledge their own frame of references, how they operate, as well as the causes of their grief, the high minded morality of liberalist hubris will continue to be as much a divide as that of the varying conservative factions.

Crowley makes an important point not only for the fundamentalists, but for the other various kinds of conservatisms that contrast with leftist liberalism. Common parlance and rhetorical structures arguably share more in common with their conservative brethren, and traditional U.S. conservatism has a history bound with the Christian use of rhetoric and rhetoric, period. Yet a liberal vantage point is both limited to see the tactic beyond the topic, as Crowley pointed out, if they even take the time to look at the history. This blindness leads to irony of articles like Oliver Morrison’s “Waiting for the Conservative Jon Stewart” in 2015. Morrison looked to 24-hour news and comedy at that time rather than looking to the history of conservative commentators and a different situation of ideological approaches, much less how they were perceived. Morrison was proffering a kind of William F. Buckley to Stewart’s Gore Vidal, missing the point of their separate styles of approach.

The documentary Best of Enemies came out in 2015 on the sparring between Buckley and Vidal. Garry Wills’s review of an ABC debate they participated in points out the context of the infamous event, where Buckley attacked Vidal’s sexuality. Wills suggests that the context of the attack played more into Buckley’s motive than the literal meaning; potentially the remark was an indirect attack on ABC for making him commit to the debate when he had reason to pull out.
The hype concerning the documentary as well as Buckley’s intelligence (Green) seems to continue to focus on the ethos of the situation rather than on the style of the debate. The documentary’s trailer points to Buckley’s style for his sensational sexist hubris when a woman asks what Buckley thinks about mini-skirts, rather than Buckley’s Latin insults to Ayn Rand (Green). Buckley is described by reviews as the traditionally intelligent conservative troll. Technically, he is succeeded by those like Bill O’Reilly, Chris Wallace or former speaker of the house Newt Gingrich. Yet their style is different, so is the time in which they argue and the audience they argue to. For instance, the bombastic illogic of the 2016 Presidential GOP candidate Trump may be similarly as postmodern to political parlance as Geoffrey Baym suggests Brian Williams was for televised news.

Conservatism’s irrationality explains the current stage of extremists, the tradition of rhetoric in the U.S. and how power is one motive of irony. One of the key points left out of this study was a long history of irony’s association with political ideologies, including Nazi associations with Paul de Man, Friedrich Nietzsche or Martin Heidegger. Each of them used irony as part of their philosophies and styles. They all explained their topics with depth, elitism, and irrational aplomb. Like Hutcheon pointed out about how those who use irony are suspect, the problem is they are not simply supporting a hegemonic system, but an enemy to U.S. liberalism. Because of their political position, their ethos is questioned before their style is accessed; their style is suspect first. That standard is a fundamental application of U.S. liberalism. Many theorists, including many
mentioned in this study, offer more to say on the history and style of each of these philosophers as pertains to irony and ideology.

Situational Perspectives: Audience and Laughter

This study focused primarily on those who create the situation for laughter, or those who craft jokes. Most research focuses on those who laugh, generally the audience. Like Hutcheon points out about communities, both the audience and the comic share in the references, they may also share in the laughter. The comic may laugh democratically, on the level of the audience, or because of the affiliation of the discursive community. However, often the framing of the joke depends upon a particular style of behavior from the comic as opposed to the freedom of expression from the audience. Stewart held to a character when mimicking the style of news reports, but he generally added certain moments of hyperbole and accentuated accents or asides. When he “broke” character, he became non-mocking serious or laughed.

Those who laugh are important to the context of why the comic does what she does. Stewart discussed both Seinfeld’s ability to explain the “gah!” concepts in people’s heads and put them to air, or Stewart’s own point of the “power of two” (“Jon Stewart on Political Satire”). These relations again point to a kind of discursive community, one that is based off of that connection of laughter and what makes us laugh. The audience is the collection of the community, and the comic generally articulates collective references. The laughter could be seen as a kind of resonance of the articulation. Or take a look at that connection between audience and comic, which Freud generally did in Jokes and
Their Relation to the Unconscious. George Carlin explained to Stewart during the “HBO 40 Years of Comedy” special, that his motivation was attention and praise from adults, that he was cute and clever, which reinforces Freud’s point that comedy is a form of social connection.

The political context of audiences and laughter could also be investigated as part of protest to strictures of objectivity when objectivity is no longer useful in situations as either discussion or protest. For instance, in the 2016 election, comics have been lambasting GOP presidential candidate Donald Trump, largely based on his personal traits, his ignorance of facts, his questionable ethos as a business man and husband, and his fearmongering prejudice against nearly every minority. However, there was a moment in the last presidential debate before the election when the audience laughed. There was no joke except for the hypocrisy of Trump’s answer concerning women. Throughout the campaign, Trump had made inferences toward women and even incestuous and sexist comments about his daughter. But the major context behind the laugh was heightened due to a tape that had been released just prior to the debate of Trump’s comments about women that were that of a sexual predator and sexual harasser.

Trump’s remark during the debate was that “nobody has more respect for women than I do,” and the audience tittered (Almond). For those watching the debate on TV or online, the laughter was faint, but audible. Moderator and FOX News host Chris Wallace “scolded” the audience for a moment before returning to the debate. While generally silent as a means of respect for the candidates and the debate, that moment of eruption immediately became assigned qualities and interpretations, including Wallace’s reaction
in the moment. But for those at the debate as well as those at home, the irony of Trump’s statement was glaring.

