

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPgSDJ_qIZI

- Reminds me of Rachel
 - She understands the ridiculous sexist games that are at play
 - She maintains an attitude that she can change things
 - Tenacious

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cP7e2URS0ZE>

- 16:30 Constance
 - Not just about reality TV but about lots of other aspects of the business
 - Crew families and the show is made very collaboratively
- 18:30
 - Perception vs Reality
 - Nobody on set cares about what network
 - A good show can exist anywhere
 - Lifetime was very supportive (maybe even thirsty) and made a great show
 - Dark/Edgier than an audience may expect
- 25:20
 - “Morality is kind of what the whole show is about. There’s an idea that millennials are kind of post-moral. I don’t know if you guys have heard of this but like morals kind of no longer exist, and notion of selling out no longer exists because it’s all about self publishing and self-promotion. It’s kind of quaint to have morals. It’s very, like, cute? And I’m of the mindset that primates who don’t live by some sort of code that’s consistent actually lose their minds. I actually think that people completely untethered will go insane and so that’s kind of the founding premise of the show. Like we’re adrift at this point where we’re post moral but we can’t actually live that way so I think it’s really really important. And one thing about the Rachel character, we literally put her character’s central conflict on her chest because we don’t want anyone to miss it you know she’s a feminist working on a very sexist show so it’s clear to us that that is again like kind of Faustian. It’s a battle for her soul in a very clear way. She’s confronting it every single day. And then the thing about Quinn is that she’s the only person in the whole equation being honest. She just tells it like it is and so the question is, is somebody deluding their self they’re a good person more moral or somebody who’s just confronting what’s real more moral”
- 29:00
 - Constance describing being an actress starting out her career
 - Agents would want her to do things to look “pretty” like Maxim centerfolds or whatever despite that not being what she wanted for her career
 - The way she describes being manipulated into that sounds remarkably like the producers on Unreal trying to get suitors to do what they want

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVr7T2shuOQ>

- Seth: We watch these shows and think so much about the people on camera, what kind of people they are, pick their flaws apart, etc. The producers are often just as flawed

“How women really are”

- Reality tv is inherently labeled as feminine because it is viewed primarily by women just like daytime tv. This is compounded in shows about courtship, marriage, domesticity, “the lowest of the low culture”
 - That dude on morning joe prefaces his rant with how he was only watching it because of his wife and is mocked
 - Not as much scholarly material because what goes on in the home (women’s space) is less important than what goes on outside (men’s space)
- Similarities to 18th century literary fiction
 - Both ask what reality is and how it can be most accurately represented
 - “Literary historian Lennard Davis explains that, in contrast to earlier modes of fiction, the eighteenth-century novel needed to assert its veracity in order to promote the moral improvement of its readers. In effect, the reader was split into the gullible reader who first believed in the work’s veracity, and then a savvy reader, who recognized its necessary fictionality
 - “Audiences acknowledge the shows’ artifices, but believe that their content reveals moments of intimate truth about real people...Viewers consent to being ‘deceived’ because they believe they are not really being tricked; they allow the shows to manipulate them and their emotions because they believe, ultimately, that some good will come of it. They believe they will learn more about human nature, about what kinds of people to trust, and whom to avoid”
- Dating shows turn ordinary people into celebrities that you might see on the cover of a tabloid magazine right alongside a truly famous person. Illusion of American Dream?
- “In turn, domestic fiction tended to focus on the lives of everyday people while ridiculing the excesses of the wealthy. But this was at the dawn of capitalism, when its democratizing promises seemed possible. Why now, when the middle-class is shrinking, do we celebrate the everyday?”
- “Today, however, viewers tend to privilege the representation of reality on television over their own lived reality. In other words, as Baudrillard had articulated, the teleological drive of capitalism is an increasing emphasis on the sign and a decreasing emphasis on the signified. Our real experience (the signified), becomes less visible, less important as it is gradually replaced by the representation of ‘reality’ (the sign)”
- Marriage is the end goal of all the female contestants on the show despite being successful (usually) and educated and knowing that the guy they want to propose to them will be cheating on them until at least said proposal.
 - UnReal season 3 seems to be more concerned with bedding the female suitress (another example of the difference between male and female roles)
 - “The ‘angel in the house’ wins the wealthy bachelor by demonstrating her moral superiority over his other choices - and, ultimately, by reforming him from a swinging playboy to solid, middle-class, husband material”

- “The woman who wins, wins on the basis of her virtue (i.e., her willingness to be humiliated on national TV in the name of love)”
- “In late-capitalism, one can embrace conspicuous consumption as long as one professes not to really care about conspicuous consumption”
 - This facade that we all accept kind of sums up the entirety of the show

