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Mobilizing Affect: The Rhetoric and Circulation of Popular Political Satire News Shows

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation offers an analysis of how popular political satire news shows use humor, emotion, and circulation to critically respond to emergent exigencies and power dynamics. This project is grounded in the primary research question: how do these shows, through the affective processes of production and circulation, impart critical literacies uniquely suited for our current moment?

Drawing from classical rhetorical theory, feminist and queer affect studies, and rhetorical circulation studies, I analyze three popular political satire shows*: Saturday Night Live, Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*, and *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*. All of these shows highlight the everyday effects of policy and political debates on individuals in a greater effort to call for political action, are among the most popular of the political satire television shows currently on air, and provide a different lens through which to investigate satire's rhetorical and affective character. For each show, I analyze a *YouTube* clip and viewer responses posted on the show's *YouTube* page. Together, the *YouTube* clips and viewer responses build an affective network for each show, offering insight into how their rhetorical ecologies shift and are repurposed in the service of different arguments and political ends.

From this analysis, I argue that these shows operate as forms of *affective rhetorical intervention* uniquely suited for the spectacle and divisiveness that characterize the current political milieu. Affective rhetorical intervention employs emotion as a rhetorical strategy to dismantle and effect change within dominant arguments and narratives. In my analysis of *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*, this intervention aims to convince viewers that all information is framed through the lens of some type of bias. In *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*, this affective rhetorical intervention is channeled towards feminist consciousness raising and confrontation of

institutionalized racism. *Saturday Night Live* employs humor and affect to kairotically respond to changes within the milieu, particularly the growing influence of personality over viewers' political decision making and voting practices.

My study contributes to the field a rhetorical and affective inquiry into how popular forms of satire respond to a political moment in which we are hard pressed to tell the difference between a salacious rumor and news. Focusing on the rhetorical processes of these shows also complicates the affective feedback loop of cynicism often associated with contemporary political satire. Finally, this project provides critical insight into how and why viewers increasingly turn to political satire as a legitimate source of news, interjecting nuance into dichotomous perceptions of political satire news shows as either democratizing forces or sources of apathy that exacerbate partisan polarization.

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by

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Chapter One:
Introduction: Tracing the Rhetorical and Affective Dynamics of Political Satire

An "analytic act is a political act. Awareness matters. Being able to articulate what is going on can change what is going on—at least in the long run."
—George Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant*, 122

"*emotions work as a form of capital: affect does not reside positively in the sign or commodity, but is produced as an effect of its circulation*."
—Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 45

Since the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, questions surrounding journalistic credibility and partisan media consumption have permeated public debate, as distrust of the media and the perception of news sources as politically biased have hit historic highs (Gallup/Knight Foundation; Ladd). A concurrent debate surrounds the relationship between partisanship, emotion, and information literacy (e.g., Pariser; Sivek). This moment of critical reflection makes critical examination of the rhetoric and circulation of popular sites of information particularly exigent. One such site is the political satire news show.[1]

Political satire news shows have been garnering high ratings[2] and accolades[3] since the 2016 election. These shows are often dismissed as mere entertainment that fosters cynicism and apathy in the viewer (Postman; Guggenheim, Kwak, and Campbell) and perpetuates partisan ideologies and ontologies (LaMarre, Landreville, and Beam). However, political satire shows have increasingly become a source of legitimate news for many since the 2000s (National

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[1] Popular examples of this (in chronological order) include: *Saturday Night Live*, *The Daily Show, The Colbert Report, Real Time with Bill Maher, Last Week Tonight with John Oliver, The Nightly Show with Larry Wilmore* (cancelled), *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee, The Opposition with Jordan Klepper* (cancelled), and *The Rundown with Robin Thede* (cancelled).
[2] For example, *Saturday Night Live* has seen increased ratings and viewership during and since the 2016 election. In addition, shows like *The Daily Show* and *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* have received high ratings. For more on this, see chapter two.
[3] For example, *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* has won multiple Emmys and *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* has been nominated for an Emmy every year since 2016.

Annenberg Election Survey, 2004; Pew Research Center, 2014). In fact, one in four adults in the U.S. turned to them for election news in 2016 (Pew Research Center, 2014, 2016). Politicians have influenced the credibility and legitimacy of political satire news shows by using them as platforms for campaigning and public relations (Lichter, Baumgartner, and Morris).[4] Research studies indicate correlations between viewership and increased political knowledge (Cao), civic engagement (Cao and Brewer; Moy, Xenos, and Hess; Lee and Kwak), and cynicism towards politics and news media (Baumgartner and Morris).[5] The shifting rhetorical dynamics surrounding the purpose and reach of satire are also evident in debates over the timeliness and appropriateness of satire as a tool of political dissent against the Trump administration.

A common characteristic across the tradition of political satire in the U.S. is the ridicule or shaming of public figures and institutions who are most often the subject of the satire. However, the effectiveness of this rhetorical strategy grows ever more complex when we consider the brazen lack of humility and shame that Trump has displayed, as well as today's divisive partisan landscape. Popular and scholarly debates identify the 2016 election as influencing the civic function of contemporary political satire. Caroline Framke recognizes how these shows shift their strategies in ways that reflect partisan polarization. Many others associate the unrelenting spectacle and scandal that has characterized the Trump administration with a renewed urgency for political satire. For instance, Amanda Day identifies the critical metric that satire affords as it counters the conventions and limitations of mainstream media coverage: "There is the danger of reporting on President Trump the way that the press reports. It would normalize his policies in a way they should not be normalized. Satirists point out things that

[4] For more on politicians' interaction with political satire shows, see chapter two.
[5] For more on research into the effects of political humor, see Compton.

aren't normal" (as cited in Hinckley). In a recent MSNBC interview, filmmaker Michael Moore recognizes satire as a form of dissent especially appropriate for President Trump:

> ...we need an army of satire.... We need everybody to use their sense of humor and their comedy to bring [Trump] down. Because his skin is so thin, he gets so upset .... I and others, we formed this larger group [that] discombobulate[es] [Trump] with humor, ridicule, satire. We want him up at three in the morning tweeting. The more he is doing that, the less he is doing to hurt the country. (Schwartz)

Both Day and Moore contend that our current political landscape will inspire satire that can effect action, and potentially social change. Yet, writers like Ian Crouch and Emily Nussbaum claim that President Trump's incapacity for shame and ostentatious nature make him impervious to satirical attacks. Similarly, Richard Zoglin questions the normalizing effect of laughing at President Trump and his actions. Regardless of the perspective they take, these arguments collectively speak to a greater exigency for investigating the public and civic character of today's political satire. As our affective capacities for shame and ridicule change, and as our discursive practices become both more nebulous and networked, so does the rhetorical, political, and civic character of satire.

Project Overview

This dissertation offers a multi-faceted rhetorical analysis of how humor and emotion operate within popular satire news shows and their circulation. I draw from classical rhetorical theory, feminist and queer affect studies, and rhetorical circulation studies to analyze clips from three shows: *Saturday Night Live (SNL), Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (LWT), and Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* (*FF*). I explore how these shows employ the affective processes of production and circulation to impart critical literacies uniquely suited for the current political milieu. To do so, I bring classical and contemporary rhetorical theories of humor, affect, and circulation together to build an analytical lens to investigate how popular forms of satire operate

across different topoi and contexts. More specifically, I analyze how each show (1) engages with rhetorical humor, (2) employs affect as a form of *rhetorical identification*[6] mobilized towards political argumentation and/or action, (3) respond to contemporary shifts in political discourse and information literacy practices, and (4) engage with pertinent issues of power, difference, and identity.

From this analysis, I argue that these shows operate as forms of *affective rhetorical intervention* uniquely suited for the spectacle and divisiveness that characterize the political moment. Affective rhetorical intervention employs emotion as a rhetorical strategy to dismantle and effect change within dominant arguments and narratives. For example, in my analysis of *LWT* in chapter three, this intervention works to convince viewers that all information is framed through the lenses of some type of bias. By doing so, the show intervenes within the one-sided delivery of mainstream news in which viewers are passive consumers of information, demonstrating how the dismissal of biased news can erode viewers' ability to detect misinformation, while also allowing them to rationalize their complacency. In my analysis of *FF* in chapter four, I argue that this affective rhetorical intervention is channeled towards feminist consciousness raising about systemic racism.

My study contributes a rhetorical and affective inquiry into how popular forms of satire are responding to a political moment in which we are hard pressed to tell the difference between

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[6] I am using the term here in reference to how the shows use identification as a tool of persuasion and/or argumentation, particularly through emotional appeals (like humor). My usage is akin to Burke's discussion of *pathos* as a form of rhetorical identification and collective knowledge formation. In addition, I draw on Wendy Hesford's theorization of *affective identification* as a form of witnessing (as informed by Krista Ratcliffe's concept of *rhetorical listening* and Barbara Biesecker's complication of identity as a field of ongoing action) that has political implications. Overall, I approach rhetorical identification as an analytic to study how the shows' engagement with emotion impacts their primary objective of humor and ability to model critical literacies.

a salacious rumor and legitimate news. In addition, this project provides critical insight into how and why viewers are increasingly turning to political satire as a legitimate source of news, interjecting nuance within dichotomous perceptions of political satire news shows as either democratizing forces or as fostering apathy and exacerbating partisan polarization. Situating political satire news shows' use of rhetorical humor historically and affectively enables us to look beyond the surface of these shows as merely snark or entertainment. By doing so, we can begin to see them as rhetorical modes that respond to both the affective dimensions of political participation.

In this introductory chapter, I offer a brief history of political satire in the U.S. This history provides important context about how the genre has evolved over time and focuses on the traditions, modes, and characteristics most influential to the case studies analyzed. Next, I provide a literature review that synthesizes the scholarly studies of humor, affect, and circulation that inform my analytical framework. Connections between these theories and my methods are crystallized in the methodology section. I conclude this chapter with an overview of the remaining chapters.

Political Satire in the U.S.: A Brief History

The history of political satire is kaleidoscopic, manifesting in different forms and mediums as it responds to a particular time or context. Rising in popularity during times of conflict or unrest, political satire in the U.S. has been influenced by a variety of traditions.[7] These include the comedic plays of Aristophanes; the satyr plays of Dionysian Greek festivals in the fifth century; Renaissance satirists like Isaac Casaubon; philosophical notions of satire offered by Lacan; fifteenth and sixteenth century philosophers, Thomas Hobbes and Thomas

[7] For more on satire's development outside of the U.S., see Hanff.

More. Ancient Roman philosophers Horace and Juvenal theorized different types of satire and have since been known as the fathers of satire (Applebee). Horatian satire is characterized as "playfully amusing" and as gently encouraging change through appeals to understanding. Conversely, Juvenalian satire is more explicitly critical and is employed as a method for "criticiz[ing] corruption or incompetence with scorn and outrage" (Applebee 584). Seventeenth century English poet, playwright, and literary critic Jonathan Dryden was highly influential in establishing satire as a nondramatic genre separate from comedy and tragedy.[8]

One of the most instrumental traditions to the evolution of contemporary satire in the U.S. is English satire of the eighteenth century, including the work of Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope (Rogers). The political and class conflicts of eighteenth-century England gave rise to topical satire as a form of social commentary and dissent. Swift's essay "A Modest Proposal" is often cited as a foundational text in the history of political satire. In this work, Swift employs humor, parody, and sarcasm to criticize child labor conditions at the time. Other influential satires by Swift include "The Shortest-Way with the Dissenters" and *Gulliver's Travels*, in which he uses Juvenalian satire to call attention to injustice and human error. Alexander Pope was known for employing Horatian satire, as he acknowledged that satire can "heal" as well as "hurt" (Griffin 33). For example, in his mock-epic poem, "The Rape of the Lock," Pope satirizes the London upper class and their ignorance towards the plight of the less fortunate.

From these traditions, early American writers adopted satire as a tool of social critique. Early examples of U.S. political satire include *The New England Canaan* (1637), a parody of

[8] As described in his foundational essay "Discourse on Satire" (1693). For more on Dryden's theory of satire and contemporary influence, see Frost.

Puritan society, and Benjamin Franklin's "Rules By Which a Great Empire May Be Reduced To a Small One" (1773) (Hanff). In the nineteenth century, political cartoons became a popular genre of satire that still influences political discourse today. For instance, the term gerrymander was first used by a Boston cartoonist in 1812; and, well-known cartoonist Thomas Nast created the donkey and elephant caricatures that continue to represent the two major political parties (Speel). During the Civil War period, political satire remained popular but decidedly safer, missing the socially conscious and critical bite of its predecessors. Unlike the boom political satire experienced as a result of the printing press, the rise in mass media in the 1940s only resulted in more safe "pseudo-satire," given the state's control of media outlets (Peterson). Barring a few exceptions, uncontroversial satire persisted in the U.S. until post-World War II, after which the counterculture once again used satire as a tool to call for change.[9]

Integral to the tradition of political satire in the U.S. is its mockery of the ruling class and its association with social activism. This emphasis on social change can be seen in the activist roots of satire within Swift and Pope's criticism of classism and labor inequality. In the 1960s, activist groups like the Yippies in the U.S. and the Situationists in Europe employed satire to incite social consciousness.[10] The Situationists, founded by Guy Debord, repurposed authoritative texts, created satirical films, and gave live satirical performances as a form of protest (Jappe). Similarly, the Yippies (Youth International Party), which included Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, used satire to criticize the war in Vietnam. "Cultural jamming" initiative that employed satire became popular forms of protest for activist groups like ACT UP and the Guerrilla Girls, both formed in the 1980s. Contemporary examples of "parodic activism"

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[9] For more on the history of political satire, see Freedman; Griffin; and, Knight.
[10] Other examples of activist satire from the 1950s and 1960s include *MAD Magazine*, the comedy of Marty Sahl and Lenny Bruce, and Beat poetry.

include the work of performance groups like The Yes Men and Billionaires for Bush (McClennen and Maisel).[11] In addition to serving as a tool of resistance for grassroots activism, satire began to seep into mainstream media in the later half of the twentieth century, including films (e.g., *The Great Dictator* (1940); *Dr. Strangelove* (1964); *Wag the Dog* (1997)), television (*The Tonight Show* (1954); *The Smothers Brothers* (1967); *All in the Family* (1971)), and radio (e.g., *A Prairie Home Companion* (1974)). With the advent of the internet, websites like *The Onion* and *JibJab.com* began to circulate political satire to a wider audience.[12] More recently, political satire in the U.S. has manifested in several different forms, including mockumentaries (e.g., *Fahrenheit 9/11 (*2004*); Religulous (*2008*);* and, *Where to Invade Next? (*2015*)),* and mock political campaigns (i.e., Steve Colbert's fake presidential runs in 2008 and 2012).

The history of satire news on television is an important context to consider in this rhetorical study. Early examples of satire news include *The Spectator English*, a newspaper in the early 1700s, and Mark Twain's work in several American newspapers, such as *The Enterprise* (Lubeck). With the rise of activist satire in the U.S. in the 1960s came early forms of gonzo journalism in the works of Hunter S. Thompson and Tom Wolfe (Hanff). Examples of television satire news programs from this time period include *That Was the Week That Was* (1962-1963) in the UK, *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In* in the U.S. (1968-1973), and *This Hour Has Seven Days* (1964-1966) in Canada. In 1975, *Saturday Night Live* first aired the segment, "Weekend Update," a satirical news sketch that continues to run today. Satire news thrived during the 1990s with the rise of cable television programming, as seen in the inception of shows

[11] For more on how social movements have historically used satire as a tool of resistance, see Day's *Satire and Dissent*.
[12] For more on the history of satire news on the internet, see Hanff; and Grey, Jones, and Thompson.

like *The Daily Show*. There was renewed interest in satire news shows beginning in the early 2000s, as shows like *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* became more popular. In 2014, *(LWT* began airing on HBO, and in 2016, TBS produced the first political satire news show to be hosted by a woman on a major network, *FF*. The sustained popularity of political satire news shows reflects their ongoing response to changes within information technologies, the mainstream media, and political power structures.[13]

As seen in this brief history, political satire in the U.S. has undergone significant changes. Rhetorical study can yield insight into how contemporary satire offers viewers critical (information and emotional) literacies. Scholarly examinations of political satire are traditionally separated into research into the "features of comedy content" and the "effects of comedy exposure" (Becker and Waisanen 173). By engaging with rhetorical studies, this project brings together these two lines of inquiry to offer insight into political satire news shows' production and circulation. Inquiries into the rhetorical dynamics of political satire have a long history that spans across a variety of disciplines. In order to postulate on the kairotic resonance of contemporary political satire, it is important to understand how it has historically functioned as a rhetorical tool to question those in power. To do so, I build upon classical models of rhetorical humor to explore how satire's rhetorical conventions and practices have evolved to respond to different temporal and political contexts. With the field's rich history of exploring humor, rhetorical studies is uniquely positioned to engage in more nuanced and complex analyses of how political satire has evolved to respond to new exigencies surrounding political discourse and information literacies. The following literature review identifies the rhetorical lenses that are most influential to this study, particularly those that examine humor, affect, and circulation.

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[13] For more on the history of satire news television in the U.S., see Tucker.

Relevant Literature

The conversations synthesized in this literature review coalesce to provide critical and methodological lenses to interrogate the ways in which political satire explicitly acknowledges, mimics, solicits, constructs, and/or mobilizes humorous and emotional appeals. This review brings rhetorical history, feminist, affect, and circulation studies together to build a theoretical framework for my analysis of political satire news shows and their circulation. In the first section, I identify classical and contemporary rhetorical studies of humor that are most influential to my study. The next section outlines the affect studies that I draw upon in my own definition and theorization of affect. The texts in the final section offer insight into how circulation influences the rhetorical dynamics of contemporary political satire.

Classical models of rhetorical humor offer this study a foundational framework for analysis because they attend to the persuasive dynamics of humor; affect and circulation studies expand these models to account for the perpetually emergent nature of both emotion and rhetoric in contemporary political discourse. Questions of ethical humor and the responsibility of a rhetor raised in classical models, for instance, must be reframed or amended to fully account for modern exigencies, particularly those surrounding identity and information literacy. As such, feminist rhetorical theories and methods are central across all three sections, as they help me to reframe classical models of humor and affect to account for satire's engagement with questions of power, identity, difference, and embodiment. In this way, working with classical and feminist studies together enables me to better explore what Sean Zwagerman identifies as the *transideological potential* of satire. In other words, classical models provide a formative understanding of how humor and emotion might function rhetorically, and feminist studies take

this understanding further to reveal the complex and emergent nature of emotions, drawing attention to the issues of power imbricated in all humor.

Classical Rhetoric

Classical rhetorical theories of humor are most valuable to my analysis because they: (1) present humor as (1) a powerful tool in civic debate and political discourse, and (2) a contextually bound rhetorical strategy that can be channeled into social commentary and action. In addition, they provide evidence of satire's rhetorical dexterity that works to rebut critiques of political satire news shows as mere entertainment. Collectively, these classical works contribute a model of rhetorical humor that requires explicit acknowledgment of the emotional and ethical dynamics at play between the audience, subject, and rhetor.

Classical models of humor[14] provide a practical analytic for this rhetorical study because contemporary satirists—including those I analyze—continue to employ strategies outlined by these models. More specifically, these historical models offer a lens to assess how humor is operating rhetorically the shows analyzed. My analysis is not meant to be a direct comparison between classical models and these shows. Instead, I trace elements of these classical models across the case studies. I build upon rhetorical history's emphasis on humor as a contextual tool of civic persuasion to offer further insight on the rhetorical dynamics of political satire news shows.

Palpable across classical rhetorical models is the recognition that humor, as an appeal based in *pathos*, is not bound by rhetorical rules. This is evident in Aristotle's focus on *catharsis*,

[14] While I use satire and humor interchangeably throughout this project, ancient rhetoricians used terms like wit, humor, and comedy. An emphasis on *kairos*, the ridicule of powerful figures, and the treatment of rhetorical humor as a civic good is evident across classical rhetoric. The applicability of classical models of humor within analyses of political satire has also been recognized by contemporary rhetorical scholars (e.g., Benacka; Jones; Waisanen).

in which he presents the rhetorical function of pathos as beyond the solicitation of an emotional reaction. Aristotle shares Plato's distrust of comedy as an unwieldy, and potentially dangerous, rhetorical strategy, associating it with negative (or aggressive) emotions (Smuts). And while his full treatise on comedy has never been recovered, there is ample evidence that Aristotle takes a more nuanced approach to humor than Plato.

While critical of it, Aristotle positions humor as a method for highlighting immoral, ridiculous, or deplorable individuals and characteristics. Aristotle defines *wit* as "educated insolence" in *On Rhetoric* (2, 12). In this definition, he recognizes the rhetorical skill humor requires and associates it with resistance. Humor's perceived threat to the established order can be seen in Aristotle's recommendation that certain forms of comedy (i.e., mockery and jesting) be forbidden by the government in *Nicomachean Ethics* (4.8.66). However, Aristotle also presents *wittiness* as a virtue, as "productive of good" in *On Rhetoric* (1.6.63). Through an emphasis on *ethos* and *kairos*, Aristotle acknowledges the contextual nature of humor. Aristotle's theorization of how humor functions for different audience and topoi provides a theoretical foundation for my analysis of how these shows respond to different contexts over time. For example, I draw from Aristotle's model in my analysis of *SNL*'s engagement with kairotic satire in chapter two.

Like Aristotle, Cicero recognizes the civic character of rhetorical humor as an exercise in oratorical eloquence. Cicero differs from Aristotle in his treatment of humor as an appeal based in ethos as well as pathos. While also expanding the emotional resonance of rhetorical humor beyond laughter, Cicero stresses its ethical dimensions as a greater path to honor, virtue, and truth (*De Oratore* 1.65). Cicero articulates the value and multiple rhetorical functions of humor:

> ...it is indeed clearly fitting for the orator to stir up laughter, either because cheerfulness by itself wins goodwill for the one who has excited it; or because everyone admires

> cleverness (often a matter of just one word!), especially of someone who gives a retort, and not infrequently also of someone who provokes another; or because laughter crushes the opponent, obstructs him, makes light of him, discourages him, defeats him; or because it shows the orator himself to be refined, to be educated, to be well bred; and especially because it soothes and relaxes sternness and severity, and often, by joking and laughter, dismisses offensive matters that are not easily refuted by arguments. (2.186)

Similar to Aristotle, the Ciceronian model of humor is contextually responsive, also departing from a prescriptive or rules-driven approach to rhetorical humor. A rhetor's ability to execute humor relies on their assertion of a persuasive ethos. The goal, then, is not simply to ridicule or get a laugh, but to engage in ethical humor: "Though I should wish an orator, moreover, to speak with wit, I should certainly not wish him to seem to affect wit; and he must not therefore speak facetiously as often as he can, but must rather lose a joke occasionally, than lower his dignity" (Cicero 6.3.436).

Cicero emphasizes a style and delivery in humor that is most generally palatable and reflective of the subject matter, audience's values, and orator's ethos: "the orator must give proof of his own good manners and modesty by avoiding dishonorable words and obscene subjects" (Cicero 2.188). Like Aristotle, the question of what is appropriate and considered non-offensive is the primary concern in executing persuasive, and in Cicero's case, ethos-building, humor. For Cicero, an orator's ability to be "elegantly witty" (2.184) depends on their avoidance of what is contextually obscene according to the rules of propriety at that time. Imparting a humorous style and delivery that is both tempered and effective at weakening another's argument requires, according to Cicero, not only skill and training, but strength of character as well. I draw from Cicero's theorization of the ethical and civic dimensions of rhetorical humor to demonstrate the transactional nature of *LWT's* satire in chapter three.

In addition, this study builds on other classical models to present rhetorical humor as imbricated in questions of kairos and context. Like Cicero and Aristotle, Quintilian asserts that

rhetorical humor "mainly depends on nature and on opportunity" (6.3.12). Rhetorical humor relies on an orator's ability to read and appropriately respond to the affective appetites and cultural knowledge of a particular audience, all while remaining mindful of how their ethos will be influenced by said humor. This attention to the relationship between rhetorical humor and emotion helps to demonstrate how political satire news shows engage with satire in ways that do more than make viewers laugh. More specifically, Quintilian's emphasis on the relationship between humor, ethos, and emotion (most evident in his theorization of *affectus*) is instrumental in my analysis of *FF's* use of anger in chapter four.

Overall, these classical models demonstrate that for humor to be effective (and persuasive), it must also be ethical, a metric that is dependent on shifting social and political norms. As such, attention to *kairos* can provide further insight into how the rhetorical capital of these shows has changed over time.[15] In addition, classical models of humor work to contextualize my claims about how political satire news shows' respond to contemporary exigencies in unique ways.[16] For instance, the driving question of this study asks how the case studies employ rhetorical affect and humor to respond to major shifts in political discourse and information literacy.

Contemporary Rhetorical Studies

While these classical models offer a rhetorical framework for analyzing how affect and humor are employed in political satire, they do not account for present-day power dynamics and

[15] As recognized by Davis, Dingo, Hariman, Kinneavy, and Rickert. For more on how kairos informs this study, see my analysis of *SNL* in chapter two.

[16] Classical rhetorical models of humor have also been influential outside of rhetoric and composition. This has been recognized by scholars in the field of humor studies and contemporary rhetorical scholars (e.g., Meyer; Smuts). For more on humor studies, see Attardo and Raksin.

discursive norms. More contemporary scholars in the field have investigated the rhetorical dynamics of humor (e.g., Booth, Davis, and Meyer). One of the most influential has been Kenneth Burke's theorizations of the *comic frame* in *Attitudes Toward History*, in which he posits humor as a tool of rhetorical identification. There have also been a few rhetorical studies that examine political satire news shows specifically (e.g., Benacka; Gring-Pemble and Watson; Waisanen). For instance, in "Political Parody and Public Culture," Robert Hariman identifies political parody as a form of rhetorical education, highlighting the processes by which parody comments on how we gather and vet information. Similarly, Elizabeth Benacka draws from rhetorical history and the history of parody to present contemporary political satire as a form of rhetorical education that promotes *deliberative democracy* in *Rhetoric, Humor, and the Public Sphere*. Benacka analyzes the use of rhetorical humor in *The Colbert Report* and Stephen Colbert's 2006 address at the White House Correspondents' Dinner. She presents Colbert's parody of right-wing media commentators as a critical reflection on the instability of political debate, arguing that the show is a source of civic education. Benacka's recognition of political satire as a form of rhetorical education echoes my own arguments about how these shows promote critical literacies. Both Hariman and Benacka demonstrate the rhetorical dexterity with which contemporary political satire is executed and received. Like these scholars, I employ and revise classical models to analyze popular forms of contemporary humor. My study is unique because I engage directly with questions of affect and circulation.

A rhetorical lens is particularly effective given political satire's history as an instrument for social commentary, persuasion in civic matters, and scrutiny of those in power. For example, contemporary rhetorical studies help me to explore the dynamics between the shows' engagement with emotion and ability to offer humor that reflects the shifting individual and

collective expectations of an audience at a particular historical moment. For instance, James L. Kinneavy argues that kairos operates on "ethical, educational, epistemological, and aesthetic levels, all of which are linked to each other" (61). In addition, Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg theorize kairos as driven by the political and cultural contexts in which a text or author is situated. Feminist scholars, such as Wendy Hesford and Debra Hawhee, position kairos as a recursive process of invention that is responsive to both immediate and historical contexts. Together, classical and contemporary notions of kairos support and productively complicate my claims about the timeliness of political satire news shows. More specifically, I employ kairos as an analytical lens in my comparative analysis of *SNL* sketches from two different presidential elections (2000 and 2016).[17] Overall, the nebulous and ever-shifting definition of political satire calls for analytics that are amenable to emergent exigencies, which rhetorical methodologies provide through their attention to context and difference.

Feminist Studies of Humor/Satire

Given political satire's tradition as a tool of dissonance, it is important to investigate how contemporary forms—like the shows examined in this study—respond to ever-shifting power dynamics. Feminist lenses are particularly appropriate because they scrutinize individuals and institutions of power: "A function of feminist critique is to question what passes as ordinary... in order to unsettle the ground upon which norms hold sway" (Micciche 176). As such, feminist methodologies are a demonstrative lens for this analysis, as they assist me in tracing not only how satire is rhetorically functioning, but also how it works to exclude or make room for otherwise marginalized voices.

[17] For more on classical and contemporary theorizations of kairos that are pertinent to this study, see chapter two.

Influencing the field in a multitude of ways, feminist rhetorical studies call attention to the gendered experiences of women and the normative biases that influence classical notions of rhetoric and the writing process. Feminist rhetorical studies recover historical and contemporary woman writers (e.g., Campbell; Glenn; Lunsford); explore the gendered subjectivity of writing students and instructors (e.g., Flynn; Johnson); call attention to the feminization of the composition classroom and profession (e.g., Miller.; Schell); reread and revise classical approaches to rhetorical theory, genre, style, and form (e.g., Biesecker; Ede, Glenn, and Lunsford; Foss, Foss, and Griffin; Micciche; Phelps and Emig; Swearingen); recognize the rhetorical and pedagogical worth of public and community writing (e.g., Hogg; Mathieu and George); raise questions concerning embodiment (e.g., Hawhee; Sedgewick); craft ethical and reciprocal methodologies for rhetorical study (e.g. Bizzell; Royster and Kirsch; Schell and Rawson); and model intersectional and transnational methodologies for the field (e.g., Alcoff; Crawford; Mohanty; Schell and Hesford; Wu).

To destabilize essentializing arguments about how affect and humor are operating within political satire news shows, I revisit classical rhetorical models, building upon the methodologies of feminist historiography.[18] Coupled with classical rhetorical models, feminist studies reveal the complex and emergent nature of emotion and humor, drawing attention to the issues of power imbricated in all political discourse. For example, feminist theorizations of *ethos* reread and revise classical models. In chapter four, I employ feminist theories of ethos (e.g., Hawhee;

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[18] Some of the most influential include Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's *Man Cannot Speak for Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric* (1989); Andrea Lunsford's *Reclaiming Rhetoric: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition* (1995); Cheryl Glenn's *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity Through the Renaissance* (1997); Susan Jarratt's *Rereading the Sophists: Classical Rhetoric Refigured* (1991) and "In Sappho's Memory" (2002); Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald's *Available Means: An Anthology of Women's Rhetoric(s)* (2001); and, Susan Williams's *Reclaiming Authorship: Literary Women in America*, 1850-1900 (2006).

Ratcliffe; Ryan, et al.) to analyze how humor and anger work in tandem to establish *FF*'s unique feminist ethos of provocation and emotional authenticity.

Like their recovery of rhetors and practices excluded from classical rhetorical history, feminist scholars have worked to rewrite the history of humor, which is commonly represented as predominantly male. By drawing attention to power differentials at play within all rhetorical action, feminist scholars engage in the recovery of women comics and analyze works as examples of feminist humor. For instance, many identify Aristophanes' fifth-century play, *Lysistrata* as an early example of satire that criticizes gender norms and highlight the feminist satirical work of Virginia Woolf and suffrage movement writers, including Fanny Fern and Sojourner Truth, and Lucretia Mott (e.g., Kaufman and Blakely). Some of the most influential chronicles of feminist comedy's history include Gloria Kaufman and Mary K. Blakely's *Pulling our Own Strings: Feminist Humor & Satire* (1980), Nancy Walker's *A Very Serious Thing: Women's Humor and American Culture* (1988), Frances Gray's *Women and Laughter* (1994), and Joanne Gilbert's *Performing Marginality: Humor, Gender, and Cultural Critique* (2002).[19] These works help situate my analysis of *FF* within the history of women's comedy. In addition to these recovery efforts, scholars have theorized the characteristics of feminist satire.

For instance, feminist studies of humor, such as Ricki S. Tannen's *The Female Trickster: The Mask that Reveals* (2007), Linda Mizejewski's *Pretty/Funny: Women Comedians and Body Politics* (2014), and Linda Mizejewski, Victoria Sturtevant, and Kathleen R. Karlyn's *Hysterical: Women in American Comedy* (2017), have acknowledged the applicability of humor

[19] With the exception of Gray, the majority of the works identified here focus on women's comedy in the U.S. For more on the international history of women and comedy, see Dickinson, et al., and Barreca's edited collection, *New Perspectives on Women and Comedy*. For more on the history of women's comedy, see chapter four.

as a conduit for feminist social critique. For instance, Mizejewski positions comedy as "a primary site in mainstream popular culture where feminism speaks, talks back, and is contested" (6). Similarly, Nancy Walker argues that humor is an important tool of protest for historical and contemporary feminist movements. Recovering the character of the female trickster across historical and contemporary texts, Tannen theorizes the *feminist comic sensibility* as characterized by the upheaval of social norms, such as traditional gender roles. Theories like Tannen's work to establish the parameters by which humor has been deemed feminist. They are useful to this project methodologically, in that they help to identify how satire can promote social conscience and provide a lens for my analysis of *FF*.

Feminist studies that emphasize how humor can call attention to power inequities are particularly relevant to this study. For instance, in *Performing Marginality: Humor, Gender, and Cultural Critique*, Joanne Gilbert presents comedy as a tool uniquely suited for the marginalized. Focusing on the genre of stand-up comedy, Gilbert asserts that "marginality has been key to the comic persona" (17). While focusing on the identity of the woman satirist as intertwined with an audience's reception, Gilbert's work establishes humor's ability to motivate critical reflection on questions of identity difference. Similarly, scholars like Teresa Graban and Linda Hutcheon theorize humor as capable of enacting feminist social change. Hutcheon identifies parody and satire as moving beyond the traditional purpose of ridicule, offering a more socially conscious view of parody as a form of protest. Hutcheon's theorization of irony as an inherently risky rhetorical strategy is useful for my analysis of *FF*'s use of anger. Hutcheon resists finite definitions of irony, emphasizing its *transideological* nature and the importance of not "generaliz[ing] about either the effects of which irony is capable or the affect to which it can most certainly give rise" (56). Attention to the subjectivity and immeasurability of humor and

emotion that feminist studies bring to this project helps me craft ethical practices that do not misidentify, diminish, or misrepresent the emotional dynamics at play between the show's arguments and viewer comments.

Feminist studies are most informative to this project because they go beyond classical models of humor as a tool of persuasion and regulatory control and illuminate its potential for questioning norms and offering critical social commentary.[20] The critical lens that feminist studies affords is especially relevant when we consider the increasing corporatization of satire in the U.S., and the fact that popular political satire news shows have been and still are predominantly anchored by white, male hosts.[21] Collectively, these feminist inquiries position humor as a tool of rhetorical identification[22] that can bring attention to marginalized voices and mobilize political action. I build upon these critical lenses to investigate how political satire news shows reflect on, criticize, and reify the hierarchies and norms that drive political discourse and participation. For example, when coupled with classical rhetorical models and affect studies, feminist frameworks shed light on how these shows, through production and circulation, draw attention to emotional narratives not represented by the mainstream media. Conversely, they draw attention to how these shows engage in the very discriminatory rhetorical practices being parodied and criticized. In addition, feminist critique helps demonstrate how these shows privilege certain perspectives over others, and in doing so, contribute to a broader normalization of political spectacle that impedes meaningful rhetorical intervention that can galvanize critical

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[20] For more on the history of women's comedy, feminist studies of humor, and theorizations of feminist satire, see chapter four.

[21] Exceptions to this include: the increased diversity of the *Saturday Night Live* cast over time, *The Daily Show* (since 2014), *The Nightly Show with Larry Wilmore* (cancelled), *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*, *The Rundown with Robin Thede* (cancelled), *The Break with Michelle Wolf* (cancelled).

[22] For more on how I am theorizing this term, see footnote seven.

consciousness and/or action. Finally, the participatory nature of these shows, evident in their engagement with political activism and circulation, calls for more complex understandings of the power dynamics imbricated in their rhetorical processes.

Affect Studies

Affect provides a critical analytical lens for this study, given the shifting emotional contexts of the 2016 election in which the case studies are situated. Attention to political satire's engagement with affect is especially pertinent right now, in light of contemporaneous discussions about political emotion that have permeated public debate since the surprising results of the 2016 U.S. presidential election. For instance, many have cited appeals to outrage and despondence as influential in the election's outcome (e.g. Carpenter; Lucas, Galdieri, and Sisco). Conservatives often accuse liberals of being oversensitive snowflakes,[23] and liberals disproportionately rely on logos-centric arguments, privileging facts over emotional appeals (Lakoff; Nussbaum). Popular and scholarly surveys into voters' emotional experiences after the election painted the electorate as overwhelmingly scared and devastated (e.g., Norman; Teng; Berman). These reports of extreme emotional responses to the election occurred across partisan lines. Megan Boler and Elizabeth Davis acknowledge this complex emotional atmosphere during and after the 2016 election:

> Collectively shared and expressed emotions distinctively characterize the political landscape since November 8, 2016 when the world witnessed Trump's U.S. presidential win. First, shock filled the airwaves.... While the winners were characteristically overjoyed with the election results, never before in U.S. history has a presidential election resulted in such profound displays and relays of public grief from the opposition. For others, fears of white supremacy and anti-immigrant violence, deportation, and militarized policing outweighed other concerns. (76)

[23] For instance, conservatives often position liberals' reliance on identity politics as manufacturing "a moral panic" and as catering more to the feelings of constituents than policy issues (Lilla).

