Women First, Journalists Second

Representation and Portrayal of Female Journalists in Film and Television Series: *The Newsroom* and *The Hour*

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Abstract

In this thesis I investigate how female journalists are portrayed and represented in HBO’s \textit{The Newsroom} and BBC’s \textit{The Hour}. Both of these television shows are from the past decade and present dramatizations of the world of broadcast journalism. Within these shows, women characters make up a fair percentage of the main characters. As characters they all have detailed storylines dealing with themes and character developments.

With the help of research dedicated to the study of the portrayal and representation of journalism in television and film, I examine the portrayal of these women to discover how their portrayals relate to past portrayals of female journalists found in film and television. By relating my findings to previous portrayals of female journalists in film and television, I am able to see these portrayals as part of a larger context and tradition.

Through my analysis I found that the portrayals of female journalists as shown in HBO’s \textit{The Newsroom} and BBC’s \textit{The Hour} are similar to past portrayals of female journalists in other television shows and films. By using a combination of film theory, television theory, feminist and post-feminist theory, to conduct my analysis, I found that all of the female characters faced similar themes, storylines and character developments.
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# Table of Contents

1 Introduction  
   1.1 Research Questions  
2 Theory  
   2.1 Related Literature  
   2.2 Film and Television Theory  
   2.3 Feminist Film Theory  
   2.4 Post Feminist Theory  
3 Methods  
   3.1 Methodology  
   3.2 Analysis Procedure  
   3.3 Study Limitations  
4 Historical Overview  
   4.1 Overview of Journalism Film Genre  
   4.2 Historical Look at Female Journalists in Films  
   4.3 Modern Female Journalists in TV/Films  
5 Analysis and Findings  
   5.1 *The Newsroom*  
      5.1.1 Character Analysis  
         Mackenzie “Mac” McHale  
         Margaret “Maggie” Jordan  
         Sloan Sabbith  
      5.1.2 Scene Analysis  
      5.1.3 Aaron Sorkin’s Writing  
   5.2 *The Hour*  
      5.2.1 Character Analysis  
         Isabel “Bel” Rowley  
         Lix Storm  
         Marnie Madden  
      5.2.2 Scene Analysis  
      5.2.3 Morgan’s Writing  

Page 4
WOMEN FIRST, JOURNALISTS SECOND

6 Conclusion 96
Bibliography 98
WOMEN FIRST, JOURNALISTS SECOND

1 Introduction

“In the eyes of most of the world, women journalists were women first, and journalists second, and suspect always.” – Howard Good

2015 was a significant year for journalism genre films as Spotlight won best picture at the Academy Awards. The film turned the true story of a team of Boston Globe reporters uncovering the systemic cover up of priest molestation and sexual abuse within the Catholic Church into a biographical dramatization fit for the movie screen. Spotlight marks the second journalism genre film to have won the Academy Award for best picture, the first film, Gentleman’s Agreement won nearly 70 years ago. With this win, Spotlight reminded audiences of the true art and labor of story telling, free from flash and embellishment seen in most Hollywood films today. Out of journalists on the Spotlight team, there was only one woman, Sacha Pfeiffer.

What was notable about Sacha’s representation was that she was an equal among the team of reporters. She worked just as tirelessly gathering victims’ stories, piecing together facts, and following leads. Her dress was frumpy, and her face exhausted, but so were the men’s. Sacha was very much a journalist. However even with this accuracy in depiction, which even won over journalists, Hollywood still had to remind the audience in subtle ways that Sacha was a woman. When Sacha is seen not in the office, she is most often seen helping out her Nana at home, clearing the dinning room table, scrubbing the dishes, and putting them in the dishwasher. When she is seen at home she is always seen with her husband, to remind the audience that she is married. Compared to Mark Ruffalo’s character Michael Rezendes who when he is seen at home you notice the stark different in domestic life. Michael is married yet we never see his wife, his apartment is Spartan with dishes, pizza boxes, and beer bottles scattered around. Both are excellent journalists but when the audience gets a glimpse into their private lives, they must be reminded of societies expectations. We must be reminded that women are women first. If this is noticeable in one of the most well regarded journalism films of recent years, what does that mean for the rest of the women journalists represented and portrayed in film and TV?