In retrospect, the laughter could have easily been sobs. The election has placed enormous amounts of stress on the U.S. from diversionary divisions alone, such as those sensationalized by the mainstream media’s focus on various scandals surrounding the presidential campaign. The real divisions come from issues that often cause immediate harm: the Black Lives Matter movement, mass shootings and gun legislation debates, conservative legislation specifically targeting women, continued harassment of women as well as crumbling infrastructure, the student loan crisis, unemployment, wealth gap, health care, etc. The laughter was arguably as trained by the reference of an army of comedic attacks on Trump as that of Cixous’s hysterical by societal oppression and psychotherapy. The laughter could also easily be as related to catharsis in the long run.

**Discursive Foci and Styles**

In public discourse, and particularly popular culture, irony offers a means to express complex issues without as many words it might normally take to explain them. Yet irony infers plenty from the overarching narrative. Irony becomes the indirect goal for those who make it. But as mentioned in chapter two, irony is received as a direct goal. The irony is tied to its context just as democracy is to liberalism in the U.S. context, as Mouffe explains in *Democratic Paradox*.

With modern democracy, we are dealing with a new political form of society whose specificity comes from the articulation between two
different traditions. On one side we have the liberal tradition constituted by the rule of law, the defense of human rights and the respect of individual liberty; on the other the democratic tradition whose main ideas are those of equality, identity between governing and governed and popular sovereignty. There is no necessary relation between those two distinct traditions but only a contingent historical articulation…Let’s not forget that, while we tend today to take the link between liberalism and democracy for granted, their union, far from being a smooth process, was the result of bitter struggles. (2-3)

This study attempted to highlight the importance of style as part of the context, especially in relation to irony and satire. The style of irony is also critical. However, the analysis in previous chapters included plenty of examples that also demonstrated the familiar style of irony, especially those from *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. There are still sixteen years-worth of examples left in the Comedy Central archive that offer many more topics to broach and that show its change over time. However, Stewart’s discussion of rhetoric came best not simply in his Baubo moments but in his explanation of rhetorical fallacies in the guise of “bullshit.”

Since Stewart stepped down, the show has continued and has had moments similar to some of Stewart’s highlights. The new host is Trevor Noah. Samantha Bee’s *Full Frontal* and John Oliver’s *Last Week Tonight* also continue in the tradition of their beginnings with Stewart. Stewart has yet to air his new project, but he has also continued to offer moments with his colleagues on matters of political exigence.
Ironic Style: Academese

This study would have benefited from an explanation or demonstration of irony using an ironic style. There have been examples of dissertations and books that attempt to be ironic and to inform, but usually they do not do either very well. And dissertations are traditionally of one format and academic style. However, a dissertation on irony and satire could benefit by highlighting the approach to irony by writers such as Paul de Man. De Man’s spiraling style in “The Concept of Irony” was amply satirical as well as informative, and generally gave as much information and references through his biting remarks as it did in actually explaining the function of irony in the general narrative. The depth of his analysis provided an example beyond what a straight definition would do, since irony generally is loath to that style. De Man also brings in Romantic irony in a way that is generally manhandled by those who treat irony for purposes outside of its literary tradition, such as Rorty.

De Man was also a fan of Kenneth Burke, one of the few U.S. scholars associated with the pragmatic tradition who addressed the literary tradition in a way that suited de Man’s frame of references. De Man had a history of correspondence with Burke, but he only mentioned Burke in a footnote in “The Concept of Irony.” While academe is not without its hierarchical standards and an application of status and knowing one’s place, the way in which de Man criticized many who studied irony in that particular essay was not simply a put down or roast, but a critique of approaches based on assumptions, or approaches that avoid an entire tradition in order to explain what they want, how they want it. Take for example, De Man’s approach toward Wayne Booth and his Rhetoric of
Irony; de Man points out how Booth steers clear of the German Romantic tradition, and instead highlights the English tradition and laughter from *Tristram Shandy*. De Man downplays the different responses to the literature the Booth focuses on, and that which he steers clear of, in order to explain the context to us.

Booth knows about the Germanic tradition, but he wants to have nothing to do with it. This is what he says: ‘But, fellow romantics, do not push irony too far, or you will pass from the joyful laughter of *Tristram Shandy* into Teutonic gloom. Read Schlegel,’ he says [p. 211]. Clearly we shouldn’t do this, if we want to keep at least reasonably happy. I’m afraid I’m going to read Schlegel, a little bit, though I don’t think Schlegel as particularly gloom. But then I’m not entirely sure that the laughter in *Tristram Shandy* is entirely joyful either, so I’m not sure how safe we are with *Tristram Shandy*. But at any rate, it’s a different kind of texture.

Schlegel’s own German contemporaries and critics, and there were many, didn’t think he was gloomy at all. They actually rather held it against him that he was not nearly serious, and not nearly gloomy, enough. But (I will say this as a simple and not particularly original statement), if you are interested in the problem and the theory of irony, you have to take it in the German tradition. That’s where the problem is worked out. (De Man 167)

De Man’s constant back and forth about points in simple, staccato sentences, is like a ping-pong match dialectic. It gives a constant rhythm of aloof-sounding yet dense critique in those short sentences that references more history than Booth omits when he
avoids an entire tradition. Continuing after this excerpt, de Man fills in the holes with the names of the German tradition where the “problem is worked out.” De Man both pokes fun but also informs; he worked the style. Part of that had been the hierarchical standard, but de Man showed it as a kind of play, being pithy but also explanatory. His insights were dense and highly contextual.