While political elections have always been visceral experiences with material consequences, the acknowledgement of the dynamics between emotion and politics has become more explicit since Trump's election.

Long before the affective turn in academic discourse,[24] rhetoricians have questioned both the existence of objective truth and the dismissal of emotions as irrational. Historical models demonstrate the rhetorical dynamics of emotion and humor as persuasive strategies; they provide a formative understanding of how affect might function rhetorically. Feminist models of affect take this understanding further to reveal the complex and emergent nature of emotions, drawing attention to the complex power dynamics of all public discourse.

Affect studies in the field have been heavily influenced by seventeenth century philosophers, such as Descartes and Spinoza, as well as modern interpretations of their work (e.g., Deleuze and Guattari). One of the most influential figures to contemporary affect studies is Brian Massumi, who worked from Spinoza's model to distinguish between affect and emotion. More recently, Critical Affect Studies (CAS) have informed many rhetorical studies of affect. CAS is an interdisciplinary area of scholarship that examines the relationships between affect and materiality.[25] Generally, critical affect studies in rhetoric and composition reenvision

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[24] In the late 1990s and early 2000s, scholars in the humanities and social sciences began to more critically explore the social and cultural dynamics of affect, which many have described as the *affective turn*. Patricia Clough and Jean O. Halley describe the *affective turn* as "express[ing] a new configuration of bodies, technology and matter that is instigating a shift in thought in critical theory (2). As I have revised this prospectus and learned more about the connotation of the term, I have moved away from using it. Both Ahmed and Cvetkovich criticize definitions and applications of the term for exacerbating divisions between affect and emotion, and for positioning emotion as solely subjective and personal. For more on the affective turn, see Clough and O'Halley; and, Gregg and Seigworth.

[25] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* is an example of CAS that I will refer to in this project. For more on the intersections between CAS and rhetorical studies, see Edbauer Rice (2008).

emotions as ontological processes involved in the performance of agency. As an analytic, emotion calls attention to the materiality of the topics studied. Contemporary rhetorical theorists adopt and expand classical notions of *pathos* as a form of persuasion and identification (e.g., Burke, *Rhetoric*; Smith and Hyde). Similarly, scholars consider the affective dimensions of the writing process (e.g., McLeod) and composition pedagogies (e.g., Langstraat; Micciche and Jacobs). Scholars, such as Ilene Crawford, Lisa Langstraat, and Laura Micciche argue that composition pedagogies that "figure emotion as a critical term" offer insight into the complex processes by which we form and act upon our greater identities (Micciche, "Doing Emotion" 7). Given the nebulous nature with which the rhetorical dynamics of emotion have been theorized in the field, it is important to first establish how I am defining affect in the context of this study.

Defining Affect

In this project, *I define affect as the embodiment or outward expression of an emotional stance*. In the case studies I analyze, this stance is employed to frame an issue or argument. In my approach, affect resides at the intersections between the personal and political spheres, in which an individual's personal expression of feelings are channeled into collective, and eventually politically impactful affect. I use this definition, along with classical models of rhetorical humor, as a discursive lens to analyze how the shows, and viewer responses to them, employ this stance as a form of rhetorical identification to frame an issue or argument and mobilize reflection and/or action. In the case studies I analyze, this channeling and mobilization of affect occurs as a result of rhetorical circulation. It is through circulation that these affective arguments are taken up, morphed, and mobilized towards reflection and/or action beyond the context of each show. As such, I associate affect with action and interaction, as its construction and meaning shifts across different contexts and for different audiences. Affect operates

primarily as an analytic for this project, in that I document the emotional appeals of the shows and viewers' responses to them. I resist strict classifications of emotions and instead focus my analysis on the rhetorical dynamics of emotion within the shows' arguments for social change. For example, in chapter two, affect provides a framework for studying the embodied performances of *SNL* actors in relation to its rhetorical goals of humor and critique. In addition, my analysis of *FF* in chapter four interrogates the dynamics between emotion and ethos.

My definition of affect is most aligned with those offered by feminist and queer scholars that resist hierarchical divisions between affect and emotion and adopt whichever term is most suitable for their project and research ethics, with many (e.g., Ahmed; Cvetkovich; Pedwell) using the terms interchangeably. Foundational theorists like Massumi draw distinct boundaries between affect and emotion, associating affect with the visceral embodiment of a feeling and emotion with a conscious recognition of said feeling: "Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized" (88).[26] Lawrence Grossberg makes a similar distinction between affect and emotion. Scholars like Debra Hawhee disrupt these distinctions; Hawhee abandons terms like affect, emotion, and feeling and adopts the term *sensation* to encompass both the rational and irrational aspects of affect, effectively resisting normative divisions between emotion and reason. In addition, Hawhee, like many other feminist rhetoricians, makes room for questions of the body and identity through the lens of sensation. Similarly, I use both affect and emotion in this project.

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[26] Massumi identified feelings as *personal* and *biographical*, emotions as social, and affect as *prepersonal*. For more, see Massumi's introduction to Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (Adkins).

This is a political move, in that the divisions between affect and emotion are problematic, given the messy and embodied nature of both. I use emotion more to refer to individual instances in which a particular emotion is named or performed in the texts analyzed. I use affect in the project as a broader term to represent how these emotions are influenced by circulation and mobilized into action. My association between affect and action is also informed by feminist and queer studies recognition of emotion as a catalyst for collective meaning making and social change. For instance, Erin Rand, analyzes how emotion can be "harnessed in political action." Yet, Rand remains mindful that "the language of emotion pins down the fluidity of affect only temporarily and partially (*Reclaiming Queer* 132). It is this critical stance that feminist and queer studies of emotion bring to this project, as I work to avoid claims and value judgements that neglect the complex and ever-shifting dynamics with which emotion is expressed, circulated, and received. In addition, by working from feminist and queer studies of affect in particular, this analysis approaches the case studies with a more complex understanding of the myriad of emotions that these shows engage with besides amusement.

Feminist and Queer Affect Studies

Queer and feminist rhetorical studies are relevant to my analysis because they emphasize the political and cultural dimensions of affect, particularly power and identity. Feminist and queer rhetorical studies theorize the impact of embodiment over affect's rhetoricity (e.g., Braidotti; Condit; Hawhee). Understanding how affect is embodied enables me to pose questions about how satire is performed, and how the identities of the satirists and the viewers/responders influence its reception. Feminist and queer models also complicate normative claims about how affect informs partisan identity, as well as political discourse and participation. In addition, they help me to examine how certain identities and emotional narratives are embodied, performed,

and represented in contemporary political satire. Overall, feminist and queer studies of affect provide critical lenses for studying how the identity of a satirist relates to contemporary political satire's rhetorical practices, circulation, and reception.

Summarizing the intersections between feminist theory and affect studies, Carolyn Pedwell and Anne Whitehead present feminist theory as having "long recognised the critical links between affect and gendered, sexualised, racialised and classed relations of power" (115). They also note feminists' association of affect with "theoretical, political, and social transformation" (Pedwell and Whitehead 121).[27] An example of this attention to the power dynamics of affect can be seen in the work of Diane Davis and Celeste Condit, who theorize the impact of embodiment over affect's rhetoricity.[28] Understanding how affect can be used to either reify or disrupt power dynamics will help this study explore how satire is performed, embodied, and how the identities of the satirists and viewers/responders influence its reception. In general, feminist studies of affect are most valuable to this study because they recognize affect as a political and rhetorical instrument.

A key focus across these studies from which I will draw is the dismissal of a pathology or hierarchy of emotions (Ahmed; Cvetkovich; Tomlinson). The categorization of emotions as positive or negative has a long-standing tradition in the fields of psychology, sociology, and political science. Some deem emotions as positive or negative based on their influence over physical and mental productivity (Russell and Carroll; Tomkins). The degree or intensity to

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[27] Interdisciplinary feminist affect studies heavily cited by rhetorical studies include Lauren Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* and Clare Hemmings's "Invoking Affect: Cultural Theory and the Ontological Turn."

[28] Also see the 2010 special issue of *Feminist Formations*, entitled "The Politics and Rhetorics of Embodiment," edited by Rebecca Ropers-Huilman.

which an emotion is felt or expressed has also been pathologized, as temperance and emotional stability are often associated with ideal citizenship (Goleman). Many feminist and queer scholars reject hierarchies of emotions, revealing how affective responses traditionally viewed as negative can motivate political action and political change. I build upon theories of affect that resist a privileging of reason over emotion, as they provide support for my counterarguments against hasty designations of satire as irrational. For instance, in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed criticizes "the psychologizing and privatization of emotions" as a "social structure that neglects emotional intensities... [and] allows such structures to be reified as forms of being" (12). She challenges the understanding of emotions as an effect of stimuli and repositions them as sociocultural performances ingrained in the larger body politic. Similarly, Ann Cvetkovich resists a value judgment of emotions as all bad or good and offers a critical re-reading of depression as a political tool, illuminating the "productive possibilities of depression" (14). Ahmed and Cvetkovich complicate normative designations of affect as positive or negative, revealing how affective responses traditionally viewed as negative (such as anger and cynicism) can be generative and motivate political action and political change. When read together with classical models of humor, feminist studies of affect offer critical frameworks for interrogating how satire is performed, embodied, and how the identities of the satirists and viewers/responders influence its reception.

Much in the same manner that Ahmed applies her theory of *affective economies* to analyze dominant narratives of happiness in *The Promise of Happiness,* I employ affect as an interpretive framework. Exploring the relationship between identity and affect, Ahmed emphasizes that all narratives and expressions of emotion are deeply imbricated in questions of race, culture, gender, and class. And, as such, dominant perceptions of affect, like happiness, can

be utilized as instruments of control and oppression. I build upon Ahmed's attention to the non-normative ways in which affect can be appropriated and repurposed in the service of political action to explore how these shows (1) acknowledge and comment on the inextricably affective nature of politics, (2) reflect on the relationship between emotion and political ideologies, and (3) craft affective arguments designed for circulation.

Ann Cvetkovich resists a value judgment of emotions as all bad or good and offers a critical re-reading of depression as a political tool, illuminating the "productive possibilities of depression" (14). Similarly, focusing on the trope of the angry feminist, Barbara Tomlinson examines feminist and antifeminist arguments both within academic and public discourse "to reveal how every day and scholarly deployments of affect function as technologies of power" (3-4). These scholars build upon these non-dichotomous understandings of affect to offer alternatives to discriminating norms. For instance, Tomlinson's work on the tracing how the trope of the angry feminist circulates provides an analytical lens for my study of *FF* in chapter four. Her approach to *feminist sociodiscursive analysis* provides a methodological foundation for my study of viewers' responses to Bee's confrontational ethos. In addition, studies such as these help me to situate my analyses within the historical contexts surrounding sexism and emotion.

Feminist and queer studies also position affect as a critical methodology for rhetorical intervention. This can be seen in Erin Rand's inquiry into how affect is traditionally viewed as operating within LGBTQ activist discourse in "Gay Pride and its Queer Discontents: ACT UP and the Political Deployment of Affect." Analyzing the complicated relationship between pride and shame within LGBTQ activist discourse, Rand recognizes the emergent potentiality of political affect that is often lost in the service of normative or intellectually neat categorizations of emotions. By resisting hierarchical and normative categorizations of affect, feminist and queer

studies help to illuminate the rhetorical potential of satire as a source of news that is no more biased or emotionally charged than mainstream media. In addition, they also help to identify the ways in which contemporary political satire departs from its revolutionary history, and privileges certain political identities and arguments over others.

Coupled with classical rhetorical models of humor, these feminist and queer studies of affect provide a critical lens for identifying the complex emotional strategies at play within popular political satire news shows. My analysis offers further details on the benefits of engaging with affect that is not easily categorized or managed. Building upon feminists' complex understandings of affect, I offer insight into the rhetorical process by which contemporary political satire engages with affect and humor to drive, reflect on, and alter habits of political discourse and belief. More broadly, these works provide support for my arguments about how political satire shows employ affect as a vehicle for political identification and mobilization. Circulation is one of the primary means by which this mobilization occurs.

Circulation Studies

To further explore how contemporary satire has evolved its rhetorical strategies to respond to new exigencies, it is necessary to consider its circulation. This is important when analyzing political satire news shows in particular because they rely on the remix of source material made possible through a networking of arguments. In addition, it is through circulation that these shows promote—and in many cases—enact change, including social media campaigns, fundraising events, and letter-writing initiatives to local representatives. By emphasizing contemporary satire's engagement with rhetoric designed for circulation outside of its original medium, I offer further details on how the rhetorical tradition of political satire in the U.S. has changed over time. More broadly, integrating questions of circulation helps to reframe debates

about the value of political satire news shows to more critically examine their rhetorical processes.

Given the unrelenting nature of the twenty-four-hour news cycle and the unpredictable ways in which we access and ascertain the credibility of news today, contemporary political satirists must engage in rhetorics that are easily—and quickly—circulated and reformed. Scholars in the field have addressed the networked movement and circulation of rhetoric, as well as the effects of that circulation. These works expand classical rhetorical theory to better account for new technologies and communication patterns, particularly that of delivery (e.g., Brooke; Connors; Morey; Porter, James). New materialism reimagines agentive power as dispersed among humans, objects, and environments (Rickert) and revises the rhetorical relationships among these entangled materialities (Davis; Stormer and McGreavy). Early inquiries into rhetorical circulation began with calls to expand the rhetorical situation to include more complex understandings of how rhetoric travels, is taken up, reformed, and redistributed across contexts and mediums. For example, Louise Phelps offers the concept of *flux* to attend to the networked materiality of rhetoric in historiographical work in *Composition as a Human Science*. This attention to circulation treats rhetoric itself as networked, as an octopus with tentacles reaching in all directions, constantly touching and being touched by an infinite number of histories, identities, locations, and memories. To account for the ever-broadening dynamics of rhetorical circulation, contemporary scholars investigate how processes of invention, composition, and reception are impacted (e.g., Gurak; DeVoss and Ridolfo). In the edited collection, *Circulation, Writing, and Rhetoric*, Laurie Gries summarizes the contributions of circulation studies to the field, "In addition to advancing new rhetorical models, inventing new research methods, and forwarding new theoretical frameworks, circulation is also transforming.... our understanding of

how discourse flows and co-constitutes our subjectivities, identities, and daily activities" (11). Coupled with an affective lens, circulation studies provide analytics for tracing how the original arguments of political satire news shows take on new meanings and affects as they travel across different modes and contexts.

Integral to this study is the field's exploration into the speed and breadth at which rhetoric is composed and circulated within the digital information age. Laura J. Gurak was one of the earliest in the field to examine how the speed and reach of communication technologies influences literacy acquisition. In this case, texts are created to serve the purpose of circulation, in that the rhetor anticipates how said text might travel and be taken up across different mediums and contexts. Danielle Nicole DeVoss and Jim Ridolfo conceive *rhetorical velocity* as the "rapidity at which information is crafted, delivered, distributed, recomposed, redelivered, redistributed, etc., across physical and virtual networks and spaces." In *Available Means of Persuasion: Mapping a Theory and Pedagogy of Multimodal Public Rhetoric*, David M. Sheridan, Jim Ridolfo, and Anthony J. Michel position rhetorical velocity as an analytic for "explor[ing] the roles that rhetor's intentions and strategies play" (83). Through an investigation into the influence of circulation on both the production and process of rhetoric, these scholars offer critical metrics for understanding how the advent of broader and faster circulation has influenced contemporary political satire as a source of information literacy. In addition, the malleability and transferability of the shows' rhetoric is consequential to both their commercial success and ability to offer kairotic commentary. In addition to examining the processes by which rhetoric travels, contemporary studies explore the politics of rhetorical circulation, and

how circulation impacts political rhetoric in particular (e.g., Chaput; Gries; Hariman and Lucaites).[29]

This expanded notion of the rhetorical situation has since influenced contemporary explorations into how circulation occurs within and across new media (e.g., Edbauer; Gries; Stromer-Galley; Stuckey; Terranova). Like Phelps' extension of the rhetorical situation, Jenny Edbauer argues for an expansion of "our popular conceptual frameworks of rhetorical situation" in "Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies" (9). Edbauer conceptualizes *rhetorical ecology* as a methodological framework for tracking and interpreting how rhetorics, bodies, and technologies interact. Both Phelps and Edbauer's acknowledgement of the affective dimensions of the rhetorical situation are useful to my analysis, as I explore how the meaning, expression, and intensity of affect in the original argument shift as it circulates. Examining viewers' responses in this analysis works to "candidly confront the reality that the way rhetorical compositions circulate is always, to some extent, unpredictable, beyond the control of even the most prepared rhetor" (Sheridan, Ridolfo, and Michel 83). In this way, circulation scholars' general acknowledgement of the unpredictability of rhetoric's movement and the impact of this movement helps to curb my claims about the intention or reception of the shows' arguments once circulated.

While there have not been many studies into the rhetorical circulation of political satire news shows, the influence of circulation over satire's civic function has been recognized. In general, scholars point to increased circulation as a means by which contemporary satire has

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[29] Interdisciplinary studies outside of rhetoric and composition have more specifically analyzed the interplay between affect and political participation through the theorization of *political affect*. For more on this, see Protevi, Nussbaum, and Marcus, Neuman, and Mackuen; and, the work of the Public Feelings Project (Staiger, Cvetkovich, and Reynolds).

moved beyond critique to invite participation. For instance, Sophia McClennen and Remy Maisel argue that platforms like *YouTube* and *Twitter* have both influenced modern satirists to alter their rhetorical processes to be better suited for circulation and enriched contemporary satire's potential for community building and collective action.[30] In addition, many scholars draw correlations between an increase in political satire's popularity in the U.S. beginning in the 2000s and the advent of the internet (Boler; Day; McClennen).

Investigations into the dynamics between medium, meaning, and delivery are important to this study, as I engage with rhetorics designed for circulation across television, the Internet, and social media channels. Digital humanities and cultural studies scholars investigate how rhetoric circulates across the internet (e.g., Benski and Fisher; Garde-Hansen and Gorton), television (e.g., Jenkins; McLuhan), and popular online platforms, like *YouTube* (e.g., Burgess and Green). The sharing dynamic of contemporary consumer culture inevitably impacts the invention, design, and delivery of today's satire. As such, foundational texts, such as Marshall McLuhan's examination of the television as a medium for collective meaning making and interaction are informative to this study. Moving from a consumption-only experience, McLuhan recognizes the viewers' agency to produce their own information in relation or response to a televised communication. Drawing upon McLuhan's work, Henry Jenkins identifies the *participatory culture* that television can build in relation to fandom. This expectation for participation is elevated on sharing platforms, like social media and *YouTube* (Lange). In fact, *YouTube* has been identified as "a site of cultural and economic disruption" (Burgess and Green 14). Studies like these help me to keep questions of circulation at the forefront of my analysis as

[30] In addition, Kimberly McLeod traces the impact of an online satirical campaign "When Canada Goes Viral: The Canada Party and the Circulation of Political Satire."

I investigate how the shows' humorous arguments and emotional appeals are received and repurposed by viewers.

The impact of medium over satire's shifting practices of production and delivery is an important line of inquiry in this study, particularly as I compare how *SNL*'s rhetorical strategies have changed over time in chapter two. For instance, I explore how the show's use of impersonations responds to contemporary audience's expectations that they can share satirical content across social media platforms. I work from DeVoss and Porter's recognition of the Internet's impact on "the economies of textual and image production" to analyze how the differences between *SNL*'s reception in 2000 and 2016 relate to broader media literacy trends (201). *SNL*'s ability to offer kairotic humor that attends to both the changing civic character of satire and the dynamics surrounding consumer culture is directly reliant on the ease with which viewers can share and respond to the show's rhetoric. In addition to this example, circulation studies help me to avoid anachronistic claims throughout this study, as I employ ancient rhetorical models of humor, pathos, and kairos to analyze contemporary rhetorics delivered on digital, mediated platforms.

Feminist Circulation Studies

Like my definition of affect, my theorization of circulation in this project is most informed by feminist studies because they engage with questions of power and identity. Attention to the power dynamics of circulation is particularly important in the analysis of political satire considering its historically contentious relationship with the establishment. Bringing theories of affect together with feminist studies of circulation, I interrogate the relationship between satire's circulation and its potential for meaningful dissent. In general,

feminist studies position circulation as a greater analytical lens for scrutinizing narrow—and as a result, potentially exclusive—understandings of rhetoric.

Feminist methodologies engage with circulation as a critical analytic for tracing and resisting the processes by which gendered rhetorics travel, interrogating the impact of circulation over identity and embodiment. For instance, Vicki Tolar Collins addresses circulation in her work on *rhetorical accretion* and Terez Graban investigates how digital archives serve feminist historiography. My theorization of circulation in this project is predominantly methodological, akin to Jacqueline Royster and Gesa Kirsch's discussion of *social circulation* as seeing the "ebbs and flows within ever-changing, often ever-broadening circles of interaction" (101). As Royster and Kirsch recognize, critical attention to circulation can shed light on how contemporary rhetorics are building on and departing from discursive conventions of the past to meet new exigencies. To accomplish this, I bring classical models of humor together with feminist studies to investigate how these shows mobilize affect towards action through circulation. In addition, feminist studies offer rhetorical frameworks for engaging with questions of identity and difference often overlooked in other circulation studies.

In *Spectacular Rhetorics*: *Human Rights Visions, Recognitions, Feminisms*, Wendy Hesford uses circulation as a critical analytic to study human rights discourse. Hesford analyzes multimodal artifacts with recognized human rights agendas, focusing on how circulation impacts the rhetorical effects of testimony and the common motive of identification with the audience. Building from Hesford's notion of *kairos*, Rebecca Dingo uses the metaphor of a network to explain how a *neoliberal kairotic exigency* influences both international and domestic public policy in *Networking Arguments: Rhetoric, Transnational Feminism, and Public Policy Writing*. In a similar manner as Royster and Kirsch, Dingo analyzes how circulation impacts the cultural

and political resonance of a text as it "shift[s] and change[s]...to reflect different ideas about production, labor and global citizenship" (7). Dingo positions circulation as innately political. Both Hesford and Dingo use rhetorical circulation to retool classical notions of kairos. I build upon this critical revision of *kairos* to explore how satire's affective appeals are appropriated and re-appropriated through circulation. Specifically, Hesford's attention to how circulation relates to identification across different mediums and contexts informs my analysis of *SNL*'s kairotic satire in chapter two. More broadly, Royster and Kirsch, Hesford, and Dingo collectively inform my theorization of circulation as revealing the political and material consequences of rhetoric. By grounding my analysis in critical studies of affect and circulation, I contribute insight into how political satire news shows are operating as rhetorical ecologies[31] in which affect and humor are recurrently repurposed in the service of political or ideological arguments.

Interdisciplinary scholarship that examines affect's circulation is also valuable to this project. Most influential are those works that analyze the complex processes by which affect and technology merge (e.g., Nussbaum; Protevi). Scholars in communication and media studies position media and technology as innately affective tools (e.g., Kartzogianni and Kuntsman; Knudsen and Stage). Political scientists and journalists explore how emotion functions within the circulation of news online (e.g., Ferreday; Hermida). Most valuable to my analysis are those works that examine the affective dimensions of political dissent (e.g., Pedwell and Whitehead; Tomlinson), the collectivity of affect and how it is transmitted between individuals and groups (e.g., Brennan), and the influence of affective responses over political participation and

[31] This ecological approach is most informed by Edbauer's use of the term to theorize the rhetorical situation as a "mixture of processes and encounters" (20).

partisanship (e.g., Marcus, Neuman, and Mackuen). For instance, Catherine Chaput draws from Foucault, Althusser, and Marx, as well as rhetorical scholars Dana Cloud, Bradford Vivian, and Ronald Walter Greene, to explore circulation as a medium for neoliberal logics in "Rhetorical Circulation in Late Capitalism: Neoliberalism and the Overdetermination of Affective Energy." She calls attention to the power of circulation within political argumentation and rhetorical appeals to ideological allegiance. Chaput offers a critical look into how the circulation of affect impacts decision making and the adoption of ideologies. She positions affect as "operat[ing] within a transsituational and transhistorical structure and energiz[ing] our habituated movements as well as our commonsensical beliefs" (Chaput 8). It is this same relationship between circulation, affect, and partisan ideologies that I explore within the arguments made and circulated by contemporary political satire news shows. These investigations into affect's circulation coalesce to help me craft a methodology for rhetorical analysis that is ever mindful of the nebulous and unpredictable nature of both emotion and digital technologies.

The conversations synthesized in this literature review represent the plethora of approaches with which political satire has been employed and studied. While originating from a variety of disciplines and perspectives, there are common threads across all the scholarship that remain essential to my study: (1) constructing, performing, and naming affect are powerful rhetorical strategies; (2) political argumentation, judgement, and identification are always affective in nature; (3) as a form of affective rhetoric, satire can reify or disrupt broader power dynamics that inform public discourse (e.g., gender, other sociocultural factors); and, (4) the circulation of affective rhetoric, like satire, alters its meaning and resonance. By bringing these different areas of scholarship together, I theorize the rhetorical and kairotic dynamics of political satire news shows as they respond to contemporary trends in political discourse, such as the rise

in citizen journalism, "fake news," rampant mistrust in the media, and increasingly blurred divisions between news and entertainment.

Methodology

In this project, I offer a multifaceted rhetorical analysis of three popular political satire news shows and their circulation. Rhetorical analysis enables me to engage with questions of power and circulation within my analysis, while remaining mindful that the rhetorical dynamics of these shows are always shifting and expanding beyond their original context. Conducting analysis of multiple sites, this project adopts what Hesford describes as *intercontextual* analysis, which "foreground[s] how meaning is produced, materialized, and experienced between multiple, ever-shifting contexts" (10). To accomplish this, Hesford analyzes how spectacle operates across multimodal artifacts, identifying how such a methodology can work to mitigate our own complicity in oppressive western-centric and neoliberal ideologies. I draw upon Hesford's model to investigate the following research questions:

- How is affect named, embodied, performed, and constructed in popular political satire news shows?
- How do the rhetorical strategies and affective dynamics of these shows shift through circulation, and across different contexts and for different audiences?
- How do these shows, through affect, make visible (or invisible) the power dynamics and inequalities of our political processes?
- How do these shows, through the affective processes of production and circulation, impart critical literacies uniquely suited for the current political moment?

To address these questions, I analyze three case studies of popular political satire shows: (1) *Saturday Night Live (SNL)*, (2) *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (LWT),* and (3) *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee (FF)*. For each case study, I will analyze different texts (or nodes) within the larger network of these rhetorical sites. Each case study differs in delivery, context, and intended audience, addressing different questions surrounding identification, embodiment,

and the use of affective framing in satire. All of the case studies employ affect to frame a public issue and promote awareness or incite political participation.

For each show, I analyze a *YouTube* clip and viewer responses posted on the show's *YouTube* page. All of the clips share and respond to a common exigency: the election of a U.S. President who did not win the popular vote. Analyzing *YouTube* clips instead of episodes enables me to better identify which of the shows' arguments are most popularly circulated, as each clip selected is one of the three most-viewed clips on that show's page. *YouTube*'s history as a vaudevillian platform for humor and its impact on satire's increasing popularity make the platform an appropriate site of study (Burgess and Green). In addition, I analyze *YouTube* clips because of the increased accessibility, as viewing entire episodes requires paid subscriptions. Engaging with the clips also yields further insight into the rhetorical circulation of the shows, as satirical arguments are intentionally shared on publicly available, embeddable, and linkable platforms like *YouTube*. By doing so, the shows invite viewers' interaction beyond the televised episodes. I limit my analysis to comments with the highest number of "likes" and replies. These responses serve as evidence of viewers' engagement with the shows' arguments after they air, as well as viewers' perceptions of the shows as viable news sources. Together, the *YouTube* clips and viewer responses demonstrate how the shows' rhetorical ecologies shift and are repurposed in the service of different arguments and political ends.

Within each argument or response, I analyze how emotion is named and used to frame political arguments. Analogous to Ahmed's concept of *affective economies*, I build from my analysis of the individual texts to conceptualize an affective network at play within each case study. I then compare the affective networks of each case study to contribute a greater argument about how humor and emotion operate within popular political satire news shows. I adopt this

networked approach for two reasons: (1) because I will be attending to the rhetorical circulation of emotion across the satirical arguments and responses to them, and (2) to understand how the rhetorical impact of satire translates across textual boundaries.

While differing in style and audience, all of the case studies are currently popular political satire news television shows that highlight the everyday effects of policy and political debates on individuals. Each case study provides a different lens through which to investigate satire's rhetorical character. The different contexts and intended audiences of each case study enable me to better understand how satire engages in affect as a form of rhetorical identification that is mobilized into political argumentation and/or action.

I selected the first case study, *SNL* because it is the longest running and one of the most popular satire shows in television history, premiering on October 11th, 1975. *SNL* has become a cultural institution, pioneering rhetorical strategies that have influenced more recent popular satire shows. *SNL*'s long run will also help me analyze how the show's use of satire has changed for different contexts. In addition, *SNL* has received its highest ratings in the past year, which many have attributed to its coverage of the 2016 U.S. Presidential election. The collaborative, digestible sketch comedy format of *SNL* also has a different mode of delivery to analyze than the other two case studies. Most significant to my analysis is that *SNL* appeals to and garners a broader audience than the other two case studies, evident in its ratings and viewership demographics.

Moving from a broader intended audience to a narrow viewership, the second case study I analyze is *(LWT*, which premiered on April 27th, 2014. *LWT* is a half-hour long program and airs weekly, covering political news of the past week. I have selected *LWT* because it was one of the first to depart from the conventions of the late-night talk show format to offer in-depth

coverage of news topics. *LWT*'s coverage of topics not often covered by other news outlets and its propensity for mobilizing activism after the show's airing will allow me to more directly investigate how satire can be channeled into alternative outlets for activism.

The final case study, *FF*, is the first show in the genre to be hosted by a woman. Samantha Bee's positionality enables me to further explore how embodied identities—like gender—impact a satirist's ethos, as her persona influences how affect is taken up and circulated. In addition, the show's explicit identification with feminist politics and advocacy for gender equality provides a point of entry for my investigation into how satire can be mobilized to enact activist goals.

All of the case studies selected call attention to the affective dynamics of political participation today, either through employing rhetorical strategies that construct affect or by naming emotions. In addition to calling attention to the affective dynamics of political participation, each case study's satirical content is circulated across different genres and forms, prompting dialogue and/or interaction from users, viewers, and/or pundits, and integrates some form of political activism campaign or agenda. The rhetorical circulation in these sites models the contemporary rhetorical practices by which affect is mobilized towards political ends. Each case study provides a different perspective—given the different contexts, identities, and audiences addressed—through which to explore how this mobilization takes place through affective satire. This not only helps me to engage in an *intercontextual* analysis (Hesford), but also models the type of transdisciplinary and multidimensional research common in feminist methodologies that trace figures or ideas across discursive or cultural sites usually seen as disparate.

Author Notes

Before concluding this introductory chapter, it is important that I address a few points of clarification. Firstly, the production processes of the shows analyzed, meaning the manner in which they are taped, edited, and packaged for publication, are far more intricate than this study acknowledges. For instance, the inclusion of a laugh track or the taping in front of a live audience inevitably impacts the delivery and reception of these shows, particularly in relation to their emotional appeals. Given the focus and scope of this study, the physical contexts of the shows' production are not paramount in my analysis. Relatedly, the production of all the shows I analyze is collaborative, in that there are writers, producers, and staff that contribute to the writing, taping, and publication of each episode. In an effort to represent the collaborative labor and authorship involved in the making of the shows, I primarily use the terms "the show" or the title's acronym (*SNL*, *LWT*, *FF*), as opposed to referring only to the hosts. However, I do not explore the collaborative nature of their production. Instead, I focus on the arguments made by the shows in the particular clips analyzed and how those arguments are received by viewers once circulated. Even so, I do not wish to misrepresent the collective authorship of the shows. How the shows are produced has an undeniable impact over their rhetoric, and the lack of engagement with these processes is a limitation of my study. The collaborative authorship and physical contexts in which the shows are produced are considerations I hope to address more in future research projects.

Secondly, I am critically aware of the complexity with which authorial intention is received and interpreted. In my analysis, I draw similarities between classical and contemporary models of humor and the rhetorical strategies employed by the shows. In doing so, I am not making claims about the writers or hosts' intentions, nor am I arguing that the shows are

employing humor in the exact manner outlined by the rhetorical models I work from. Instead, I present these rhetorical models as valuable lenses for analysis of contemporary political satire. In addition, I am ever mindful that the shows analyzed are commercial enterprises created for profit. As such, their arguments and rhetorical strategies are informed by the overarching goal of achieving higher ratings. While the corporatization of satire is a context in which I situate my analysis throughout the study, I do not contend directly with this goal in my claims. In identifying how the shows use humor and emotion rhetorically to promote critical literacies, I do not mean to impose altruistic agendas that ignore the shows' commercial interests. In fact, the dynamics between the corporatization of political satire and the rhetorical strategies employed by the shows analyzed is a line of inquiry that I hope to explore in future iterations of this project.[32]

Finally, much like my resistance to work from a stagnant definition of affect, I use the terms comedy, humor, and satire interchangeably throughout this project. While I identify the shows analyzed as forms of satire, the theoretical models employed in my analysis work from a multitude of terms, including humor, wit, comedy, and irony. Humor, as an innately subjective rhetorical strategy, is driven by the context in which it responds to. As such, it has been theorized in a myriad of ways under a variety of identifiers, as it does not have a "standardized, consistent usage in either everyday or analytical terminology" (Weitz 4). My refusal to provide a fixed definition of comedy or satire is once again informed by feminist scholars who interrogate the limitations of definitive boundaries between different types of humor, such as Nancy Walker, Linda Hutcheon, Joanne Gilbert, and Regina Barreca. For instance, Walker recognizes that "the use of the terms humor, wit, and comic inevitably brings up the thorny issue of definition;" yet,

[32] For more on how I plan to address questions of commercialization in the future, see the conclusion chapter.

she reconciles this issue by "sidestep[ing] it as neatly as [she] can" (12). I take a similar methodological approach in this study by using the terms employed by the particular theorist I am working with at the time. By using the terms humor, comedy, and satire interchangeably, I aim to collapse the discursive differences that have been drawn between them and resist historical designations of comedy as a lower art form than humor. In addition, this usage reflects the contextual and subjective nature of humor as a rhetorical strategy.

Chapter Breakdown

Working from the theories and methodologies outlined in this introductory chapter, I begin my analysis of the case studies in chapter two. In this chapter, I draw from classical (Aristotle; Cicero; Quintilian) and feminist (Dingo; Hesford; Royster and Kirsch) theorizations of kairos to analyze SNL's coverage of the 2000 and 2016 Presidential debates. Unlike the other two case studies, I analyze two clips from different time periods: "First Presidential Debate: Al Gore and George W. Bush – SNL" and "Donald Trump vs. Hillary Clinton Third Debate Cold Open – SNL." While from different times, the clips share a common exigency with all of the case studies, providing important historical context to my analysis in subsequent chapters. I offer a comparative analysis of how the show employs humor and emotion to respond to different contexts. From this analysis, I argue that the show blends the rhetorical tropes of parody, mockery, and impersonations common in traditional satire with emotional appeals to criticize the growing influence of personality and campaign-driven rhetoric on political rituals and voting practices.

In chapter three, I draw from Cicero's model of rhetorical and civic humor to analyze a popular episode of *LWT*. I analyze the most recent of the three most-viewed clips posted on the show's *YouTube* page, entitled "Trump vs. Truth: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (HBO)."

Coupling this rhetorical analysis with feminist and queer studies of affect (e.g., Ahmed; Cvetkovich; Sedgewick), I trace the plethora of emotions named, performed, and circulated by the show and its viewers. I argue that the show operates as affective rhetorical intervention that can work to promote viewers' critical engagement with the news in ways that circumvent prevalent perceptions of bias in relation to journalistic objectivity. In this chapter, I introduce my theorization of affective rhetorical intervention, which also informs my analysis of *FF* in chapter four.

Coupled with analyses of *SNL* and *LWT*, analyzing a feminist satire show like *FF* offers a more complex understanding of contemporary political satire news shows to this dissertation by engaging with questions of gender, feminist activism, and the rhetorical impact of a satirist's embodied identity. Working from feminist theorizations of ethos (e.g., Hesford; Ryan et al.) and emotion (e.g., Sedgewick; Tomlinson), I analyze a clip that also covers the 2016 U.S. Presidential election and is the most recent of the top three most-viewed clips posted on the show's *YouTube* channel, "The Morning After | Full Frontal with Samantha Bee | TBS. I analyze how the show uses anger to establish a feminist ethos of confrontation that parodies, reclaims, and harnesses the common stereotype of women as too emotional to be funny or politically productive. I argue that *FF* channels its affective rhetorical interventions toward feminist consciousness raising as it aims to convince viewers to confront their complicity in institutionalized racism.