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2 Michael Koliska, Stine Eckert, “Lost in a house of mirrors: Journalists come to terms with myth and
Journalism films provide an interesting insight into how the media sees and represents part of itself to the wider field of media. Media is made up of different branches and sections, and when they converge the results are thought-provoking. Since the early days of film, journalism genre films have been a staple of Hollywood productions. They provided directors and producers the perfect atmosphere to develop engaging storylines and captivating characters. While male journalist characters have been presented in a multitude of different ways over the years and have varying complex characteristics, since the beginning of journalism genre films female journalist characters have been portrayed in the same manner over and over again. Facing the same themes, conflicts, character developments, and stereotypes. This study looks at the representation and the portrayal of female journalists in television and film, by using textual analysis to analyze the films: Torchy Blane (Film Franchise from 1937 to 1939), Absence of Malice (1981) and The China Syndrome (1979) as well as looking in depth at recent modern day television examples found within Aaron Sorkin’s The Newsroom (2012 to 2014) on Home Box Office (HBO) and The Hour (2011 to 2012) on BBC. By looking at journalism film genre in a larger scope, by examining the genre’s history, one can examine how and if journalism is portrayed positively, negatively, and fairly in TV and film representations.

This thesis is specifically looking at how female journalist characters are portrayed and represented in journalism genre films and TV shows. By examining these portrayals, we can see what imagery these portrayals present, how they are constructed and how they relate to the larger representation of women in media. This type of research is important as “The portrayal of journalism in popular culture has ‘enormous influence’ on how the public understands the effectiveness of news media.” As media scholar Professor Michael Renov noted, “The cinema has never existed in a representational vacuum, but is situated in a network of mutually reinforcing cultural practices, an image context that conditions audience expectations.” With the cinema playing into our preexisting ideas and our preexisting ideas influencing the cinema, the relationship is one of constant dependence. The argument isn’t solely focused on these depictions being accurate depictions of female journalists but how these depictions influence our understanding of journalism. This is important to keep in mind, because “In the end, it doesn’t

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3 Howard Good, Girl Reporter – Gender, Journalism, and the Movies, (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1998) Pg. 15
matter whether these images are true or not. They make up the image of the journalist in which we believe and upon which we act.”

1.1 Research Question

I originally developed the idea for my research project after first watching The Newsroom. I had been recommended to watch the series by several people I attended journalism school with during my undergraduate degree. I was interested in seeing how a television drama envisioned the world of broadcast media and how it presented journalism through an entertainment medium. What originally drew my attention was the prevalence of female characters throughout The Newsroom. Initially, I was impressed by the inclusivity of the women journalists into the storylines, the amount of time taken to develop their characters, and how they worked into the overall plot. This observation prompted me to examine other examples of journalism portrayed in TV and films. By watching all of these portrayals of journalists in films and television series, I began to notice distinct patterns in the portrayals. I observed that the majority of films and television shows that portrayed journalists did so through an all male or predominantly male cast, specifically that of white men. If there were women journalists represented, they did not have as much of a variation in their characterizations, storylines, or plots. With this in mind, I sought out to examine examples of films and television shows, which had strong predominant representations of female journalists within their main cast members. I began to observe looking for similarities, differences, and any variations found within the portrayals. This thesis analyzes and answers two key research questions in regard to journalism genre film/TV and representation.

How are women presented and portrayed in The Newsroom and The Hour, as these are examples of modern day journalism genre television.

How do these portrayals found within The Newsroom and The Hour relate to past portrayals of female journalists, as seen in the films Absence of Malice and The China Syndrome.

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2 Theory

In this chapter I will present the varying theoretical perspectives I use to analyze the film and television texts included in this thesis. I will also touch upon related research literature that looks at the portrayal and representation of journalism in films and television. This will provide context to the research being done within this field of study. As this thesis uses qualitative research methods, specifically textual analysis of film and television series, I used both film and television theory as a base to conduct my research. Since my thesis is specifically analyzing the representation and portrayal of female characters, I used feminist and postfeminist theory as the framework for my analysis. By using all of these theories, I was able to conduct analysis that had a certain level of overlap and intersectionality, which works well within the scope of my research questions as well as within the fields of media and feminist research.

2.1 Related Literature

When it comes to finding related literature and resources related to the examination of the image of the journalist in TV and film, the Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture (IJPC) database from the Annenberg School of Journalism and Communication at University of Southern California is the epicenter for research regarding the topic. The database has over 86,000 items categorized on journalists, public relations practitioners and news media found in various formats (such as Television, film, fiction, Cartoons/Comics, Non-fiction, Radio, Humor, Commercials, Games, Music, and Art). The database has a collection of other theses, which examine the role of journalism in film and television, which provides the perfect showcase of what research has been conducted in the field of study.