Reality Television, Affect, and Intimacy: Reality Matters

- Love makes sense as a subject for this genre/medium of false reality because it is oddly similar. They are both “open to doubts about whether it is real, always begging to be proved or performed, love even has the putative power to skew one’s view of reality (as paradoxical proof that you’re really ‘in’ it).”
- The Bachelor goes against the accepted public knowledge that love is something you just feel “balls to bones” by playing it out as a competition week by week in front of a national TV audience. If you just know, what’s the pull?
 - I think part of the reason we watch is *because* we realize that it is a flawed idea that might still produce the results/feelings that we’re looking for
- Television also makes perfect sense for such a show since it is streamed into homes
 - “The reality of the televisual world and the reality of being in love comes down to a matter of feeling”
 - “Public space of nested boxes”
 - The show demands a public proclamation of love (engagement, wedding, etc.)
- “By presenting myself to the other as the One, by projecting myself towards the other’s gaze as the loved object, I find myself humming from balls to bones”
- Dating shows matching strangers dates back to The Dating Game (1965)
 - The Bachelor is different in that it follows the “intimate strangers” model being in a house and that they don’t play for a casual fling, they’re playing for keeps
- Asserts love through serialization of emotional performance
 - They come to know each other as we come to know them
- The Bachelor replaces the freakshow element with Hollywood elegance
- Structure of show is meant to simulate the “socially coded process of becoming intimate”: group, one-on-one, meeting the parents, sex, bring them back to your parents
- Polygamy here is the path to monogamy and is necessary, otherwise how can you confirm that you are in love?
- “Not all lovers must be beautiful, but they should be more or less in the same ‘league.’”

20/20 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZXyqpCWRenA>

- Melissa
 - Melissa
 - This was my way of coping with heartbreak, I didn’t expect to fall in love
 - Self-described hopeless romantic
 - Just as much a competition as a search for love
 - She knew they were breaking up but not that he was picking the other girl
 - “I wasn’t innocent, I wasn’t a victim, I knew the relationship was over”

- I was angry that they lied to me
 - “At the expense of my emotion, got the episode that they wanted”
- Reporter
 - “You signed up for it”
 - She turned it into fame and a career
- Producer
 - “We didn’t want him to spill the beans off camera”
 - “We went with the truth”
- Brad
 - “I led them on”
 - Picked a ring
 - Made promises
 - Fantasy suite
 - I intentionally misled them
 - The producers wanted him to pick someone but ultimately were pretty happy that he didn’t since it was unpredictable and good TV. For the Bachelor, any press is good press.
 - J Note: Why is that? Why don’t we care how poorly these people are treated?
 - They signed up for it
 - There is at least an effort to make it look classy and to pretend that there is a real payoff in the end
 - There is in some ways, being The Bachelor or Bachelorette provides the opportunity for money and fame regardless of success
 - Producer: “Let him blow both of these girls out of the water...that might be cool”

The Surveillance of Women on Reality Television: Watching The Bachelor and The Bachelorette

- “This book assumes that whatever we see on the show is a narrative put together by producers and editors from a tiny percentage of the miles of footage shot. I take film scholar Stam’s approach to the study of screen media and see characters in reality TV shows ‘not as real people, but rather as discursive constructions”
- Confessions
 - Aren’t private and aren’t monologues, they’re interviews with producers trained to push buttons and elicit response
 - They are integral for the story so that we understand what characters are thinking and their motivations

Bachelor Podcast

- Arie Finale 7:50: For weeks and weeks and weeks you’re breaking people’s hearts day after day, should bring out emotion

- After the Final Rose 0:50: It really is crazy to me that the Bachelor year after year, no matter how boring, brings me to the edge of my seat at one point
- After the Final Rose 3:45: We're in this for love
- After the Final Rose 8:45: Every season is a trainwreck, we just want to know if it will lead to love or not
- After the Final Rose 17:15: Arie wanted to turn everything on himself and maybe that's bs but it worked because it made Becca the most popular Bachelorette ever
- It is literally designed to turn people against each other. Is there a humane way to do this? Probably not. Does that lower the bar or does it eliminate it entirely?

Brainstorm

I'm looking more for the parallels of power between viewers and producers. How we both know that what we're watching/creating isn't real, but that it does affect reality. Why do we sit in on Becca's 15 minute unedited meltdown? Although we also knew that this relationship couldn't possibly work, her reaction feels genuine. Is it just the same idea as torturing you Sims? Power struggle between producers and produced. How much of a person's reaction is authentic to themselves, and how much is based on the manipulation of the producers, and does it really matter? If you are manipulated into doing something, that doesn't excuse your actions or completely separate you from responsibility but it also doesn't not right?