In the concluding chapter, I summarize my major findings and crystallize my claims about how the political satire news shows I analyzed function as examples of affective rhetorical intervention. I then describe the implications and contributions of this project, both to the field

of rhetoric and composition and more broadly. Finally, I identify lines of inquiry that arose during my study that I would like to pursue further in future iterations of this project.

Chapter Two:
The Politics of Personality: *Saturday Night Live's Kairotic* Satire

"When *Saturday Night Live* is at its best, it serves as one big selfie, reflecting an artful vision of who and where we are at the moment."
—James A. Miller and Tom Shales, *Live from New York: An Uncensored History of Saturday Night Live*, 699

Saturday Night Live's (*SNL*) parody of the first Presidential debate of the 2000 election between Al Gore and George W. Bush is one of the most popular skits in the show's history.[33] While Presidential impersonations have been a staple of the show since Chevy Chase first mocked Jimmy Carter in 1975,[34] the Gore and Bush debate skit impacted the political sphere in unprecedented ways (Voth).[35] Since then, *SNL*'s political humor[36] has continued to garner praise and disapproval from viewers, sitting Presidents, and critics alike. Recently, *SNL* has received some of its highest ratings (Nolfi) with its most popular material still being the impersonations of presidential candidates. These parodies continue to have an important role outside of the comic realm, shown on mainstream news networks, shared on social media outlets, and studied by scholars and pundits as meaningful political commentary.

Since its premiere on October 11th, 1975, *SNL* has become a cultural institution of political satire in the U.S., pioneering strategies that have influenced more recent satire shows. Blending impersonations of politicians and celebrities with news parodies, comedic skits and

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[33] Over seven million viewers tuned in to watch this skit (Strope qtd. in Smith and Voth).
[34] Some of the most popular and circulated of *SNL*'s presidential impressions include Dan Aykroyd as Jimmy Carter, Dana Carvey as Ross Perot and George H.W. Bush, Phil Hartman as Bill Clinton, Tina Fey as Sarah Palin, and Amy Pohler as Hillary Rodham Clinton. For more on *SNL*'s presidential parodies, see de Moraes.
[35] In a 2001 CNN interview, Bush playfully adopted the term "strategery," which was coined in the skit to mock his mispronunciation of words and even dubbed a strategic committee within the White House, "The Department of Strategery" or "The Strategery Group" (Milbank). Gore's advisers had him watch the *SNL* skit to recognize and correct off-putting flaws in his demeanor.
[36] I toggle between the terms "comedy," "humor," "parody," and "satire," often using them interchangeably. For more on my rationale for this choice, see the introductory chapter.

monologues, and popular musical guests, *SNL* offers a diverse forum for political satire.[37] *SNL* has also served as a platform for politicians' self-promotion[38] and has become a popular source of news (Smith and Voth). The current President, who laments and rejects the show's characterizations of him, has responded directly to its parodies in a series of Tweets (Johnson). *SNL*'s multifaceted appeal is also apparent in the fact that it draws a much broader audience than other satire shows, evidenced in its ratings and viewership demographics.[39]

Given its longevity and broader appeal, *SNL* can provide insight into how political satire in the U.S. has evolved over time. This chapter examines *SNL*'s coverage of two unprecedented moments in U.S. politics: the 2000 and 2016 U.S. Presidential elections. More specifically, I compare how the show employs humor and affect to parody and comment on the Presidential debates from both years. I also compare how viewers respond to the clips. I selected these clips because they, like the other case studies in this dissertation, share a common exigency: the election of a U.S. Presidential candidate that did not win the popular vote. In addition, the impact of candidates' debate performances and the media's wide coverage of the debates represent a significant moment within the electoral process for voters. More particular to *SNL*, these clips are some of the most popular and resonant skits in the show's history (Jones).

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[37] For more on *SNL*'s uniqueness as a satire show, given its longevity, wide appeal, and live broadcast, see Hilmes, and Shales and Miller.

[38] In fact, it was the first late night comedy show to feature an official from the administration in 1975 when Ron Nessen, White House press secretary, appeared on the program (Dagnes 115). In addition, U.S. Presidents, such as Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush have appeared on *SNL*, with many more Presidents directly commenting on the show in public forums (Compton).

[39] This is not to claim that *SNL* appeals to a wider range of viewers across partisan and ideological spectrums than the other shows analyzed in this dissertation. In fact, like these shows, *SNL* has received much criticism recently for catering to the beliefs and attitudes of liberal audiences. For more on the show's bias, see the "*SNL*, Political Satire, and Partisan Bias: A Brief Discussion" section.

This analysis contextualizes my inquiry into how the political satire news shows analyzed throughout this dissertation respond to the 2016 presidential election. Like *LWT* and *FF*, *SNL* employs humor and affect to reflect the internal and external processes that impact viewers' political literacies. While the rhetorical tactics of each show differ, they all provide critical commentary on how the current political milieu, and viewers' interaction with it, is changing. As such, a study of *SNL*'s timeliness provides a foundation for my analysis of how *LWT* and *FF*'s satire and social commentary differ from previous moments in recent U.S. history. This study also works to ground my analysis in the history of political satire in the U.S., thereby rebutting claims that today's satire is operating in unprecedented ways. While shows like *LWT* and *FF* are responding to politics in unique ways, they are grounded in rhetorical methods employed by satire shows for many years. By exploring how *SNL* uses humor and affect to attend to *kairos* to respond to broader trends within the body politic, this chapter also provides a frame of reference for claims about *LWT* and *FF*'s more pointed satirical critique of media literacy and racial politics. Overall, since my analyses throughout this dissertation constellate around the strategies by which popular satire reacts to the contemporary political landscape, this longitudinal study of *SNL* contributes a deeper understanding of the genre's timeliness.

In this comparative analysis, I demonstrate how *SNL* uses humor and emotion to provide kairotic satire that exposes and responds to shifting political norms. I argue that the show blends the rhetorical tropes of parody, mockery, and impersonations common in traditional satire with emotional appeals to criticize the growing influence of personality and campaign-driven rhetoric on political rituals and voting practices.[40] Constant in both its coverage of the 2000 and 2016 elections is *SNL*'s use of humor and impersonation to satirize candidates' personal

[40] For more on the growing influence of personality over politics in the U.S., see Bittner.

characteristics. In this way, *SNL* employs a common trope across historical examples of political satire, such as Nast's cartoons. In both examples, *SNL* uses the Presidential debate as an opportunity to satirize the often-counterproductive structures of the electoral process. More specifically, *SNL* criticizes the debate structure itself as a rhetorical platform for gathering meaningful information for the voting booth. The show offers viewers a different perspective on conventional coverage of the debates in addition to a cathartic release from the onslaught of pontification that saturates the media during election cycles.

While humorous impersonations are the primary strategy by which *SNL* attends to kairos in both the 2000 and 2016 parodies, its response to the influx of appeals to personality and celebrity in the rhetoric of the 2016 election is more explicit. The impersonations in the 2016 clip deviate more from the actual rhetoric employed by the candidates than in the 2000 clip, offering more intense and exaggerated performances of their public personas. As a result, *SNL* more directly responds to the spectacle, dissolution of political norms, celebrity culture, and intersection between emotion and politics[41] of the 2016 election. The circulation of Clinton and Trump's public personas prior to the 2016 clip is just as informative as the debate performances themselves. As such, a multifaceted reading of *SNL*'s satire, one that "highlights the rhetorical intercontextuality of images and their meanings," considers how the media portrays the candidates (Hesford 17). To do so, I explore how *SNL* satirizes not only the candidates' public personas but the circulatory processes by which those personas are constituted. More specifically, I explore how the clips respond to media coverage of the candidates to reflect on changing information consumption and literacy practices. As a result, I situate my analysis of

[41] For more on the increasingly complex intersections between emotion and politics within the U.S. during and since the 2016 election, see the introductory chapter.

SNL within the broader media landscape at the time. *SNL*'s execution of kairotic satire is dependent on its response to the tropes with which the candidates are presented in mainstream media. This is most clearly seen in the 2016 *SNL* clip, in which more exaggerated caricatures emphasize the media's representation of the candidates as opposed to focusing on their actions, responding to the increasingly mediated and manufactured nature of U.S. politics.

Both skits employ emotion and humor; yet, the show is less concerned with bipartisan parody of both candidates or a critique of the debate structure in the 2016 clip, offering more poignant commentary on the intersection between personality and politics. In this way, *SNL* calls attention to the broader effects of a candidacy like Trump's. While Trump is not a new phenomenon, his engagement with the media, abandonment of precedence and decorum, and reliance on personality over content represents a shift in political norms.[42] The circulation of the Trump brand and his public persona as a businessman, book author, and reality television star with his own catchphrase also mark the unconventional nature of his candidacy. Responding to this shift, the widespread disbelief that Trump could win prior to the election, and the consequences of his possible win, the show offers kairotic satire that is arguably a more effective form of resistance to his Presidency. In addition, examining *SNL*'s response to Trump rhetorically can productively complicate accusations that the show has grown increasingly partisan over time. Overall, the show's critique of personality as politics speaks to a stable but evolving form of political satire in the U.S. and how the genre continues to reflect, and intervene within, the relationship between civic life and media consumption.

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[42] While the intersections between personality and modern politics have long been in the making, Trump's candidacy and election represents a new extreme, as recognized by Nai and Maier. In addition, many have referred to Trump's popularity as dependent on a "cult of personality" that takes precedence over partisan norms and policy standards (Ben-Ghiat; Hassan).

Comparative Analysis: *SNL*'s Coverage of the 2000 and 2016 Presidential Debates

As recognized in the introduction of this chapter, *SNL*'s parody of the first debate of the 2000 Presidential election remains one of its most influential political skits. Because of this, I begin my analysis of *SNL* with the clip, "First Presidential Debate: Al Gore and George W. Bush – SNL."[43] This skit was the cold open for the *SNL* episode that originally aired on October 7, 2000. Vice President Al Gore was played by cast member Darrell Hammond, while Will Ferrell played Governor George W. Bush.

The 2000 skit begins with the moderator, played by Chris Parnell,[44] welcoming the audience and is staged much in the same manner of the actual debate. The moderator sits at a desk facing the two candidates, who each stand behind a podium, wearing similar suits and ties to those worn by the candidates. The staging and costuming add to the parody style of the skit, recreating the scene of the original debate. After a humorous commentary from Parnell about the Republican party's sponsorship of free, pay-per-view entertainment on other channels that are airing simultaneously during the debate,[45] Hammond and Ferrell enter the stage and shake hands. For the entirety of the clip, the parody relies predominantly on the performers' impersonations of the candidates' mannerisms and actions. This focus on impersonation humor has been a staple of the show's political sketches since its inception, as its "satire typically focuses on personalities rather than substantive policy" (Day 52). Ferrell recurrently portrays Bush as incompetent,

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[43] This clip received a total of 3,861,343 views as of April 2020 and can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDgRRVpemLo.

[44] From this point forward, and in the analysis to follow, I use the performers' names as opposed to the candidates they are playing when referring to their actions in an effort to avoid confusion.

[45] Not a significant moment in the parody for the purposes of this analysis, this comment is assumingly offering humorous commentary on Republicans' reluctant support of and embarrassment for Governor Bush, as they attempt to entice their constituents to turn the channel and not watch the debate.

unaware, and confused. For instance, in an early example, Ferrell responds to an answer given by Hammond by simply stating: "I don't know what that was all about" ("First Presidential Debate"). Hammond relies on painstakingly slow speech throughout the clip, satirizing the overly deliberate, confident, and detached nature of Gore's self-presentation.

The clip also includes parody of the words and policies espoused by both candidates in the actual debate. Ferrell parodies Bush's propensity to misuse and mispronounce words, rebutting one of Hammond's responses with the phrase, "I believe some of his figures may be in-ak-o-ret (mispronouncing inaccurate)" ("First Presidential Debate"). In one of the most popularly circulated moments of the parody, Hammond repeatedly refers to the metaphor of a "lockbox" used by Gore to describe his proposed tax plan. Hammond satirizes the policy by repeatedly referring to the "lockbox" not as a metaphor as originally intended by Gore, but as a literal object:

> Rather than squander the surplus on a risky tax cut for the wealthy, I would put it in what I call a lockbox. In my plan, the lockbox would be used only for Social Security and Medicare. It would have two different locks. One of the keys to the lockbox would be kept by the President. The other would be kept in a small, magnetic container and placed under the bumper of the Senate Majority Leader's car.... the lockbox would also be camouflaged. Now, to all outward appearances it would be a leather-bound edition of *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexander Dumas. But, it wouldn't be. It would be the lockbox" ("First Presidential Debate").

Quotes from the candidates' campaigns are integrated throughout the clip with the performers responding to them. For instance, Parnell asks Ferrell to clarify a quote from Governor Bush: "Two weeks ago, at a meeting with the Economic Club of Detroit, you said the following, 'More seldom than not, the movies give us exquisite sex and wholesome violence that underscores our values. Every two child did. I will.' What did you mean by that?" ("First Presidential Debate"). By including this quote in the parody, the show draws attention to the confusion that Governor Bush often caused with his speech. Ferrell elevates the satire by answering Parnell's question

with a casual and repeated response of "Pass," as if he was on a game show ("First Presidential Debate"). After the moderator displays the quote on screen and presses Ferrell for an answer, Ferrell responds with a question: "Could it be education?" ("First Presidential Debate"). While Ferrell's performance relies on a caricature absent from Bush's self-presentation, the show works from the candidate's quote, both parodying and offering broader critical commentary on the actual rhetorical situation of the election. In addition to mocking Bush's documented lack of knowledge about political matters, the satire offers criticism on the ridiculousness of a candidate rising to the level of a Presidential nomination who does not have the expected political expertise. This moment also draws attention to Presidential candidates' propensity to dodge interrogations of their policies and credibility with appeals to personality and likability.

While I posit *SNL*'s impersonations as a conduit for broader political critique, others identify its reliance on caricature as impeding effective or serious social commentary. For instance, Jones describes the show's political impressions as "typically missing any form of meaningful political critique, instead depending largely on impersonation humor that is focused more on personal mannerisms and political style than on politics" (38). Yet, supplementing impersonations with commentary on candidates' policy statements establishes a connection between the empty rhetoric in which campaign promises are often delivered and candidates' personal traits. While these impersonations are primarily a humorous strategy, they also work to imbue *SNL*'s satire with an implicit critique of the lack of accountability and objective standards to which voters hold candidates.

Viewing impersonations as a key strategy through which *SNL* attends to kairos expands the rhetorical purview of its humor and the range of responses it can potentially elicit from viewers. Classical rhetoricians have long theorized the significance of kairos in matters of

persuasion. For instance, Gorgias presents kairos as attending to the "opportune time" in rhetoric (*Encomium of Helen*). In *Phaedrus*, Plato describes kairos as the "propriety of time," highlighting its importance in executing "good" and "truthful" rhetoric (272a). In his definition of rhetoric, Aristotle stresses the ability to read and effectively respond to a rhetorical moment: "Rhetoric may then be defined as the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference" (*On Rhetoric*, I.II.1). The "means of persuasion" are dependent on time, place, and context, as the rhetor "must consider in each case what the opportune action is" (*Nicomachean*, II.II.9-10). Cicero recognizes the importance of "decorum" in executing persuasive and "virtuous" rhetoric (*De Oratore*). Similarly, Quintilian resists a prescriptive and rule-driven approach to rhetoric, as the metrics for effective rhetoric are always "liable to be altered by the nature of the case, circumstances of time and place" (*Institutes*, II.XIII.2). Across all these classical definitions, a rhetor's speech and character rely on their ability to effectively respond to the expectations of the audience through attention to kairos. Contemporary rhetoricians have studied and augmented classical theories of kairos in a myriad of ways, exploring how it operates within Sophistic (Poulakos) and scientific (Miller) rhetoric, its relationship to embodiment (Hawhee), and its value as an analytic for studying invention (White), expressivist rhetoric (Pender), and social discourse (Carter).[46]

Analysis of how the dynamics between emotion and satire in SNL have shifted over time benefits from Aristotle's theory of kairos, which is prevalent in both his discussions of comedy and *pathos*. In fact, *kairos* occupies an important role across all of the types of rhetoric—deliberative, forensic, and epideictic—and modes of persuasion—ethos, pathos, and logos—that

[46] For more on how kairos has been studied, applied, and re-theorized in contemporary rhetorics, see Sipiora and Baumlin's edited collection *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory, and Praxis.*

Aristotle identifies.[47] Throughout his texts, Aristotle emphasizes the importance of a "given" situation (*On Rhetoric* I.II.1), even arguing that one's "honor" and "virtue" are dependent on "place and time" (*On Rhetoric* I.V.9). Attending to kairos required temperance and moderation, in that a rhetor should always strive to achieve an "intermediate" state, or the "mean" (*Nicomachean* II.VI.15-16). For Aristotle, kairos served as "the foundation on which to construct his theory of virtue as a mean between two extremes" (Kinneavy 59). An effective attention to kairos, then, involves reading a given situation and responding with a moderate rhetoric and character most representative of the values and expectations of the audience and milieu. When employed as an analytic, Aristotle's theory further positions *SNL's* satire as kairotic, in that its primary strategy, i.e., impressions, are constructed from the personal traits, speech, and reception of actual candidates and campaigns at that particular time.

Kairos is paramount in *SNL*'s execution of rhetorical impersonations that are more than just humorous. The circulation cycle of the show is necessarily kairotic, as it provides timely commentary on the events of the past week and is immediately circulated online. Responding to the mediated images and performances of the candidates, the show's delivery is informed by the timing and medium in which it is produced. Attending to the mediated nature of television (McLuhan) and the shareability of its arguments beyond its television audience, the show crafts satire that is delivered in a manner fit for the networked, intercontextual nature of information consumption today. The show's circulation, then, is essential to its invention and delivery, as it provides consumable and shareable bits of humor that also invite interaction. James Porter emphasizes interaction as a key component of digital delivery. Similarly, Collin Gifford Brooke argues that delivery should be seen as an "intransitive, constitutive *performance*" (170). In this

[47] For more on how kairos operates within Aristotle's theories, see Kinneavy and Eskin.

approach, a rhetor's choices surrounding delivery are designed in anticipation of the audience's interaction. In analyzing *SNL*'s circulation—and its response to the circulation of the texts, personas, and performances it parodies—this study "connects up questions of delivery with rhetorical invention, with audience, with design" (Porter, James). From this perspective, *SNL*'s delivery is a networked endeavor that responds to shifting conventions regarding humor, television, and digital circulation. Attentive to the plethora of choices available to the viewer and commenter, the show's satire is delivered in "a way that it would be accepted and attended to rather than refused, ignored, or thrown into the wastebasket unread" (Lanham 24). The design and delivery of humorous arguments that interest readers and are responsive to circulation demands across varied media and contexts characterize the kairotic satire of *SNL*.

Responding to both current events and viewers' previous knowledge of Presidential debates, *SNL* uses impersonations to parody candidates in a way that will be best received (as humorous) by viewers supporting either candidate or party. Reflecting the political processes of identification and representation most prevalent at the time, the show uses the election as an opportune moment to serve as a critical moderator on both the candidates' authority and the influence of the debates over voters' decision making. Relying on viewers' recognition of the referential frameworks on which their impersonations of both the candidates and debates are based, *SNL*'s attention to kairos is integral in its invention and delivery of satire that is both humorous and critical.

In describing *SNL*'s satire as a vehicle for political critique, Chris Smith and Ben Voth recognize the unique relationship between humor and commentary in the show's parody of the 2000 debate:

> It isolated, identified and magnified Bush's and Gore's imperfections and created an alternative field of social criticism directly opposing traditional, tragic modes of

> presentation. For example, '*SNL*' allowed social confrontation of the candidates shortcomings, such as Gore's exaggerations and Bush's apparent puzzled state and mangling of words that was often not possible to illustrate in tragic modes of presentation. (115)

While impersonations are the predominant rhetorical strategy, the show channels the actors' performances into more significant critiques of their rhetoric. By integrating the party lines espoused by Gore and Bush throughout the campaign, *SNL* expands the effect of its satire beyond poking fun at the candidates. The integration of critique within its humor, while not adhering to temperance in the traditional sense that Aristotle described, does aid the show's attention to kairos.

A similar focus on timeliness is evident in Aristotle's model of rhetorical humor, as soliciting laughter requires both a kairotic knowledge and an ability to offer comedy that appeals to a wide range of tastes. He defines the two extremes to be avoided in the execution of rhetorical humor:

> Those who go to excess in raising laughs seem to be vulgar buffoons. They stop at nothing to raise a laugh, and care more about that than saying what is seemly and avoiding pain to the victims of the joke. Those who would never say anything themselves to raise a laugh, and even object when other people do it, seem to be boorish and stiff. Those who joke in appropriate ways are called witty, or, in other words, agile-witted. (Aristotle, *Nicomachean*, IV.8.5-10)

Achieving an "intermediate state" between these two extremes requires a "dexterity" and "discriminating attitude" from the rhetor, one that is contingent on their ability to attend to kairos (*Nicomachean* IV.8.18, 33). Given political satire's rhetorical tradition of commenting on the most pressing issues of the day and responding to the actions of those in power, consideration of kairos is both appropriate and valuable when studying its rhetorical dynamics. And while temperance is more consequential in Aristotle's theorization of humor than in satirical rhetoric, such a model provides a useful framework for exploring *SNL*'s longevity and ability to draw a

more diverse viewership than similar shows. For viewers who are not moved to laughter by the impressions, the show mocks the absurdity of the candidates' inability to communicate measurable policy strategies. *SNL* provides viewers an opportunity to laugh not only at the candidates' personal traits but their ineptitude as well. By extension, this laughter can lead to recognition of the processes by which they come to support one candidate or another and the stock they put into debate performances. In this way, the content of *SNL* provides a kairotic and humorous reflection on the *lack* of content within political arguments to which viewers subscribe, mirroring the absurdity that characterizes personality politics.

The focus on candidates' inability to offer real solutions or policies is also present in the performers' equally dismissive, but very different, responses to a question about foreign relations and diplomacy later in the skit. Parnell first asks Ferrell a question about the U.S.'s relationship with other countries, including a long list of hard-to-pronounce European leaders. While Parnell is asking the question, Ferrell emotes a pained and dreading expression, as if he is fearful of the impending question and his inability to answer it. Ferrell then responds: "First of all, I think any instability in that first country you mentioned is troubling. And, clearly the second guy you spoke of beat the first guy. Personally, I favor seeking the diplomatic help of the person I call guy number three. Uh, but I'm not going to pronounce any of their names tonight because I don't believe that's in our national interest" ("First Presidential Debate"). During this answer, Ferrell appears uncertain and unprepared, as if he is grasping at some semblance of an acceptable answer. Yet, at the conclusion of the response, this changes drastically, as Ferrell emotes a satisfied, happy-with-himself expression, as if he has provided some groundbreaking response. Ferrell's uncertainty is juxtaposed against Hammond's unfounded confidence and overbearing response to the same foreign relations question. Taking on an inappropriately confrontational

manner, Hammond delivers his answer: “Let me here tonight issue a warning to the enemies or potential enemies of the United States. You may think you know the location of the lockbox, and maybe you do! Or, maybe that’s a decoy, or a dummy lockbox. Only the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, myself, and Tipper will know for sure” (“First Presidential Debate”). Like Ferrell, Hammond concludes his response with a look of satisfaction and confidence that contradicts the empty nature of his answer. While addressing serious topics that arose in the actual Presidential debate, the performers mock the toothless nature of the candidates’ policies, commenting on the futility that often characterizes campaign rhetoric and political rituals like the debates.

The impersonations also respond to the circulated personas of Gore and Bush throughout the 2000 election. As a former Vice President and Governor, Gore and Bush’s personas were well circulated prior to the *SNL* skit. Mainstream media coverage of Gore was predominantly negative, with liberal media describing him as “repellent,” “delusional,” and a man who “lies like a rug” (Peretz). Coupled with erroneous reports that he claimed to have invented the Internet, Gore was painted as robotic, overconfident, and inauthentic candidate. While also the target of negative media coverage that emphasized his incompetence, the media emphasized Bush’s “folksy affability,” “distinctive charm,” and “effortless banter” (Peretz). Working from media coverage of the candidates as source material for parody, the clip satirizes the public presentation of each candidate, the stark contrasts between their personas, and the credibility issues of both candidates. As described in the introduction of this chapter, the 2000 clip had a direct influence over the campaign and election. In this way, *SNL*’s satire both responds to and co-constructs the candidates’ public personas.

In addition to Ferrell and Hammond’s performances, the show integrates commentary on serious subject matter with material effects on the lives of the viewers, including healthcare and

economic concerns. As a result, the show strikes a balance between comedy and tragedy that is characteristic of the kairotic and measured wit that Aristotle describes. In defining the most rhetorically effective forms of comedy, he states: "Recent comedy...inclines instead towards the serious, but laughter and amusement are vital to comedy. Therefore, a mean between these styles, which constitutes a mixture of both, is to be preferred, so that comedy falls into neither buffoonery nor solemnity to any excessive degree" (Aristotle qtd. in Janko 99).[48] This "mixture," can be seen in the use of parody as a vehicle for the amusement and critique in the clip. By doing so, the show also attends to the tastes and expectations of a variety of viewers. For those who tune in to laugh, Ferrell and Hammond's impressions provide such an outlet. And for those more interested in biting social commentary on the week's political events, these impressions give way to critique of the discourse surrounding candidates and pundits' treatment of consequential policy issues.

The parody of more than the candidates' characters or personalities is also seen in the implicit commentary on the structure and conventions of political debates in the U.S. in the clip. As in the actual debates, the performers interrupt one another and compete for more air time than is allotted to them, with Hammond even asking if he "can have two closing statements" ("First Presidential Debate"). The clip also integrates the convention of the split screen, showing Ferrell acting confused and distracted while Hammond speaks. Much like actual candidates, the performers cite the struggles of individual constituents in their responses as leverage for their arguments, as Hammond does when describing prescription drug prices. And as in many

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[48] This quote and several others in this chapter are derived from Richard Janko's translation of *The Tractatus Coislinianus*, the anonymous "Treatise on Comedy," in *Aristotle on Comedy*. While the authorship of this text has been highly debated, many rhetorical scholars attribute this text to Aristotle as part of the lost text of *Poetics II*. For more on Aristotle's theory of comedy in relation to this text, see Bernays, Cooper, and Kayser.

Presidential debates, Parnell unsuccessfully attempts to enforce time constraints on Ferrell and Hammond, also asking for the reductive, one-word answer at the skit's conclusion common among debates over the years. While criticizing the show's dependence on impressions in this skit, Jones also recognizes how *SNL* attempted to prompt "citizens [to] see fairly clearly that the serious choice they were being asked to make was, instead, fairly ridiculous" (44). *SNL* interjects subtle critiques of the conventions of the debate platform within its satire. As a result, the show offers viewers a chance to reflect on both the credibility of the candidates and the impact of political customs like the debates on their voting decisions.

The show's attention to how personality politics are affecting civic life enhances its attention to kairos, as *SNL* responds not only to contemporary events and rhetorics, but the larger institutions of power and identity that inform both the content and reception of its satire. Because of this broader critique, feminist rhetorics provide useful methods for recognizing how *SNL*'s is engaging with kairos, as they draw attention to the "politics of space, place, and time" (Schell 923). More specifically, they expand classical perceptions of kairos to attend to the ever-present, but not always recognized, influence of history, power, and agency over a rhetor's ability to be persuasive. Through humor and critique, *SNL*'s satire highlights the often uninformed and subjective nature with which political arguments are delivered and received. In doing so, the show elevates its ability to be kairotic, in that it remarks on the individual and social modes of knowing that direct viewers' voting practices. This timely social commentary is akin to the more complex understanding of kairos that feminist rhetoricians like Debra Hawhee describe. In recognizing the importance of invention, Hawhee defines kairos as "encourag[ing] a kind of ready stance, one in which rhetors are not only attuned to the history of an issue (*chronos*), but are also aware of the more precise turns taken by arguments about it and when they took these

turns" ("Kairos" 49). Similarly, Wendy Hesford offers a contextual framework for kairos: "a multidimensional rhetorical term that refers to a situational understanding of space and time and to the material circumstances" (207). With this focus on circumstance and materiality in hand, analyzing kairos becomes a lens to recognize how a text is not only capitalizing on an "opportune" moment or achieving temperance, but also its potential for influencing spheres outside its original rhetorical situation. Hesford refers to this recognition as reading *intercontexually*. To do so is to explore why a piece of rhetoric is not just persuasive but "culturally resonant and politically viable at any given historical moment" (Hesford 10). Such a lens provides pathways for seeing how *SNL*, while offering humorous impersonations, is also drawing attention to the cultural and social contexts that inform the ubiquity of personality politics. Serving as a source of political catharsis, *SNL*'s satire offers viewers an opportunity to purge some of the emotions associated with voting decisions and practices. In the clips analyzed, this catharsis is channeled towards the emotions voters experience in response to candidates' public personas and debate performances.

Cognizant of both the candidates' arguments and the ways in which Presidential debates are covered by the media, *SNL* offers an alternative outlook on this influential event. In this way, the show not only engages with the immediate rhetorical situation of the debate, but also the broader historical and sociopolitical contexts that inform candidates' self-presentation and reception. In addition, an *intercontextual* reading demonstrates how *SNL* is both contributing to and critiquing the role of personality-driven media in modern politics. As such, a contextual understanding of kairos "approaches the political effectiveness of rhetoric in terms of how, when, and why certain tropes, arguments, and narratives gain momentum among rhetorical publics" (Hesford 9-10). The show does not serve just as a popular form of satire or

impersonation comedy, but as a platform on which the ever-shifting relationships between humor, political participation, and emotion are being worked out in real time. In this light, the show acts as an exposé of the rigidity of political and discursive structures that not only affirms existing ideas or beliefs, but models new modes of inquiry and reflection. The blending of humor with political commentary in the clip representative of both the tradition of political satire in the U.S. and the *SNL*'s continued relevance and influence in more recent election cycles. Highlighting the ways in which candidates try and fail to meet the shifting norms of what it means to be "presidential" aids in *SNL*'s attention to *kairos* and becomes one of its most unique contributions to the resurgence of satire in the 2016 election. This can be more clearly seen in the show's parody of the debates between Donald Trump and Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton.

While *SNL* covered all three of the 2016 Presidential debates, its parody of the third debate was the most popular, as evidenced by its number of *YouTube* views. For this reason, I compare the 2000 debate skit with the clip, "Donald Trump vs. Hillary Clinton Third Debate Cold Open – SNL."[49] This clip is the cold open of the *SNL* episode that originally aired on October 22nd, 2016. Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton is played by cast member Kate McKinnon; guest star Alec Baldwin plays Donald Trump; the moderator is played by celebrity host Tom Hanks.

Much like the 2000 debate skit, the clip begins with Hanks welcoming the audience. Yet, Hanks offers direct commentary on the futility of the debate and the frustration surrounding the 2016 campaign that many viewers are feeling: "Tonight is going to be a lot like the third *Lord of the Rings* movie. You don't really want to watch, but hey, you've come this far. Now let's

[49] This clip received a total of 26,206,578 views as of April 2020 and can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-kjyltrKZSY.

welcome the candidates" ("Donald Trump vs."). In this interjection, Hanks emotes an exhaustion with both the candidates and the debate format. This delivery diversifies the emotional register of the parody before either candidate speaks their first word, as the performance mimics the feelings of many viewers towards the current state of political discourse. As a result, the clip works from a subtle recognition of the emotional milieu surrounding this election, in addition to criticism of the absurdity and practicality of the debates as a platform for information also seen in the 2000 sketch. After this welcome, the candidates enter the stage and stand behind their podiums.

As in the 2000 debate, the performers' impersonations of the candidates' mannerisms, by way of their words and body language, is the predominant strategy of parody in the 2016 clip. Throughout the sketch, McKinnon impersonates the overconfidence and lack of concern with the likelihood of her defeat that many felt was characteristic of Clinton during the campaign. Baldwin bases his impression on Trump's inability to attend to political decorum in his outlandish remarks and recurrent contradictions. These caricatures are seen in the delivery of their very first lines, as both comment on their past debate performances. McKinnon responds to Hanks' welcoming statement with: "Thank you for having me. In the first debate, I set the table. In the second debate, I fired up the grill. Tonight, I feast" ("Donald Trump vs."). Delivering this line with a smile and matter-of-fact persona, McKinnon portrays Clinton as enjoying the ridiculousness of the campaign to some degree. In addition to her facial expressions, McKinnon's embodied performance is elevated by her pandering to the room, as she waves to several different areas in a similar fashion that a member of royalty or celebrity might. Baldwin, on the other hand, promises that he will affect a different and more measured style, only to betray this promise after being asked the first question. He begins: "I'm going to start this debate

in the quietest voice possible. In the past, I have been big and loud. But tonight, I am a sweet little baby Trump." Hanks shows appreciation for this pledge, and then prompts Baldwin with a question about reproductive rights, to which Baldwin responds by screaming: "They're ripping babies out of vaginas!" ("Donald Trump vs."). In contradicting himself so quickly, Baldwin does not outwardly claim the hypocrisy that Trump is accused of but performs it in an unwitting manner that emotes the personal flaw he is parodying. While the 2000 skit relied more on mockery of the actual words and mannerisms of the candidates, Baldwin and McKinnon adopt an emotive approach that is more representative of how the candidates have been characterized by voters and the media. As in his theorization of humor, Aristotle's discussion of kairos and emotion provide a demonstrative framework for recognizing how emotion aids in the show's execution of timely satire.

While not as present as in his discussions of ethos or logos, Aristotle recognized that emotional persuasion required a situational awareness. Aristotle's contextual understanding of pathos was dependent on the affective appetites of a particular time and audience. Aristotle maintains that achieving effective emotional appeals relies on "reach[ing] the mean" (*Nicomachean*, II.9). In exploring the influence of kairos on Aristotle's rhetorical theory, James Kinneavy recognizes his "situational grounding to the notion of an emotional argument" (70). Similarly, in analyzing the impact of kairos over emotion in Aristotle's *pistis*, Phillip Sipiora describes the contextual process of affecting a fitting and moderate *pathos*: "An effective pathetic appeal must evoke certain emotional responses in the audience, which, once again, require that the rhetor know the emotional predispositions of his or her audience and be able to persuasively articulate the 'right' emotional arguments" (118).[50] While impressions are

[50] For more on Aristotle's theory of emotional appeals, see Gross.

significant in both the 2000 and 2016 debate clips, McKinnon and Baldwin rely more on exaggerated performances of the affective character traits with which the candidates are attributed and criticized. These impressions have been seen as more extreme and arguably partisan than that of the 2000 debate parody,[51] yet, they are another aspect of the show's engagement with satire that attends to the shifting kairos of political discourse. While some have identified the 2016 impressions as indicative of the show's partisan bias, when considered as kairotic, they become more representative and responsive to the "emotional predispositions" and expectations of contemporary viewers (Aristotle). With these impressions, the show elevates its commentary on personality as politics, in that how the candidates are received is often more consequential than their self-presentation or policies.

In order to execute humorous impersonations, *SNL*'s caricature and jokes are paired with performances that are representative of the public figure they are mimicking. This balance between realistic impressions and humor is similar to the "mean" Aristotle describes in his theorization of kairos. This is because impersonations rely on adherence to an audience's previous knowledge of a figure to be believable, and therefore humorous. In addition, Aristotle's moderate notion of kairos can be seen in *SNL*'s parody of both candidates' mannerisms in the 2000 and 2016 clips. The parody is not focused on one candidate in a partisan attack; instead, the clip satirizes the bravado and manufactured performances that characterize political debates. In this way, the target of the show's satire is broader than the subject of the impersonation, as it becomes a conduit for a broader response to the civic literacies and affective appetites at a particular moment in time, such as a Presidential election.

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[51] For more on how the impersonations were received, see the discussion of the similarities and differences between the 2000 and 2016 debate clips that begins on page 26, in which viewer responses are examined.

SNL's use of caricature in the 2016 skit is not only a mode for parody or criticism of a candidate, but a broader reflection of the cult of personality that has characterized the unprecedented success of a candidate like Trump. *SNL*'s satire, then, acts as a "perfect vehicle for interpreting the silly and ridiculous nature of partisan politics at that moment in time" (Jones 43). The political humor of the 2000 debate skit was more focused on the rhetoric and personal flaws of the candidates as a vehicle for broader political commentary. Yet, the 2016 skit, through these more exaggerated impressions, provides criticism on how authority is granted to candidates to begin with. More specifically, the skit reflects the extensive—and in many ways, unprecedented—degree to which the candidates' caricatures circulated. For instance, Baldwin's impersonation has been associated with international news stories that cover Trump (Stolworthy).