By exploring the IJPC database, I found many of my key resources such as: books, articles and other research to use throughout my thesis project. Through the database I was able to search the films I cover in the historical overview of female journalists in film section of my thesis, these include: The Torchy Blaine franchise, The China Syndrome, Absence of Malice through the database to see what comments were made about the films. Key documents found via this database include –

Matthew C. Ehrlich’s book journalism in the Movies and article “Facts, truth, and bad journalists in the movies” are key resources in my examination of the historical overview of journalism films. Ehrlich’s research focuses on the historical development of journalist
WOMEN FIRST, JOURNALISTS SECOND

characters found in film and how the depictions have changes over the years. By looking at the history of journalism films, we can examine and see the developments made to character portrayals and representations.

Howard Good’s book *Girl Reporter – Gender, Journalism, and the Movies* is a case study about the representation of female journalists in film by focusing his research on *Torchy Blane*, a film franchise from 1937 to 1939 consisting of nine films. The title character, Torchy Blane is noted as being one of the first tangible examples of a female journalist portrayed in film. Torchy’s character was influential in the portrayal of female journalists for years to come, as her representation as a “girl reporter” created a baseline to compare future portrayals of female journalists in TV and film.

The Director of the IJPC database, Joe Saltzman has an extensive amount of research examining journalist archetypes, specifically the *Sob Sister* archetype. The *Sob Sister* is one of the prevalent archetypes found within the portrayal of female journalists in television and film. I use Saltzman’s work in order to outline what archetypes exist for female journalist characters, and how these archetypes fit within various different portrayals.

The most significant article I found through the IJPC database was Chad Painter and Patrick Ferrucci’s article “His Women Problem”: An Analysis of Gender on *The Newsroom* which was written this past year in 2015. This article directly relates to my research as it also examines the role of female journalists found within *The Newsroom*. By finding this article, it shows that research into recent and modern examples of journalism genre TV shows and films continues to be pursued. It also shows that research into portrayals of female characters, more specifically journalists is an area of academic research, which is being pursued and has value.

### 2.2 Film and Television Theory

In this thesis I use a combination of film theory and television theory in order to textually analyze both films and television shows. While there are different elements to film and television theory, both fields rely on the use of textual analysis and analysis of cinematic qualities and techniques. Film theory has many facets in regard to the way films can be analyzed and studied. When applying film theory to my thesis, I use analysis of cinematography, sound, editing and the overall mise-en-scène as means to examine and interpret the scenes. I will also examine the narrativity of the films and television series to explore how their creators present the stories and
how the audience can interpret what is being shown. When it comes to my use of television theory, I apply a textual study of the television series by looking at three foci “the formal qualities of television programs [that is, their style] and their flow; the intertextual relations of television within itself, with other media, and with conversation; and the study of socially situated readers and the process of reading.” The use of film and television theory to analyze various media texts is critical as it is important to give “…the same attention to detail that scriptwriters, directors, cinematographers, editors, and so on, put into the construction of a television text…” in order to employ the deconstruction of that text. Therefore by analyzing these texts, one must “‘reverse engineer’ media texts in order to fully understand their style.”

2.3 Feminist Film Theory

In order to analyze film and television one must decide upon which theoretical framework to conduct their analysis. Since this thesis is looking specifically at the roles of female characters, my theoretical framework of analysis will be based within a feminist film theory perspective. Feminist film theory developed out of the emerging second wave feminist movement in the early 1960s and was also heavily influenced by new theories in sociology, psychology, semiotics, and philosophy. Studying film from a feminist perspective furthers the analysis of film by examining the portrayal and production of film through a gendered lens. As E. Ann Kaplan states, “Film study is enhanced by feminist perspectives because the word ‘feminist’ implies a particular stance vis-à-vis women: it implies a concern with gender difference in general, but taking up the perspective of women specifically.” Feminist film theorists often ask and analyze questions regarding the relationship of the images of women on film to women’s lives, signs and symbols used to portray or produce meaning about women, or the relationship between the images and individual or social desires or unconsciousness. In this thesis I will utilize Laura Mulvey’s iconic article “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” as well as Molly Haskell’s book *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in Movies*. These two resources will serve as a fundamental feminist film theory basis for my analysis.