Some of the most watched shows of 2017 depict moral wastelands: The Walking Dead, Game of Thrones, and Sunday Night Football, just kidding, The Big Bang Theory is a much bigger moral compromise.

When you root for a contestant you want them to win but you also don't because The Bachelor sucks and it wouldn't be what's best for them. But in reality it's not what's best for them vs what they want, it's what you want vs what they want

Outline

I. Introduction

- A. Unreal clip next to the bachelor? Play season 1 finale?
- B. Unreal is obviously a commentary on true love reality shows like The Bachelor, but what isn't as obvious is how layered its approach is
 - 1. Manipulation, the producers on the cast, for their fictional audience, and also often in a way that reads completely differently for us, knowing the whole story
 - 2. But it's not like we don't know this is happening on The Bachelor, I mean this is how last season ended
- C. Unreal is about morality, but more than anything, it's about honesty, truth, and if that even matters, which - in a roundabout way - is exactly what The Bachelor is about.
- D. Thesis: Our experiences watching The Bachelor and Unreal are flip sides of the same coin, because they both ask us the same questions, just in completely different contexts.
 - 1. Only talking about season 1 Unreal and this season of The Bachelor for the sake of simplification

II. Why is that special?

- A. It's deconstructing its target to its key ideas, and building a new perspective of those ideas around the original piece

III. What are the questions?

- A. Do the ends justify the means
- B. Faust
- C. What is real and does it matter

IV. Where does it do this?

- A. Machiavelli
 - 1. The Bachelor
 - a) Do we accept love in the wake of all of this heartbreak?
 - b) Is it okay to date and dump 19 of 20 women if it helps you find love?
 - (1) Would it even if you're just supposed to know?
 - c) By framing it in the lovey-dovey packaging, it seems like yes
 - 2. Unreal
 - a) Is it okay to do what they do to produce great TV?
 - b) By framing it in the seedy underbelly of the BTS, it seems like no
- B. Faust
 - 1. Well what if they signed up for it?
 - a) Part of the genius of focusing on this section is that we haven't even really answered the first part before adding in this variable
 - 2. The Bachelor exposure/The Bachelorette

- a) It's very hard to say no, the price you pay is humiliation (shoveling horse shit as that book said)
 - b) Grace tries the same idea and nearly wins at the end of Unreal season 1
 - c) Even for those who aren't doing so with exposure, love comes at a similar cost, and at a much smaller payoff
 - (1) Quinn: "Love's swell but is it really something to build your life around?"
- 3. Unreal represents a "Faustian dilemma" to Rachel in the same way that we're presented with one at the heart of The Bachelor. By buying into the system, Rachel experiences the same power that we do. We know that this isn't reality, but it is reality-adjacent.
 - a) She gets her sense of power from manipulating reality and playing God
 - b) Ours is rooted in voyeurism, that we're being allowed to follow closely something that we never could before
- 4. Does the show bring out your ugly side or are you just ugly?
 - a) If you are manipulated into doing something, does that separate you from your actions? Nature vs Nurture

C. Honesty

- 1. How honest is The Bachelor?
 - a) Kind of
- 2. How much of a person's reaction is authentic to themselves, and how much is based on the manipulation of the producers, and does it really matter?
 - a) If you are manipulated into doing something, that doesn't excuse your actions or completely separate you from responsibility but it also doesn't not right?
 - b) A lot of talk about being fake or whatnot
- 3. Unreal takes that question and pivots it. Quinn is totally transparent about all of the manipulation, but just because she's honest and they signed up for it, does that make it okay?
 - a) Quinn is producing Rachel because she "knows what's best for her", don't we assume we know what's best when we root for different characters watching The Bachelor?
- 4. Adam: "I'm trying to figure out what's real here" but he's not in that moment. The contestants accept the bonkers terms and still think there is a shred of reality in there, and there is. It's reality-adjacent. Unreal is about honesty and truth I think just as much as morality. Honesty and truth being stand-ins for 'reality'. Is love the biggest lie of them all?

V. Conclusion

- A. Visual art is all about manipulation at some level. We're shown something that's meant to make us feel a certain way. The subject, the context, and the way it's

depicted all help shape what our response will be. At some level, the whole exercise assumes that we have less free will than we'd like to admit. Provided some kind of stimulus, we're bound to react in the intended way.