While the 2000 clip responds to media coverage of Gore and Bush, the rhetorical strategies of the 2016 clip more directly reflect the influence of circulation over the development of a candidate's public image. For instance, the overwhelmingly negative coverage of both Clinton and Trump informs audiences' expectations of *SNL*'s satire. Trump's coverage predominantly focused on scandals, including reports of repeated sexual misconduct, his unprecedented use of social media, and his sexist, racist, and xenophobic comments. Clinton's coverage was also marked by stories of the WikiLeaks scandal during the latter part of her campaign. Trump was often presented as an incompetent clown, as seen in Jones's cartoons in *The Washington Post*.[52] Coverage of Clinton focused on her gender and association with former President Bill Clinton. She was presented as an overconfident "liar" and elitist by mainstream

[52] There is also a history of satirical publications covering Trump. For instance, in 1988, *Spy* magazine identified Trump as a "short-fingered vulgarian." This trope of Trump's unusually small hands carried into more contemporary coverage of him, such as *Vanity Fair* (Nelson).

media outlets across the political spectrum, with many questioning her credibility and authority (Patterson). In addition to responding to the tabloid-esque coverage of Clinton and Trump, the 2016 clip attends to shifting expectations surrounding viewers' consumption and sharing practices. The more exaggerated impersonations respond to the need for shareable, memeable arguments that can be easily repackaged, circulated, and interacted with. As outlined by DeVoss and Ridolfo, *SNL*'s satire is composed for "recomposition," in that the short, easily digestible, and affectively driven performances are delivered in the manner that is most likely to invite viewers' laughter and interaction.

McKinnon and Baldwin's reliance on the caricatures with which the candidates are presented in the mainstream media carries into their responses to policy questions later in the clip. For instance, when asked about how he will address the growing threats of ISIS, Baldwin responds, affecting a quasi-confidence that quickly turns to confusion as his answer progresses: "Here's exactly what I'll do. First off, Mosul is bad and we're going after Mosul because ISIS is in Mosul. But she [referring to McKinnon] created ISIS. Iran should write us a letter of thank you because Iran is taking Iraq and we're going to Mosul and Iran's going to write us a letter of...Listen, Aleppo is a disaster and Iran is Iraq, and..." ("Donald Trump vs."). Hanks then interrupts Baldwin's stammering: "Thank you, Mr. Trump, we have to move on," to which Baldwin responds, "Oh thank God. I don't know if you could tell but I was really spinning out of control" ("Donald Trump vs."). As Baldwin moves through this answer, his demeanor shifts drastically, as his posturing melts away to reveal an affect of fear and confusion. This shift culminates in his direct recognition that he is "spinning out of control," not a recognition that Trump ever made or one that is associated with his public persona of superiority. While a similar moment in Ferrell's impersonation of Bush in response to a foreign relations question occurs in

the 2000 debate skit, Ferrell's emotional performance maintains an attempt at decorum, again trying to mimic "presidential" behavior. Baldwin, on the other hand, directly comments on Trump's inability to do so. Both examples provide commentary on the unwarranted confidence with which candidates often present. Yet, Baldwin uses emotion to depart from a representative impersonation of Trump's mannerisms or language. In these departures, Baldwin breaks character to demonstrate the flawed nature of the candidate's public façade.

SNL juxtaposes Baldwin's portrayal of Trump's lack of experience with McKinnon's performance of Clinton as egotistical. In response to Baldwin's questioning what she has been doing over her thirty-year political career, McKinnon responds with a list of her accomplishments. Hanks recurrently interrupts this list, emoting frustration:

> McKinnon: I'd be happy to talk about the last thirty years.
> Hanks: Oh, no. Not again.
> McKinnon: Back in the 1970s, I worked for the Children's Defense Fund.
> Hanks: Yes, yes, we know.
> McKinnon: I was a senator in New York on 9/11.
> Hanks: Yeah we get it.
> McKinnon: And I was secretary of state, and I don't know if you've heard this before...
> Hanks: We have.
> McKinnon: But I was instrumental in taking down a man by the name of...
> Hanks: Osama Bin Laden.
> McKinnon: [yelling]: OSAMA BIN LADEN!
> Moderator: We're all very proud of your accomplishments, secretary.
> ("Donald Trump vs.")

Like Baldwin's impersonation, McKinnon also abandons a more moderate impression of Clinton, announcing her accomplishments as if she was a sports announcer, moving around the stage, and inverting her microphone as she yells the name, "Osama Bin Laden." In addition, Hanks' sarcastic interjections make McKinnon's performance seem not only overly celebratory but tone deaf to widespread criticism of Clinton as relying too heavily on her past record and not catering to constituents' desires to hear concrete plans.

While Baldwin and McKinnon's impressions are a humorous form of parody, they also engage in more complex criticisms of those in power in a "carnivalesque, up-ending manner" (Gray 164). Like Bakhtin's recognition of the rhetorical, cultural, and political effects of the more debauched, extreme humor of the "carnival world," *SNL*'s satire channels the intense affective dynamics surrounding the 2016 election as an opportunity to provide humorous yet biting critique of candidates' modes of self-presentation, many of which mimic that of celebrities. The show's strategies are altered, namely surrounding the performance of impersonations, to continue to respond to the shifting dynamics between politics and celebrity culture in the U.S. Specifically, the more exaggerated representations of the candidates' public personas respond to the unprecedented nature of Trump's candidacy. The show also uses satire to more effectively respond to changes in viewers' appetites for humor, as what solicited a laugh fifteen years ago does not garner the same level of amusement. Aristotle recognizes this in his discussion of timely humor: "for what people used to find funny was shameful abuse, but what they now find funny instead is innuendo, which is considerably more seemly" (*Nicomachean* IV.VIII.20-26). Today's consumers of comedy have much more to choose from, as satirists exist across a vast variety of media and topic areas. Recent debates surrounding the political correctness of comedy have impacted the acceptability of contemporary satire. The absurdity of political discourse itself and the continuing intersections between entertainment and politics have also altered the relevance and reception of satire. By engaging with more hyperbolic impersonations and relying less on the candidates' actual rhetoric than in the 2000 clip, the show attends to the more polarized and extreme palates of viewers, whether for humor or political commentary.

As in the 2000 clip, the performances mirror the personal attacks and back-and-forth

conflict that often characterize political debates. At one point in the skit, in response to a reproductive rights question, McKinnon refers to Baldwin as "a man who is a child and whose face is birth control" ("Donald Trump vs."). Circumventing a viable response that could appeal to voters' values, McKinnon opts to attack Baldwin's personal appearance. Similarly, Baldwin repeatedly responds to McKinnon's statements by calling here a "liar" and a "nasty woman." This element of attack was absent from the 2000 debate clip, as Ferrell and Hammond recurrently attempted to feign a respectful and friendly tone even when disagreeing with each other. The degree of conflict within each clip also reflects the discursive norms of presidential campaigns during that time. Even when the 2016 debate clip integrates questions about the candidates' actual policies and language, these references were quickly turned into another opportunity for the candidates to argue.

For example, when asked about immigration, Baldwin repeated Trump's racist remarks: "I mean, people are just pouring into this country from Mexico and a lot of them are very bad hombres" ("Donald Trump vs."). This response prompted a very excited McKinnon to exclaim: "Oh, Bingo, Bingo! I got Bingo! I've been playing all year and I got it. Bad hombres, rapists, Miss Piggy, They're All Living in Hell, and If she wasn't my daughter" as she held up a Bingo card ("Donald Trump vs."). As with her previous performances, McKinnon portrays Clinton as enjoying and even reveling in the minutia of the debate and her own likelihood of winning the election. This portrayal is also evident in the one question that pertains to an actual event within the Clinton campaign: WikiLeaks. When asked about the email scandal, McKinnon responds: "Thank you for bringing up my emails, Chris. And I'm very happy to clarify what was in some of them. Sorry, what Carol? What? I'm sorry, I thought I heard my friend Carol. Anyway, back to your question about the way Donald treats women. And that is how you pivot!!" ("Donald

Trump vs."). With a triumphant tone and a short victory dance, McKinnon celebrates her ability to dodge the question. When asked directly whether she will ever address this issue, McKinnon states: "No, but it was very cute to watch you try" ("Donald Trump vs."). This performance augments McKinnon's exaggerated portrayal of Clinton as overconfident and unconcerned with voters' doubts, as McKinnon affects a superiority that is above not only the question but the debate itself. The ridiculousness of both Baldwin and McKinnon's impersonations, while departing from the more restrained representation of the candidates' personal flaws in the 2000 clip, further demonstrates *SNL*'s engagement with kairotic humor that both mocks the candidates and the absence of substantive debate.

Both Baldwin and McKinnon engage in exaggerated performances that portray the candidates as overly emotional; however, the 2016 debate clip does seem to mock Trump more than Clinton. The 2000 debate clip equally satirizes both Bush and Gore's personal mannerisms and inability to substantively answer questions. Yet, in the 2016 debate clip, Hanks directly tells Baldwin at one point: "You know you're going to lose" ("Donald Trump vs."). This increased attention on Trump has and will continue to be read as indicative of the show's bias or its endorsement of Clinton.[53] Yet, when viewed as enhancing the show's engagement with rhetorical humor, one can better recognize how the show is kairotically responding to the unique nature of the 2016 campaign and Trump as a viable Presidential candidate. While I resist the common trend to identify the 2016 election and politics since as completely unprecedented, the ways in which Trump's candidacy and Presidency have defied historical norms is undeniable. Firstly, Trump's identity as a reality star, and his own lionization of this identity as a key

[53] For more on *SNL*'s partisanship, see the "*SNL*, Political Satire, and Partisan Bias: A Brief Discussion" section.

campaign strategy is unique when compared to previous candidates. More importantly, his reliance on media coverage and celebrity culture as opposed to substantive platform issues represents a defining moment in the growing dominance of personality politics. As such, a candidate like Trump requires a different type of satire, one that is more affectively diverse and attuned to the ensuing changes such a candidacy may bring upon the broader body politic. *SNL* responds to Trump's candidacy and the changes it brings upon political norms by engaging with similar strategies in its parody of him. Modeling and critiquing these strategies simultaneously, the show satirizes both Trump and the larger political system that led to his candidacy.

Regardless of the balance of jokes, both Trump and Clinton are portrayed with exaggerated impersonations. McKinnon and Baldwin's emotional performances further enable the show's timely political commentary on how personality politics are evolving. The value of emotion as a tool for kairotic social commentary is more evident when considered through the lenses of feminist and queer studies of affect. For instance, the affective deliveries of McKinnon and Baldwin can be seen as examples of satire's engagement with what Eve Sedgwick refers to as the *periperformative*. Providing avenues for multiple modes of interpretation and new knowledges, the *periperformative* "has more aptitude than the explicitly performative for registering historical change" (79). By deviating from simply humorous impersonations, *SNL*'s 2016 clip makes room for more inquiries into not only the character of candidates but viewers' own interaction with the public personas of those they vote into power. In this way, *SNL*'s parody is less about the actual candidates than the absurdity that has come to characterize the electoral process in the U.S. The show's impersonations of the candidates become both a model of personality politics and a conduit for criticism of that very system, all while not sacrificing its primary objective as a satire show: to provide humorous content that will garner higher ratings.

The kairotic appeal of the clips is more dependent on what they communicate about the broader social and cultural moment in which they are situated than the actual performances. Parodying the lack of substance in the debate and the rhetorical moves of candidates' with more animated performances, *SNL* more explicitly demonstrates the similarities and differences between both candidates and campaigns in the 2016 sketch. As a result, viewers are inspired to reflect on the arbitrary nature of their own partisan allegiances, as candidates from opposing political parties are guilty of the same false performances and celebrity pandering. As Sara Ahmed describes, engaging with emotions in this way can lead to deeper understandings of "how they work in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective" (*The Cultural* 119). The emotional exchanges between McKinnon and Baldwin, coupled with the audience's knowledge of the public characters of Clinton and Trump, result in an exaggerated sense of conflict not as palpable in the 2000 skit. With this tension, the show capitalizes on the emotional identities of the candidates, further enabling a broader commentary on the collectives of each party and how they form.

Viewer Responses

The similarities and differences between how humor and affect operate within the 2000 and 2016 clips are more evident when considered alongside viewer comments. As with the other shows analyzed in this dissertation, engaging with viewer comments offers further insight into how today's political satire promotes viewers' reflection and/or action. Considering viewers' comments in this study help to further demonstrate how *SNL*'s rhetorical delivery and circulation impacts its ability to offer kairotic satire. In addition, addressing the show's circulation works to update Greco-Roman frameworks employed in this study to account for contemporary

exigencies and mediums. Finally, the viewers' comments function as another node in my *intercontextual* analysis of *SNL*'s arguments. More specifically, these comments provide additional evidence of *SNL*'s response to particular political moments and its resonance over time. As can be seen from the viewer responses to both the 2000 and 2016 parodies, *SNL* evokes affective responses from the viewer beyond amusement, working to make them more aware of the impact of personality-driven media and rhetoric over political content.

The most prominent theme across the responses to both clips were comments on the quality of the impersonations. In response to the 2000 debate clip, one viewer praised the cast's performances: "As brilliant as political satire gets. Brilliantly written and perfectly acted. Ferrell's utter bewilderment and short attention span. Hammond's well-intentioned but deadly-dull earnestness" (Rick Rose1). Another viewer expressed appreciation for the humor of the impersonations but also despondence that so many political leaders can be so easily satirized: "LOL! I know it's only humor and it's damn funny at that, but it's about time we had a candidate for our country's highest office and most important office in the free world who the comedians cannot make fun of, or at least find it extremely difficult to find anything about him or her to make fun of" (Depcom). This viewer provides commentary on the intersection between comedy and politics, in that the parody of presidential candidates can serve as a metric of sorts for their adherence to what we expect of those in power. In addition, this viewer implies that Ferrell and Hammond's impersonations are more than just humorous caricatures, as they speak to the viability of the actual candidates. These comments provide evidence that viewers react to the impersonations with a range of affective responses. In addition, the commentary on candidates' credibility speaks to the impact that the show's critique of personality politics can have, as viewers recognize the influence of a candidates' laughableness on their electability.

A third viewer applauds the impersonations for their realism, while also criticizing more contemporary *SNL* impersonations: "Why does everyone play these characters so true to life and nowadays they don't? They play everyone like human fart jokes. I wonder if that is a change in *SNL* or a change in the audience" (Jo SoZen). This comment speaks to the same inquiry posed in this very analysis, as I offer claims about the timeliness of *SNL*'s political impersonations. While not providing an answer, this comment does indicate that the affective nuance of *SNL*'s impersonations impacts their reception and its overall response to contemporary politics.

Comments responding to the 2016 impersonations were mostly critical, as viewers saw the exaggerated nature of McKinnon and Baldwin's performances not as kairotic but as distracting or indicative of bad acting. For example, two such viewers wrote: "These were actually seen as good impersonations? Wow..." (Andre Pettersson), and "Tom hanks was the best impression. Baldwin isn't a good Trump, you can't nail impressions of people you despise" (Wayne Payne98). While a viewers' propensity to applaud or criticize the quality of the impersonations is arguably dependent on their own political affiliation and/or their interpretation of *SNL*'s perceived bias, these comments still provide an interesting point of comparison between the two clips. Like my analysis, these viewers recognize a correlation between the exaggerated nature of the 2016 clips and *SNL*'s ability to offer timely and critical satire. Yet, while I posit affective impersonations as aiding in *SNL*'s attention to kairos, these viewers react to them as detracting from its humor. Furthermore, while I resist arguments that point to the 2016 impersonations as indicative of *SNL*'s growing partisanship, these viewers see the opposite. These comments demonstrate that *SNL*'s satire can motivate awareness of the influence of personality politics today, while also serving to complicate claims about its bias.

Another common theme across the responses to both clips was time, and how looking back at clips from a different era influences their reception. For instance, several of the comments responding to the 2000 clip expressed a nostalgia and longing for the past: "I can't believe I'm actually nostalgic for these days" (buriedxinblack); "this was a simpler time" (Jeremy Bader). The timing of the posts, which range from several years to just weeks ago, and the fact that the clip is from eighteen years ago undoubtedly influenced this trend. Yet, it does point to an interesting connection between timing, humor, and affect recognized by viewers that speaks to the kairotic nature of the clips. Like the performers' reliance on the public's preconceived impressions of the candidates in the 2000 clip, viewers' responses to it are also influenced by how Gore and Bush's images have circulated since 2000. While Gore was criticized as detached in media coverage of the 2000 election, he is now seen as a renowned climate change activist, winning an Oscar for his renowned documentary, *The Inconvenient Truth* (Peretz). Bush's public image was indelibly changed by his actions during 9/11, the war in Afghanistan, and the Iraq war. Looking at how viewers respond to satirical clips from two different time periods, I attend to a nebulous view of circulation that addresses questions of immediacy, virality, and permanence, such as Jonathan Bradshaw theorizes with *slow circulation*. In addition, looking at *SNL*'s reception over time contributes insight into the affective ecology of the show. Catherine Chaput describes such an approach as tracing how rhetoric "moves throughout material and discursive spaces to connect the differently situated moments comprising its organic whole" (13). The clips, the viewer responses, the mediated public images of the candidates prior to the clips, and the clips' circulation are all elements of *SNL*'s rhetorical ecology. Analyzing these elements together demonstrates the kairotic nature of

SNL's satire, illustrating how it shifts rhetorical strategies to reflect and resist dominant norms of political discourse at that time.

This theme of time also resonated across the viewer responses to the 2016 clip. Several of the viewers commented on how the passage of time, given Trump's victory, influenced how humorous and ironic they found the skit: "This is so much funnier watching from 2019" (david hill); "This is even funnier now. I doubt *SNL* thinks so" (Betty Becall). Conversely, many other comments expressed sadness when watching the clip in the present day: "It is so much more devastating to watch in almost 2019" (Mareike Dregger), and "Sometimes I go back and watch this just to cry" (whiteraven18). These comments demonstrate the range of emotional responses to the 2016 election even in the present, providing another outlook on the impact of time over the rhetorical resonance of humor and emotion in *SNL*'s clips.

The viewer responses to both the 2000 and 2016 clip also included commentary on how the nation's appetite for political humor has changed over time. Since the 2000 clip was posted many years after its original airing, viewers' comments provide a unique perspective on the timeliness of the skit and its resonance within a different political milieu. Much like the comments that expressed nostalgia for a "simpler" and less divided time in U.S. politics, some viewers lamented the loss of political humor within the emotionally heightened atmosphere that has resulted from the 2016 election. For example, one viewer described the 2000 skit as occurring at a time "before everyone was so sensitive about *SNL* presidential impersonations, including the president" (Zebulous). Another used their response as an opportunity to criticize the partisan nature of today's political discourse in comparison to the 2000 skit, writing "We still laughed at each other back then! This is classic. Can't we again? It's supposed to be great in America" (Benthruit). A response to the 2016 debate clip expresses a similar frustration: "I

swear, Americans don't know how to take jokes anymore. It's just a skit..." (Tatenda Madondo). Responding not only to the 2016 clip but the reactions it garnered from both the President and their fellow commenters, this viewer seems to long for a time when political satire was not taken so seriously. In this way, these comments provide insight into the shifting dynamics between politics and humor and how such shifts impact the kairotic nature of *SNL*'s satire.

The intentions and emotional experiences of viewers are impossible to identify with any certainty, given the complex nature of affect, especially in relation to time. Yet, considering these comments in this analysis provides another node for the comparison between the rhetorical strategies of the 2000 and 2016 debate skits and their reception. These comments demonstrate how *SNL* has used the parody of presidential debates as a kairotic platform for social commentary and critique. Conversely, they also point to commonalities across responses to satire created in different time periods, speaking to the timelessness of certain satirical forms, such as *SNL*'s political impersonations.

SNL, Political Satire, and Partisan Bias: A Brief Discussion

Before concluding this chapter by identifying what this comparative analysis of *SNL*'s attention to kairos reveals about how satire has changed over time, it is important to briefly acknowledge an issue that arises throughout this dissertation: partisan bias. While this study focuses on the rhetorical processes and reception of political satire and not its effects, this is an issue worth considering. Like all of the shows analyzed in the following chapters, *SNL* has been criticized by many for having a liberal bias. This criticism has only increased over time.

In fact, a common theme across the viewer responses to both clips is *SNL*'s bias. For instance, responses to the 2000 debate clip described it as less partisan than more recent *SNL* skits: "Ahhh..... the 2000s- where every politician, a Democratic or Republican are both

mocked by the media" (Rafael Santos); "This was so great. Back when *SNL* poked fun at everyone" (Gina Sigillito). Similarly, responses to the 2016 debate clip identified the show's parody of Trump and Clinton as unequal: "And that, my friends, is what passes for 'impartial' at *SNL*. Poke fun at DJT the ENTIRE time, and take one shot at hillary. This is why Trump won" (Casselle Ball); "loved it. get the feeling the creators are a little TOO Liberal" (Patrick Alley). Given the ubiquity of these comments, it is clear that the perceived bias of political satire, as is the case with all media, is influential over viewers' reception. In addition, viewers' perceptions of media, including political satire, impact how they identify bias.

In a study of *SNL*'s mockery of the political parties, Robert S. Lichter, Jody C. Baumgartner, and Jonathan S. Morris found that the show lodged twice as many jokes at members of the Republican party than they did Democrats. Yet, the authors do not position this finding as detracting from the effectiveness of the show's commentary, but rather a reflection of the "left-of-center milieu of the entertainment industry, to which many late night comedians belong" (Lichter, Baumgartner, Morris 137). Hollywood's liberal bias has been documented since well before the 2016 election. What is different among today's comedians is their engagement in political activism, as more are starting their own political organizations and lobbying Congress on pressing issues of the day (Lichter, Baumgartner, Morris 215). It is not that today's satirists are more partisan; instead, they are more directly responding to the blurring boundaries between civics and entertainment by becoming more politically active. As the celebrity culture has grown more influential over politics, so has the popular satirist.
will the popular satirist.

In addition, scholars have responded to criticisms against satire as having a partisan bias by noting the genre's tradition as a vehicle for antiestablishmentarianism and dissent. For

instance, Alison Dagnes argues, "That this satire was liberal is indicative not of bias, but indicative of two more obvious explanations: the first is that satire has to reflect an antipathy toward the established order; the second is that satire will consistently epitomize the cultural and political mood of the time" (131). Responding to the political appetites and major trends of the day, satire like *SNL*'s reflects the ideological tensions and divisions that characterize partisan politics. Given the structures that dictate our elections and political representation, the dissenting voice will inevitably be one that is more liberal, even when a Democrat occupies the White House.

This is not to claim that *SNL*, or the other satire shows analyzed in this dissertation, does or does not possess a partisan bias. In fact, while the political demographics of the audiences of such shows are difficult if not impossible to measure, the available data does indicate that viewers are more likely than not to be liberal leaning. Yet, this may communicate more about the identity of satirists or the relationship between one's tolerance for humor and political allegiances than the actual partisan nature of today's satire.[54] Furthermore, increases in the perceived bias of the media and the impact of partisanship over media literacies are having an effect on satire's reception. With an understanding of these important contexts in mind, one can see satire's engagement with partisan arguments not as detracting from their appeal but as further evidence of their attention to kairos.

Findings and Interpretations

SNL continues to be an important institution of satire in the U.S., employing rhetorical humor to reflect and respond to shifting trends within the greater body politic. As such, examining the show's rhetorical processes over time provides a foundation for beginning to

[54] For more on the partisan bias of political satire in the U.S., see Young, and Morrison.

understand how the genre has evolved and why it has experienced a resurgence in popularity and public influence in recent years. And while a comprehensive understanding of how political satire in the U.S. has changed over time would require a more intensive longitudinal study of a wider range of shows, analysis of *SNL* helps to avoid anachronistic or generalized arguments about the uniqueness of satire today.

By engaging in kairotic satire, *SNL* attempts to mobilize viewers' laughter and emotional engagement into broader realizations about the failings of political figures and structures. More specifically, the show calls attention to the impact of personality politics over viewers' voting practices. *SNL*'s satire models and contributes to the blurring of normative boundaries between emotion and civic literacy, and comedy and politics. In this way, *SNL* represents satire's potential as a timely rhetorical vehicle for speaking back to the processes and effects of this blurring. The show is not bound by its identity as a comedy show, or its appeal to a broader audience than similar shows, as it engages in affective political critique that can galvanize viewers towards reflection.

While conventional appeals to humor—such as impersonations, parodies, and sketch comedy—have and continue to characterize *SNL*'s satire, it also employs a range of affective strategies. In this way, the show harkens back to a more emotional Juvenalian form in which the satirist is not an "isolated observer," but is moved by the same emotions and impulses they reflect through humor (Keane 11). Such a form, because of its reliance on affect, serves as a "representation of the human experience—including personal self-assertion, cultural definition, and all manner of conflicts and crimes—in emotional terms" (Keane 217). Attending to an ever shifting kairos, *SNL*'s satire reads and responds to the complexities that characterize contemporary political discourse, altering its rhetorical strategies to reflect changes within

individual and collective appetites for humor, emotional appeals, and political commentary. The show accomplishes this by responding to the growing influence of personality within contemporary politics. Through both humor and other emotional appeals, *SNL* reacts to and counters dominant narratives surrounding the processes of participation and representation that exacerbate the inertia of partisan politics. By juxtaposing serious subject matter with humorous impersonations, and blending humor with other emotions, *SNL* does not rely on parody or comedy alone in its political critique. More specifically, in the clips analyzed in this chapter, *SNL* integrates affective arguments—whether overt or implied—to comment on the dissolution of political norms that characterize Trump's candidacy and presidency.

Departing from the singular goal of offering the most widely appealing satire, *SNL* employs emotion as a rhetorical strategy to offer poignant commentary on personality politics and the kairotic humor that viewers have come to expect. In analyzing the longevity of the show, Jim Whalley identifies its attention to *kairos* as influential in its success: "the show's fortunes have been closely tied to the ways in which it has responded to and incorporated each new generation's outlook and values" (188). As this analysis shows, one of the primary ways in which *SNL* achieves this timeliness and timelessness is through its attention to affect as an important and necessary rhetorical strategy within today's political satire.

Chapter Three:
Bringing Rhetoric Back to the News: *Last Week Tonight's* Transactional Interventions

"There is no occasion in our lives where refined wit may not fittingly play a role."
—Cicero, *De Oratore*, Bk II, 199

"Revolutionary forms of political consciousness involve heightening our awareness of just how much there is to be unhappy about."
—Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 222

Questions surrounding the relationship between partisanship and information literacy have permeated public debate since the surprising results of the 2016 U.S. Presidential election. Terms like "post-truth," "fake news," and "filter bubbles" dominate political discourse, as many associate the rampant spread of misinformation with partisan polarization. In response to the growing issues of misinformation, the mainstream media has worked to maintain a pretense of neutrality in the hopes of presenting the news in a way that viewers will see as objective (Kovach and Rosenstiel). Yet, this pretense has not resulted in the public's increased trust in the media, as more and more individuals turn to alternative sources of news that are explicit about their biases. The public's desire for such sources reflects "a new set of demands around transparency, participation and involvement that are beginning to be incorporated into user expectations around media performance, and indeed new attitudes around information and core values such as truth and trust" (Fray as qtd. in Maras 200). An alternative source of news that is both transparent about its biases and invites viewers' participation is the political satire news show.

Rhetorical studies can provide critical perspectives on the unique character of today's political satire, as ancient and contemporary rhetoricians question the existence of objective truth. In addition, the field has long recognized the political and civic functions of humor. Rhetorical frameworks are particularly valuable in this project because they help to reframe the debate around "fake news" by calling attention to the ever-present influences of individual and

collective biases on the framing of information. Furthermore, analyzing contemporary political satire through a rhetorical lens makes room for multi-faceted interpretations of the genre that recognize the complex dynamics with which emotion, identity, and information literacy intersect. To this end, I offer an analysis of a political satire news show gaining in popularity and known for mobilizing viewers' critical engagement, *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* (*LWT*), as a form of *affective rhetorical intervention*.

LWT premiered in April 2014 on HBO. Airing Sunday nights at 11:00 pm, *LWT* is a thirty-minute, late-night show that reflects on the news and events of the past week. While the format of the show occasionally varies, each episode usually begins with a brief recap of the week's event, followed by a humorous interlude[55] entitled "And Now This," which includes a descriptive segment title followed by a montage of video clips. The majority of each episode's time is devoted to an in-depth investigation of a particular topic and generally culminates in a call to action.

This chapter first offers an overview of the rhetorical theories of humor, affect, and circulation that I draw from in both my theorization of affective rhetorical intervention and my analysis of *LWT*. I then analyze how humor and emotion operate within one episode of *LWT* and viewers' responses to demonstrate similarities between the show's use of humor and Cicero's rhetorical goals to "instruct, delight, and move" (*De Inventione* 1.4, 357). Coupling this rhetorical analysis with feminist and queer studies of affect, I trace the plethora of emotions named, performed, and circulated by the show and its viewers. I conclude by articulating how

[55] These interludes cover a wide range of topics, including parodies of mainstream news shows and the examination of long-standing policies.

LWT's affective rhetorical interventions can promote viewers' critical engagement with the news in ways that circumvent prevalent perceptions of bias in relation to journalistic objectivity.

What is *Affective Rhetorical Intervention*?

An affective rhetorical intervention employs emotion as a rhetorical strategy to dismantle and effect change within normative arguments and narratives. In *LWT*, this intervention occurs through a variety of affective and humorous arguments employed to remind viewers that all news involves argumentation. This variety enhances (while not guaranteeing) the show's accomplishment of its goals, as it does not rely on humor alone to galvanize the viewer but presents it alongside emotional appeals often employed by mainstream news outlets. By doing so, the show's satire helps it transparently acknowledge its bias and invite viewers' participation while also embodying the emotions expressed by many of its viewers.

LWT channels the emotions of the host and audience to disassemble dominant narratives perpetuated by the administration and mainstream media. Intervening within the exigencies surrounding partisan media consumption outlined at the beginning of this chapter, *LWT*'s satire highlights the ability of biased and emotionally charged news to encourage critical engagement. The show aims to inform viewers by providing in-depth coverage of topics not garnering the same coverage on conventional news sources and to make them laugh. The show accomplishes these interrelated goals by using humor and emotional appeals to incite viewers' critical reflection and action. For *LWT*, humor and emotion as rhetorical sign posts to convince viewers that all information being presented is framed through the lenses of bias. By doing so, the show intervenes within the one-sided delivery of mainstream news, in which viewers are passive consumers of information. Harkening back to the history of news as rhetoric, *LWT* presents the news as transactional in nature, as it works to motivate viewers' reflection and/or action after

watching. Within these interventions, humor operates as an affective tool that makes *LWT*'s arguments more accessible and helps to convince viewers that their role as news consumers is also rhetorical, in that they should engage with the information being presented to them as forms of rhetoric and not as the objective delivery of factual information.

LWT promotes viewers' reflection on their own biased allegiance to false, problematic, and potentially detrimental ideological "truths" and sources of information. To do so, the show poses questions, acknowledges its own bias, and models the emotional labor many viewers reportedly experience as they navigate the news. The show prompts viewers to channel the feelings of disillusionment and divisiveness chronicled since the 2016 election into political action. This action includes the adoption of critical literacy strategies, engagement with alternative perspectives and futures, and activism. In this way, *LWT* serves as an affective, fact-checking news source that attends to the widespread, yet ill-informed, desire for journalistic objectivity that currently characterizes political discourse in the U.S. Even so, the show's arguments must also be situated within the overarching pursuit of profit and ratings, as it responds to the capitalistic pressures of the entertainment industry and the corporatization of satire.[56]

Rhetorical Frameworks

As briefly touched upon, rhetorical studies can provide critical insight on how political satire news shows shift their production and circulation practices to respond to the exigencies outlined at the beginning of the chapter. More specifically, Cicero's model of rhetorical humor and insistence that rhetoric should "instruct, delight, and move" offer analytics for exploring how

[56] For more on how I plan to address the limitations of this study in regard to the commercial objectives of the shows analyzed in the future, see the concluding chapter.

LWT employs satire to invite viewers' participation (*De Inventione)*. This analysis is not meant to be a direct comparison between *LWT* and Ciceronian humor but serves as further evidence of how *LWT* engages with humor to present news as innately rhetorical. Feminist and queer rhetorical studies of emotion (i.e., Ahmed; Brennan; Cvetkovich; Pedwell) provide analytics for exploring how the show's use of emotional appeals aids in its calls for viewers' participation. In addition, these scholars' attention to the power dynamics of affect provide frameworks for acknowledging and productively analyzing the problematic ways that *LWT*'s emotional appeals are and can be taken up.

Ciceronian Humor

LWT employs humor to achieve multiple rhetorical goals, including making the audience laugh, providing them with critical social commentary, and inspiring their interaction with the show's arguments. In this way, the show's satire resonates with Cicero's theorization of effective (or eloquent) rhetoric that "instruct[s], delight[s], and move[s]" the audience in *De Inventione.* This can be seen in the show's juxtaposition between humor and serious subject matter, which evokes a variety of different—and often polarized—emotional stances, and in its encouragement of viewers' civic participation.

To better understand the rhetorical functions of Ciceronian humor, it is necessary to first explore how he characterized rhetoric. To accomplish this, I draw from Cicero's discussion of the ideal orator in *De Oratore*[57] and *De Inventione*. In his description of the ideal orator, Cicero identifies the means and ends of rhetoric as *eloquence*. During the period in which Cicero was active (approximately 85-43 BC), political oratory was exceptionally influential in the decision-

[57] I focus predominantly on *De Oratore* in this chapter for two reasons: (1) it is widely acknowledged as his most prominent work, and (2) his explicit treatment of humor and wit in Book II of the text.

making processes of the Senate and other legal assemblies. Considering the constant political unrest that characterized Cicero's time, a rhetoric that was audience- and context-driven, and that addressed the inevitable contingency of the rhetorical situation as opposed to formulaic rules of speech, was most persuasive. For Cicero, rhetoric was innately performative, influential in identity formation and in the navigation of political or civic discourse. Cicero attributes a pragmatic function to rhetoric in its association with civic virtue in *De Oratore*: "Let, then, the end proposed in civil law be the preservation of legitimate and practical equity in the affairs and causes of the citizens" (1.188). Effective rhetoric, then, should be concerned with public/political affairs of great consequence and work towards effecting change within such affairs. In addition, Cicero associates rhetoric with an invitation for audience participation, in that rhetoric should "instruct" them by modeling or directly identifying strategies or actions they should adopt in response to the oration.

Cicero presents rhetoric as a virtuous and pragmatic currency for political participation, in that it garners one influence and agency within civic debate. In ruminating on the best kind of orator, Cicero identifies the rhetorical goals of eloquence: "The supreme orator, then, is the one whose speech instructs, delights and moves the minds of his audience. The orator is in duty bound to instruct; giving pleasure is a free gift to the audience, to move them is indispensable" (*De Inventione* 1.4, 357). In this definition, Cicero presents rhetorical persuasion as encompassing multiple dimensions. An ethical rhetoric, according to Cicero, is one that teaches the audience, and moves them towards some sort of rhetorical or civic action after the orator's delivery. Attending to these multiple functions requires an orator's blending of many different rhetorical strategies, as Cicero also recognizes: "For exposition and explanation they should be pointed, for entertainment, bright and witty, for rousing the emotions, weighty and impressive"

(1.5, 357). When considered alongside Cicero's model of humor, this attention to rhetoric as a form of inquiry and galvanization makes room for analyses of contemporary political satire as engaging in complex rhetorical interventions that go beyond amusement. In addition, Cicero's emphasis on "moving" an audience correlates with *LWT*'s goal of presenting news in a transactional manner. Similar to his focus on oration as a conduit for action, Cicero presents humor as having multiple rhetorical functions, as it is a key strategy by which eloquence can be executed.

As with his theorizations of rhetoric's broader functions, the Ciceronian model of humor departs from a prescriptive or rules-driven approach. In *De Oratore,* Cicero articulates the functions and methods of humor available to an orator in the pursuit of their intended goal. He presents humor as an exercise in rhetorical savvy that functions as a tool of refutation and invention. He describes the ability to make others laugh as requiring a degree of civil and intelligent eloquence, which can be seen in what Caesar outlines as the "five questions to be considered" regarding laughter (Cicero, 2.235-252). He also draws key distinctions between being witty and funny, with wit requiring more rhetorical skill and being what the ideal orator would trade in more frequently. All of these applications of humor require an orator's rhetorical dexterity.