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6 Ibid. Location 221 of 6623.
7 Ibid.
Mulvey’s primary argument is that Hollywood narrative films use women in order to provide a pleasurable viewing experience for the male audience. The films structure their gaze as masculine and the woman is always the object of the reifying gaze, not the barer of it. Fundamentally this means that “…men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves.”\(^9\) This means that even women in the audience of any film or television series, still observes through a male gaze. This gaze is “a three part process, involving the camera, the other actors on the screen, both acting as surrogates for the male viewer – that woman was deprived of her own subjective desires and converted into this symbol of male desire.”\(^10\) As objects to be looked at, women on the screen serve two purposes, “Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium, with a shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen.”\(^11\) The focus of gaze in cinema is essential as it directly relates to how society as a whole sees. This is because “In reality the fantasy world of the screen is subject to the law which produces it.”\(^12\)

Haskell’s main argument is that Western society is built around the notion and the lie that women are inherently inferior to men. From this lie, Hollywood acts as the propaganda arm of the American Dream machine, which produces the images we base out society off of.\(^13\) Haskell notes the importance of analyzing films as she states that “Movies are one of the clearest and most accessible of looking glasses into the past, being both cultural artifacts and mirrors.”\(^14\) From the lie that women are inherently inferior to men, Hollywood works under the assumption and belief that women will watch stories about men’s lives, however men will no watch stories about women’s lives. As most film genres are intended for men, this prompted Hollywood’s his prompts Hollywood’s creation of the market for “Woman’s Films.” “Woman’s Films” are defined as films with women-centered narratives with female protagonists who deal with

\(^12\) Ibid. Pg. 346.  
\(^13\) Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) pg. 1  
\(^14\) Ibid. xviii
“women’s concerns” meaning problems with domestic life, romance, motherhood, and the family. Haskell notes that in “woman’s films” a woman is at the center of the universe. These films were designed to appeal to a female audience, and as Haskell describes them, “‘woman’s films’ fills a masturbatory need, it is soft-core emotional porn for the frustrated housewife.”\textsuperscript{15}

Although the films and TV series I analyze in this study do not fit within the genre of “woman’s films” which Haskell outlines, they do have female characters and themes, which are similar to those Haskell depicts in “woman’s films.” These types of female characters are: the extraordinary woman (strong powerful figures who are the exception to the rule), The ordinary woman (Common, passive, often a victim, the largest common denominator), and the ordinary woman who becomes extraordinary (victims who rise, or endure).\textsuperscript{16} Haskell goes on to note that all women start as victims. Haskell outlines the common themes used within “woman’s films” and labels them as: sacrifice, affliction, choice, and competition.\textsuperscript{17} The theme of sacrifice is often used in regard to a woman sacrificing herself for her children, her children for their own welfare, her marriage for her lover, her lover for her marriage or his own welfare, her career for love or her love for her career. Affliction is a theme used when women characters hold a secret from the rest of the cast, often an illness or a disease. The theme of choice is in reference to women having to choose between romantic suitors, often it is between two and forms a love triangle storyline. Competition is a theme used when women characters must battle with another female character, usually in regard to winning the love of a husband, fiancé or lover. These character prototypes and themes will be referred back to throughout this thesis as they appear in the TV shows and films analyzed.

2.4 Post-Feminist Theory

Although Post-feminism is a disputed term among academics and scholars, it has an important place among the feminist discussion. As my research heavily analyzes two modern day television shows, I felt it was important to use current theories found within the field of feminist, as well as use theories which are strongly connected to media and media culture. In this thesis, post-feminism will be defined simply as a term, which is reflective of today’s western society.

\textsuperscript{15} Molly Haskell, \textit{From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) pg. 155
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. pg. 160-162
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid. pg. 157
and popular culture’s shift in thinking in regards to feminism. It is not a rejection of feminism but instead is about feminism today within the context of “…contemporary neo-liberal, late-capitalist society characterized by consumer culture, individualism, postmodernism, and a decreased interest in institutional politics and activism.”  