Roland Barthes is another example of the ironic use of style, particularly in his use contrast for emphasis. Barthes integrated insights from a moderately descriptive analytic style with quotations from Marquis de Sade in the chapter, “Sade I” of Sade, Fourier, Loyola. Barthes was able to both utilize the blast of obscenity for context, as well as explain the way the obscenity worked through his analysis. The impact of the effect can be jarring and laugh-inducing. For instance, here is an excerpt where Barthes’s explains Sade’s order rather than eroticism and how it relates to rhetoric.

In short, speech and posture are of exactly the same value, one equals the other: giving one, we can get the other back in change: Belmore, appointed president of the Société des Amis du Crime, and having delivered a fine speech, a sixty-year-old man stops him and, to show his enthusiasm and gratitude, “begs him to give him his ass” (which Belmore hardly refuses to do). Thus it is not at all surprising that, anticipating Freud, but also inverting him, Sade makes sperm the substitute for speech (and not the opposite), describing it in the same terms applied to the orator’s art: Saint-Ford’s discharge was brilliant, audacious, passionate,” etc. Above all, however, the meaning of the scene is possible because the
erotic code benefits totally from the logic of the language, manifested through the artifices of syntax and rhetoric. (32)

Barthes play with style throughout his work was as tantalizing as his point about strip tease with text as it was about a kind of burlesque satire. Barthes offers more about the body of a text that could work with the low-brow, bodily humor, and blue humor especially, used in satire.

Hannah Arendt also wrote in a variety of styles that supported irony. The account of Eichmann shows off her sense of humor, her familiarity with irony, and her comedic frame. Her descriptions were insightful, laden with context. The narrative is addicting, even while the subject matter is horrific. Her background with irony comes from the German tradition, informed by Nietzsche and Heidegger, and also uses irony in its variety of contexts from that tradition. In the beginning of her account, she describes background information of persons related to the trial such as Israeli Prime Minister Ben-Gurion.

That Arab nationalists have been in sympathy with Nazism is notorious, their reasons are obvious, and neither Ben-Gurion nor this trial was needed ‘to ferret them out’, they never were in hiding. The trial revealed only that all rumors about Eichmann’s connection with Haj Amin el Husseini, the former Mufti of Jerusalem, were unfounded...If Ben-Gurion’s remark about ‘the connection between Nazis and some Arab rulers’ was pointless, his failure to mention present-day West Germany in this context was surprising. Of course, it was reassuring to hear that Israel does ‘not hold Adenauer responsible for Hitler,’ and that ‘for us a decent German,
although he belongs to the same nation that twenty years ago helped to murder millions of Jews, is a decent human being.’ (There was not mention of decent Arabs.) (13)

She continues to discuss Ben-Gurion’s connection to West Germany in a similar manner. While not blithely humorous, Arendt’s style points to the hidden contexts that come up in relation to the surface goings on in a biting ironic way.

This study could also benefit from more Burke. Burke offers much on not only the comic frame, talking about irony and satire, terministic screens and his wide swath of in-jokes with the groups and persons he was in constant correspondence with. Yet he also wrote satires, as well as demonstrated in a variety of ways applying a style of perspective, often engaging in a self-dialectic reminiscent of the back-and-forth from J.S. Mills’s writing. Burke’s “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s ‘Battle’” highlighted a kind of struggle, one of which offered a kind of show to the reader of how to work through labeling an enemy, but still attempting to comprehend them, if for nothing more than what they might do. Burke’s exigence on many points offered a means for satire and irony that is key to the example of satire I chose for the study of irony in *The Daily Show*.

Also, other popular examples may have offered an interesting alternative through political movies and their use of frames of reference in a way similar to Arendt’s. They also offer variations of dramatic irony which Burke often mentions. Yet they apply to the same point about Alcibiades in the second chapter; the audience needs to already have that frame of reference in order to understand the premise. The movie *Our Brand Is Crisis* offers a darkly funny moment in that light. Political strategists from the U.S. go to
Bolivia to influence the outcome of a presidential election. Sandra Bullock’s character starts rumors about the opponent’s connection to Nazis, which is untrue, but effectively distracting. In a moment where the tide seems to be going against her candidate, and her opposition’s strategist, Billy Bob Thornton, uses psycho-sexual tactics to belittle Bullock. In return, she feeds him a quote, supposedly from Faust; she’s holding the book in her hand. And as we see throughout the movie, Thornton used tactics that make it seem the reference would be about him. Thornton feeds his candidate the quote, since the words are timely and empowering. However, the quote is not from Faust; it is from Joseph Goebbels, Nazi propagandist. Bullock knew that Thornton would use the quote and not check its source because it fit so well with the moment. Bullock got the last laugh.

“Bullshit” from *The Daily Show*

The program made a lasting impact on the “architecture” of news-focused satire (M. Wright). The show gave a model, and Stewart and correspondents on the show often remarked upon how the show was constructed, even within the show itself. The show illustrated various tactics of highlighting information, ranging from narrative emphasis of absurdities to a rhythm of punchlines leading to a cumulative end point. The show also branched off the style of the monologue and other satires, like *The Onion*, for correspondents’ bits. While *The Daily Show* did not necessarily utilize other satires or comedy styles into the show, some of their main writers are, or have been associated with *The Onion*, like Ben Karlin and David Javerbaum.
The style of the show also proved that it operated as a collective with certain hierarchies. As an institution, the way *The Daily Show* itself was built does not offer a purely democratic model for discourse, but rather one symbiotic with a liberalist democratic republic. The show promoted the ideal of democracy through a mixture of strict methodology, corporatism, and republicanism. While Stewart’s editorial was absolute, whether he was a tyrant or not is not important. What Stewart offered would be more appropriately labeled a method; it was the basis of the show’s orientation the way irony is a language trope. It made the show work, it was the architecture.