Cicero's model illuminates the rhetorical potential of humor that does not result in laughter. In fact, he positions humor as an exercise in rhetorical elegance itself: "someone who does not lack elegance and humor can discuss any other subject more wittily than witticism itself" (2.217). With this more complex understanding of humor, we can see how the show's engagement with different emotions does not detract from its execution of rhetorical humor, but aids in its ability to maintain its argument. This relationship between elegance and humor within Cicero's attention to context also represents a civic function of rhetorical humor, in that an orator

should reflect on the civic and political exigencies of the moment in a way that motivates the audience's interaction. Cicero's model of rhetorical humor is valuable in an analysis of *LWT* for: (1) his presentation of rhetoric as a tool for civic affairs and political persuasion, (2) his theorization of humor as a contextually bound rhetorical strategy for social commentary and action, and (3) his insistence that rhetoric should prepare or motivate an audience for civic participation.

Affective Rhetorics

In addition to humor, the writers of *LWT* engage in a variety of other affective appeals to make their arguments. To explore how the show employs emotion to "instruct" and "move" its viewers towards action, I bring rhetorical theories of humor and affect together. Feminist and queer models (e.g., Ahmed; Brennan; Cvetkovich; Pedwell) are particularly demonstrative in approaching emotion as a lens for rhetorical analysis. For example, in a study of how happiness is represented in public texts, Sara Ahmed articulates the productive complications that studying affect can yield: "We can explore the strange and perverse mixtures of hope and despair, optimism and pessimism within forms of politics that take as a starting point a critique of the world as it is, and a belief that the world can be different" (*The Promise* 163). Here, Ahmed associates affective analysis with more complex understandings of how political arguments and movements effect change. As Ahmed directly recognizes, such an analysis is especially constructive when examining texts that criticize or reimagine the political landscape. This is particularly applicable in this study, given political satire's history in the U.S. as a tool of social commentary and *LWT*'s ethos of channeling its critique into action by offering (or modeling) critical literacy strategies.

In addition to positing emotion as a rhetorical lens, theories like Ahmed's disrupt distinctions between specific emotions, and reposition unproductive affects—like cynicism—as generative for rhetorical action. This disruption is achieved, according to Ahmed, through a rhetorical reframing of so-called "negative" emotions. For instance, she argues: "Unhappiness might offer a pedagogic lesson on the limits of the promise of happiness" (*The Promise* 217). Examining the rhetorical practices by which the norms of happiness are reified, Ahmed complicates dichotomous representations that deem one emotional state as more politically productive than another. By applying this complex understanding of emotion's political dimensions to a rhetorical analysis of contemporary satire, we can see how *LWT* models and reflects on emotions not traditionally associated with productive, civic action. *LWT*'s affective arguments are integral to its parody and critique of how the news is presented, consumed, and circulated, as the show retools the emotional appeals of popular news outlets often seen as exacerbating misinformation into entry points for viewers' critical reflection, inquiry, and even political participation. Each emotion supports a particular intervention being made by *LWT*, as emotions are paired with the most convincing—or in many cases, most jarring—information or arguments. By offering whatever affective lens is most resonant with the viewer, the show does not rely solely on humor, shame, or claims to moral superiority that often characterize traditional satire but dismantles fallacious arguments in a way that is most convincing—and potentially mobilizing—for viewers. These strategies result in a plethora of rhetorical effects that fall outside the purview of traditional forms of satire, as viewers' interaction with the show's arguments and circulation impacts the meaning and affective resonance of its humor.

Rhetorical Circulation

LWT relies on rhetorical circulation to mobilize its affective appeals into other forms of rhetorical and political action. Looking at viewers' responses to the show provides insight on how its rhetorical delivery of the news—via humor and emotion—is received. Examining the show's circulation also attends to the emphasis on transmission and reception across interdisciplinary affect studies, and particularly rhetorical studies of emotion. Ahmed recognizes the importance of considering affect's circulation, asserting that "the more signs circulate, the more affective they become" (*The Cultural* 45). As such, any inquiry into the emotional dynamics of contemporary rhetorics is incomplete without attention to circulation, especially when we consider the ever-changing nature with which emotions are expressed, discerned, and appropriated across digital spaces today. Furthermore, consideration of the show's circulation is essential in light of contemporaneous discussions about the interplay between emotion and information literacy and political satire's rhetorical character since the 2016 presidential election.

Attending to circulation also makes room for my acknowledgement of the rhetorical unpredictability of humor and other affective strategies, as *LWT*'s arguments are taken up in a variety of ways. This unpredictability also productively complicates my theorizations of how affective rhetorical interventions function after being circulated. For instance, while I analyze viewers' responses as examples of these interventions, rhetorical theories of affect and circulation effectively temper my analysis and help me avoid categorizing or making value judgements about viewers' emotional expressions. While measuring the effects of *LWT*'s engagement with humor and emotion is not the purpose of this analysis, exploring responses to the clip's circulation provides another perspective on the broader *affective ecologies* (Edbauer) in which the show operates. Again, my goal is not to name or evaluate the affects being displayed

as a result of the show's circulation, but to explore how viewers channel or resist the show's affective appeals in the service of their own arguments. By exploring how viewers model, resist, and reform the affects addressed in the episode, we can also gain insight into how political satire's traditional functions of humor and subversion are influenced by its circulation.

LWT addresses circulation by presenting the news in a rhetorical manner that aims at a transactional exchange with viewers, as delivery is only the first node of the show's arguments. *LWT*'s explicit attention to circulation aids in its execution of affective rhetorical interventions that take on new meanings and forms through viewers' interaction. *LWT*'s rhetoric circulates in a variety of ways across different communicative technologies, including its HBO-sponsored *YouTube* channel, social media platforms, and online and television news. One of the most popular examples of this circulation is a segment from a February 2016 episode, "Make Donald Drumpf Again," that went viral.[58] In this clip, *LWT* pokes holes in Trump's reputation as a successful real estate mogul, citing his history of shady business deals, lawsuits, and a biographer's account of his ancestor changing the family surname from Drumpf to Trump (Zorthian).[59]

Through circulation, *LWT*'s arguments often translate into forms of political participation and social activism, evident in the measurable steps taken by the show and its viewers to influence change. Some examples of these steps include a surge in donations to non-profit organizations, such as the Trevor Project, Planned Parenthood, and the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, named by Oliver on air after the recent 2016 election results; the erasure of

[58] This clip was viewed over sixty million times on Facebook and can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mkpJgVdm2Kk.
[59] The hashtag #MakeDonaldDrumpfAgain created in this episode also trended on Twitter and was printed on hats in the style of Trump's MAGA hat, which were sold on the show's website.

fifteen million dollars in debt, purchased by *LWT* during the planning of a story on the corruption of the debt purchasing; *LWT* viewers' crashing of the FCC website after Oliver encouraged them to post comments on the site during a 2014 story on net neutrality; and, the show's arguable role in the resignation of FIFA President, Sepp Blatter in 2017.

In the particular episode analyzed in this chapter, *LWT* creates mock television commercials on policy information, such as the nuclear triad and climate change, addressed to Donald Trump that ran on FOX, CNN, and MSNBC in the Washington D.C. area the following morning. While I am not focusing on the commercials' circulation in this analysis, they do serve as a prime example of how the show uses humor to engage in rhetorical interventions that circulate and take on new meanings after the episode's airing. In addition, *LWT* started a hashtag in this clip, #MakeAmericaFierceAgain, which trended online.[60]

The show capitalizes on this circulation, often creating affective arguments designed for *rhetorical velocity* (DeVoss and Ridolfo), in that they are crafted to live beyond the episode's broadcast. Responding to timely issues, the show's arguments and circulation are kairotic. Through circulation, *LWT* brings an urgency to its calls for action, encouraging viewers to interact immediately after the original broadcast and long after. Circulation and new media studies in the field provide methodological and theoretical lenses for further exploring the transactional nature of *LWT*'s arguments as they circulate on *YouTube*. For instance, Brooke

[60] This hashtag was circulated on Twitter in some interesting ways, as it was repurposed for different rhetorical arguments. Many Twitter users retweeted the hashtag by expressing ironic support for a RuPaul 2020 presidential campaign and overall appreciation for the show. RuPaul himself also tweeted several times with the hashtag, even using it to promote certain activist events, such as the "Not My Presidents Day" rallies that year, and used the hashtag to make arguments for a broader understanding of non-normative gender practices, tweeting in one instance: "Doing drag doesn't change who you are, it actually reveals who you are. #NotMyPresidentsDay #SCROTUS #MakeAmericaFierceAgain" (20 Feb 2017).

describes new media studies as emphasizing a "more social model of invention...that is concerned more with practice than product" (82). As described in the introductory chapter, Jenny Edbauer argues for an ecological view of rhetorical contexts. Drawing from these lenses, Ryan Skinnell investigates how viral videos circulate on *YouTube*, and as a result, take on new meanings as viewers comment on, interact with, and repurpose them.

Given the timeliness of political satire news shows' circulation today, studies that theorize the virality, temporality, and immediacy of digital rhetorics provide important lenses for this analysis. For instance, similar to DeVoss and Ridolfo's theorization of rhetorical velocity, Karine Nahon and Jeff Hemsley argue that *viral circulation* depends upon the "speed" and "reach" of arguments. In analyzing how rhetoric travels online, Steven Krause identifies the Internet as "both an example and a generator of immediate rhetorical situations" (as qtd. in Eyman). Krause collapses traditional distinctions between the audience, argument, and context. Dustin Edwards and Heather Lang adopt Krause's theorization of *rhetorical immediacy* to analyze the potential of hashtags in mobilizing social activism. Edwards and Lang argue that the hashtag draws on the "dynamic and agentive entities made possible by ontological acts of circulation" (85). Capitalizing on a similar momentum, *LWT* invites viewers' interaction by crafting arguments and calls to action that are amenable to the discursive and political channels already used by social activists. While kairotic, *LWT*'s circulation is not limited to immediately after clips are posted, as evidenced in the fact that viewers respond to the clips long after.

As such, rhetorical models that engage with questions of circulation over periods of time are also helpful in this analysis. For example, Jonathan Bradshaw resists speed and reach as the primary designators of virality, arguing that *slow circulation* is a more productive avenue for mobilizing action: "The slow circulation model calls us to attend to the persistence of rhetorical

elements over time, arguing that this persistence is just as culturally relevant to the work of rhetors as are their transformations in public discourse.... in some cultural contexts, communities have greater potential for social impact when their strategies for circulation strive for rhetorical persistence and change over the long haul" (481). *LWT*'s arguments are crafted for both immediacy and permanency, archived on the show's *YouTube* page where viewers comment on the clips and connect them with other arguments and contexts by linking, embedding, and repurposing them for different purposes. As a result, part of *LWT*'s effective engagement with emotion and humor is its use of circulation as a tool for mobilizing viewers' affect into reflection and action. Across all of these circulation and new media studies, there is a recognition that "the circuits of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption through which [the argument] circulates" directly impact its "cultural value and worldly force" (Trimbur 194). Similarly, *LWT* attends to the kairotic nature of its circulation by modeling and encouraging viewers' critical information literacy. While my analysis of viewer responses works to demonstrate how this takes place, there are limitations to my study, as I do not engage with how the show's arguments circulate on other platforms and in other modalities. These comments represent just one node of the show's broader network, as the examples of *LWT*'s circulation already identified in this chapter indicate.

The attention to circulation and the impact of mediated environments like television and the Internet over rhetorical arguments raised by circulation studies also works to update the Ciceronian rhetorical frame that I draw on in my analysis of the show's humor. Contending with the influence of technological advancement and the networked nature of rhetoric in today's media landscape, contemporary models, like that of Krause's *immediacy* offer a "more fluid and dynamic reading of rhetorical situations that attempts to examine how discourse functions (or

doesn't function) within a postmodernist, technologically-advanced mode where the static distinctions assumed by 'modernist' rhetoricians like Plato, Gorgias, Bitzer, and Vatz are no longer valid" (Eyman). When paired with contemporary affect and circulation studies, Cicero offers a model of rhetorical humor that recognizes its potential for motivating civic awareness and action. In addition, Cicero's more nebulous and contextual theorization of rhetorical invention—and humor in particular—offer an analytic that is grounded in the rhetorical tradition but responsive to modern exigencies. David Eyman recognizes this, identifying Cicero's model as "particularly appropriate for understanding networked rhetoric...which creates meaning through shared historical, temporal, and geographical contexts." Together, these classical and contemporary lenses help to trace the dynamics between emotion, circulation, and argumentation that *LWT* capitalizes on. The show encourages viewers' interaction with its arguments by crafting them for circulation. As such, one of the most important revisions of the rhetorical situation that contemporary frameworks offer this study is the theorization of audience.

While classical models, such as Cicero, theorize audience as a fixed entity interacting with the rhetor in real time, this project approaches audience as a more networked, fluid, dynamic, and ever-changing element of the rhetorical situation. My theorization of audience in this project emphasizes action and interaction, as the audience has a participatory role in *LWT*'s ability to execute rhetoric that is humorous and emotionally resonant. In *The Wealth of Networks*, Yochai Benkler recognizes the impact of circulation over audience, as it no longer comprises "mere readers, viewers, and listeners. They can be, instead, participants in a conversation" (as qtd. in Rheingold 30). In addition to the feminist and queer models already identified, scholars that recognize the potential of digitally circulated arguments to organize audiences into social

groups and causes inform my theorization of audience. For instance, Michael Warner articulates the power of participatory circulation as it contributes to the formation of *counterpublics*: "even the counterpublics that challenge modernity's social hierarchy of faculties do so by projecting the space of discursive circulation among strangers as a social entity, and in doing so fashion their own subjectivities around the requirements of public circulation and stranger-sociability" (87). In this way, the political participation of *LWT* viewers reveals much about the political landscape, as well as the formation of our identities as political and rhetorical agents. And, while I do not explicitly recognize *LWT* as encouraging the creation of a counterpublic among its viewers, I do contend that the circulation of its arguments invite their interaction.

Like Warner, Edbauer Rice conceptualizes the relationship between an audience and text as in "an ongoing social flux" (9). Similarly, I resist finite distinctions between the audience and text, and instead adopt a networked view of audience that shifts based on the genre conventions of the *YouTube* comment section and the resonance of the clip with trending conversations at the moment. A similar approach can be seen in Fatima Pashaei's analysis of blogging as a rhetorical ecology. In addition, Casey Boyle and Nathaniel Rivers theorize circulation as an *activation of publics*. Consideration of audience as an ever-forming element of the rhetorical situation is particularly relevant in this study given my engagement with emotion as an analytic. For instance, Thomas Rickert describes rhetoric and its circulation as innately affective: "Rhetoric is a responsive way of revealing the world for others, responding to and put forth through affective, symbolic, and material means, so as to (at least potentially) reattune or otherwise transform how others inhabit the world" (162). With this networked understanding of rhetoric, interaction between an audience and text, through circulation, results in a co-construction of meaning that continues to emerge and shift over time. In addition, Massumi directly recognizes the impact of

movement over the expression, transmission, and sharing of sensation, theorizing and tracing the *affective channels* through which the social construction of emotion occurs. As described in more detail in the introductory chapter, Ahmed presents affect as "produced as an effect of its circulation" (*The Cultural* 45). This recursive approach to studying the dynamics between circulation and affect informs my analysis of viewers' responses to *LWT*'s emotional appeals. Furthermore, it helps me work from an understanding of audience as a nebulous and transient entity that is distributed across the technologies, mediums, and genres on which the show's arguments circulate.

Affective Rhetorical Interventions **in "Trump vs. Truth"**

The *YouTube* clip analyzed in this chapter, "Trump vs. Truth: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (HBO)," focuses on Donald Trump's relationship with the truth. This clip was the most recent of the three most-viewed clips posted on the show's *YouTube* channel, originally airing on HBO on February 12, 2017.[61] This clip is twenty-three minutes and fifty seconds in duration, and is the main segment of the episode, which runs thirty minutes in its entirety. Oliver addresses the audience directly for the majority of the episode and intersperses clips of Trump speaking and from mainstream news stories. Identifying both the audience and Trump as subjects of its satire, *LWT* attempts to intervene within the processes by which Trump's lies are circulated and taken up as fact. Presenting the virality of Trump's dishonesty as a symptom of viewers' passive consumption of the news, the show aims to demonstrate the inextricability of—and offer viewers strategies for critically engaging with—bias as they ascertain the validity of news sources.

[61] This clip received a total of 29,547,593 views as of April 2020 and can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xecEV4dSAXE.

Employing humor and emotion to present news as innately rhetorical, the clip begins with a call for viewers' reflections on their own biases. Cicero theorizes a model of humor that relies on contextual and explicit acknowledgment of the affective dynamics at play between the audience, subject, and rhetor. *LWT* uses humor to reflect on this interplay in "Trump vs. Truth." Oliver begins by stating: "Normally, we like to focus this part of the show on complex, depressing policy issues; something fun, like CO2 Emissions from hearses, or space poverty, or the proliferation of special purpose taxing districts, a topic so boring that you didn't even realize we literally already did that exact story last year" ("Trump vs."). *LWT* uses humor to engage with the dynamics between the orator and audience in this introduction, directly addressing and criticizing viewers for their inability to remember the show's history accurately. A move that is often deployed by *LWT*, this explicit attention to the audience's interaction with the show's material provides a layer of metacognition to its humor, one that explicitly recognizes the audience's power in determining the rhetoricity of satire. This quip serves to remind viewers of their own inability to reliably recall information. In addition, this introduction shifts the subject of *LWT*'s satire beyond Trump, as the viewer is first to be ridiculed. By doing so, the show associates the ubiquity of Trump's lies with viewers' own complacency as news consumers.

In addition to prompting viewers to reflect before presenting them with the show's arguments, this introduction employs humor through the subtle insertion of words and ideas that do not quite belong, such as "fun," "hearses," and "space." In this juxtaposition, the show insinuates satirical critique through the implied resistance to discussing the topic it will actually be covering: Donald Trump. Humor is employed in this way to prime viewers for *LWT*'s argument, and to temper its critique of a figure already generally condemned by what one would

assume is the show's predominantly progressive fan base.[62] Cicero describes a similar process of rhetorical humor in "hav[ing] a hint of humor below the surface" (2.278). In addition to demonstrating rhetorical elegance, this implied execution of humor, according to Cicero, is more successful in matters of civic persuasion and social commentary. In this example, humor is interspersed within more somber descriptions of the "depressing" and "complex" topics the show usually covers to highlight the show's own bias and signify that the news being presented is rhetorically driven and not objective fact. Coupling this subtle humor with the satirization of viewers' information literacies, *LWT* aims to interject nuance within debates about the objectivity and trustworthiness of news.

Complicating the media landscape in which viewers identify a news outlet's bias, the show reflects the complex and often contradictory ways in which the same piece of news is covered. In this way, *LWT*'s satire contributes to what Robert Hariman describes as the "democracy's social imaginary." In theorizing its potential for modeling civic literacies, Hariman argues that "parody nurtures public culture...by portraying public life as a dynamic field of competing voices forever commenting on each other" (257). By pairing critiques of Trump with a transparent recognition of its own bias and the impact of viewers' biases, the show does not dismiss the existence of nor claim authority over objective truth, but instead demonstrates the

[62] The partisan demographics of *LWT* are difficult to measure, as the show is aired on a premium network (HBO) and is often viewed in excerpts on *YouTube*. However, Nelsen ratings, which are measured for the 18-49 demographic, indicate high ratings and volume of initial viewers in comparison with similar shows aired on similar networks (Porter, Rick). And, given both the liberal-leaning arguments of the show and that a high percentage of these 18-49 viewers, according to the Pew Research Center, identify as Democratic or liberal, it is safe to assume that those that watch the show are more likely to be progressive than conservative (Maniam and Smith).

need for viewers' critical engagement with the information they receive, regardless of a source's purported or self-identified bias.

Furthermore, the show calls attention in this joke to the propensity of mainstream news outlets' omission, or inadequate coverage of, news stories that viewers might find emotionally abhorrent. As a result, the show's naming of an emotion many try to avoid (depression) enhances, as opposed to impedes, its engagement with rhetorical humor that can "instruct, delight, and move." This attention to the emotionality of news accomplishes two rhetorical functions: (1) it aids the show's parody and criticism of mainstream news outlets' emotional manipulation and pretense to neutrality; and, (2) it reflects the labor of staying informed today. While political satire news shows are often criticized for divorcing stories from their wider context, relying on soundbites and quips to make viewers laugh, *LWT* uses humor and emotion to prompt viewers to contend with issues and events they are otherwise unaware of. In a March 2018 interview, Oliver explains how humor serves as a tool of rhetorical priming to persuade the audience of the importance of the issue being covered. He describes *LWT*'s humor as working "to sell people on the idea that the subject that [they]'ve just brought up doesn't make them want to turn their TV off" (Gross). *LWT* performs the biased and selective nature that characterize the delivery of all news, in that it explicitly identifies the selection of its stories as a rhetorical move. *LWT*'s coverage of lesser known topics is part of its affective rhetorical intervention, as it demonstrates the rhetorical components of selection while simultaneously drawing attention to mainstream news outlets' biased over coverage of the same stories. In this clip in particular, the show argues that the media's coverage of Trump's lies, as well as viewers' passive consumption of this coverage, has contributed to the circulation and endorsement of misinformation.

After the introduction, the exigency of the show is presented: "And we want to keep doing those types of things, but unfortunately we can't, until we address something even bigger: the concept of reality itself. And that is because of this guy" ("Trump vs."). At this point, a photograph of Donald Trump at a podium marked with the presidential seal is displayed in the left, upper corner of the screen. The show moves beyond ridiculing or shaming Trump to offer an exposition into how his own information literacy—or lack thereof—can influence the lives of viewers, even those who abhor or refuse to acknowledge Trump's authority as president.[63] Here, the show employs humor and emotion not only to intervene within the endorsement of Trump's lies, but also the news coverage of his lies. Unlike other liberal news outlets' outrage over Trump's continued dishonesty or their focus on only fact-checking his lies, political satire news shows, such as *LWT,* rhetorically deconstruct the methods by which these lies are formed and taken up, identifying the media and viewers as complicit. In analyzing the rhetoric of parody, Don Waisanen theorizes a similar approach with the *comic counterfactual*. In the satirical examples he analyzes, comic counterfactuals "demonstrate one means by which the latent, imaginative potentials of our bodies may be activated toward social change" (Waisanen 87). By motivating viewers' reflection, broadening the subject of its satire beyond Trump, and tracing the material consequences of misinformation's circulation, *LWT* models a critical information literacy for evaluating and responding to contemporary news media.

After establishing the satirical subject as not solely Trump, the purpose of the clip is identified: "So, tonight we thought it would be useful to try and answer four basic questions: how did we get a pathological liar in the White House?, where are his lies coming from?, why do

[63] Here, I am referring to popular liberal arguments that delegitimize Trump's election and/or fitness for office (i.e., #notmypresident).

so many people believe him?, and, what can we possibly do about it?" ("Trump vs.). Here, the reliance on questions rather than declarative statements is noteworthy, as it establishes the episode's purpose as critical inquiry. In posing questions, *LWT* invites viewers' participation and departs from a one-sided delivery of news in which viewers passively receive information. This departure bolsters *LWT*'s arguments that Trump's lies are not innocuous. By also expanding the subject of its satire beyond Trump and emphasizing reflective inquiry as a critical literacy strategy, the show intervenes within broader arguments that claim bias precludes objectivity. *LWT* positions the viewer as capable of effecting change, as they are encouraged to contribute their own responses to the questions posed. In this way, the show models a skeptical approach to news that is not solely based on the perceived bias of a journalist or news outlet. This skeptical lens is also directed towards the viewers' and the show's own biases in a greater effort to offer strategies for determining source validity.

In an analysis of *The Colbert Report*, Sophia McClennen describes this inquisitive motive as part of the pedagogical potential of political satire news shows: "The show does not give answers, but it does use satire to help viewers critique the information we receive and the process by which we receive it" (181). Similarly, *LWT* engages in humor not only to parody, but to offer rhetorical interventions that model the critical literacy practices viewers require to navigate the emotionally charged and highly divisive state of U.S. politics today. Instead of outwardly criticizing Trump and his supporters, the show poses broader questions about how they come to believe and support the policies they do. As a result, the show reframes prevalent questions about partisan media bias to investigate and critique the rhetorical processes and social structures that not only reify, but privilege, false information.

Attention to the broader exigencies and stakes of Trump's endorsement of false information can be seen early in the episode: "Trump's relationship with the truth is going to be of profound importance going forward because any policy discussion has to begin with a shared sense of reality and Trump's reality can change within a single sentence" ("Trump"). In this broader focus, *LWT*'s satire shares similarities with Cicero's model of rhetorical humor that "insinuates" and "throws light on an unclear and hidden situation" (2.268). By highlighting the ridiculousness and brazen nature of Trump's circulation of lies since taking office, *LWT* utilizes humor to "throw light" on a political situation that is not necessarily hidden but is potentially dangerous.

In an interview in which he describes this very episode, Oliver identifies the show's purpose as extending beyond its ridicule of Trump, reflecting on the show's resistance to cover Trump in the first place: "we felt like we had to talk about Trump's relationship with the truth before we talked about anything else that year because it felt like there'd been a seismic shift in the way that we were going to collectively live our lives in America" (Gross). Oliver attributes the show's focus on Trump as a means to an end, as a point of entry into its more complex investigations into how viewers engage with information. In this, we can identify the broader goal of *LWT*'s affective rhetorical intervention, in that it responds to and offers strategies for navigating this "seismic shift." Similar to Ciceronian humor, *LWT* intervenes within changing political norms to offer the most kairotic[64]—and therefore rhetorically effective—strategies for civic participation. Responding to the rapid dissemination of information and twenty-four-hour

[64] By "kairotic," I am referring to the development of critical literacy strategies that are uniquely suited for the shifting landscape of partisan media consumption, characterized by the exigencies outlined in the introduction of this chapter.

news cycle, *LWT* presents news in a rhetorical form (humor) that is digestible and potentially mobilizing. As outlined in Cicero's model, the invention and delivery of *LWT*'s satire are both informed by kairos, as it reflects and responds to how viewers are consuming information. Furthermore, humor works to sustain the viewer's attention and make the show's bias, as well as its goal to make the audience laugh, explicit.

By crafting arguments for circulation, the show's execution of humor resembles the participatory nature of the Ciceronian model, which is more evident when we examine viewer *YouTube* comments posted in response to the clip. These responses serve as evidence of viewers' engagement with the show's arguments after they air, as well as viewers' perceptions of the show as a viable news source. On their own, viewers' comments demonstrate a type of engagement that may or may not translate into action. But, when considered within the broader context of the show's circulation and its established ethos of mobilizing viewers' activism, they provide insight into how the show's emotional appeals operate as a conduit for viewers' reflection and political participation.

Viewers channel their emotional responses to *LWT* into arguments about how we process and react to information. They enact the critical literacy strategies that *LWT* advocates, criticizing the show's citation practices and overall bias: "Sources with links would be nice actually. When are these guys going to start posting them?" (Stephen Wiegman); "Love the show but this one is over the top by twisting and misdirecting facts and skewing interpretations" (Xeit). In these examples, viewers do not blindly accept or starkly resist *LWT*'s arguments; instead, they challenge the veracity of the show as a news source. Responding to the very questions posed by the show, viewers become participants within the greater debate on news' civic character. While the viewer accuses the show of engaging in the same misinformation

practices it deplores, they do not dismiss *LWT* because of its bias, but focus their critique on the show's methods and sources. In this way, viewers mimic the show's interventions, as they engage with the rhetoricity of its arguments and do not solely focus on its perceived liberal bias.

In one of the most impactful examples of these interventions, a viewer shares their own affective narrative since the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Drawing from their emotional experiences, the viewer offers critical commentary on satire's potential normalization. The viewer writes: "I get it, it's all funny. Oliver I love you, but for someone who has lost a dear friend in the crossfire of a gang shootout in the bay. Deported 5 times, guess that's not enough apparently. I just don't see the humor. Real funny when it's not you mourning! Cue the laugh track..." (Bump). To bolster their point, the viewer then provides a link to an *L.A. Times* news story about a deported immigrant's acquittal for the murder of Kathryn Steinle in 2017. Before sharing their experiences, the viewer identifies as a fan of Oliver, expressing "love" for his past work, effectively aligning themselves against the other commenters that directly criticize the show as liberally biased or as not funny.

The viewer interjects with their own commentary, not as a knee-jerk reaction to the show's partiality, but as a thoughtful response that is framed in human experience. Given the material consequences of Trump's election, including discriminatory immigration policies and an increase in hate crimes in the U.S., this viewer questions both the affective and rhetorical appropriateness of humor when covering an issue with such high stakes. While criticizing the show, the viewer engages in similar rhetorical practices, as they use emotion to rhetorically intervene and complicate other responses to the show, even offering documented evidence and drawing attention to other immigrants' stories. In this way, they go beyond the show's original argument about Trump's lies to comment on, and even disrupt, the rhetorical processes by which

news is treated as objective truth. This viewer's response also speaks to the affective alienation that is always possible in the execution of satire. By inviting its viewers to reflect on their own rhetorical and affective experiences as news consumers, *LWT* does not circumvent this risk of alienation; instead, it becomes a generative space for further interventions.

Attending to the complex political dynamics of emotion, the show does not rely on humor alone to accomplish its affective rhetorical interventions. *LWT* pairs humor with a range of emotional appeals, expressing, naming, and moving through a myriad of emotions at a fast pace. To demonstrate this, I analyze how the show combines its humor with appeals to fear, empathy, and optimism in the following sections.

Fear

LWT's humor works to transparently acknowledge the show's bias, rhetorically frame the news being presented, and shift the subject of its satire from Trump to viewers' information literacy practices. Humor is punctuated with moments of fear to emphasize the stakes involved in Trump's relationship with the truth and parody the fear mongering often employed in mainstream news coverage. Coupled with humor, these appeals work to bolster the show's execution of Cicero's rhetorical intention of "mov[ing]" an audience, in that they make the show's arguments for viewers' reflection and action more convincing. For those not moved to laugh at themselves, Oliver's naming and emoting of fear aims to motivate them to see their own bias and complicity in the misinformation feedback loop that has contributed to Trump's lying with impunity. Employed to communicate the stakes of misinformation, fearful appeals are paired with hypotheticals about the consequences that can arise. Fear, then, reconstructs the crisis of truth that others claim we are currently in in a greater effort to dispel it. While the show urges viewers to engage more critically with the news and resist arguments that facts no longer exist, it

also illustrates the fallacy of arguments that there is one, knowable truth in every circumstance. Bringing its appeals to fear together with this nuance, the show establishes news—whether told through a partisan or humorous lens—as subjective. With this understanding, viewers are better able to recognize how their dismissal of biased news as not objective impedes their capacity for critically engaging with information from various sources and perspectives.

The stark contrast between the content and delivery of these humorous and fearful moments works to prevent viewers' complacency, to remind them that they do not tune in just to be amused. These moments are most palpable in Oliver's performance. Immediately following a joke or impression, Oliver abruptly switches his mocking tone, and emotes fear to galvanize the show's arguments for social action. For instance, after mocking Trump's preferential treatment of Brietbart news with a lewd joke, Oliver states: "The notion that our leaders should be able to pass on mistruths with impunity should be alarming to absolutely everybody, regardless of politics" ("Trump"). Here, the show models the fear many have experienced since Trump's election and channels it into an argument for change. Appealing to an emotion that has long been recognized as effective in political argumentation and propaganda, the show positions this "alarmed" state not as a negative emotion, but one that viewers should dwell in and use as fuel for civic engagement.

In similar examples throughout the episode, words like "horrified," "less harmless," "troubling," "terrifying," and "frighteningly" are regularly used. Coupled with Oliver's affective performance, the show appeals to fear in an attempt to convince the viewer to "take [Trump] seriously" ("Trump"). Again, the show later employs fear to communicate the stakes of its viewers' apathy, in that failing to understand the consequences of Trump's lies will lead to detrimental policies. *LWT* describes the misinformation feedback loop between Trump and his

supporters as "dangerous." With this appeal to fear, *LWT* reiterates its ultimate rhetorical goal: to mobilize viewers into action. In addition, the show acknowledges, and works to refute, arguments about satire's normalization of the Trump administration, such as those seen in the comment posted by the "Bump" viewer in the previous section. The show expresses a similar concern as the viewer, even explicitly arguing that Trump is not to be simply laughed at and dismissed. In doing so, the show also establishes the rhetorical potential of incorporating humor in the news, in that laughter—as Cicero established—has a civic function. Yet, when viewed alongside the "Bump" comment, we can also recognize how *LWT*'s arguments risk perpetuating the ways in which the news can skew the immigration debate and its material effects.

By using humor and emotional appeals to convince viewers of their rhetorical power as news consumers, the show engages with emotion in the critical manner that feminist and queer rhetoricians have long recognized. For instance, in presenting depression as a tool for catharsis and collective meaning making, Ann Cvetkovich argues that "Discussions of political depression emerge from the necessity of finding ways to survive disappointment and to remind ourselves of the persistence of radical visions and ways of living.... it's more about noticing and describing the places where it feels like there is something else happening, and passing on strategies for survival" (*Depression* 6). While Cvetkovich is not focusing on fear specifically here, they do describe a similar rhetorical process as *LWT* employs, in which emotion is used as a discursive lens for critical commentary, and possibly resistance. *LWT* engages with the so-called negative emotion of fear as way to convince viewers of the futility of passively consuming or dismissing news that does or does not align with their preconceived biases. *LWT* appeals to fear to further persuade viewers that they should invest the emotional labor required to build critical information literacies. Fear, then, becomes a rhetorical lens through which the show can

communicate the inextricability of bias, which affects all journalists and audiences. What makes us fearful is subjective; however, the affective impulse of fear is one that most viewers either can relate to or have some familiarity with. Similarly, while our biases are subjectively driven, we all have them. By pairing fear with arguments about the biased nature of, and the need for viewers' critical engagement with, news, the show aims to intervene within the expectation and pretense of neutrality that permeates public debate.

The rhetorical dynamics of the show's appeals to fear become clearer when examined alongside viewers' responses to the episode. In addition, we can see how *LWT*'s rhetoric, while still "delight[ing]" some viewers, can "move" others to experience a plethora of emotions that can in turn inspire different forms of political and civic engagement. By sharing these emotions publicly, viewers engage in some sort of reflection and become more than passive consumers of the show. One of the most prevalent patterns across all the comments was viewers' naming of similar fearful emotions[65] to which *LWT* appeals. For example, in response to the clip, one viewer commented: "This video was painful. Funny, but painful" (Hayley Rodgers), while another wrote: "That is amazing, sad, and terrifying at the same time" (Scott Winterringer). In their naming or discernment of these emotions, these responses to the episode embody what Zizi Papacharissi refers to as "affective attunement." This attunement signifies viewers' engagement with the show's rhetoric beyond laughter, as they reflect on their own experiences and engage with other commenters in response.

[65] I periodically use "fear" and "fearful" to describe the comments in this section for the sake of clarity and to draw similarities between the show's emotional appeals and the viewers' comments. I am not identifying or categorizing the emotions of the viewers.

This emotional discernment and reflection can then lead to broader awareness of the cultural structures one follows, such as the news outlets they do or do not frequent. In *LWT*'s case, this discernment promotes reflection on (1) one's own biases, and (2) how those biases align or conflict with an ability to identify and critically engage with credible news sources. Teresa Brennan describes the rhetorical power that can be harnessed from affective reflection, asserting that:

> When one discerns [emotions], one is able to detach from them, to know where one stands, to be self-possessed. Discernment, in the affective world, functions best when it is able to be alert to the moment of fear or anxiety or grief or other sense of loss that permits the negative affect to gain a hold.... any faculty of discernment must involve a process whereby affects pass from the state of sensory registration to a state of cognitive or intelligent reflection" (119-120).

By employing emotion to transparently and critically engage with their own bias, *LWT* models this discernment for viewers. As Brennan describes, viewers' naming of emotions in this collective, digital space, is not only an act of individual discernment but a form of political alignment and action. In addition, the show directly calls for viewers' reflection on their emotional responses to the news they encounter and channels this reflection into optimistic calls for viewers' action at the conclusion of the episode. In this way, the show's engagement with emotion is integral to its ability to mobilize viewers' action, even if that action is limited to a *YouTube* post.

The rhetorical potential of viewers' emotional discernment is evident in comments about the futile nature of bi-partisan debate. Departing from the particular topics covered in the episode, viewers reflect on, and intervene within, the dialogues taking place in the comments section as a microcosm for political discourse. For example, one viewer wrote:

> I made the mistake of reading some of the comments on here. I just wanted to say that it amazes me how so many people are unable to receive constructive criticism. I am sad for America. I'd say I want to leave but I don't really think it would be better anywhere

> else. I am sad for the human race. Believing that someone is against something you believe in simply because they are willing to point out its flaws is ridiculous. I have higher hopes for this country than a boatload of thin-skinned partisan BS. (Darby Burbidge)

This viewer first expresses sadness over the current state of political debate in the U.S., and then over the decay of intellectual debate more broadly. In this way, they identify the personal attacks in the comments section as a mere example of the divisiveness that characterizes political discourse today. The viewer also cites fellow commenters' "thin skin" and "partisanship" as impeding ethical and balanced debate, drawing connections between one's emotional tolerance, bias, and ability to gain new insight from a source with opposing ideologies. The viewer offers critical commentary on the ubiquity of bias, lamenting not the prevalence of biased information, but our preoccupation with bias itself.