When it comes to my use of postfeminist theory throughout this thesis, I mainly use two main theorists: Rosalind Gill and Angela McRobbie. Rosalind Gill notes stable features of what makes up postfeminist discourse, and this thesis will use the same features in regard to post feminist analysis. These features are:

- The notion that femininity is a bodily property
- The shift from objectification to subjectification
- The emphasis on self-surveillance, monitoring, and discipline
- A focus on individualism, choice, and empowerment
- The dominance of a makeover paradigm
- A resurgence in ideas of natural sexual difference
- A marked sexualization of culture
- An emphasis upon consumerism and the commodification of difference

McRobbie’s proposal of post-feminism is “…that through an array of machinations, elements of contemporary popular culture are perniciously effective in regard to this undoing of feminism, while simultaneously appearing to be engaging in a well-informed and even well-intended response to feminism.” McRobbie is not implying that feminism has been extinguished, but instead is suggesting that within a wider context, feminist ideals have been adopted or taken on board by various organizations and public bodies. McRobbie presents the concept of “post-feminist masquerade” as the main means of female body-oriented power found in today’s society. There are many incarnations of this ‘post feminist masquerade’, however McRobbie outlines three key types of women found in today’s media, which she defines as: the well-educated ‘working girl’, the dirty mouthed and boozing ‘phallic girl’, and the exotically ethnic ‘global girl’. However in my thesis, I will only be using the ‘working girl’ and the ‘phallic girl’ models outlined by McRobbie as they relate and are relevant to the characters I

21 Ibid. Pg. 7
analyze. With feminist ideals being integrated into varying aspects of society and culture, it is clear that there is a distinct connection between post-feminism and media. This connection is noted by Chad Painter and Patrick Ferrucci who stated, “The depictions of feminism on television programs generally fall into the third wave, or postfeminism, which combines feminist ideas with postmodern concepts of society’s instability.”\textsuperscript{22} Because all of the media texts presented in this thesis have prominent female characters, it is fair to say that they are presenting depictions of feminism by simply just having female characters. With this in mind, I refer back to elements of post-feminist discourse when they are presented in the texts I analyze.

### 3 Methods

#### 3.1 Methodology

In order to examine how female journalists were portrayed in the films and the television shows listed in the research questions, I had to use qualitative methodology to conduct my analysis. My primary method of research was textual analysis, which fits within the scope of qualitative methodology as it allows me to examine the style, nuances and complexities found within the media texts I set out to analyze. The unit of analysis was spoken and written text, as well as features of the text such as shot, content, sequencing, and graphics. Textual analysis allows researchers to examine the surface level of content whilst also aiming to dissect and understand all possible meanings that went into the making the content. The use of textual analysis is habitual in the fields of cultural studies, media and mass communication studies, as well as in social sciences. Researchers using textual analysis “assume that behavioral patterns, values, and attitudes found in this material reflect and affect the behaviors, attitudes and values of the people who create the material.”\textsuperscript{23}

#### 3.2 Analysis Procedure

For my analysis of the texts: \textit{Absence of Malice}, \textit{The China Syndrome}, \textit{The Newsroom}, and \textit{The Hour}, I watched every text at least twice. When it came to the in-depth analysis of \textit{The Newsroom} and \textit{The Hour}, I watched every episode twice and took down notes for every scene in

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Chad Painter, Patrick Ferrucci, “Unprofessional, Ineffective, and Weak: A Textual Analysis of the Portrayal of Female Journalists on \textit{Sports Night}” in \textit{Journal of Mass Media Ethics} 27:4, Pg. 249.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Arthur Berger, \textit{Media Research Techniques} (London: SAGE Publications, 1998) Pg. 23
\end{itemize}
which the female characters spoke. For my in-depth analysis of *The Newsroom*, I also watched the corresponding *The Newsroom – Inside the Episode* clips found on HBO’s YouTube channel, to get writer and producer, Aaron Sorkin’s perspective on each episode. For my in-depth analysis of *The Hour*, I also looked for interviews online with writer and producer, Abi Morgan in order to get her perspective of the show, as well as watched behind the scene footage included on *The Hour* Season 2 DVD. I took note of particular scenes, which greatly affected or reshaped the main female characters’ key experiences. I transcribed the scenes and the corresponding dialogue in order to best analyze every aspect of the scene and dissect the conversations. In total I watched over 40 hours of footage and transcribed all of the dialogue from the scenes I examine in the character and scene analyses.