The main irony of the show was how it was supported through sponsors. To do the show at all, it needed sponsors. The show was able to use profanity, to some extent, and offer an alternative view on events because it was on a private network that saw the profit-potential of a marketed name: Stewart. Stewart could then bring in more talent with the show, and offer what would then culminate in a long-running project that would bring large viewerships otherwise not seen for that time slot and genre on cable.

What the show offered, then, was representation; the principles of Stewart and those on the show were that of consternated constituency, those who were not happy or complicit to simply yell at a TV screen. Those on *The Daily Show* wanted to make fun of those that they otherwise might direct malice toward. But instead of focusing on the people, they broke down the situation and got to what was causing the problem, or the mechanism of what was absurd. The style of the show allowed for both diffusion of malice but also a focus on the absurdity of what made people mad, and offered alternative perspective and a style of diatribe through a ritual satire, a *Daily* ritual.
Part of that ritual was Stewart’s lampooning point of the “bullshitocracy.” At one point, there were several clips with the label “Polish That Turd” as a way of explaining, making fun of and one-upping those who would attempt to give an alternative perspective on a terrible situation, still advocating the terrible situation. Stewart then also had several clips on “bullshit,” pertaining to FOX News and his introductory monologue at The Rumble in the Air Conditioned Auditorium.

In his final monologue, Stewart expanded upon a particular style of rhetorical tactic of “bullshit.” It is not simply rhetoric, nor is it irony, but it does mask the motive behind the tactic. The bullshit can be malicious, or it can be “day-to-day, organic-free-range” that “keeps people from making each other cry all day.” Yet what is, or what becomes, malicious bullshit is that slung by elites who wish to continue to either get into power, maintain power, or make a last-ditch attempt at keeping power. This kind of bullshit is arguably tied to issues of legitimacy and tactics like fearmongering. Those who use bullshit in relation to the issue of legitimacy are the bullshitocracy, and their styles range considerably, but Stewart listed three main examples. One is hyperbolic language, often nationalistic or with positive connotation. Two is obfuscation through dry, lengthy language that tires readers because they cannot untangle the references. Three is a blatant logical fallacy, what Stewart calls the “bullshit of infinite possibility.” Instead of the limitations of an appeal to probability, it is negative; that “We can’t do anything because we don’t yet know everything.” The subtext of the speech was labeling consistently used logical fallacies in FOX News as well as political speeches from
ideologues, but Stewart explained it in terms that were both funny because of the word choice, but also succinct.

**Exigency: Kairos and Continued Ritual Satires**

Two of the main sweet spots of *The Daily Show* were catharsis and exigency. While the show did not necessarily make people get up and take action, it ended up offering alternative analysis of situations that most often would be imbued with meaning by particular ideological narratives. The show mocked those narratives, but to do so, they gave added context to show why those narratives were absurd.

Comedy also offers an irrational style and type of analysis. For moments that are often charged with grief, horror and tragedy, such as 9/11, natural disasters, wars, and social strife, there is an unending source of material to broach. Yet in the example of 9/11 mentioned in chapters three and four, comedians spoke on behalf of themselves and others to offer solace, community, insight, and catharsis. They also offered a new direction of the national conversation on these things, especially in the case of *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*. The timing of their work played into not only their success but the framing of the show. These shows offered connection between tragedy and comedy which is largely explicit in satire. Looking back on clips from Stewart’s time on *The Daily Show*, there is an odd sense of orientation. While the immediate context of the moment has passed, and the show is a way to catalogue new historical situations, what Stewart says, and how he says it, is still relevant.
Exigency is utilized by Samantha Bee and John Oliver especially in their satirical critiques. They both forcefully pounce on current topics with their own style, using how they talk about the topic as a way to land the point they make in their punchlines. They both offer their own approach toward exigency, urgency and frustration, but they are clear and concise. Bee offers consistent insults throughout her narrative as she amplifies the worst of the irony, and Oliver uses a steady flow of sarcasm and deadpan, saving insults and aggressively absurd statements for impact.

This subsection gives air to some of the more bracing pieces from Oliver, Bee, and Noah. There are more, and Colbert was not forgotten, particularly his two week-long series on the 2016 political conventions. Colbert’s entire shows were mockery of the candidates, the process, and the massive frustration from constituents about the candidates. Colbert brought back his alter-ego Stephen Colbert from *The Colbert Report*, as well as Stewart, who had been out of the lime light since *The Daily Show*. After his bit with the alter-ego, Colbert then made fun of the legal problem of bringing his alter ego out of retirement, since it was property of another network. However, one of the main differences Colbert has struggled with is how to work within the model of *The Late Show*, how to work around profanity laws with the FCC, and how to work with a more general audience. However, Colbert’s ratings have been consistently high for his transition, and he has been able to utilize the monologue format used in both *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* after the traditional headlines and band-interaction portion for *The Late Show* format.
Oliver—John Oliver’s *Last Week Tonight* on HBO offers a different style from that of *The Daily Show*, he continues rigorous research to hammer references in order to cover issues like abortion laws. Oliver utilizes his platform catharsis for tragedies like the Orlando Pulse nightclub shooting in the summer of 2016 and the Paris attacks in fall 2015. And Oliver also adds the occasional self-denigrating in-jokes based on his *Daily Show* history.