Another viewer engages in a similar intervention in response to the episode, as they also express frustration over the lack of substantiated claims both in the comments section and more broadly:

> I hate how people can't just have an intelligent debate over political issues in the comments section without it devolving into name calling and a lack of arguments. Also it is good to debate with Trump supporters to help them see that they are wrong but it won't work if either side starts lobbing insults and won't use actual facts. (DEADPOOL THE GREAT)

Neither of these comments identify one particular political party as guiltier than another, and they name different emotions in service of their arguments. In both examples, the viewers build upon and model *LWT*'s affective arguments to engage in their own critical questioning and rhetorical interventions about the impact of partisanship over how news is presented and consumed. The second comment goes further to identify the absence of "actual facts" within arguments as contributing to the prevalence of misinformation. In this comment, we can see the viewer echoing *LWT*'s arguments about journalistic objectivity as being predicated on the

substantiation of information and not solely on the bias of a source. Furthermore, in avoiding partisan attack, both comments also resonate with the show's more unexpected appeals to empathy, which are interspersed throughout the episode. *LWT* employs empathy to make its humor more palatable, and to increase the likelihood of "instruct[ing]" viewers not "move[d]" by their humor or appeals to fear.

Empathy

As with its appeals to fear, the show engages in unexpected moments of empathy to acknowledge the inescapable nature of bias and satirize the complacency of all its viewers, regardless their partisan affiliation. Still undeniably liberal, the show empathizes with the human impulses that contribute to rampant misinformation and partisan division, calling for collective responsibility and action. As with its appeals to fear, the show first employs empathy to acknowledge its own bias. In these instances of empathy, Oliver's volume and demeanor become decidedly softer. Departing from the exaggerated tone and body language that is present in the majority of the episode, Oliver regularly strikes a compassionate persona. These empathetic moments work to channel the critique not towards one individual or political party, but the structures that impede critical information literacy. The show satirizes the broader processes by which news is presented, received, and acted upon, offering more than a parody of Trump the candidate. By broadening the subject of its satire through empathy, *LWT* draws attention to the dynamics between emotion, political affiliation, and news consumption that directly impact viewers' civic literacies and voting practices.

LWT's use of empathy to reflect on the realities of partisan polarization can be seen in the show's attempts to not only mock, but understand, why Trump supporters endorse his lies: "so many people believe Trump because if you get your news from similar sources as him, as many

many many people do, he doesn't look like a crank. He looks like the first president ever to tell you the real truth, but rumors can be really tenacious" ("Trump"). As opposed to identifying Trump and his supporters as stupid or insidious, the show humanizes the process by which we all have come to believe something that is not true. *LWT* follows this empathy with an example of an apolitical rumor about Richard Gere, that while ridiculous in nature, still circulated with the same traction as many of Trump's false claims. By citing a rumor that viewers may have very well believed and/or spread alongside broader arguments about the dangers of misinformation, the show inspires them to reflect and claim responsibility for their own biased and often ill-informed relationship with news sources.

Later in the episode, Oliver strikes an empathetic tone to directly engage with counter arguments that position Trump's relationship with the truth as innocuous, or as low-hanging fruit for liberal alarmists. In this move, the clip establishes the consequences of misinformation as non-partisan. Not focusing on Trump's own political affiliation or bias, the show intervenes within the discursive networks and processes through which Trump's lies are circulated as truths. Citing arguments that dismiss Trump's propensity to spread false information, the show states: "even if you take the kindest approach here, and assume that Trump made an honest, innocent mistake and passed along a news story without checking it, when he was presented with a lack of evidence, he disregarded that fact, at which point he is *lying*" ("Trump"). Here, the show engages in rhetorical intervention without attacking Trump or his base. While the show is clearly accusing Trump of lying, its employment of humor and empathy provide new lenses to the already prevalent news coverage of Trump's dishonesty. While *LWT* calls attention to the ridiculousness of many of Trump's lies, it does not swiftly dismiss them, but breaks down the implicit motives and rhetorical dynamics of a lie's circulation. In addition, by recognizing its

own bias throughout the episode, the show avoids an air of superiority with which many other liberal news outlets cover Trump's lies.

This recognition can be seen later in the episode when Oliver again addresses the audience and ruminates on how partisan polarization impacts the delivery and consumption of all news, including the show itself. *LWT* acknowledges the rate at which Trump's lies have already been covered, as well as the biased reception of that coverage. In doing so, the show directly recognizes how the bias of its viewers will impact its reception, stating: "Before we go any further, Donald Trump lies is clearly not a fresh observation. Liberals are probably thinking, 'well, hot take there, Johnny!'.... And, if you're on the right, you're probably thinking, 'oh, great, another blizzard of snowflakes from Last Cuck Tonight with Johnny Trigger-Warning'" ("Trump vs."). While working to mimic the biased receptions of different viewers, and therein promote their reflection on these biases, the show also attributes the widespread coverage of Trump's lies as making viewers—of both political leanings—desensitized to their consequences. Shifting the subject of its satire and addressee once again, the show employs "you" interchangeably to demonstrate bias as a human, and not partisan, experience. Disrupting arguments that "fake news" only originates from the opposing political party, the show uses empathy to circumvent viewers' blind dismissal of the show's arguments based on their opposition to Trump and/or the liberal bias of *LWT*. In this example, the show parodies viewers' lack of engagement with the news in a greater effort to thwart it and to "move" the audience to respond not to the perceived bias of the show but its arguments.

However, the show does use this empathetic moment to also speak directly to its liberal fan base, abandoning any pretense of neutrality, as it draws from the same language employed in conservative arguments that critique liberals as alarmist snowflakes. As Cicero outlined, humor

is employed in a way that will be most received by that given audience, for that given context, as *LWT* both caters to the expectations of its primary audience while also responding to broader political and rhetorical issues of the time. Bringing empathy and humor together in this example, *LWT*'s affective rhetorical intervention accomplishes two goals: (1) to critique and disrupt viewers' preoccupation with bias, and (2) to remind viewers that everyone is vulnerable to the myopic perspectives that we disparage and dismiss in individuals and news sources originating from an opposing ideology. The show offers an empathetic critique that attempts to convince viewers—both liberal and conservative—to laugh at themselves. This is not to claim that *LWT* is convincing—or attempting to convince—conservative-leaning viewers of liberal ideals, but that it is employing rhetorical humor as a method to comment on how political information is delivered, manipulated, and consumed. Coupled with its regular acknowledgement of the stakes of Trump's lying and its incorporation from sources from different partisan lenses, *LWT*'s empathetic and humorous appeals work to satirize both sides of the political spectrum not in an effort to hide its bias or feign neutrality, but to further convince viewers to ask themselves how they can more critically engage with the news they consume and circulate as fact.

Even though the show appeals to the viewer's empathy in the episode, and strictly avoids disparaging Trump supporters as ignorant, we still see this inclination in viewers' comments. Arguments over which political party is smarter often take a more extreme turn, with viewers expressing "hate" and other forms of condemnation for the opposing side: "I hate Trump supporters more than I hate Trump" (Wall). An extreme example of this vitriol reads: "For the sake of our planet and our Children's future, all Trump's gullible, heinous supporters/ cult members should [be] rounded up and euthanized" (Spumemonk 115). While one might cite these

comments as evidence of the show's promotion of ridicule or its perpetuation of partisan division, it is not the morality or value of the comments that we should be most interested in.

Instead, these examples demonstrate the complex and unpredictable nature with which the show's emotional appeals are taken up, effectively disrupting arguments that criticize satire for promoting one particular emotion or perspective. Furthermore, viewers' comments facilitate an *intercontextual* analysis of *LWT*, as they demonstrate how the show's satire is networked with other arguments, emotions, and circumstances occurring before, during, and after the televised episode. Looked at from a critical affect lens, these comments serve as further evidence of the inextricable relationship between emotion, political bias, and how we respond to the news. For example, Carolyn Pedwell resists traditional definitions of empathy and draws attention to the ways in which altruistic, empathetic arguments can be appropriated for nefarious purposes. Pedwell demonstrates the rhetorical nature of empathy, and emotions more generally, defining it as a contextual emotion that "open[s] up rather than resolve[s]" (189). This attention to the complexity of empathy, Pedwell asserts, "involves ways of relating that take conflict and lack of full commensurability as central to affective politics, rather than what needs to be eliminated or neutralized by empathy, and approach empathetic 'failure' and 'mis-translations' as opportunities for discovery and transformation" (189).

With this complex understanding of empathy, we can approach viewers' expressions of hate and political intolerance not as evidence of the failure of *LWT*'s empathetic appeals, but as a different form of their own affective rhetorical interventions. As such, a viewer's discernment of their hatred in response to the show's arguments is more than a biased attack on the opposition, as it serves as a form of affective catharsis that can translate to a critical awareness of how we become bound to the institutions with which we identify. This awareness can then be channeled

into other inquiries. We see this in viewers' responses, as they are "moved" by emotion to circulate their own arguments and critiques, whether they take the form of political intolerance, as previously seen, or in calls for respectful bi-partisan debate that are also present in the comments section.

In one of these examples, a viewer writes: "I'm genuinely curious... Can any Trump supporter tell me (without bashing or hating, that's not what I'm trying to do here) why you support him and what you think about his many statements that are arguably not scientifically checked or later-on proved to be false?" (Maxime1). This post inspired over one-hundred and thirty replies, with many applauding the viewer's attempt at civil discussion and genuine curiosity. In this example, the viewer reaches out to others feeling similarly, attempting to intervene in the comment section with their own critical inquiry. One of the comments posted in reply to this question reflected on the importance of emotion in critical literacy development: "It's respectable that you share this view.... Being able to use emotional intelligence is a rare skill and I reach out to anyone in despair who feels that it's failing" (TheAireaidLord1). Here, we can identify a similar empathetic tone that *LWT* periodically strikes in the episode. The viewer moves beyond the first comment's gesture towards empathetic debate to pose solutions for resisting fallacious judgements of bias. Like the previous comments, these viewers channel their emotional experiences into rhetorical interventions, employing empathy as a generative space for critical debate about bias and information literacy. Much in the same way, *LWT* builds upon its empathetic appeals to model an optimistic sentiment as it calls for action at the conclusion of the episode.

Optimism

LWT's engagement with a model of rhetorical humor akin to Cicero's goals of "instruct, delight, and move" can also be seen in its appeals to viewers' optimism. The show invites viewers to become participants in its interventions by outlining specific rhetorical strategies for critically engaging with news sources from varying perspectives. Using fear and empathy to convince viewers of the wide-ranging stakes of Trump's deceit, the show employs optimism to convince viewers that they are capable of effecting change. Through optimism, *LWT* operationalizes its critique of Trump's lies, the mainstream media's coverage of those lies, and viewers' blind acceptance of misinformation that confirms their preexisting biases. In conjunction with its humorous appeals, this emphasis on action helps the show emphasize the innately rhetorical nature of the news.

By employing fear and empathy to establish that all viewers are susceptible to misinformation and blind political allegiance, the show is better positioned to convince viewers that they have the agency to combat these issues. Maintaining its ethos of mobilizing satire into action, *LWT* offers strategies for mitigating the challenges of rampant misinformation and for overcoming the emotional manipulation and sensationalism of mainstream news outlets. The clip concludes by gesturing towards potential solutions:

> We all need to commit to defending the reality of facts, but it's going to take work.... we should make extra efforts on social media to try and verify stories before passing them on, especially if they confirm our preexisting biases. Ask questions of yourself, like "is this a source I know and recognize? Has anyone fact-checked this? Does it link to primary sources, and do those sources match what the story says? And if you see an outlet repeatedly gets things wrong without correcting them, stop trusting that outlet...like, the White House. ("Trump vs.")

After mirroring the emotions experienced by viewers as they navigate today's divisive and overwhelming media landscape, the show offers viewers their own pathways for rhetorical

interventions after watching. These strategies emphasize fact-checking mechanisms that align with historical notions of journalistic objectivity. By shifting the address from "we" to "you" in this conclusion above, Oliver further presents these strategies as part of a collective effort. Instead of dismissing or criticizing emotion as just a form of political manipulation, *LWT* models an affective awareness that mobilizes viewers towards rhetorical (in their responses to the show) and political (evidenced in the past success of *LWT*'s activist campaigns) action.

As a result, the show's affective rhetorical intervention offers viewers both critical social commentary and an optimistic outlook for a different political future.

Findings and Interpretations

LWT retools the very arguments, genres, and mediums used by Trump and the news to convince viewers that being critically informed is a political move that requires active participation. Blurring the boundaries between news and entertainment, the show highlights the rhetorical nature of all news, working to reframe the debates around "fake news" and journalistic objectivity to critically engage with the ubiquity of bias. This affective rhetorical intervention is then channeled into more complex inquiries into the circulation of misinformation, which has material consequences. The show's humor prompts viewers' reflections on the affect they already embody long before tuning in, and its fluctuation between humor, fear, empathy, and optimism mimics the unpredictability with which emotion and bias operate within today's news landscape. *LWT* accomplishes this by oscillating between facts, different affective registers, and outlandish and humorous fiction. This requires the viewer to move between these different rhetorical frames as they constantly ascertain what is information and what is humor, much as they do when navigating the onslaught of the twenty-hour news cycle.

LWT's affective rhetorical intervention is both analytical and generative (pedagogical), in that the show analyzes the issue at hand in such a way that viewers can decide the most effective form of intervention for them. This modeling occurs primarily through the show's acknowledgement of its own partisan and emotional biases. The show employs this rhetorical intervention to demonstrate how the dismissal of biased news has eroded viewers' ability to detect misinformation, while also allowing them to rationalize their complacency. Examining *LWT* as a form of affective rhetorical intervention positions contemporary political satire as less about shame and ridicule and more about critical awareness and participation. In addition, focusing on the rhetorical processes and circulation of shows like *LWT* work to complicate the affective feedback loop of apathy that is often associated with contemporary political satire. As a result, rhetorical analysis of this genre can provide more nuanced understandings of how and why viewers are increasingly turning to political satire as a legitimate source of news.

In its resistance to Trump, the show embraces the liberal bias with which it is associated. Yet, in its refusal to act as if bias can ever be easily ascertained or dismissed, *LWT* uses humor and emotion rhetorically to intervene within the social authority granted to Trump and the news, responding to a political moment in which we are hard pressed to tell the difference between a salacious rumor and legitimate news. Intervening in today's emotionally heightened and hyper-partisan persuasive landscape, the show does not aim to convince conservative viewers, but to dispel false divisions and claims of neutrality or superiority between different ideological lenses and biases.

Chapter Four:
Affective Confrontations: *Full Frontal*'s Feminist Ethos

"*There has always been a linkage between comedy and anger, but there has always been a disjunction in that same culture; women are not supposed to show or demonstrate anger, so what do we do when women use anger in their comedy?*"
—Ricki S. Tannen, *The Female Trickster*, 167

As established in previous chapters, there has recently been renewed interest in political satire in the U.S.[66] Since the election of the most mocked U.S. President in recent history (Associated Press), shows like *SNL* and *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* have garnered their highest ratings in decades. Parodying the Trump administration's upheaval of political decorum and propensity to lie, satirists have also condemned its racist, sexist, and xenophobic rhetorics and policies.

Contributing to this condemnation, women satirists have long recognized the potential of comedy[67] as a tool of rhetorical agency. Historically, they have used humor to call for equal rights and suffrage (Browne), support gender and reproductive activism (Walker; Weisstein), and raise consciousness of institutional racism and the oppression of minorities (Apte; Boskin; Dorinson).[68] Contemporary women satirists have commented on the sexist treatment of the first

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[66] For more on the popularity of political satire in the U.S. in recent years, see the introductory chapter.
[67] I toggle between the terms "comedy," "humor," and "satire," often using them interchangeably. For more on my rationale for this choice, see the introductory chapter.
[68] Some of the most influential chronicles of feminist comedy's history include Gloria Kaufman and Mary K. Blakely's *Pulling our Own Strings: Feminist Humor & Satire* (1980), Judy Little's *Comedy and the Woman Writer: Woolf, Spark, and Feminism* (1983), Nancy Walker's *A Very Serious Thing: Women's Humor and American Culture* (1988), Zita Dresner's *Redressing the Balance: American Women's Literary Humor from Colonial Times to the 1980s* (1988), Regina Barreca's *They Used to Call Me Snow White...But I Drifted: Women's Strategic Use of Humor* (1991), Frances Gray's *Women and Laughter* (1994), Kathleen R. Karlyn's *The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter* (1995), Lori Landay's *Madcaps, Screwballs, and Con Women: The Female Trickster in American Culture* (1998), Audrey Bilger's *Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen* (1998), Susan Glenn's *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism* (2000), and Joanne

female U.S. Presidential candidate, the election of a President accused repeatedly of sexual misconduct, the recent onslaught of draconian reproductive laws, and feminist movements like the Women's March and MeToo. Women's comedy has also grown in recent years, evidenced in the popularity of specials by Amy Schumer on HBO and Netflix, and television shows, such as *Chelsea Lately*, *Lady Dynamite*, *The Mindy Project*, *At Home with Amy Sedaris*, and *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*.[69] Notably absent from this revival is a representation of women comedians of color, aside from Aparna Nancherla and Mindy Kaling. While today's most popular satirists continue to build on the rhetorical strategies of their predecessors of color, the genre has yet to grant these women the same platforms. While the racial vitriol of the current administration and the impact of racial tensions over today's political discourse have prompted comedians of color to respond, the most popular women satirists are predominantly white. Even so, women satirists of color are an integral part of the history, evolution, and future of women's comedy in the U.S.[70]

In addition to its lack of diversity, women's comedy has and continues to be a precarious and unpredictable endeavor, marked by constant resistance and recurrent debates over women's authority to speak out in public spaces and ability to be funny. One of the most well-known of these debates began with Christopher Hitchens' controversial piece in *Vanity Fair* in January 2007, "Why Women Aren't Funny," in which Hitchens equated childbirth with a biological

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Gilbert's *Performing Marginality: Humor, Gender, and Cultural Critique* (2002). With the exception of Bilger, Gray, and Little, the majority of the works identified in this chapter focus on women's comedy in the U.S. For more on the international history of women and comedy, see Dickinson, et al., and Barreca's edited collection, *New Perspectives on Women and Comedy*.

[69] For more on the resurgence of women's comedy in the U.S., see Mizejewski, Sturtevant, and Karlyn.

[70] For more on how women of color have and continue to contribute to feminist satire in the U.S., see Finley and Tucker.

seriousness that circumvents a woman's ability to be funny.[71] As infuriating as this debate is, it does speak to a recurrent criticism lodged against women, and especially feminist, comedians: that they are too serious, angry, or irrational to have a sense of humor that could appeal to audiences of the opposite sex.

Feminist scholarly works, such as Ricki S. Tannen's *The Female Trickster: The Mask that Reveals* (2007), Linda Mizejewski's *Pretty/Funny: Women Comedians and Body Politics* (2014), and Linda Mizejewski, Victoria Sturtevant, and Kathleen R. Karlyn's *Hysterical: Women in American Comedy* (2017), have also acknowledged the challenges women comedians face. Across all of these popular and scholarly conversations is a recognition of humor's association with maleness and the rhetorical bind that women comedians will always find themselves in. Frances Gray articulates the unpredictability of this space for women: "Comedy positions the woman not simply as the object of the male gaze but of the male laugh—not just to-be-looked-at but to-be-laughed-at—doubly removed from creativity" (9). While the earliest women comedians were confined to gender stereotypes, more contemporary comedians channel male expectations into subversive calls for change, much like feminists' resistance to gender norms. For instance, second-wave feminists upended the traditional role of the housewife, forging pathways for women's inclusion in a variety of professional and political positions. The complicated history and recent resurgence of women's comedy, coupled with the Trump administration's attacks on women's and transgender rights, mark an exigency for analyses of today's most popular forms of feminist satire.

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[71] Hitchens' piece was met with outrage and a rebuttal by Alessandra Stanley in the April 2008 issue of *Vanity Fair*. Stanley relies on the accomplishments of women comedians, such as Tina Fey and Sarah Silverman to refute his claims. Hitchens doubled down on his argument about the differences between man and woman humor in "Why Women Still Don't Get It."

Coupled with analyses of *SNL* and *LWT*, analyzing a feminist satire show like *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee (FF)* offers a more complex understanding of contemporary political satire news shows to in this dissertation by engaging with questions of gender, feminist activism, and the rhetorical impact of a satirist's embodied identity. Departing from the conventions of the late-night comedy show, Bee stands and delivers impassioned monologues directly into camera, often for the entirety of each episode. Occasionally, shorter news pieces anchored by *FF* correspondents on particular issues are shown and segments of Bee interviewing political figures and celebrities. *FF* is most unique in that Bee is the first woman to host a political satire news show, which is highlighted in TBS's description of the show: "Breaking up late-night's all-male sausage fest, TBS presents a new show from one of the most unique and visible comedic voices on television—longtime *Daily Show* correspondent Samantha Bee—featuring a nuanced view of political and cultural issues." While *FF*'s stories often revolve around women's experiences, the show also covers institutionalized racism, oppressive immigration policies, and poverty. The show is collaboratively written by Bee, the producers, writers, and correspondents on staff. *FF* is executive produced by Samantha Bee, Jason Jones, Tony Hernandez, Miles Kahn, Alison Camillo, and Pat King ("Full Frontal"). Committed to working with a diverse body of writers, *FF* employs blind submission for all of its stories.[72]

Most importantly, *FF*'s employment of anger makes it a unique site of analysis for this study. Unlike *LWT*'s juxtaposition of different affects, *FF* blends anger and humor throughout its arguments. This blending results in a more confrontational *affective rhetorical intervention*[73] that

[72] For more on *FF*'s hiring practices and the diversity of its staff, see Kruger and Gallagher.
[73] An *affective rhetorical intervention* employs emotion as a rhetorical strategy to dismantle and effect change within normative arguments and narratives. For more on how I define and theorize this term, see chapter three.

operates from within the precarious tension between humor and anger, and between feminism and patriarchal politics. This dual focus on critique and optimism is also informed by a similar ideological tension that feminist rhetoric draws upon in its confrontations of injustice. *FF* does not aim to convince the audience of a definite goal or to make them laugh as in previous case studies, but to simply challenge them with contradictory affects and arguments. The show's unapologetic reliance on anger in both Bee's delivery and its unique blending of humor and anger is akin to what Karolyn Kohrs Campbell identifies as the "anti-rhetorical style" of the women's liberation movement. This style is marked by "affirmation of the affective, of the validity of personal experience, of the necessity for self-exposure and self-criticism, of the value of dialogue, and of the goal of autonomous, individual decision making" (202). The show also executes this style by engaging with questions rather than answers, provoking the audience to respond to its anger with their own inquiries.

While *LWT* and *SNL* temper potentially more offensive affects—such as fear and outrage—with humor, *FF* demonstrates how anger and humor can work in tandem to confront the complexities of the social issues being covered. This anger may impede the show's ability to persuade viewers of its arguments, as evidenced by the viewer responses analyzed later in this chapter, yet this is not the goal or potential of its rhetorical intervention. While *LWT* encourages reflection on the current state of bias in the news and its influence over viewers' media literacy practices, *FF* establishes a feminist ethos of confrontation that parodies, reclaims, and harnesses the common stereotype of women as too emotional to be funny or politically productive. The show crafts this ethos by employing anger as the operative rhetorical strategy, drawing on the embodied identities of the host and diverse staff, disrupting traditional expectations of rhetorical authority and credibility, and reflecting on the show's ethical responsibility and fallibility.

***Ethos*: An Analytical Framework**

Given the rhetorical precarity that characterizes women's comedy in the U.S., and *FF*'s use of anger, humor, and feminist consciousness raising typically avoided by the show's male counterparts, analysis of *FF* requires a different rhetorical and affective lens than *LWT* or *SNL*. An exploration of *FF*'s blending of humor and anger calls for complications of what ethos and feminist consciousness raising within today's political satire can look like. To accomplish this, I draw from classical and feminist theorizations of ethos and how emotion and embodiment impact what it means to be rhetorically effective.

Classical models that deal with the dynamics between ethos and emotion inform both this study and the feminist theories I draw from in my analysis. For instance, Quintilian's theorization of ethos is useful because he complicates classical notions of ethos, such as Aristotle's,[74] to include an audience's perception of a rhetor's character beyond the confines of the speech. Quintilian provides an early recognition of the rhetorical possibilities of using humor and anger to build a credible ethos that will move an audience in his theorization of *affectus*. Quintilian defines *affectus* as a "kind of eloquence [that] is almost wholly engaged in exciting anger, hatred, fear, envy, or pity; and from what sources its topics are to be drawn is manifest to all" (VI.II.26). Inciting the emotions of the audience, according to Quintilian, is reliant on the

[74] Defining ethos as the "character of the speaker," Aristotle places great emphasis on gaining authority by convincing audience members of one's trustworthiness in their speech: "the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence.... And this should result from the speech, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person... character is almost, so to speak, the most authoritative form of persuasion" (*On Rhetoric* 38-39). Here, a rhetor's ability to present themselves as credible is one of their most effective means of persuasion, achievable through a knowledge of what their audience will find most virtuous. This virtue, according to Aristotle, is established through a display of both intellectual and rhetorical prowess in the demonstration of expertise, knowledge on the subject of the speech, and adherence to broader codes of morality of the times (*Nicomachean Ethics*).

orator's ability to be affected by those same emotions: "The chief requisite, then, for moving the feelings of others, is, as far as I can judge, that we ourselves be moved" (VI.II.26). Quintilian equates an orator's genuine emotional expression with their capacity to demonstrate a credible and trustworthy character. As such, emotional appeals are based on ethos and vice versa, as an orator cannot credibly or convincingly execute an emotional appeal without themselves being moved first.

Humor is a key rhetorical strategy by which affectus is reached. It is through an embodiment of emotion that an orator can stir laughter in their audience. Amusement is not the only affect associated with rhetorical humor, according to Quintilian, as it has the power to "excit[e] laughter in the judge, dispel melancholy affections" all while "diverting his mind from too intense application to the subject before it, recruiting at times its powers, and reviving it after disgust and fatigue" (VI.III.1). The unpredictability of humor that Quintilian acknowledges speaks to the rhetorical precarity of political satire, especially when considered alongside his discussion of affectus. In addition, Quintilian's discussion of the rhetorical impact of affect elucidates the very tensions between humor, decorum, and emotion that *FF* continues to play with through satire. Feminist rhetoricians expand classical prescriptions of rhetorical authority and effectiveness on which Quintilian's theorizations of ethos rely. Bringing Quintilian and feminist rhetorics together works to provide a rhetorical and affective lens for this analysis that accounts for the complex dynamics between embodiment, humor, and emotion that characterize *FF*'s feminist consciousness raising.

Feminist theorizations of ethos reread and revise classical approaches to rhetorical theory, genre, style, and form (e.g., Biesecker; Ede, Glenn, and Lunsford; Foss, Foss, and Griffin; Micciche; Phelps and Emig; Swearingen) and raise questions about embodiment (e.g., Hawhee;

Sedgewick). Feminist studies highlight the ways in which the embodied identities of some rhetors—namely anyone other than white males—violate the moral and ethical conditions of virtue outlined in classical rhetoric. Karolyn Kohrs Campbell articulates the problems that a classical Aristotelian ethos presents for women rhetors in the nineteenth century, in that by speaking publicly, women "lost their claims to purity and piety," thereby impeding their ability to demonstrate a moral virtue to their audiences (13). Similarly, Krista Ratcliffe describes the limitations of classical models of ethos that women rhetors continue to face:

> Aristotelian ethical appeal also poses problems for feminists. Aristotle restricted his concept of ethos to that sense of speaker which emerges from the text at the site of the audience's listening. This concept of ethos, however, has traditionally not included a space for women whose sex is visibly marked on their bodies. The sight of women or the sound of feminists behind the bar or the pulpit has almost always evoked resistance before they could ever utter a word (20).

These limitations require more complex and modern notions of ethos in which women are given pathways to credibility and trustworthiness that also recognize the precarity that exists between rhetorical authority and identity. Feminist rhetorics embrace the inevitable tensions within a woman's appeal to a virtuous character as opportunities to appeal to multiple dimensions of ethos that can raise social consciousness. For instance, Kate Ronald redefines ethos as "residing in the tension between the speaker's private and public self" (39). Such redefinitions make room for the rhetorical bind in which women rhetors find themselves, both historically and today, in that their gendered identity commands less power and privilege than their male counterparts.

Extending the complexity and multiplicity recognized in these earlier feminist arguments, the more recent edited collection *Rethinking Ethos: A Feminist Ecological Approach to Rhetoric* adopts the term "ethē" to encompass the plethora of strategies that feminist rhetors use to engage in consciousness raising. While careful not to limit the ways in which a rhetor can appeal to a

"feminist ethē," the editors outline three rhetorical strategies, "interruption, advocacy, and relation:"

> women can seek agency individually and collectively to interrupt dominant representations of women's ethos, to advocate for themselves and others in transformative ways, and to relate to others, both powerful and powerless. These three terms, interrupt, advocate, and relate, offer broad descriptive categories for the kinds of ethē women adopt and the rhetorical strategies they employ, often in resistance to more static constructions of ethos privileged by normalizing expectations. (Ronald, et al. 3)

Given the sexism and resistance to feminism still experienced by rhetors today, such strategies are applicable to analyses of contemporary feminist rhetorics, particularly those in which women continue to lack equal representation, such as political satire. When coupled with Quintilian, feminist rhetorics provide contextual methodologies for contending with the complexity, unpredictability, and ever-changing nature of affect, and for studying the rhetorical dynamics between feminism and humor more broadly.

"The Morning After:" A Rhetorical Analysis of *Full Frontal*

To demonstrate how *FF* achieves a unique feminist ethos through its blending of humor and anger, I will use the rhetorical theories outlined above to analyze a *YouTube* clip entitled "The Morning After (The 2016 Election) | Full Frontal with Samantha Bee | TBS," which covers the results of the 2016 U.S. Presidential election. This clip is the most recent of the top three most-viewed clips on the show's *YouTube* channel, originally airing on November 9, 2016.[75] This clip also shares an exigency with the other case studies in this project, providing continuity and a point of comparison for my arguments about the embodied identity and ethos of a satirist. Bee delivers a monologue addressed to the audience for the majority of the clip, also periodically displaying video of Trump speaking, video from mainstream news stories, and images on a large

[75] This clip received a total of 3,528,429 views as of April 2020 and can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1SaD-gSZO4.

screen behind her. Providing an overview of the election results the night before, *FF* questions its causes, particularly partisan ideologies and systemic racism and sexism. Departing from a sitting, behind-a-desk delivery employed by male-hosted counterparts like *LWT*, Bee stands and faces the camera for the entirety of her monologue. Such a delivery, coupled with the angry tone that accompanies all of *FF*'s episodes, is key to the show's establishment of a feminist ethos of confrontation.

The clip begins with a direct acknowledgement of the unexpected results of the election and the uncertain position in which a feminist show like *FF* finds itself in the Trump era:

> Welcome to the show! How's everybody doing? So great. I'm still wearing the jacket, though tonight, it sparkles ironically. And if haters wanna call me a sad liberal Liberace, tough titties, I said it first. So, how did everyone get this so spectacularly wrong? Pollsters, the media, the keeping at 1600 nerds, us? What was the x factor that none of the forecasts accounted for? ("Morning").

Referring to the jacket she wore in the prior episode, Bee confronts the unpredictable irony that the show must contend with given its previous arguments about the election. While identifying "sad" as the emotion her critics might associate with her, she affects an angry and despondent tone, acknowledging and attempting to diffuse the inevitable resistance of her "haters." In this way, *FF* begins the clip by building an ethos of confrontation, intervening in both the arguments of its opposition and the overall rhetorical situation created by political polarization. Embracing the provocative ethos that is often already associated with outspoken women, *FF* does not rely on mutual understandings or on establishing connections with the audience. Instead, the show avoids an agreeable ethos much in the same way as Valerie Palmer-Mehta describes in her analysis of Andrea Dworkin's radical feminist rhetoric. Analyzing Dworkin's speeches and essays from the 1970s and 1990s, Palmer-Mehta argues that Dworkin "subverts traditional, masculinized accounts of ethos and invents a productive, confrontational ethos for women—a

radical feminist ethos" (53). *FF* displays a similar feminist ethos of provocation in its recognition that the show's arguments are always "in the cross-hairs of cultural debates" (Palmer-Mehta 52). As a result, *FF* works from an understanding of ethos as a "site of struggle" that is being constantly negotiated and modified (Hesford, "Ethos Righted"). The show executes a biting irony through the outward display of anger and its adoption of a contentious ethos that might impede persuasion.

This irony does not operate in the traditional sense with the rhetor saying the opposite of what they actually mean, but in the more complex and affectively driven manner that Linda Hutcheon theorizes. Complicating classical literary and rhetorical understandings of irony, Hutcheon draws attention to its unpredictable, affective, and *transideological* dynamics. She dismisses intention and interpretation as the metrics by which irony occurs, defining it as "a discursive strategy that depends on context and on the identity and position of both the ironist and the audience" (194-95). With this attention to the impact of identity over irony, *FF*'s employment of anger as a tool to simultaneously build a feminist ethos of confrontation and provide a satirical critique becomes clearer. In fact, Hutcheon also acknowledges anger when discussing women's use of irony in satire: "irony's deployment in satire and invective might suggest the possibility, less of a defusing, than of an engaging of precisely that anger.... Satire directs fire power through comedy, irony, and pointed social commentary that can be both angry and engaging in dialogue" (14-15). *FF* executes this irony by pairing the humor expected of a satire show with an angry delivery to reflect and criticize viewers' discursive communities and expectations. Much like its choice to cover topics that will result in an audience's discomfort, the show discourages viewers' complacency by constantly shifting rhetorical and affective tactics within one monologue.

FF's irony continues as Bee adopts a less expected tone of self-deprecation and uncertainty in this introduction. Claiming the moniker of the "sad liberal," Bee engages in a self-deprecation that also demonstrates a self-awareness and -determination characteristic of women's comedy throughout its history. By humorously and ironically adopting the stereotypes used against them, the show offers a broader critique of the partisan and ideological rigidity that prevents some from seeing *FF*'s claims as ironic in the first place. Hutcheon identifies such a use of irony as "self-protective" (50). Often perceived as either arrogance or a defensive move, this ironic self-deprecation involves acknowledgment of "the opinion of the dominant culture...and allows the speaker or writer to participate in the humorous process without alienating the members of the majority" (Walker as cited in Hutcheon 50). Working with anger as an ethos-building tool, the show's arguments are not focused on the effects of its ironic statements and delivery, or with whether viewers will see the irony at all.

In the inclusion of "us" within the parties that "got it so wrong," the show displays an ethos of fallibility. *FF* turns its outrage on itself, again identifying with the haters it rebuts in the previous statement. Cheree A. Carlson describes this tactic as "essential to a comic strategy for social change" (450). This move positions the show's anger and humor as more than entertainment, as it engages in critical social commentary of the greater political systems that made Trump's election possible. Aware of the patriarchal establishment's tactics to "paint the confronter as a moral leper," *FF* aims to work against the binary of us vs. them often placed on social activists by acknowledging the show's fallibility and by playing with different, and even contradictory, affects (Cathcart 98). Yet, this acknowledgment, because of the show's unique blending of anger and humor, does not detract from its feminist outrage or critical edge. Instead, *FF* moves beyond confrontation to engage in a productive critique of social institutions, namely

the media. Furthermore, by making the show a target of its anger, in that it too misread the likelihood and real danger of a Trump election, *FF* models an introspection that it hopes to move viewers toward.

Returning to an angry tone, Bee then refutes common arguments about comedy in the Trump age, offering commentary on the real and non-humorous effects of the election as well as the show's rhetorical intent in employing satire: "And please don't even think of writing something stupid like, 'what a lucky break a Trump presidency is for comedians!' The jokes just write themselves! No, no, no, shut up. Jokes don't write themselves, Jews write jokes, and they are scared shitless!" ("Morning"). In one of the most overt displays of the show's characteristic angry delivery, *FF* rejects both fans' and critics' claims, in that the absurdity of Trump's election may be laughable but is also dangerous. The show's anger at such assumptions about satire further illustrate that the goal of its humor is more than amusement, in that Trump's election is not only a catalyst for jokes but a source of alarm. By using anger to counter such understandings of humor, the show also provides a glimpse into its greater argument: that viewers need to be more aware and proactive about the consequences of elections like Trump's, particularly on the marginalized. Countering false narratives about the purpose and process of satire under a Trump presidency, *FF* also uses this moment to bring attention to the emotional experiences of minorities, prefacing a broader critique of the growth of xenophobia in the U.S.