### 3.3 Study Limitations

My study isn’t without limitations. My study is limited to analyzing only a handful of media texts, all of which come from either American media or British media. I chose to focus on American and British media, as they are two of the media systems that I am most familiar with as a native English speaker. My analysis only examines the prominent female journalists in each of the presented films and television shows. In the case of *The Hour*, I include analysis of Marnie Madden, although she is not a journalist she does have a role as a TV host and is one of the prominent female characters in the series. One of the most notable limitations to my study is that all of the media text examples I go on to examine and study depict “white, straight, single, professional women working in a man’s world.” This limitation is partly on my behalf, as I did not actively seek out examples of media, which counter this generalization. However this limitation marks commentary on the representation of people of color within journalism genre films and television. It should be noted that this limitation works in direct connection to post-feminist theory as McRobbie relates the post-feminist masquerade to “re-[securing] the terms of submission of white femininity to white masculine domination, while simultaneously resurrecting racial divisions by undoing any promise of multiculturalism through the exclusion of non-white femininities from this rigid repertoire of self-styling.”

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masquerade will be further examined throughout my analysis of the characters presented in *The Newsroom* and *The Hour*. Further research could expand to analyze the portrayals of all the journalist characters, or all of the non-journalist female characters. Researchers could also compare and contrast the portrayal of female characters from *The Newsroom* and *The Hour* to their real life counterparts – modern broadcast journalists and past broadcast journalists. Further research could also be undertaken to examine the social affects of these portrayals by conducting focus groups or in-depth interviews with aspiring journalists to see what impact the portrayals have.

### 4 Historical Overview

#### 4.1 Overview of Journalism Film Genre

Since the early days of cinema, journalism has always been a noted career option for film characters. Journalism provided the perfect backdrop for developing character relationships, storylines and plots. Stereotypical depictions of journalists conjure up images of middle class white men wearing fedoras with white “press” cards tucked into the bows, scrumming around politicians trying to get the scoop for their newspaper. However, throughout history the depiction and variation of journalists in TV and film have been reflective of social and political issues of the time. This was especially true in films produced during WWII. In order to stir up patriotism and support for the war, reporters were portrayed as “dedicated patriots” as the Hollywood studios worked closely with the government to boost the war effort.\(^\text{26}\) After the war, focus shifted onto portraying journalists with “conscientious professionalism” whilst uncovering anti-Semitism and municipal corruption.\(^\text{27}\) In recent years, the depiction of journalists often rests on stories where journalists have to go up against corporations and face immense pressure to uncover the “truth.” One notable commonality found within all of these representations is that they portray journalists as heroes. This lies in direct contradiction as to how many journalists feel as if they have been portrayed in TV and film. Many journalists argue that overwhelmingly the portrayals of them within TV and film is negative not positive. Stereotypically negative

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depictions of journalists are often “hard-drinking, foul-mouthed, dim-witted social misfits concerned only with twisting the truth into scandal and otherwise devoid of conscience.”

While some think negative portrayals of journalists is a relatively new phenomena, as early as 1931 people were complaining of negative portrayals, such as journalism educator John Drewry who called out Hollywood for making “the reporter more nearly resemble a gangster than even a moderately well-off business or professional man.” Many link the negative portrayals to inherent cynicism found within the profession of journalism. The traditionally long and hard hours rarely left time or anything else. The work was tough and “their cynicism darkened them, roughened them, and potentially made them unfit for normal living.” One of the ways of dealing with knowing too much meant drinking too much. However, studies have been done over the years to analysis the portrayals of journalists in TV and film to find out what percentage is negative vs. favorable. In 1947 the Motion Picture Association conducted a survey of 398 films where were approved in 1945. Out of the 398 films, 77 had journalists. A total of 81 journalists appeared in those 77 films, and out of that 67 were portrayed sympathetically, 5 unsympathetically, and 9 neutrally.

Journalism has always been seen by the film industry as an industry that provides viewers with a perfect settling and environment to watch stories unfold. Over the course of film history, the portrayal of journalists has evolved and changed from decade to decade. During the 1930s “reporters were gritty characters instinctively siding with the common man.” By the 1970s and the 1980s journalists were beginning to be seen as villains, “[being] portrayed, on average, as more loathsome than the lawyers, politicians, or business moguls who are the traditional bad guys in films about the white-collar world.” In the 1990s up until present day, the depictions have been a mixture of both positive and negative, and therefore it would be “…misleading to suggest that more recent movies about journalism have been completely negative.”

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30 Howard Good, Girl Reporter – Gender, Journalism, and the Movies, (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1998) Pg. 34.
31 Ibid. Pg. 99.
32 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
of the portrayal of characters, the relationship between journalism and film is one of unique circumstance.