Oliver has offered longer essay narratives of investigative analysis as well as urgent topics to inform audiences of the situation. To do this, Oliver generally keeps to a particular narrative ark and delivery throughout his pieces. Oliver often uses invective, marks absurdity with a mock-aggressive tone, but overall his format is an investigative or collective analysis in a longer version of Stewart’s long-form essay-style monologue. Oliver’s style is highly contextual, largely focusing on evidence to point out gross absurdity in high profile situations and certain powerful individuals’ corruption. The form of *Last Week Tonight* is generally between the monologue from *The Daily Show* and *60 Minutes*.

In the piece, “Abortion Laws,” Oliver went in depth about the repercussions from the 1991 ruling *Planned Parenthood vs. Casey* that allowed states to put upon abortion providers a “few” regulations. Oliver then continues to explain TRAP laws, Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers, and how these laws use the pat explanation that they are “protecting women’s health.” Oliver points out that politicians who used the phrases were almost too insistent, and that repetition and insistence is a warning. However, the waiting periods, the misinformation clinic physicians are mandated to explain to patients,
and the limited number of facilities have made it nearly impossible for women to receive adequate care. Oliver showed clips of clinic staffers recounting stories of desperate women who needed abortions but could not make it under the heavy restrictions. Oliver expresses shock, but tempers it with juxtaposition of bad taste. “‘I’ll tell you what I have in my kitchen cabinet, and you can tell me what I can do.’ When your state’s abortion laws are forcing people into the most depressing quick fire challenge in Top Chef history, I think it’s safe to say they’ve gone too fucking far.”

In the same piece, Oliver punches up by driving holes in the premises used in the legislative examples. For some of the specific, often single, examples that states used to validate their legislation, the premise of the legislation could have easily been covered by existing laws. “They didn’t need new laws so much as they needed to bother to enforce the ones they had.” The piece also detailed women who could not make it to the clinics due to states’ limitations on the clinics that in turn affected the women. Oliver stated, “abortion cannot just be theoretically legal, it has to be literally accessible.”

One of the benefits of the investigative rigor from Oliver and their team of researchers is bringing light to information you would otherwise not be getting from mainstream media. Oliver generally does not follow Stewart and The Daily Show’s path of focusing on news outlets unless they are the story. So punching up or putting down a target is usually directly related to the situation. One example is when Oliver pointed attention to a long line for blood donation after the Pulse night club shooting in Orlando in 2016. Oliver simply offered video from Twitter, but he kept pointing out the feel-good
part of people coming together in a time of crisis; “that Terrorist dipshit is vastly outnumbered.”

Oliver seems to relish his use of profanity and obscenity which generally accompany his invectives. During the Paris attacks in fall of 2015, Oliver was self-aware of this point, and pointed out he would be partaking of his capability to be profane; as of now, we know this attack was carried out by gigantic, fucking assholes; unconscionable, flaming assholes possibly working other fucking assholes, definitely working in service of an ideology of pure assholery. Second, and this goes almost without saying, fuck these assholes.

Oliver explains about Paris’s resilience for a culture war with the ISIS branch, an extremist Muslim terrorist group, as one that these “assholes” could not win. Oliver gives a list of philosophers, wine, cigarettes and cheese as evidence against what he called a “bankrupt ideology” of the attackers. “You just brought a philosophy of rigorous self-abnegation to a pasty fight, my friend.”

Oliver also indulges in long running invectives. His vocabulary along with his writers has spawned many descriptions carefully crafted for the right amount of insult under the proper poetic meter and rhythm. In Oliver’s take-downs of Donald Trump after the lewd tape of Trump’s sexist comments was released, Oliver remarked,

In a way, perhaps we’ve always been heading for this historic moment.

The first female presidential nominee versus the human embodiment of every backwards, condescending Mad Men-esque, boysclub attitude that
has ever existed, rolled into one giant, salivating, dick-size referencing, pussy-grabbing, warthog in a red power tie.

Oliver has a particular knack for story-telling, and utilizes different approaches to delivery for impact. He happens to make a speedy hypothetical during the “Abortion Laws” piece as an example of another terrible way to die, other than death by colonoscopy. Oliver gives an entire list of a series of awkward moments that culminate in many twists and turns, starting simply with what one would assume is a teenaged boy masturbating, and ends with a trip to the hospital with the father yelling after the car as it speeds away, “your TV show is derivative and you’ll never escape the shadow of Jon Stewart. [audience laughs] That’s what we’re all afraid of, right?” Oliver is aware of how readily he has praised Stewart, as well as the moment he sat in for Stewart, and even how, to a certain extent, he re-appropriated Stewart’s form of monologue. Yet Oliver is self-deprecating, often delighting in how he can use himself as a pin cushion for comedic effect as well as the hard hitting topics he and his staff investigate.

*Bee’s Pulse*—Samantha Bee’s *Full Frontal* on TBS is also well researched, but her style is the main focus. First, the style of the show is more a magazine style that deals with connected one-liners and snarky comments. Second, Bee’s performance, while not a personae like Colbert, brings performativity and expectation of women’s representation into play. Bee also directs exigence through her style, a strong example is from her response to the Orlando shooting.