This move can be more clearly seen in the show's employment of anger and humor in tandem, as it plays with and challenges the rules of rhetorical and cultural propriety that continue to restrict women's expressions. Responding to the sexism that continues to dictate political norms, *FF* draws attention to the importance of humor as an embodied and affective performance, much in the same way that women comics have throughout history. In analyzing

the evolution of modern feminist satire, Linda Mizejewski, Victoria Sturtevant, and Kathleen R. Karlyn recognize the reclamation that satirists like Bee engage in through their anger: "The fact that neither Bee nor Fey takes the trouble to hide her anger is a retort to the logic of hysteria—the idea that women's emotions disqualify them from public input on weighty matters. Indeed, their anger sharpens and gives shape to their input, as they do not flatter and cajole but demand equity in the public discourse around American popular entertainment" (31). *FF* builds on this demand to call for change, not only within the genre of political satire, but the institutions that oppress and misrepresent the experiences of women and people of color. More specifically, *FF* denounces the racism and xenophobia that both characterized and has resulted from Trump's election.

For example, *FF* recognizes the material consequences and marginalization experienced by its staff:

> believe it or not this isn't a great day to be part of the most diverse staff in late night. They're not in a very jokey mood. This is the script they handed me this morning, [displays an image of random letters and symbols on a page] right before vomiting on my shoes. You know, I don't say this very often, but I should have hired more white dudes. I mean, look at Mathan [displays a photo of a male writer of seemingly Middle Eastern descent]: best-case scenario, he gets stopped and frisked daily. Worst-case scenario, he gets erroneously deported. ("Morning")

Before turning to Mathan as an example of the oppression people of color will continue to experience at increased rates under a Trump presidency, *FF* begins by further establishing its ethos to speak on such matters. In this way, the show implicitly recognizes Bee's own privilege as a white woman, while presenting satire as an embodied performance, in that the identity of the writers matters. *FF* appeals to ethos in the designation of the show as having "the most diverse staff in late night" ("Morning"). By doing so, *FF* establishes the show's credibility to speak on the effects of xenophobic and racist rhetorics. In addition, this ethos helps to position *FF* as part

of the solution to such rhetorics, as it is not only calling out a lack of diversity, but modeling diversity in its practices. In analyzing the unique feminist satire of Tina Fey in the early 2000s, Lisa Colletta recognizes the shift in women's satire towards "a broader and more subversive assault on the way we know and understand the world" (209). *FF* achieves this "broader" feminist stance by employing Mathan's narrative to critique the widespread comfortability and complacency that made Trump's election seem so outlandish to voters from both parties. Using anger to confront and question the status quo of white, male writers in contemporary political satire, and in political debate more broadly, *FF* raises consciousness about the consequences of the election unknown to or unexperienced by its white viewers. In this example, *FF* uses anger at Mathan's situation to both refute false arguments about the lack of racism in U.S. politics and incite the audience to consider the future that a Trump election bodes.

Not detracting from the satirical character of the show, Bee's angry persona helps establish an emotionally genuine and invested ethos. *FF* offers satire not from the perspective of a detached observer or critic, but from individuals that are experiencing the material realities of the topics being covered. Harnessing the critical anger that has long been part of the feminist movement, *FF* invites viewers to feel the frustration that the show's writers experience. Coupled with other discussions of the writers' experiences later in the clip, this example represents the self-awareness and critique of satire that are among *FF*'s most unique contributions to the genre.

The show's angry delivery also lends a seriousness to even the most outlandish or humorous of the show's arguments, confronting the audience with an image of a woman (and feminist) satirist that is both emotional and as deliberate, measured, and researched as her male peers. The show channels the tension between humor, gender and anger into an ethos that can mobilize consciousness raising. For example, later in the clip, Bee adopts an even more blaming

and shaming tone, narrowing the target of the show's anger to white women in particular: "...and, a majority of white women faced with the historic choice between the first female President and a vial of weaponized testosterone, said, 'I'll take option B, I just don't like her.' Hope you got your stickers, ladies...way to lean out! Did you not hear people of color begging you not to legitimize this...?" ("Morning"). The show then displays clips of xenophobic, racist, sexist, and homophobic comments being shouted by Trump supporters at campaign rallies. Drawing on the calls for intersectionality that have long been part of the feminist movement, *FF* identifies women as most responsible and capable of effecting social change. Also directing its anger towards women, and not only men or conservatives as some critics might expect, *FF* employs anger as a direct response to, and critique of, traditional prescriptions for femininity, feminism, and likeability forced upon women in both politics and comedy.

By continuing to use the pronouns of "we" and "us" in criticism of white female voters, *FF* subtly recognizes Bee's own privilege as a white woman and employs angry shaming in a corrective manner. Sara Ahmed describes the potential of shame within feminist calls for action as "crucial to the process of reconciliation or the healing of past wounds. To acknowledge wrongdoing means to enter into shame; the 'we' is shamed by its recognition that it has committed 'acts and omissions,' which have caused pain, hurt and loss for indigenous others" (*The Cultural* 101). *FF* draws attention to the danger in "legitimizing" a President whose campaign was riddled with xenophobic claims to white supremacy.

In addition, *FF*'s critique of not only white voters but white women further dispels the perceived bias against feminists as only man hating. Bee's angry delivery and the show's accusation that white women have "some karma to work off," draws on and upends the trope of the angry feminist. Barbara Tomlinson defines this trope as:

> not an argument about unseemly emotions; it is a tool of discursive politics designed to enact and reinforce patterns of social dominance. If it were actually an argument about unseemly emotions, the troper would behave as if its own emotions were also to be evaluated. Yet in a contradiction also central to the trope, tropers immerse themselves in emotionalism, irrationality, and self-righteousness in dismissing feminists as prisoners of emotion, irrationality, and self-righteousness. (16)

Acutely aware of this trope and of critics' propensity to dismiss women's comedy by reframing it as angry (Gray; Mizejewski, Sturtevant and Karlyn), *FF* uses anger and humor simultaneously. Not offering answers or prescribing solutions, the show works from an affective space that viewers can relate to and potentially be moved by. What they are moved towards is not the show's main concern, as *FF* recognizes the futility in such a goal. Instead, it is the act of being angry and humorous, of being conciliatory and accusatory, in the space of one argument or episode that the show channels into a feminist ethos of disruption.

In an analysis of the show's feminist politics, Tasha N. Dubriwny argues that anger serves as "an ethical stance," in that it "provides a model for women to experience and act on their feelings of discomfort about the current political situation" (149). Dubriwny investigates *FF*'s response to the June 2016 Orlando nightclub shooting, concluding that Bee's unabashed anger is a platform for broader social commentary. Effecting an angry ethos that pushes audience members towards accountability, the show also attends to the precarity of rhetorical humor recognized by Quintilian. The circumstantial character of humor also results in its unpredictability, according to Quintilian, in that "the origin of it is doubtful, as laughter is not far from derision" (VI.3.7). Since derision might impede an orator's temperance, and therefore their execution of an effective style and credible ethos, it is a precarious rhetorical strategy that has the potential for high costs and rewards. Quintilian's theories "speak to the tension between humor and decorum still being negotiated in the present" (Waisanen 30). This tension is even more

influential on the reception of women's comedy, given the suspicion and resistance with which female authority is often still met with today.

This rhetorical approach to humor and *affectus* that Quintilian describes is tangible in the sarcastic recap of a recent experience of one of the staffers of color: "I'd also like to congratulate the patriot in a pickup truck who escorted one of my staffers on his walk to work this morning, shouting 'payback for Obama time, no more socialist Muslims!' Oh, I think the healing has begun, guys!" ("Morning"). In this example, *FF* works with anger and humor simultaneously. Appealing to the audience's anger, *FF* works from a rhetorical approach to affect that is akin to Cicero's theorization of *indignatio* in *De Inventione*. Aimnig to mobilize viewers anger towards the pervasiveness of racism and experiences like this one, the show's satire works to draw attention to the reality that accompanies the legitimization of xenophobic, nationalist rhetoric as a result of the election. *FF* uses a feminist ethos not only to demonstrate the rhetorical value in anger to bring new perspectives to popular forms of comedy, but also to confront viewers with realities they would otherwise like to dismiss or overlook. Through Mathan's experiences, *FF* also demonstrates an understanding of ethos that is "based not on philosophical universalism but on an awareness of the historical contingencies and rhetorical exigencies of ethical responsibility in its entanglement with institutional structures and individual lives" (Hesford, "Ethos Righted" 190). Using the telling of Mathan's experiences as an ethos-building strategy for the show, *FF* demonstrates critical attention to the impact of changing social structures over everyone's agency, including that of the contemporary satirist. Also working with a long-standing trope of comedy shows to include staffer's experiences, *FF* mobilizes this trope towards affective critique and ethos-building. In another way, *FF* portrays the sharing staff's experiences as a model for

social change, as consciousness of such narratives will motivate more equitable and realistic political views and modes of participation.

FF is both adding a unique ethos to satire and drawing on the rhetorical strategies of the show's feminist predecessors in the sharing of marginalized experiences to combat oppression. This sharing is not merely a rhetorical tactic, but a genuine engagement with and *assimilation* of anger (Quintilian VI.I.27). This can be felt in an interview with Bee, in which she discusses the emotional state of the staff at the time of the clip:

> Well, really, right after the election, we were broken. It was very emotional, especially at the beginning. And we kept coming back to this conversation of, "OK, how are we going to do this show going forward? We're so unhappy. We're just really unhappy, and we have to make a comedy show. So, what are the things that we can do? Where can we find the joy that will infuse this show with life?" It can't all come from a place of sadness. (Dunham)

Here, she identifies the writers' feelings as one of the primary motivations for their arguments about the election. *LWT* explicitly acknowledges its bias and the bias of its viewers to motivate critical literacies, yet *FF*'s engagement with affect is more about representing the unique collective ethos of the host and writers. In addition, *FF*'s ethos and creative processes are driven by the tension between anger and meeting the expectations that a satirical show still be comedic. In both its privileging of the collective ethos of the staff and its attention to the need to negotiate this tension, *FF* exemplifies a feminist "ethos [that] is neither solitary nor fixed. Rather, ethos is negotiated and renegotiated, embodied and communal, co-constructed and thoroughly implicated in shifting power dynamics" (Ronald, et al. 11). *FF* accomplishes this ethos by uniquely blending anger and humor to engage not only in satirical critique but feminist consciousness raising that is affectively driven. The show's anger becomes the method by which it "negotiate[s] and renegotiate[s]" a feminist ethos to bolster its arguments and comment on changes to the broader political landscape. It is through this attention to emotion that *FF* is able to maintain an

angry persona while not sacrificing the show's satirical appeal. The show's affective rhetorical intervention, then, is based predominantly on its establishment of a dual ethos of provocation and emotional genuineness, both of which offer a unique and feminist perspective to contemporary political satire news shows.

Feminist theories of comedy articulate the rhetorical potential of such an ethos for promoting social awareness and change. *In All Joking Aside: American Humor and Its Discontents*, Rebecca Krefting conceptualizes *charged humor* as a common tactic of feminist comedy that "charges audience members with complicity toward social inequities" and "offers solutions for redressing the balance" (25). Working from an ethos of anger and confrontation, *FF* offers humor that is grounded in the history and politics of feminism. Diane Davis recognizes this in her analysis of feminists' employment of the *rhetoric of laughter* as a tool for social organizing. Similarly, by attending to the complicated and unpredictable effects of emotion over ethos, the show works from what Ricki S. Tannen identifies as a *feminist comic sensibility*. Tannen defines this approach as "less interested in protecting social boundaries than remaining keenly attentive to the relational dynamics that might promote or hinder one's rhetoric across *any* circumstances" (43). Resisting other shows' allegiance to that which viewers will find most persuasive, *FF* channels its unique feminist perspective into an engagement with emotion that privileges satire as an embodied performance. Like feminist rhetoricians have done, the show uses the uncertainty that surrounds a woman's ethos as an opportunity to comment on and resist power dynamics that impede rhetorical agency.

Feminist models that recognize the potential in employing humor and anger together also provide foundational frameworks for demonstrating FF's affective rhetorical interventions. For instance, Terrence Tucker theorizes *comic rage* as an impactful rhetorical strategy of African

American text in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In exploring feminist humor in particular, Regina Barreca positions comedy as in a cathartic relationship with anger, arguing that "Comedy can effectively channel anger and rebellion by first making them appear to be acceptable and temporary phenomenon, no doubt to be purged by laugher, and then by harnessing the released energies, rather than dispersing them" (33). *FF* balances anger and humor to craft a feminist ethos by acknowledging and mobilizing the tensions between emotion and ethos, particularly those surrounding women's displays of emotion. While representing the true feelings of the show's contributors and many viewers, its engagement with anger is still intentionally rhetorical in that *FF* is aware of the potential impact on its credibility.

In an interview about the show's uniqueness, Bee directly acknowledges the link between the show's emotional displays and its ethos: "Young people, particularly these days, are allergic to inauthenticity. And one thing I can truly say about this show is that it comes from a very authentic place. We don't mince words: everything comes from real emotion, real passion. I mean, that's why I like to do it, so I don't blame them!" (Lewis). In this, Bee attributes the show's ethos to *FF*'s engagement with affect while also recognizing audiences' heightened expectations surrounding affective genuineness. *FF* responds to such expectations by channeling the emotions that writers and producers already embody into a credible ethos, even if audiences are not convinced by the show's arguments. While such an ethos can undoubtedly promote persuasion, the show's engagement with a polarizing affect like anger privileges its ethos over the audience's acceptance of its arguments.

The tone and focus of the clip shift again, as the clip moves transitions from a sharing of the affective experiences of the staff to a brazen condemnation of white Trump voters: "In the coming days, people will be looking for someone to blame: the pollsters, the strident feminists,

the Democratic Party, a vengeful God. But, once you dust for fingerprints, it's pretty clear who ruined America: white people" ("Morning"). Once again, the show engages directly with and dispels false narratives about who is and is not responsible for Trump's election. Unafraid to call out the continued influence of racism over our political processes, *FF* uses anger to rewrite the script around Trump's election. Here, the anger that has been key to the show's ethos is directed towards a larger flaw within U.S. politics: systemic racism. After displaying exit polling data to support this assertion, *FF* directs its satire towards white Trump voters:

> The Caucasian nation turned out in droves to vote for Trump, so I don't want to hear a goddamn word about black voter turnout! How many times do we expect black people to build our country for us?! And don't try to distance yourself from the bad apples, and say 'it's not my fault, I didn't vote for him, #notallwhitepeople.' Shush, shush!! If Muslims have to take responsibility for every member of their community, so do we! ("Morning")

Refusing to shy away from arguably one of the most contentious topics in U.S. politics—race relations—*FF* continues to confront the tensions that viewers are most likely to avoid or outwardly resist. Bee's angry delivery and accusatory tone embolden the show's arguments, even as she uses pronouns like "we" and "us" to identify with the targets of her anger. While *LWT* and other shows actively work to not alienate Trump voters, *FF* makes them a target.

FF's engagement with anger also contributes to its past and future circulation, both in relation to popular forms of satire and public perceptions of feminists as angry. The potential for anger in building a collective has long been recognized by contemporary rhetoricians (i.e., Burke; Condit, *Angry Public*). Feminist rhetoricians like Audre Lorde recognize the affective capacity of anger as a politically generative emotion. Lorde identifies anger as a rhetorically appropriate and instigative response to racism, in that it operates as a "liberating and strengthening act of clarification" (280). It is through circulation that anger is translated into social commentary and action. Emily Winderman traces anger's circulation within the #MeToo

movement, arguing that "women's anger [has] been a nation-shaping force" in feminist arguments" (329). In addition, Winderman, working from Marilyn Cooper's ecological analysis of anger in black feminist rhetorics, contends that anger is "inherently rhetorical and contingent upon relations of power" (329). Responding to previous circulations of women's anger, *FF* appeals to the emotion as a conduit for social awareness and as a motivator for viewers' accountability and interaction. This interaction is more clearly seen in how viewers respond to, reform, and draw upon the show's anger in their own arguments.

The dynamics between anger and circulation are particularly relevant given the affective dynamics of digital mediums. The rhetorical potential of anger to "provoke accelerated circulation" also leads to the formation of new publics and counterpublics (Larson 272-273). Attending to this collective power of anger's circulation, *FF*'s satire upends normative images of the angry feminist previously circulated. Countering what Tomlinson identifies as the trope of the angry feminist, the show participates in the broader circulation of anger in relation to contemporary feminist politics. While one might expect the show to direct anger towards the establishment or Trump, as is the tradition of both political satire and feminism, the show uses emotion to motivate the show's—and potentially the audience's—introspection and accountability. Allaina Kilby acknowledges the unexpected nature of *FF*'s criticism of its audience, especially given the mainstream news' treatment of Trump: "This is a disruption of the satirical status quo and a move that their audience would not be expecting given the deluge of negative stories surrounding Trump" (1940). Departing from the common move in contemporary media to criticize Trump in a manner that will convince viewers of his corruption or incompetence, *FF* focuses on the consequences of viewers' maleficence. By doing so, the show subverts audience expectations and risks dissension. Much like its critique of satire earlier in the

clip, *FF* once again disrupts the norms of Trump's coverage. From this disruption, viewers are left to question how they, the media, and the show itself are guilty of the complacency that dismissed Trump as a viable candidate. It is this dismissal that *FF* ultimately aims to reveal and criticize, as the target of the show's anger shifts throughout the clip.

In her analysis of *FF*, Dubriwny comes to a similar conclusion about the show's use of anger and humor together to mobilize viewers' affective experiences towards action, in that the show "enacts a model of angry womanhood that uses anger to move the conversation about justice forward by engaging in feminist myth-busting, and offering counter-narratives to patriarchal common sense" (159).

While *LWT* also engages in a critique of its viewers' media practices, it does so in a greater effort to convince them of the ubiquity of all bias in the news and offer critical literacy strategies. In addition, *LWT* uses affect to temper its mockery of viewers. Yet, *FF*'s engagement with anger is again more provocative, in that anger is the show's operative strategy, even more so than humor. *FF* does not attempt to understand white voters' impulses or make them feel less guilty about their racist inclinations; in fact, it dispels the very arguments that white voters might use in response, even if they did not vote for Trump. By using anger as a conduit for its arguments, *FF* works to reveal, not excuse, the pervasiveness of racism in U.S. politics. And unlike *LWT*, *FF* does not follow criticisms with specific strategies for rectifying the issue; instead, *FF*'s rhetorical intervention is just that: an intervention within the false narratives white viewers tell themselves about their privilege and complicity in systemic racism. While anger has been rhetorically associated with a catharsis or release, in this example, it is about confrontation that can lead to recognition, in that it "is not escapist, and creates a space, for both writer and reader, where rage can be constructively expressed and the effect of white supremacy can be

effectively counteracted" (Tucker 7). *FF* implores its white audience to reflect on their complicity in the election, and to take responsibility in future political action to mitigate the Trump administration's oppression of the marginalized.

Towards the clip's conclusion, the show shifts tone again, using humor to implore even the most resistant viewers that they should care about the issues of racism raised in the clip:

> Look, this isn't good for anyone, our democracy just hocked up a marmalade hairball with the whole world watching. What we did was the democratic equivalent of installing an above ground pool. Even if we're lucky and it doesn't seep into our foundation, the neighbors will never look at us the same way again. ("Morning")

In criticizing Trump's election with a humorous metaphor, the show once again blends humor with anger and more serious calls for change, suggesting that the audience "get off the floor, and get busy" while displaying "2018" in large, bold letters, referring to the 2018 election cycles ("Morning"). While not as overt as the strategies *LWT* offers, *FF* blends anger and humor with calls for change, once again building a feminist ethos that moves towards influencing activism. The show's affective rhetorical intervention is not dependent on these calls or viewers' adoption of activism; yet, such a move does speak further to the show's employment of satire that can "channel anger and rebellion by first making them appear to be acceptable...and then by harnessing the released energies, rather than dispersing them" (Barreca 33). Through its circulation, the show's anger works towards a catharsis that can then be mobilized into accountability and potentially action. Dubriwny recognizes this in her analysis of the show, as she positions *FF* as employing anger to appeal to and co-construct a *feminist counterpublic* (147). In this way, the show both responds to past circulations of women's anger and co-constructs new entanglements and linkages between feminism and anger, as viewers interact with its argument via circulation. For viewers who want more than commiseration about what they should be rightfully angry about, the show's anger challenges them to develop a broader

political consciousness. An important element of this consciousness is viewers' recognition of their complicity in systemic racism and ability (and responsibility) to effect change.

While missing the optimism of *LWT* and other popular satire shows, *FF* does draw attention to the victories of the 2016 U.S. elections, shifting focus from Trump in a demonstration that change is not only possible but is already occurring:

> Ilhan Omar whose political journey began in a Kenyan refugee camp will be America's first Somali-American legislator. Yes. Catherine Cortez Masto will be the first Latina U.S. senator. Kamala Harris will be our first Indian senator and California's first African-American senator! Double milestone!.... I like that Congress is starting to look more like this and less like this [juxtaposes an image of predominantly white, male Congressman with a more recent image that includes women of color]. ("Morning")

In this list, *FF* draws attention to women and people of color who won in the recent elections, decentering the discussion from Trump in a way that might galvanize viewers. In addition, this recognition of women's victories also works to dispel arguments that feminists only focus on negative outcomes. While anger is central to *FF*'s ethos, the show also works to "challenge the perception that satire is too angry to propose solutions to political problems" (Kilby 1942). In addition, the show incorporates an optimism that moves beyond critique or outright rejection. Challenging and reimagining the social institutions that continue to impede the rights and representation of the marginalized, *FF* achieves a dual focus between critique and hope through its simultaneous employment of anger, optimism, and amusement. The show engages in feminist critique that offers pathways to a more equitable future, akin to what Sara Ahmed describes as a *feminist wonder*. Yet, this optimism is not an attempt to apologize for *FF*'s anger or temper its arguments, but further speaks to the complexity with which the show blends humor and anger with other affects.

The show's engagement with a more optimistic affective rhetorical intervention is more palpable in the clip's conclusion, which addresses young, female viewers:

> and to all the little girls who are watching this, never doubt that you are valuable and powerful and deserving of every chance and opportunity in the world to pursue and achieve your own dreams. And if Ms. Rodham's not in the White House, that's okay. One of those girls is going to be. We still have millions of nasty women who aren't going away and as long as women over 20 are still allowed on television, I'll be here, cheering them on. Although that may only be till late January. ("Morning")

Here, *FF* works to ensure that the viewer will not see women's victories listed above as an excuse for future complacency. Pivoting Rodham Clinton's loss not as a setback but as a stepping stone for other women, the show reminds female viewers of their power. If any doubt remains in the viewer's mind of the show's feminist agenda or ethos, this concluding statement dispels it. Not only calling for more women to know their worth, *FF* further cements its feminist ethos and continued loyalty to social justice and women's equal representation in U.S. politics. Yet, the show does not act as if viewers will be magically convinced or that feminist arguments will suddenly become more acceptable in its cheeky recognition of the uncertainty of *FF*'s run. Given the continued popularity of the show, *FF*'s unique feminist blending of anger and humor is still warranted and attractive to viewers. Less clear is how or why viewers are attracted.

Regardless of the arguable effectiveness of *FF*'s rhetoric, which given the complexity of affect and feminism would require much more analysis than this chapter offers to determine with certainty, it is undeniable that *FF* contributes a unique perspective to the genre. Unlike other similar shows, *FF* does not rely on humor as the operative rhetorical strategy. The show's unapologetic display of anger and the embodied identity of Bee culminate in *FF*'s distinctive ethos and affective rhetorical intervention that challenge normative understandings of feminism, comedy, and anger.

Full Frontal's Circulation

Like the other political satire news shows examined in this dissertation, circulation is an important part of *FF*'s rhetoric. The popularity of *FF*'s circulation is documented in the over one-hundred and sixty-eight million views garnered on the show's *YouTube* channel. In addition, videos of Bee interviewing President Obama and *FF*'s coverage of the Women's March have gone viral, earning the show higher ratings and online views than more established shows like *The Daily Show* (Huddleston Jr.).[76] Turning to rhetorical circulation in this analysis works to demonstrate the complexity with which affect, humor, and feminist arguments are read. More specifically, attending to rhetoric's circulation serves as a method for remaining attentive to "the risks of perspectives that slide towards equating knowing through affect as offering access to being or truth outside of histories and structures of power and representation" (Pedwell and Whitehead 120). Given the embodied nature of satire, and of feminist satire more particularly, such a consideration interjects nuance into analyses of women's comedy as working from a singular affective dimension, such as anger or hate. Furthermore, this examination also aids in the comparison between the reception of male-hosted satire news shows like *LWT* and the feminist ethos of *FF*.

As I proceed with this analysis, I am careful to avoid value judgements or easy classifications of certain responses as particular emotional expressions. Instead, I aim to compare the themes and patterns across the responses to *LWT* and *SNL* with *FF* to further demonstrate the

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[76] One of the most circulated was a 2016 video clip not aired on the cable show that questioned Trump's ability to read, which has received nearly five million views alone. In this clip, *FF* does not argue that Trump cannot read, but questions his ability by referring to statements made by his supporters, critics, and administration. Titled "People Are Saying," the segment parodies the larger trend in U.S. politics of unsubstantiated claims receiving credence from both the public and media as fact. This video has had 5,218,910 views as of March 2020 and can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7LFkN7QGp2c.

impact of a feminist ethos over the reception of satire. One of the most visible patterns was the attack on Bee as an individual. While responses to *LWT* mostly avoided specific identifications of Oliver, many of the *FF* comments began with addresses like "Ms. Bee," "Samantha Bee is," or "Sam." In addition, the amount of dislikes and negative comments were far greater among the *FF* responses, with 45% "down" comments to *LWT*'s 8%. Many of these "down" comments expressed hatred towards Bee: "I'm not a trump supporter by any means, but hate Samantha Bee" (Christian Boekhout). Others engaged in more overt sexist comments about Bee's inability to be convincing or genuine based on her gender: "This is what happens when women don't have children, they become angry, neurotic and bitter" (delving deeper74). Several responses also identified her ethos as flawed given her emotional delivery and perceived feminist identity, with one commenter simply writing, "Zero credibility" (Infliktor). Based on the history of feminist comedy and the current state of sexism in the U.S., these trends are unsurprising. Yet, they do provide insight into the impact of embodiment over satire's reception. Working from the very tropes of an angry feminist that *FF* is aiming to ironically subvert, these commenters dismiss the show's arguments at the onset. While they still take the time to watch and comment on the show, they are seemingly unwilling to be held accountable by or laugh with a woman in the same manner as they do when the host is male. However, this is the very type of resistance that the show both expects and capitalizes on, as it moves the audience not towards reconciliation or critical understanding but discomfort and accountability.

While one might see such a pattern as pointing to *FF*'s failure to engage in feminist consciousness raising, it is more indicative of the current political diaspora and rhetorical landscape in which the show aims to intervene through its blending of anger and humor. What the overwhelming resistance to the show, and more particularly the personal attacks on Bee,

demonstrate is not only the unpredictability of affect's circulation, but the contemporary reception of women's comedy within the polarized political landscape: "whether it can transform anger and frustration into action, as earlier female comedy did is more difficult to discern because the mediated information of postmodernity speaks more to the fractured narratives of individual opinions rather than to large-scale ideological concerns" (Colletta 212). These comments serve as evidence of the lack of personal accountability that the show is naming and parodying, and as such, demonstrate the social and political need for a satire show that embodies a complex feminist ethos of disruption. Even if viewers tune in and engage with the show's rhetoric just to be angry, this is still a form of affective engagement. And, it is not the effects of show's arguments that we should be most concerned with but what *FF*'s rhetorical processes communicate about contemporary political satire as an embodied performance.

This is not to claim that all of the comments were as dismissive as those above. As with the previous shows analyzed, many commenters expressed an appreciation for the show for offering them a cathartic release from the contentious political landscape. One viewer simply wrote, "Thanks for this, I laughed and feel better" (Dru Delmonico). Another expressed finding solace in watching the show after being despondent as a result of Trump's election: "funny and informative, just the way i like it! I needed this after crying the last couple of days about the new president elect." (re2dance). Even while the show relies less on humor than the other shows analyzed in this dissertation, viewers still respond to *FF*'s anger as commiseration. It is the show's engagement with emotion that enabled the second commenter to identify the show not as just funny, but "informative," speaking to *FF*'s potential for consciousness raising. Like the responses to *LWT*, viewers channel their affective relation with the show into awareness of a

topic or issue. This becomes more evident when we examine another theme across the *FF* responses: race relations.

Responding to the show's calls for racial consciousness and white voters' accountability for legitimizing Trump's hateful and xenophobic policies, viewers commented with their own arguments about the impact of racism on the 2016 U.S. presidential election. In many instances, these comments included thorough and thoughtful commentary on the state of race relations in the U.S. and their influence over political representation and voting practices. For instance, commenter munawishes wrote:

> When Obama was elected the right wing responded with racism headed by Trump, when Trump was elected people responded by protesting which is one of the freedoms of this great nation. People who are against Trump are against regressive policies. People who were against Obama were against him because he was black. It's just a relief to know that there are people like Samantha Bee speaking the truth and so many other people of all races speaking up against what Trump represents. To justice, freedom and truth. Keep up the fight everyone.

Agreeing with and expanding on *FF*'s explanation of how racism impacts political processes, this viewer offers a rallying call for more consciousness raising. Like *FF*, the viewer is willing to address arguably one of the most contentious issues in the U.S., even identifying the show as an example of the "truth telling" that can lead to meaningful change. In the responses to *LWT*, this consciousness is centered around the ubiquity of bias and the need for more critical literacy practices that will combat the issues of "fake news" and "filter bubbles" that impede productive and equitable political debate. In this example, the commenter responds to *FF*'s anger as a call to arms, offering their own view on racial politics, and one that is often glossed over in public discourse.

Another viewer rebuts a comment criticizing the show as oversimplifying the issue and bashing all white people by posting more information about the systems and structures that contribute to institutionalized racism in the U.S.:

> Yes, because above average crime rates in mostly-black areas are generally products of cycles of oppression and incarceration, poor educational systems, and systemic poverty, not black people. Policing, education and the economy are functions of a government with incredibly limited representation from these communities, that probably don't have their best interests in mind. I agree that her tone isn't calming, but calling for people living in a society to help the others in that society is not controversial.... Americans are living in different realities; and it's important for us to share information and beliefs with an open mind if our society is going to function. In the next few years, remember people are scared, and people aren't easy to talk to when they're scared. We'll all need patience. (Nora Byrne)

This viewer reminds fellow commenters of the material consequences that people of color have and will continue to experience under Trump. They also employ affect to make this argument in the claim that "people are scared." Not indicative of all of the comments on racism, this viewer does point to the rhetorical value of speaking to a divided and emotional electorate through affective experience, much in the same manner that *FF* does with anger. While responses to *LWT* exhibited similar critical literacies, they did not engage with emotion as an argumentative strategy in this way. Here, it becomes clearer how Bee's embodied delivery and the show's feminist ethos may have influenced commenters own affective literacies, not to challenge the biased nature of the news, but to intervene within flawed arguments about racial inequality. Yet, this is not to claim some grand victory for *FF* over racial consciousness, as the majority of the comments about race accused the show of being anti-white or of "race-baiting."[77] However, this pattern does speak to an interesting link between Bee's embodiment and viewers' consciousness.

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[77] For example, two such comments read: "People annoyed by race baiters are the ones who turned the scale. And you Samantha are a race-baiter of the highest order" (Austin Adams); "so its wrong to blame all muslims for the act of a few but its ok to blame all whites??? (mariano panaia).

This link is also seen in the comments that question the legitimacy of Bee's ethos as a white woman arguing for racial consciousness.

Interestingly, some of the viewers attempt to hold the show accountable in a similar manner that the show does with white voters by criticizing *FF*'s choice to have a white woman speak on the oppressions experienced by people of color. The affective delivery of these comments are varied, as one commenter more directly addresses Bee and calls for her dismissal: "Samantha Bee, you should fire yourself and hire a black woman" (Daniel Greenway). In this comment, the viewer resists the show's ethos while simultaneously modeling an attention to diversity that *FF* advocates. Again, this viewer exhibits a heightened awareness of embodiment absent from viewer responses analyzed in previous chapters. This same call is seen in another comment that is addressed to other viewers: "i mean come on guys it's 2016 we need a POC to host not the white girl whos with me" (Mr Tomato). While this call does not warrant many responses, it does offer poignant commentary on the lack of diversity still plaguing political discourse in the U.S., also drawing attention to the complexity of *FF*'s feminist ethos. Like historic calls for more intersectionality within the feminist movement, this viewer expresses a frustration with the show's privileging of a white voice. This critique could be lodged at most political satire news shows, given the genre's reliance on white hosts. The impact of a satirist's positionality and embodiment in relation to race is a limitation of this study and is an area of inquiry that will inform future iterations of this project.

An interesting parallel here between the *LWT* and *FF* responses is viewers' willingness to not blindly accept the shows' arguments and to turn the critical eye that the shows are aiming to inspire towards their own appeals to ethos. In *LWT*, viewers criticize the show's failure to identify all of its sources as impeding viewers' ability to execute the media literacy practices that

it models. In this example, *FF*'s appeals to its ethos as "a diverse staff" are insufficient, as the embodied identity of the satirist herself is once again paramount in the viewers' reception of the show's arguments.

From this analysis of the *YouTube* comments, one can identify similarities and differences between how viewers responded to *FF* and the show's male-hosted counterparts. Yet, a key distinction between the patterns emerged: viewers of *FF* engaged more directly with the show's feminist ethos. Viewers did not identify or read *FF*'s affective arguments in the manner that the show named, predicted, or attempted to inspire, as in the other case studies. Instead of engaging directly with the affects of humor, optimism, and fear that shows like *LWT* employed, responses to *FF* are marked by patterns of relation and resistance to Bee's embodied identity and the show's feminist ethos. In both praises and criticisms, viewers recognized the influence of embodiment and affect over the credibility of *FF*'s arguments. In addition, even with the show's many attempts to distribute its ethos among the staff, Bee's embodiment as a woman comedian still remained the most prominent metric for viewers' acceptance or dismissal of its premises. Once again, these differences are not meant to serve as evidence of *FF*'s failure or success but provide insight into the complex manner with which affect, humor, and feminism intersect and are received within popular forms of contemporary political satire.

Interpretations and Future Inquiries

Throughout this analysis and the entirety of this dissertation, I have resisted firm claims about the effects or efficacy of the shows analyzed and have instead focused on their processes as forms of affective rhetorical intervention. This resistance is even more important in analysis of feminist satire like *FF*, given the propensity to dismiss, misrepresent, or falsely label women's and feminist rhetorics. While I have focused on the ways in which *FF* engages in

interventions as forms of feminist consciousness raising, this analysis would be incomplete without recognition of the show's negative reception and the potential problematics surrounding *FF*'s engagement with anger and claims to authenticity. Firstly, I cannot disregard the multitude of viewer responses that outwardly reject *FF*'s arguments, as the show's engagement with anger and feminist politics continues to be dismissed as emotional outbursts and partisan pandering. While viewers' rejections of *FF*'s premises can be attributed to the suspicion and challenges that feminist arguments—and more particularly feminist comedy—have sustained throughout history, they do point to potential shortcomings in the show's rhetorical appeal. I maintain that the show's goals are not to engage in traditional modes of persuasion or adhere to the strategies that will be most effective for its audience. Yet, given the divisive rhetorical landscape that *FF* is attempting to intervene within, it is prudent to question the impact of the show's tactics, especially given its focus on consciousness raising.

The complicated dynamics between anger, humor, and political commentary that *FF* is negotiating become more evident when considering negative reviews of the show. Many critics have celebrated Bee's unique contributions to the genre as the first woman host who is unafraid to use anger to provoke an audience. In fact, the show's ratings have more than doubled since Trump's election (Schwindt) and *FF* received a 2019 Emmy nomination. However, the majority of reviews since the show's inception have criticized *FF*'s angry tone as perpetuating political divisiveness and inertia. For instance, one review representative of the show's critical reception identifies *FF*'s use of anger as "empty vitriol" that is "compounding frustration as much as offering catharsis from it" (Garber). Another review describes *FF*'s engagement with anger as similar to the tactics of the establishment that the show aims to challenge: "Trump and Bee are on different sides politically, but culturally they are drinking from the same cup, one filled with

the poisonous nectar of reality TV and its baseless values, which have now moved to the very center of our national discourse" (Flanagan). While these critical reviews can be attributed to the perpetual sexism that impedes a woman's ability to be seen as productively angry (or emotional), or to the political leanings of the reviewer or publication, they also raise interesting points about the rhetorical effectiveness of anger as a satirical strategy. Given my definition of affective rhetorical intervention, does such a strategy go far enough to intervene and effect change within the current body politic? While the show uses anger and humor together to build a feminist ethos and work towards consciousness raising, to whom is it appealing? By potentially alienating viewers, is the show simply preaching to the converted? Does *FF*'s anger bolster the divisive rhetoric and issues of partisan echo chambers that critics accuse the show of?