Both fields depend on one another, as “the relationship between journalism and films has been symbiotic Newspapers have promoted the movies while movies have given newspapers advertising revenue and many favorable depictions.” Both industries also act as watchdogs in their own regard “As the press serves as a watch dog on government, so Hollywood, likewise on behalf of the public and with a like commercial basis keeps an eye on the press,” Because of this symbiotic relationship between journalism media and entertainment media, it is not surprising that Hollywood uses journalism as a means to portray stories and characters. While these portrayals have been depicted many ways over the years, positive and negative, these depictions were influenced by current events and the society around them. However, just like other representations in Hollywood, the majority of these journalistic portrayals were of male characters. Thus male characters have had more opportunity to be portrayed in a multitude of ways and scenarios.

4.2 Historical Look at Female Journalists in Films

In the early 1900s to the 1930s, few female journalists existed in reality as women still did not have equal access to work and career options. However, in the early days of film women journalists were well represented, as they were perfectly suited characters for dialogue films. Hollywood provided women with jobs, and often they got to portray various professional roles that women in reality were still working and fighting towards getting. As noted by Journalist and Professor Howard Good, “Film portrayals served as a camouflage of, and compensation for, the lack of economic justice for women.” During the early days of dialogue films, the film industry saw journalism as one of the few professions in which women were capable of doing. In the 1930s many B movies, movies that had lower-budgets, simple plots, and were created to be a supporting film for the feature presentation had female journalists as prominent characters. As noted by Haskell, women were more often billed ahead of men as the pivotal member of a team.

in the 30s and due to the shortage of male stars during the war in the 1940s. One franchise which consisted of B movies and that had a prominent female character that was a journalist was the *Torch Blane* films created by Warner Brothers from 1937 to 1939.

The *Torchy Blane* franchise consisted of nine films, and remains the only series of feature films ever produced by Hollywood about a journalist. The films were a blend of comedy, adventure and mystery. Although they had comedic elements, the films were not over the top or absurd like many of the screwball comedies of the time. Although the series was not a within the genre of screwball comedy, Torchy’s character still fit the mold of “quick-witted” woman found within every screwball comedy. This characteristic of the “quick-witted” woman could be defined as “an aggressive, even eccentric woman whose efforts to prod her more stodgy and conventional beau along the rocky road to the altar primed the comic mechanisms for a great deal of humor-by-embarrassment.” By being the quick-witted woman, the *Torchy* films provided audiences with humor and suspense as Torchy pursued finding scoops and stories.

Even though the *Torchy Blane* franchise consisted of B movies with low budgets and less distribution, *Torchy Blane* made a huge impact on how female journalists were to be portrayed in film for years to come. For the 1930s, “Torchy more or less embodied everyone's notion of what a female reporter looked and sounded like for that era -- fast-talking and feisty, self-confident and even cocky -- and forced to contend constantly with the biases of her era.” Torchy’s character was originally intended to be a male reporter “named Kennedy, the hero of a series of pulp magazine stories by Frederick Nebel.” However when Warner Bros. began to develop an adaptation of the magazine stories, they noted the potential element of romance if they turn the reporter into a woman and made her the romantic interest of the detective Steve McBride. In every film there is a mystery to be solved, and although Torchy’s job is as a reporter, she acts as a sort of amateur detective. In the films, Torchy is frequently at odds with her detective boyfriend McBride for searching for scoops in places where she ought not to be. Torchy is

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known to cause more trouble and drama to the stories than to just write her reports and meet her deadlines. Considered to be a star “girl reporter”, Torchy’s actions as a reporter are less than star worthy, as they are ethically questionable. For example: hiding in a trashcan to eavesdrop, bugging rooms with microphones, snooping through rooms, and talking with questionable sources. All of these actions subconsciously poking holes in her “girl reporter” image. Although the films did not focus on the push towards marriage, by the end of each film Torchy would once again find herself in the loving arms of McBride. Even Torchy Blane, the star girl reporter could not escape society’s gendered expectations of her. Good points out that, “No matter how strong the female reporter was throughout the film, she, like Torchy Blane, would hope for matrimony with the most available man.” By making sure Torchy fell back into the arms of her boyfriend, “It was as if to underline the fact that no matter how self-sufficient they seemed, what every woman really wanted was a man -- even if he was a meathead -- and a family.” Torchy, as feisty as she was, was still fundamentally a woman first, and a journalist second.