Bee covers current political events, feminist issues, legislation that affects women, and more. Bee uses delivery that is speedy, focused on exigence, fierceness, and
showcases frustrations. She uses one-liners, insults, invective, and a heavy influence of feminist terminology mixed with obscenity. She either explains or illustrates graphic bodily material in the topics she chooses or as an example of insult. Bee is unapologetic and aggressively sarcastic throughout her narrative.

Like *The Daily Show* and *Last Week Tonight*, *Full Frontal* is highly contextual and well researched. However, the show focuses less on in-depth investigations and instead is a kind of magazine show, covering several topics that generally may be related. Bee also goes with her staff for field pieces, such as for the 2016 political conventions. The show utilizes the vast amount of resources from research through its organization and Bee’s rapid monologues. While Bee does have a live audience, she does not interact with the audiences the way Stewart of Oliver do, instead, the audience seems to be an amplification of Bee’s impassioned and directed delivery.

The most jarring point for some may be how calm and sedate she is throughout an interview as compared to the show. Yet the difference goes back to feminist discourse concerning women’s behavior and various kinds of performativity. Whether that is part of Bee’s comedic methodology or not has not been expressed in interviews, but Bee also deals differently with the media/audience “ripple” as Oliver and Stewart called it, but has the added perspective, as Charlie Rose reminded her, of being a woman. She offers alternative points to leading questions with a matter-of-fact approach. One example mentioned previously was making changes in the misogyny of comedy through their show’s hiring tactic.
Bee pointed out in an interview to Charlie Rose how her delivery or approach on the show was not necessarily anger but rather a kind of catharsis. “We’re so about point of view of the show, about stating our point of view so firmly and forcefully. I think that we just wanted to make a show that was vigorous and visceral and satisfying. We wanted to make a show that we wanted to watch” (“Samantha Bee”).

With the magazine format, the show takes on exigence, using it as a means to try a different approach than predecessors, and digging into the snarky style of the show. One interesting example came after the Pulse nightclub shooting in the summer of 2016. Bee had already done several field pieces and monologues covering gun legislation and violence in previous weeks, also showing how easy it was to buy guns by making a stockpile. Bee pounced on the shooting as the tragic culmination of those pieces by starting the show with,

> After a massacre, the standard operating procedure is that you stand on stage, and deliver some well-meaning words about how we will get through this together. How love wins, how love conquers hate, and that is great. That is beautiful. But you know what? Fuck it. I am too angry for that. Love does not win unless we start loving each other enough to fix our fucking problems.

The crowd roared, and Bee continued to focus on different ways to approach discussing the situation.

First was shame about who could get guns, including those persons listed on the government’s no-fly list. She pointed out the normalizing of mass shootings, and how
politicians were treating the event as if it was just a city’s “turn.” The governor of Florida, Rick Scott, was questioned by news media, but generally kept it short and uninformative, talking about how they were working on a plan for bettering society. “This wasn’t even Orlando’s first high-profile gun-murder of the weekend. Stop thinking and do something to improve our society.”

And one of the common adages that generally had become as obnoxious as a continual gong was people offering “thoughts and prayers with the victims and their loved ones.” Bee focused on the prayer part, and went to the “instruction book,” aka Bible and quoted James 2:17: “Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” Her remark then was, “There is no shortage of troubled 20-somethings out there and whether they’re radicalized by ISIS, or homophobia, or white nationalism, or a dislike of movies, we’re making it far too easy for their derangement to kill us.” Her prayer was part invective, part insult and insight.

The Daily Show with Trevor Noah and Women—Trevor Noah became the host of The Daily Show on Comedy Central after Stewart left in Aug. 2015. Noah was immediately judged by Stewart’s standard for comedy, journalism, and a misogynist Twitter past. Within a year, Noah has produced several comedic insights on the show from the blunders of GOP presidential candidate Donald Trump. Noah has also made an important distinction about sexed language that punches up for feminist interests.

From the moment Stewart mentioned his successor, and the day he started, Noah has been burdened with the immediate memory and impact of his predecessor. Noah’s style is not Stewart’s. In spite of this, and because of this, Noah offers a start to The Daily
Show that Stewart did not have. Noah had no background in U.S. politics, and as was previously mentioned, he was not grounded in the way our journalism had shifted from the objective high modernism to propaganda focused messages and 24-hour models. Noah could offer his perspective as both someone with a background in African dictators (“Donald Trump”) as well as offer a way into the political conversation that could be a bridge between cultures, generations, and arguably, an audience with a different frame of reference.

Before he started, Noah raised eyebrows with a history of sexist tweets, one about fat women, one about white women having a large ass being like unicorns (Cox), and many about either watching women or not getting women. An additional one from 2014 went, “Go beat the pussy up! RT @eugenekhoza: In other news my neighbor’s cat is irritating me.” That particular tweet is highly contextual, and only makes sense or would be funny within the context of Eugene Khoza, another South African comedian. Noah responded to the news and wave of responses of his previous tweets with another tweet, “To reduce my views to a handful of jokes that didn’t land is not a true reflection of my character, nor my evolution as a comedian.” To be fair to Noah, he is pointing out again, comedy has roots in not just punching up, but also punching down, as Carolyn Cox pointed out with her list of Noah’s tweets in the online feminist magazine The Mary Sue. In this instance, Noah comes from Stewart’s kind of background not only with stand-up and an eye for contextual critique, but also misogynist commentary. Noah tripped again after the example of the SCOTUS tweet after the abortion legislation ruling in Texas mentioned previously.
Noah’s overall performance has been judged by current standards and had received scrutiny that was not there for Stewart. The overall situation has shifted to a kind of immediacy that Stewart did not have. However, Noah has offered a kind of response that Stewart did not work through until arguably Kristen Schaal came to the show in 2008, five years after Samantha Bee started. The show slowly made the shift in a way that Cox was looking over with the “best of” moments with Jessica Williams, which happened nearly thirteen years after Stewart’s start. Noah’s learning curve has had to be quicker.