The second review above also illustrates an interesting quandary surrounding *FF*'s claims to authenticity and use of anger, as the show engages in similar strategies as the Trump administration. How effective are these strategies given the show's association with feminist politics and political satire's tradition of resisting the establishment? In this chapter, I have claimed that *FF*'s anger lends an atmosphere of emotional genuineness to the show, and in an interview quoted earlier, Bee attributes the show's engagement with emotion to its ability to build an authentic ethos. The show's assertion of emotional authenticity provides an interesting juxtaposition to Trump's own arguments about his election and lack of political decorum as responses to the rampant inauthenticity of U.S. politics. Yet, the means and ends of the show's and Trump's claims to authenticity through anger are very different. Unlike Trump's and other conservative politicians' use of authenticity as a justification for offensive and intolerant discourse, *FF* does not claim superiority but employs emotion to craft an ethos and narratives

that can counter such claims. *FF* uses emotion to represent the material experiences of the staff to relate to viewers and challenge their complacency.

Working from within the tension between feminism and comedy and affect and persuasion, *FF*'s anger offers a form of feminist rhetoric that "can interrupt the truth regimes that relegate groups of people to lesser status" (Tomlinson 190). Trump, on the other hand, uses anger and claims to authenticity to appeal to the beliefs that his base already holds. While Trump's goal is political allegiance, *FF* does not pursue anger for a predetermined goal but as a strategy for building a feminist ethos that may or may not appeal to its viewers. Yet, these differences do not erase the issues that will always surround claims to authenticity and sincerity. What are the metrics for assessing something as authentic or inauthentic? Who decides? Is authenticity, like most rhetorical strategies, contextual? Given the contingent and subjective nature of authenticity, it is difficult to identify *FF* as more or less genuine than other forms of popular satire. Still, I maintain that *FF*'s unabashed engagement with anger does lend the show an ethos of authenticity not as present in the other case studies, in that being funny or changing viewers' opinions is not its primary goal.

The dynamics surrounding sexism, gender, emotion and ethos at work within this case study make the questions I have raised in this conclusion more prominent. Yet, such questions can and should also be posed about male-hosted shows like *LWT* as well. These are important inquiries that can productively complicate my analysis of *FF*; however, I do not offer them as further criticism of the show. Bee's embodiment as a woman and the challenges that women's comedy has always faced do not leave the show much choice or opportunity to avoid these issues. Regardless how one might answer these questions, the contentious reception surrounding

FF's anger make it a unique and appropriate site for further analysis of the rhetorical and affective dynamics of contemporary political satire news shows.

While this analysis points to questions about anger and claims to authenticity as rhetorically viable forms of resistance within satire, it also demonstrates how *FF* introduces a unique feminist ethos to the genre that taps into and channels the emotional intensity and political polarization that characterizes much of public debate in the U.S. during and since the 2016 election. *FF* mobilizes this ethos to intervene within false narratives about political and social oppression; raise consciousness about the material realities of the marginalized; resist patriarchal and white supremacist structures that perpetuate institutionalized sexism and racism; advocate for the rights of women and people of color; draw attention to voices and perspectives devoid from other forms of contemporary political satire; address contentious topics, issues, and arguments glossed over or ignored in mainstream and other satire news shows; and, attempt to galvanize the audience into activism.

More broadly, this analysis speaks to the larger rhetorical predicament that women, particularly those in politics who express emotion, continue to find themselves in. This analysis also works to complicate what feminist consciousness raising, particularly through satire, can look like today. In addition, the comparisons between this analysis and that of previous chapters provide insight into the gendered nature of political affect and satire as an embodied performance. Together, these studies demonstrate the efficacy of affect as a lens for rhetorical analysis of contemporary political satire, given the complexity and unpredictability with which it is executed, received, and circulated. Such a lens, particularly when turned towards feminist arguments like those of *FF,* demonstrates the potential of the genre of satire for timely and

critical social commentary that can inspire alternative forms of consciousness raising and political participation.

Chapter Five:
Conclusion: Where Does Satire Go from Here?

I have long been a fan of political satire news shows, drawn to the unique mix of social commentary and entertainment they offer. After the 2016 election, I began to notice a shift in the focus and style of the shows I watched. My affective responses became more complex, as the degree and frequency of my laughter changed. My inability to articulate exactly what felt different about these shows, in conjunction with contemporary debates about the intersections of emotion and politics, became the impetus for this dissertation. Conscious of my own bias as an avid viewer, I turned to rhetorical studies to analyze how the strategies and goals of political satire news shows have evolved over time to respond to the dissolution of political norms that characterized the election of a television reality star as U.S. President.

From an analysis of their engagement with humor and emotion, I argue that these shows serve as sources of political education that intervene within false and oppressive arguments that dominate more traditional news media. While illustrating how these shows impart critical literacies through the affective processes of production and circulation, this study also points to the complicated dynamics between entertainment and education in their rhetoric. In this way, my analysis interjects nuance within existing scholarship that positions political satire news shows as either partisan entertainment (Guggenheim, Kwak, and Campbell; LaMarre, Landreville, and Beam) or democratizing sources of dissent (Day; McClennen). Operating as forms of *affective rhetorical intervention*, these shows juggle the rhetorical goals of humor and commentary, modeling the importance of emotional awareness to the development of a critical political consciousness.

Major Findings

While all three of the shows analyzed in this dissertation—*Saturday Night Live* (*SNL*), *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* (*LWT*), and *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee* (*FF*)—are currently popular, the disparities among them provide insight into how their rhetorical strategies shift to attend to different contexts, positionalities, and issues. Together, the analyses in each chapter demonstrate how contemporary political satire is using humor and affect to reflect and comment on the internal and external processes that impact viewers' political literacies. The clips analyzed are exemplars of each show's characteristic style; yet, a comprehensive argument about each show's rhetoric would require a more detailed study of additional episodes. Instead, the analyses of the clips come together to illustrate how the genre of political satire news shows is responding to emergent exigencies and power dynamics. More specifically, this study contributes insight into how today's political satire aligns with and departs from classical rhetorical models of humor, employs emotion as a form of rhetorical identification, comments on contemporary shifts in civic literacy practices, and engages with pertinent issues of power, difference, and identity.

Chapter two provides a comparative analysis of *SNL*'s parody of the 2000 and 2016 Presidential debates. *SNL* is an important case study in this project because of its longevity, broader appeal, and recent resurgence in popularity. Many critics have cited *SNL*'s coverage of the 2016 Presidential election as the primary reason for its rising ratings.[78] By comparing *SNL*'s coverage of two different time periods, this analysis works to contextualize my claims about how the other two shows attend to and depart from the genre's traditional tactics. In addition, analyzing the processes by which *SNL* continues to provide kairotic satire that responds to

[78] For instance, see Izadi and Littleton.

seismic shifts in political discourse provides a foundation for my analysis of the more recent satire shows and my broader claims about how the genre has changed over time. From an analysis of the 2000 and 2016 clips, I argue that *SNL* employs humor and affect to call attention to and criticize the impact of personality politics on viewers' voting practices. Using the Presidential debate as a site of invention, the show parodies the empty rhetoric and manufactured nature of political campaigns in the U.S. Working to inoculate viewers to the mundanity of rituals like the debates, the show mobilizes viewers' reflection on and critique of their own civic literacies. All of the shows analyzed in this dissertation impart viewers with avenues for recognizing and enacting their agency to effect change within political structures.

While the other two case studies use argumentation more directly in an expose of the topics covered, *SNL* employs impersonations as a conduit for its broader criticism of personality politics. Responding to the erasure of political norms within the 2016 election, *SNL* abandons its earlier attempts at bipartisan mockery, offering the contemporary audience exaggerated impersonations that reflect the caricature-like coverage of candidates by mainstream news outlets. As a result, *SNL* modifies its satire to more directly respond to the spectacle, division, and celebrity culture of the 2016 election. The show's critique of personality as politics represents an evolving form of political satire in the U.S. that intervenes within the relationship between civic life and media. While abandoning the singular goal of laughter, the show still offers viewers the kairotic humor they have come to expect from it.

While *SNL* channels its satire towards a critique of personality politics, *LWT* aims to motivate viewers' reflection on their own biases and the unrealistic expectation of impartiality imposed upon contemporary media. Chapter three analyzes how the show employs humor along with the affects of fear, empathy, and optimism to intervene within arguments that equate bias

with misinformation and media malpractice. *LWT* achieves this intervention by engaging in a variety of affective and humorous arguments to remind viewers that all news involves argumentation. By doing so, *LWT* transparently acknowledges its bias and invites viewers' participation, all while modeling the emotions expressed by many of its viewers. Exhibiting the critical engagement that a biased and emotionally charged delivery of news can offer, the show disrupts oversimplified notions of impartiality. *LWT* presents bias, through its parody of other news outlets and recognition of its own subjectivity, as inextricable from all forms of information exchange. In this way, the show prompts viewers to critically engage with how bias operates instead of simply dismissing it.

Pushing against dominant claims about the relationship between truth and media, the show reminds viewers of the innately rhetorical nature of news consumption. Intervening in today's emotionally heightened and hyper-partisan persuasive landscape, the show does not aim to convince viewers of a particular argument; it dispels false divisions and claims of neutrality or superiority between different ideological lenses and biases. In addition, the show's unique juxtaposition of humor with other emotional appeals forces the viewer to navigate different rhetorical frames in the space of a few minutes, imparting a critical literacy required of viewers as they consume media from various sources and perspectives. Responding to the onslaught of the twenty-four-hour news cycle and the growth of non-traditional news sources, *LWT* models an approach to information consumption that is driven by a realization of partisan and emotional biases.

My presentation of *LWT* as an example of how today's political satire can serve as a form of affective rhetorical intervention carries into my analysis of *FF* in chapter four. More directly engaging with questions of embodiment and identity than in the previous case studies, this

chapter poses questions about satire as a tool for feminist consciousness raising. While *SNL* and *LWT* gesture towards the implications of satire as an impetus for activism, *FF* uses humor to explicitly call for change. Unlike *LWT*'s oscillation between humor and other emotional appeals, *FF* blends anger with humorous arguments. Responding to the trope of the angry feminist and broader conversations about how emotions functioned in the 2016 election, *FF* employs anger as its predominant satirical strategy. Like *LWT*, *FF* acknowledges its own biases and even dispels common criticisms of it by expressing the anger that many viewers are feeling at the moment. Embracing an ethos of confrontation and disruption, *FF* does not temper its arguments for viewers with opposing ideals, as seen in the other case studies. Instead, anger and humor work together to further the show's arguments for viewers' reflection and action.

The show channels this anger towards recognition of the racism and xenophobia that made Trump's election possible. Calling for more intersectional representation in U.S. politics, the show draws on the material experiences of its staff and viewers to expose the racism behind seemingly innocuous arguments within popular discourse. Showcasing the potential of a feminist ethos in today's satire, *FF* intervenes within normative narratives of political and social oppression, modeling a rhetorical resistance to patriarchal and white supremacist structures that perpetuate institutionalized sexism and racism. This unique ethos also enables the show to address contentious topics, issues, and arguments glossed over or ignored in mainstream and other satire news shows. When compared with the other case studies, this chapter further demonstrates the impact of a satirist's identity over their reception, emphasizing the embodied nature of satire.

Together, the analyses of *SNL*, *LWT*, and *FF* highlight the different ways in which political satire has shifted to respond to changing dynamics between politics and entertainment,

and between viewers' roles as consumers and citizens. All of the shows use satire to provide viewers with an opportunity to reflect on and hone their information literacies, as they engage with humor and affect as sources of political education. Collectively, the individual analyses in this study provide a more complex understanding of the rhetorical processes at work within contemporary satire, and why the genre is growing both in popularity and as a source of legitimate news. In this way, this dissertation provides "a better understanding of the ideological and ethical functions of political comedy and its contributions to contemporary discourses on gender, power, and citizenship" (Becker and Waisanen 175). In addition, this study points to the importance and potential of affect as a rhetorical strategy within today's political satire. The shows' different engagements with affect are central in their response to the spectacle and division of political discourse since the 2016 election.

In this way, the shows present satire as a tool for recognizing how emotion impacts civic literacies. In fact, in a 2014 study of the effects of viewing *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *The Colbert Report* on emotional attitudes toward political candidates and policies, researchers, working from quantitative data, reaffirmed previous acknowledgements of these shows' potential for "invigorat[ing] the participatory souls of citizens while inviting viewers to talk and play with the affective qualities inherent in sarcastic humor" (Lee and Kwak 325). While this study is more concerned with the rhetorical processes of these shows than their effects,[79] it does demonstrate the unique ways in which each show employs emotion to traverse the dual rhetorical goals of humor and social commentary. While I pose the emotional awareness that the shows model as integral to the development of a critical civic and information literacy, this project does not

[79] For more on how the effects of satire over viewers' civic literacies, see Jones and Geoffrey; Baumgartner.

engage explicitly with how the shows' affect the ways in which viewers exercise this civic literacy, apart from their responses on *YouTube*. Future iterations of this project could more fully address the potential of satire as a force for engaging civic literacies as well as its limitations for doing so.

While still predominantly identified as forms of entertainment, political satire news shows respond to the mix of information and entertainment that pervades mainstream news. Rhetorical scrutiny of these shows yields insight into what they offer viewers and how they contribute to new definitions of what informed citizenship and political participation can look like today. Overall, this study demonstrates the potential of satire for timely and critical social commentary that can inspire alternative forms of consciousness raising and political participation.

Throughout this study, I have resisted arguments that identify all political satire as partisan in nature. The variability in topic and style across the genre—as well as the case studies examined in this dissertation—preclude blanket observations of how partisan bias manifests in political satire. In addition, while the shows analyzed here all express the subjective perspectives of the writers and performers, that does not prevent them from delivering substantive commentary that has the potential for encouraging viewers' critical reflection.[80] However, the viewership of these shows has and continues to be liberal leaning. As such, a rhetorical study of today's political satire must question the breadth of the critical literacies that these shows can impart. Therefore, this dissertation acknowledges how these shows could be contributing to the issues of misinformation and partisan media consumption outlined by critics of the genre.

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[80] For more on the relationship between bias, the delivery of political satire news shows, and their potential for imparting critical information literacies, please refer back to my analysis of *LWT* in chapter three.

For example, the shows' condensed coverage of complex news stories can skew important issues that require viewers' deeper consideration. Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca acknowledge this risk, arguing that humor in argumentation can lead to "a communion between a hearer and his [sic] hearers, in reducing value, in particular making fun of the opponent, and making convenient diversions'' (163). All of the shows engage in easy, quick, and even oppressive jokes that can alienate or make fun of those with opposing opinions. For example, attacks on politicians' looks are common across all three of the shows analyzed. Such attacks have the potential for advancing sexist, racist, and ableist modes of thinking. While their use of cheap jokes is part of their commercial success and the quick format is central to the genre and its mockery of corporate news outlets, acknowledgement of these issues is necessary. Yet, these issues do not circumvent the shows' potential for modeling critical information literacies that traverse normative boundaries between the personal and political. The examination of the shows' circulation in this study works to demonstrate this, as viewers critically respond with their own affective and rhetorical arguments, even outwardly rejecting the shows as valid sources of political education. The potential problematics surrounding the shows notwithstanding, this analysis points to the ever-complex dynamics between humor, emotion, and political argumentation. It is these dynamics that shows like *SNL*, *LWT*, and *FF* continue to play with and work from, offering viewers the chance to enjoy—and possibly act upon—the type of rhetorical intervention that is most moving for them.

Implications and Contributions

This study, given its engagement with different topoi, contexts, and methodologies, contributes to a variety of disciplines. First, this project contributes an examination of political satire news shows that is otherwise absent from the field of rhetorical studies. Focusing on the

rhetorical processes of these shows complicates the affective feedback loop of cynicism that is often associated with contemporary political satire. Second, the combination of classical models of humor, feminist and queer studies of affect, and circulation studies in this project contributes a multifaceted methodology for examining other sources of political education gaining in popularity. In addition, this dissertation contributes to the field of rhetorical history by applying classical models to the analysis of contemporary rhetorics and emergent information literacies.

Third, given the dynamics between humor and activism within the *LWT* and *FF* case studies, this dissertation points to the potential of satire as a tool for consciousness raising, thereby advancing the goals of feminist rhetorical studies. For instance, feminist rhetoricians work towards more inclusive modes of inquiry that address the complexities of power, identity, and gender difference within the rhetorical situation. Overall, feminist models destabilize essentializing arguments about the rhetorical situation, making room for the material and realistic ways in which rhetoric functions. Royster and Kirsch summarize feminist studies as "offer[ing] multiple mechanisms for enhancing our interpretive capacity with regard to the symphonic and polylogical ways in which rhetoric functions as a human asset" (Royster and Kirsch 132). In this study, feminist models help to reveal how the shows' rhetorical strategies respond to shifting exigencies and contexts surrounding political discourse, power, and participation. In addition, by focusing on the rhetorical and affective dynamics of the shows, this study demonstrates the efficacy of emotion as a lens for rhetorical analysis of the complexity and unpredictability with which contemporary political satire is executed, received, and circulated.

The attention to rhetorical circulation in this study works to productively complicate arguments about satire's reception, while also contributing to the ongoing work of circulation studies in the field. For instance, this project positions contemporary political satire as a

networked rhetorical enterprise. The shows gain political traction through circulation, as viewers exercise the critical literacies modeled by the shows through their interaction with and responses to their arguments. Engaging with how viewers respond to the shows' emotional appeals also works to interject nuance into claims that these shows only encourage apathy and cynicism in viewers. This study demonstrates the affective dynamics of satire's circulation, as I analyze how the shows design arguments for circulation and how their emotional appeals take on new meanings and resonance via circulation. Overall, my engagement with circulation in this study presents an ecological view of contemporary satire as an affective network uniquely fit for current practices of media consumption and political participation. By emphasizing contemporary satire's engagement with rhetoric designed for circulation, I offer further insight into how the rhetorical tradition of political satire in the U.S. has changed over time.

Tracing the impact of emotion over circulation and vice versa, as this study does, can also help rhetors, students, and consumers recognize their affective experiences as politically generative. Finally, my engagement with affect and circulation in this dissertation offers the field methodologies for tracing how satire's arguments and resonance take on new meanings as they travel across different modes and contexts. However, there were limitations in my engagement with circulation in this study, as I only engaged with viewers' *YouTube* comments posted in response to the clips analyzed. More comprehensive claims about political satire's circulation would require analysis across more nodes, mediums, and platforms. For instance, the use of *Twitter* to encourage viewers' civic engagement would be a productive area of inquiry for future studies into the circulation of political satire news shows.

Finally, while not the focus of my analysis, this project speaks to the pedagogical applications of political satire in rhetoric and composition. Study of contemporary political satire

in the writing classroom yields models for rhetorical analysis, while offering students an opportunity to reflect on their own information literacies. For instance, Jane Fife positions satire as helping students develop audience awareness. In addition, integrating humor into composition courses can prompt students' critical inquiries into rhetorical exigency and context, as they explore satire that analyzes and repackages arguments from other sources (Daiute; Weber). The effects of humor on collaboration has also been recognized in Writing Studies (i.e., Hall; Jordan).[81] The pedagogical implications of political satire new shows warrant further examination in future iterations of this project. To explore how political satire news shows can be incorporated into rhetoric and composition classrooms, I would begin by introducing them more into my own teaching. Instead of using them in one exercise or lesson plan as I have done previously, I would integrate satire as content for analysis throughout a composition course. For example, analyzing political satire's use of pastiche and mockery could help teach students about rhetorical invention and how its response to current events contributes to its execution of effective arguments. In addition, students' analysis of satirists' humorous timing could help them better understand the relationship between a rhetor's delivery and ability to be persuasive. Finally, having students create their own satirical arguments would provide them with an opportunity to critically engage with source information as they parody and expand upon previous arguments.

The implications of my findings reach beyond the field of rhetoric and composition, as I contribute an interdisciplinary examination of satire's political and rhetorical capital within our current milieu. Responding to a gap in the scholarship on satire that examines either the content

[81] For more on how satire and humor have been used in composition pedagogies, see Raskin.

or effects of political comedy,[82] my dissertation looks simultaneously at the production and circulation of these shows to make claims about their resonance within contemporary discourse. This project offers insight into how and why viewers are turning to political satire shows as a reliable source of news. As a result, my project contributes to work taking place in political science, critical affect studies, journalism, and popular culture studies. In addition, my analysis of satire's circulation responds to questions posed by scholars across the Humanities, as I offer insight into the ever-shifting relationship between technology and civic literacy practices. More broadly, my project contributes an inquiry into a popular source of information that disrupts normative divisions between emotion and reason, entertainment and news, and more generally, the personal and political.

As with any rhetorical study, I encountered challenges and limitations. For instance, analyzing emotion in a nuanced and ethical manner is always tricky, given the subjective nature of emotion and ever-present risk of misrepresentation. I managed this challenge recursively throughout my study by grounding my analysis in feminist and queer models that resist normative judgements of how emotion is expressed, received, and interpreted. The partisan bias of the shows and their viewership was a dynamic that I struggled to contend with throughout this project. To address this, I remain focused on the processes and strategies of the shows' rhetoric, avoiding claims about the effects of their arguments on viewers. Drawing from the history of political satire also helped me to counter generalized and anachronistic criticisms of contemporary satire's bias. I also struggled to represent the collaborative nature of the shows' authorship throughout my analyses, given the many actors and stakeholders involved in writing, production, and editing processes. In addition, I acknowledge the shows' commercial motives,

[82] For more on the gap in scholarship that I am referring to, see Becker and Waisanen.

but do not analyze how these motives influence or manifest in the arguments analyzed. Finally, while I engage with questions of embodiment in the *FF* chapter in relation to gender, this study does not contend with inquiries into how race and other positionalities impact satire's reception. The gaps and limitations of this study into the affordances and risks of political satire directly inform the areas of future research that I identify in the following section.

Areas of Future Study

While completing this dissertation, I encountered several lines of inquiry that I would like to pursue more copiously in the future. The most prominent is the potential of satire as a tool for feminist consciousness raising and activism. I touched upon this topic in my analysis of *FF* in chapter four. Future iterations of this work would examine other sites of feminist satire across different mediums, such as the performance art of groups like Guerilla Girls and lesser known women satirists. Given the long history of feminist satire, the recognition of women's rights movements like #MeToo and the Women's March, and the recent resurgence of political satire's popularity in the U.S., this is an exigent moment for deeper exploration of the rhetorical dynamics of feminist humor. While my study is limited to satire in the U.S. in the interest of scope, I noted some interesting parallels between the shows I analyzed and satire from other countries. A comparative analysis between international satire and the evolution of political satire in the U.S. would illuminate these parallels while also making my current study more inclusive.

In addition to the locale of the shows analyzed, my study is limited to examples that are currently popular, and therefore commercially successful. While my research questions rely on examining political satire that is most resonant with the current audience and milieu, examining less corporatized examples of satire would also be informative. The production and circulation of

these shows is undoubtedly influenced by their overarching goal to make a profit and solicit the most viewers or subscribers. As such, examining forms of satire, such as those on social media or other independent, consumer-driven platforms, might yield more complex findings regarding satire's response to changes in the political landscape. In a recent interview, journalist, author, and activist Chris Hedges acknowledges the disconnect between satire's success and its traditional goal of dissent, stating,

> Satire becomes destroyed in essence in the hands of figures like Colbert and John Stewart and others because they will attack the excesses and foibles of the system but they're never going to expose the system itself because they're all millionaires, they're commercially supported…. If you really use satire the way Swift used satire to expose the English barbarity in Ireland, you're going to be very lonely. (Gann)

The conflicts between the recent success of political satire news shows and their ability to adhere to the genre's tradition of rebellion are important and exploring them would productively complicate the claims I have made about the rhetorical character of these shows. Such an exploration might also yield insight into why some satire shows, such as *The Nightly Show with Larry Wilmore* and the conservative-leaning *The Week That Was*, were unable to garner the same commercial success as *SNL*, *LWT*, and *FF*. In addition, a comparative analysis between less corporatized examples of political satire and this study would be beneficial in understanding the impact of a satirist's positionality on its reception. Furthermore, broadening the scope of the case studies would also help me to more fully address how satire's engagement with rhetorical humor and affect changes across different mediums, modes, and audiences. For example, further exploration into questions surrounding the rhetorical impact of the shows' production processes, such as the inclusion of a laugh track and the taping in front of a live audience, would be fruitful lines of inquiry in the future.

Because this project begins with an examination of the rhetorical strategies, goals, and circulation of political satire news shows, it serves as a foundation for all of these possible areas of future study as well as other interdisciplinary examinations into the evolution of satire. Given the simultaneous timeliness and timelessness of political satire as a rhetorical genre, it will continue to morph its strategies and goals to reflect the dominant literacies of a particular moment. Since writing this project, political satire has continued to pervade contemporary debate and grow in popularity. For instance, *SNL*'s impersonations of Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, Sean Spicer, and Jeff Sessions continue to dominate recaps on mainstream news outlets like CNN and Fox News. Bee's reference to Ivanka Trump with an expletive and criticism of her role in the White House garnered national coverage and sparked a renewed debate on political correctness in comedy. *SNL*'s news segment, "Weekend Update" has recently been picked up and will air as its own show on NBC.

Some have cited the absurdity and spectacle of politics and rampant spread of misinformation as rendering today's political satire redundant, unnecessary, or toothless.[83] Yet, if we look at today's satire as a rhetorical and affective source of political education, we can begin to see shows like *SNL*, *LWT*, and *FF* as working to mobilize what Ann Cvetkovich calls *slow living*, a feminist practice for recognizing and dwelling in the affective dimensions of politics as a source of critique and invention (168). Furthermore, if we prescribe to the notion that "an analytic act is a political act" (Lakoff 122), then perhaps analyzing satire as a site of political education may also help to identify—and then mitigate—the degree to which humor and emotion in popular media impede cross-ideological debate by accounting for the inextricable affectivity

[83] For instance, see Smith and Warner.

of all political processes. The rhetorical precarity[84] that will always characterize the genre of political satire will also make its study an ever-evolving endeavor that I look forward to continuing to contribute to in the future.

[84] Throughout this project, I use this term to reflect the subjectivity, contextuality, and unpredictability of emotion and humor as rhetorical strategies, particularly in relation to political structures. My usage is similar to how the term operates in Anthropology, in that it is associated with social marginalization and emergent power dynamics (*Cambridge Encyclopedia*). Working from this approach, Judith Butler defines precarity as "the politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks" (25). For more on how I apply this term in my analysis, see chapter four.

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Zoglin, Richard. "To Understand How to Beat Trump in 2020, Democrats Should Look to Comedians." *The Washington Post*, 18 June 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/to-understand-how-to-beat-trump-in-2020-democrats-should-look-to-comedians/2019/06/18/874122aa-91d9-11e9-b570-6416efdc0803_story.html?tid=lk_inline_manual_32&itid=lk_inline_manual_32. Accessed October 2019.

Zorthian, Julia. "John Oliver's 'Donald Drumpf' Segment Broke HBO Viewing Records." *Time*, 31 March 2016, https://time.com/4277790/john-oliver/. Accessed August 2018.

Zwagerman, Sean. *Wit's End: Women's Humor as Rhetorical & Performative Strategy*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2010.

Vita

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EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Composition and Cultural Rhetoric, Syracuse University, May 2020.
2019-2020 Dissertation Fellow
C.A.S. in Women's and Gender Studies
Certificate of University Teaching
Dissertation: "Mobilizing Affect: The Rhetoric and Circulation of Popular Political Satire News Shows"
Dissertation Director: Dr. Lois Agnew

M.A. in English Education, Appalachian State University, 2013.
Rhetoric and Composition Graduate Certificate
Thesis: "Writing in the Now: Cultural Consciousness and Critical Pedagogy in the Information Age of Composition"
Thesis Director: Dr. Lynn Searfoss

M.A. in Liberal Studies, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, 2011.
Thesis: "Bang Your Head to the *Beat* of Non-Conformity"
Director: Dr. Mika Elovaara

B.F.A. in Theater, Summa Cum Laude, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, 2008.

PUBLICATIONS *(* denotes invited publications*)

*"Review of *Reframing the Relational: A Pedagogical Ethic for Cross-Curricular Literacy Work.*" *The WAC Journal,* vol. 29, 2018, pp. 247-51.

"WAC and Transfer: Towards a Transdisciplinary View of Academic Writing." (2018). *Across the Disciplines,* vol. 15, no. 3, 2018, pp. 48-62.

*with Rebecca Moore Howard, *Instructor's Manual* for *Writing Matters*, 3rd Edition E-book, McGraw Hill, 2018.

"Review of *Placing the History of College Writing: Stories from the Incomplete Archive*." *The WAC Journal*, vol. 28, 2017, pp. 139-45.

*"Bang Your Head to the *Beat* of Non-Conformity." *Unity in Disparity: Cultural Connections to Metal*. Eds., Mika Elovaara and Bryan Bardine. 2017, pp. 120-142.

*"SWR Interview with Tiffany Rousculp." Studies in Writing and Rhetoric Series. *National Council of Teachers of English*. April 2016. https://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/swr/interviews/rousculp

In-Progress

"'Making Room to Speak Truth': Diane di Prima's Feminist Rhetoric."

with Georgia Rhoades, "The Women's Writing Pilgrimage: A WAC Program's Feminist Reflections."

Popular Writing

Gender and Sexuality Columnist, *The Daily Orange*, Syracuse University, September 2017-May 2018.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2017-2020	Co-Principal Investigator & Lead Grant Writer The Citation Project, Phase IV: Students and Their Sources
2015-2019	Consultant, The Writing Center, Syracuse University
2015-2019	Instructor, Writing Studies, Rhetoric, and Composition Department, Syracuse University
2016-2017	Assistant Director of Teacher Assistant Education, Writing Studies, Rhetoric, & Composition Department, Syracuse University
2016	Planner, Composition & Cultural Rhetoric Program's Annual Community Day, Syracuse University
2014-2015	Composition Collaborative Mentor, Rhetoric and Composition Program, Appalachian State University
2013-2015	Consultant, Writing Across the Curriculum Program, Appalachian State University
2013-2015	Faculty Mentor, WAC Program, Appalachian State University
2013-2015	Faculty Consultant, University Writing Center, Appalachian State University
2013-2015	Full-Time Rhetoric and Composition Lecturer, English Department, Appalachian State University

2012-2013 Graduate Teaching Assistant, English Department, Appalachian State University

2011-2012 Graduate Research Assistant, Leadership and Educational Studies, Appalachian State University

TEACHING

2015-2019 Syracuse University
WRT 105: First-Year Practices of Academic Writing
WRT 205: Second-Year Critical Research
WRT 307: Third-Year Professional Writing

2012-2015 Appalachian State University
Upward Bound Summer Course, "Creative Compositions"
ENG 0900: First-Year Basic Writing
ENG 1000: First-Year Expository Writing (Service Learning)
ENG 2001: Second-Year Introduction to Writing Across the Curriculum (5)

EDITING EXPERIENCE

2016-2020 Assistant Editor
Studies in Writing and Rhetoric Series, NCTE

2016-2020 Graduate Student Editorial Board Member
Studies in Writing and Rhetoric Series, NCTE

2017 Freelance Editor & Developer
Connect Activities for McGraw Hill Education to Accompany *Writing Matters,* 3rd Ed.

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

Invited Talks

"Using Cicero to Analyze Popular Rhetorics" for Krista Kennedy's WRT 255 Course, Syracuse University, 2019.
"Writing Beyond Academic Contexts," Writing Across Institutions Conference, WAC Program, Appalachian State University, 2018 (compensated).
"Teaching Portfolios," Writing Studies, Rhetoric, & Composition Department, Syracuse University, 2016.
"Writing Center Consultants Expert Panel" for Ben Erwin's WRT 331 Course, Writing Center, Syracuse University, 2015.

"Rhetorical Analysis in Writing Across the Curriculum," English 112 Institute for Community College Faculty, 2014, WAC Program, Appalachian State University, 2014.

Conferences

"Affective Virality: Humor in Contemporary Feminist Activism," 2019
Feminist Rhetorics Conference, Harrisonburg, Virginia
"Mobilizing Affect: The Rhetoric and Circulation of Full Frontal with Samantha Bee," 2019
Conference on College Composition and Communication, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
"A Modern Forum for Remixing Political Rhetoric: A Rhetorical and Historical Analysis of Political Satire News Shows," 2018
Rhetoric Society of America Conference, Minneapolis, Minnesota
"WAC as Ecological Practice," 2017
Conference on College Composition and Communication, Portland, Oregon
"The Power of Disciplinary Identity: Student Agency Across the Curriculum," 2016
Conference on College Composition and Communication, Houston, Texas
"A Balancing Act: Encouraging Critical Media Literacy in the College Comp. Classroom," 2015
Student Success in Writing Conference, Savannah, Georgia
"Media Literacy in Global Learning," 2014
Global Learning Symposium Appalachian State University, Boone, NC
"Diane di Prima: Uncovering the *Beatiful* Truth," 2014
Southeastern Women's Studies Association, University of North Carolina at Wilmington
"Creating a Writing Culture Across Campus Through the University Writing Center," 2014
Southeastern Writing Center Association, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC

GRANTS & AWARDS

2019-2020 Research Excellence Doctoral Funding Dissertation Fellowship
2017 Graduate Student Association Travel Award Grant, Syracuse University
2016 Graduate Student Association Travel Award Grant, Syracuse University
2014-2015 Transfer Advisory Board Project Grant, Appalachian State University
2014 Global Learning Communities Grant, Faculty and Academic Development, Appalachian State University
2014 Most Helpful Faculty and Staff Award (student-nominated)
2013-2014 Transfer Advisory Board Travel Grant, Appalachian State University

SELECTED SERVICE

Reviewer
Double Helix: A Journal of Critical Thinking and Writing, The WAC Clearinghouse, November 2019.
Member
Search Committee for WAC Director, Writing Studies, Rhetoric, & Composition Department, Syracuse University, 2018.

Member
Graduate Committee, Writing Studies, Rhetoric, & Composition Department, Syracuse University January 2017-May 2018.
Member
Lower Division Committee, Writing Studies, Rhetoric, & Composition Department, Syracuse University, January 2016-May 2017.
Organizer & Moderator
"Engaging Food Politics in the Writing Classroom with Dr. Eileen Schell," WAC Program, Appalachian State University, 2015.
Organizer
"A-portfolio Institute/Using Digication for Portfolios," WAC Program, Appalachian State University, 2015.
Chair
Rhetoric and Composition Faculty Development Subcommittee, Rhetoric and Composition Program, Appalachian State University, August 2014-May 2015.
Organizer
Writing Across Institutions Conference, WAC Program, Appalachian State University, 2014, 2015.
Workshop Organizer & Leader
"Service Learning and Linked Courses," WAC Program, Appalachian State University, 2014, 2015.
Member
Appalachian & the Community Together (ACT) Service Learning Council, September 2014-May 2015.
Member
Rhetoric and Composition Advisory Committee, Rhetoric and Composition Program, Appalachian State University, August 2013-May 2015.
Member
Non-Tenure Track Search Committee, Rhetoric and Composition Program, Appalachian State University, August 2013-May 2015.
Ex Officio
Celebration of Student Writing Steering Committee, Rhetoric and Composition Program, Appalachian State University, August 2013-May 2014.
Founder & Organizer
Annual New Faculty Reception, WAC Program, Appalachian State University, 2013, 2014.

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Attendee
"Reimagining Student Writers: Writing Across the Curriculum," Writing Studies, Rhetoric, & Composition Department, Syracuse University, 2018.
Colloquium Participant
"Balancing Community and Individual Pedagogies," Dr. Lois Agnew and Jessica Corey, Syracuse University, 2016.

Workshop Participant
"Source Use and Strengthening Student Voice," Dr. Rebecca Howard, The Writing Center, Syracuse University, 2016.
Attendee
"Reimagining Student Writers: Disciplinary Perspectives on Teaching 'Good Writing'," Writing Studies, Rhetoric, & Composition Department, Syracuse University, 2016.
Workshop Participant
"Threshold Concepts About Writing: What Do We Know and How can that Knowledge Inform Our Work?," Dr. Elizabeth Wardle, University of Central Florida, 2015.
Workshop Participant
"Building a Budget in Grant Writing," Appalachian State University, 2014.
Workshop Participant
"Ethnography and Composition," Dr. Beverly Moss, The Ohio State, 2014.
University, Rhetoric and Composition Program, Appalachian State University

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Association of Writing Across the Curriculum
College Composition and Composition
National Women's Studies Association
Rhetoric Society of America