Noah made an astute assessment of Trump’s comments about women that also works well within his own context in his monologue, “Fallout from Donald Trump’s Pussygate Scandal.” Noah’s assessment highlights the intent behind statements as well as the way in which the statements are addressed, and what they say about the communities who use particular language. “There is a big difference between saying dirty words and glorifying non-consensual sexual contact,” and “I understand that everyone’s been in the presence of an unsavory joke. Right? But there’s a difference between laughing at the jokes you don’t agree with and being an active accomplice.”

Noah used Trump’s example in the rest of the piece to emphasize the distinction, as well as to point out the media’s focus on Trump saying the word “pussy” to objectify women, as well as to violently do so. “It feels like more people are focused on, ‘he said pussy.’ It’s not about that. It’s about him saying that he forces himself on women.” Instead of focusing on the minutiae of language, Noah pinpointed the problem of intent, and differentiating behavior in that intent, instead of focusing on the language or any
language play. That something about the intent got through at this point, for some reason instead of Trumps earlier comments, in a way that had hit a breaking point. Noah also pointed out the irony of Trump’s mention of the breath mint company Tic Tac; “You know your words are bad when even the candy, whose only purpose is to help cover up what comes out of your mouth, say they can’t help you. They’re like, yeah, we can’t even fix that man.”

Irigaray’s sexed language is glaring as well as imperative to Noah’s differentiation between the two extremes of intent and dirty language. Noah asks the audience which is worse: a man who uses meek, straightforward words that sound stereotypically white, yet tell you what he will be doing to a woman without her invitation; or, a man who uses slang, profanity, and sound stereotypically black, but when a woman says no, he accepts it. “Neither of them is ideal, but one of them is crude and the other is against the law.”

Noah finished the monologue by focusing on the location part of the phrase “locker room talk,” a phrase that did not make sense to a many of the newscasters, and they did not agree with the premise much less that this was a common style of parlance. Noah emphatically ended by pointing out that the taped conversation was not in a locker room, it was on a bus and on a TV interview. If the “talk” is not necessarily in the locker room, “it’s not the locker room, it’s you, motherfucker! It’s you!”
Feminist Satire

What comedy offers feminist discourse is misogyny. And as Oliver, Bee, and Noah continue to point out, while that may seem counter intuitive, misogyny offers material as well as a practice to be against. Misogyny rehearses fundamentalist rhetoric in the context of liberalist empiricism. The easiest branch of this combination to identify is mansplaining.

There is also the irony of the “Not All Men” defense. Not All Men exemplifies the problems of negation in argument immediately—as well as the benefits—for those not arguing the premise. The example helps to identify a particular style of defensive arguing. The style reflects both the ideology of the speaker, but who fed the style and information to the speaker.

There are many ways that feminism, and particularly an ironist feminist perspective or application of satire could further social critique and discursive communities. I will finish here with two more thoughts to pursue in the future. One is a potentially broader focus of women, comedienne and feminist’s representation in public discourse A second would analyze the issue of patriarchal legitimacy in language and cultural contexts and how it is generally either taken for granted or not seen.

Representation

In comedy, some of the most effective punching up-statements come from alternative perspectives outside the hegemony. Outlets such as YouTube, Funny or Die,
and Comedy Central have various women and feminists from different ethnicities, sexualities and religions. The stand-up circuit is also still alive and well.

Due to influences like The Daily Show, attention is paid to when women and minorities breech long-standing male roles, like those in late night television. In her interview with Charlie Rose, Bee was quick to point out a Netflix series that offers similar commentary from Chelsea Handler. Large production comedy movies with Saturday Night Live casts offer female dominated leading roles and casts, including the 2016 remake of Ghostbusters with Melissa McCarthy, Kristen Wig, Kate McKinnon and Leslie Jones. Women’s media representation has been taking on the male-dominated lead role fixation and two dimensional female support roles by re-scripting male leads for female characters. Another example is Sandra Bullock’s character in Our Brand Is Crisis.

This study also cited examples of the hegemonic gender binary, as well as the conservatism of white feminist discourse. The literature on sexuality alone would greatly help to work out different representations of masculinity through Judith Butler’s performativity, considering how she mentions the parody of gender in Gender Trouble. Queer comedy in general is another avenue to touch more upon to open up the discourse in a way that was not broached here. The LGBTQ community offers other ways to bust binaries attributed to patriarchy and white feminism, and authors like Gloria Anzaldúa and Maria Lugones offer foundational texts.

Besides bodies and the right knowledge and perspective, style is important to represent. Style has arguably been the prevailing point of this entire study; style is why The Daily Show was used as an example. The fake news genre of Stewart’s Daily Show is
not simply having an opinion or being witty, it generally veered toward punching up because of the motivation for catharsis and humanity. That kind of drive and ethos is important behind the way the topics of feminism or anything else are approached, and another reason why The Daily Show was a very particular brand of satire, much less architecture.

Blue Balls

Blue humor is arguably as transideological as irony. What matters is the way a blue joke is used, by whom, for what reason, its style, and delivery. With patriarchal comedy styles, blue humor was crass and simply demeaning, going for shock rather than depth, insight or even nuance of the style. Like the point about LGBTQ comics, the matter of blue comedy has been central to many sets, including Lenny Bruce’s, George Carlin’s, or Woody Allen’s movies. Blue comics and comedy are an area of study, especially if there is a similar shift, or varying shifts depending on where the audiences are, the styles of the comics, and the larger social and political situations.

The sexist situation could also be looked at more in depth by itself, as part of a psychological investigation about the sexual politics that play into not only the comedy sets, but the way comedy as an industry functioned from Lenny Bruce until the current day, or some other era. Also, various places or audiences could be looked at for either accepting or banishing sexist humor or sexist behavior from comics or industry workers. In a 2016 study from Psychology of Men & Masculinity, audiences of men’s magazines were studied for their acceptance of misogynistic attitudes and behaviors. While the men
in the study did not necessarily condone the behavior, they were less apprehensive about it or participating in it because it was presented as normal, if not a right (Hegarty, Stewart, Blockmans and Horvath). Trump’s “locker room” behavior and talk is seen less as an essential or natural trait and instead often linked to arguments made by media, such as visual representations of women in print or online magazines. Comedy can then be looked at for whether it participates in this kind of behavior or joke focus, not simply as punching down, but as a sign of legitimacy of patriarchal norms. Jokes can be questioned for their stylistic aim, as well as intent or the kind of audience.

However, masculinity and patriarchy do not have to be the topic of a comedian’s comedy, or it can be the brunt of the joke. Or, as with Noah, Colbert and Stewart, it can shift over time. One of the great goals of Stewart with The Daily Show was to create something new, topical, humane and critical. Those did not have to be tied to patriarchy or against feminism, and often still struggled with the old patriarchal language. Yet this generally untethered perspective allowed for more of the focus on style than one tightly around an ideological justification, for patriarchy, feminism, or something else.

Situation Next: Technology & Podcasts

Technology was a large point in chapter three and four that pointed toward part of the foundation of situational shift for The Daily Show and news media. The point was to emphasize the importance of having a limited yet fledgling resource in broadcast televised news shifting to a nearly unlimited 24 our news cycle taken to the accessibility of the internet. Also, The Daily Show both highlighted part of that shift and used the
incoming technology for its own purposes. *The Daily Show* broadened its audience base and their own general accessibility.

Technology was also a part of their process and style. It was the context of the situation, for instance, that they could use green screens to mock CNN. And technology also impacted the way the show worked; having TiVo was revolutionary for their ability to call up archive footage. The point of *The Daily Show* was also how to use that technology *not* like the 24-hour news, or at least mock the use of it; *The Daily Show* was 22 minutes, once daily, four times a week. The show generally shunned immediacy and non-calculated reaction. It only used technological gimmicks to mock those who used them first. And, its non-news format allowed it to not have to worry about the shifts of the news industry from inside. Rather, it could continue to critique from the plane and industry of satire.

How true this picture is and how far Geoffrey Baym’s premise goes beyond *From Cronkite to Colbert* would be interesting for further study. The book offers interpretation of the integrated palate of *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* with news, including the question of whether *The Colbert Report* was more akin to Fredric Jameson’s pastiche. Peter Russell’s critique would offer an interesting counter. But the point of the postmodern model of *The Daily Show* as both a spin-off from the high modernist broadcast news yet not necessarily tied to the 24-hour model is important to the way *ethos* impacts the use of the technological advances, even in the way it impacts scheduling and audiences, much less accessibility.
So along with the point about writing in a different style, this study could be taken into the realm of crafting a non-written study that both utilizes the style of satire, but in different mediums, such as video shorts or podcasts. With the technological potential of reaching wider audiences through the internet, YouTube, SoundCloud, Funny or Die, and other comedy specific outlets have garnered both audiences, followings, as well as ways to branch off into various mediums besides the main road of traditional stand-up. And, in lieu of the investigative function of *The Daily Show* genre, many how-to style videos are giving funnier historical and PSA type video clips. One such example is Franchesca Ramsey’s *Decoded* on MTV and online Ramsey was a former writer and correspondent on *The Night Show with Larry Wilmore*.

Podcasts also offer the means to be informative and play with the medium of sound. Established comics like Ricky Gervais, John Hodgeman, Jessica Williams, and Gilbert Gottfried, a man with a voice made for radio, all have invested time in podcasts. Some of these shows cross media, and are both podcast and video short, such as *Adam Ruins Everything*, which is a myth-busters style satire. Generally, the narrative is dominated by Adam, but in the episode “Adam Ruins Everything - The Truth About Hymens and Sex,” Adam turns the narrative over to a female friend. This friend named Emily goes over examples of common myths surrounding understanding of a woman’s hymen as well as societal and political ramifications of the myth upon the safety and wellbeing of women.

There are many unanswered questions about an ironist feminist perspective and how it can best utilize satire, but technology continues to offer new avenues of
communication, as well as spaces of misogyny and ways to point that out. This study was not necessarily attempting to end misogyny in any way, but rather to show ways that it can be made fun of, and differentiate men from All Men. Not All Men need to be made fun of mercilessly, but rather with some sense of purpose, perspective, and style.
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