During this time, Hollywood created the two prominent archetypes, which would set the path for character development of all female journalists in the future. These two archetypes are: The Sob Sister and the Stunt Girl - Both of which were influenced by the two main types of female journalists of the time. The term “sob sister” originated from the 1907 trial of Harry K. Thaw, heir to a steel industry fortune who was accused of fatally shooting his wife’s lover, architect Stanford White. Four women were covering the trial: Ada Patterson, Dorothy Dix, Winifred Black, and Nixola Greeley-Smith. They were there to write sympathetic stories about Evelyn Nesbit Thaw, the enchantress in the case. The term “stunt girl” originated from the yellow journals of the 1880s and 1890s. As the name suggests a stunt girl was “required to do the bizarre or sensational – drive a locomotive, stay overnight in a haunted house, pose as a lunatic, 

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WOMEN FIRST, JOURNALISTS SECOND

witness a hanging – and then write about it from a feminine perspective.”47 Both of these archetypes can still be seen in the portrayals of female journalists today.

The Sob Sister was to use her emotions to find and write about stories. By using emotions and playing up the notion that women are inherently emotional beings, the Sob Sister archetype fits well within long established gendered roles in western society. Within western cultures, the assumption and expectation that women be more in tune with their emotions is commonplace. Because of this assumption that women are more emotional than men, professional women have to continuously prove themselves regarding their professionalism and work ethic. This is present in the Sob Sister archetype as Professor Joe Saltzman notes that, “The sob sister always has to prove herself. She has to persuade the males around her that she is worthy of their respect. She often screws up before winning her stripes, but, by and large, she is an independent, hardworking reporter who never lets her newspaper down.”48 Saltzman goes on to explain, “Occasionally, the sob sister shows signs of feminine frailty. Most female reporters eventually need rescuing by the most available male. But more often than not, she outwits, outfoxes, and out reports every male reporter in sight. Only then does she become one of the guys.”49 It is through distancing herself from her gender and societies expectations, only then does she gain the respect she deserves. The sob sister summarizes the dichotomy faced by movie female journalists as “She [is] considered an equal by doing a man’s work, a career woman drinking and arguing toe-to-toe with many male in the shop, and holding her own against everyone. Yet this tough reporter often [shows] her soft side and [cries] long and hard when the man she [loves] [treats] her like a sister instead of a lover.”50 As the Sob Sister archetype emphasizes the stereotype that women are emotional, it also feeds into perpetuating the stereotype that women are irrational. This is highly problematic when women who are supported to be presented as leaders or empowered are categorized within the Sob Sister archetype. The Sob Sister can never escape society’s expectations of her as a woman because society must remind us all that women regardless of their profession or achievements are women first. The Sob Sister can still be found today in journalism, as many women journalists are expected to write human-interest stories, which play to the emotional

49 Ibid.
50 Ibid. Pg.4
heartstrings of others. Unsurprisingly, “Most women reporters resent this label because it reinforced the stereotype of women as big-hearted but soft-minded, emotionally generous but intellectually sloppy.”\textsuperscript{51} This archetype of delegating female journalist characters to cover the emotional or humanist side to stories is still seen repeatedly throughout the film and television industry. We will see this archetype later in this thesis when examining main characters from \textit{The Newsroom} (Maggie Jordan) and \textit{The Hour} (Bel Rowley).

The Stunt Girl archetype plays into the long-standing gendered belief that women are weaker than men. By playing off of the cultural assumption that women are weaker than men, the stunt girl reporter gives women the opportunity to show that they are just as capable to do the same things as men, however this comes at a great cost. By making women report something seen, as “bizarre or sensational” means that society doesn’t expect women to be able to do whatever it is the woman journalist is reporting, therefore reiterating gender roles found within society. This is also further when the journalist is requested to write from a “feminine perspective” as it further means she is expected to write for women following societal gendered guidelines. The second film of the \textit{Torchy Blane} franchise, \textit{Fly Away Baby} (1937) uses the stunt girl archetype to follow a murder investigation. In the film, Torchy plays up the feminine angle of news reporting and while pitching her idea she reiterates her editor’s advice that “A woman doing anything is good copy.”\textsuperscript{52} This highlights the idea of a woman journalist being a spectacle and something worthy of being sensationalized to get readers attention.

While both of these archetypes allow women to be able to portray journalists in television and film, fundamentally the archetypes eat away at the respect female journalists really deserve and discredit the profession. As Good goes on to point out, “Ironically, the very characteristics that qualified women for stunt-girl or son-sister reporting disqualified them from more serious journalism.”\textsuperscript{53} This is because both of these archetypes rely on stereotypes. The Sob Sister relies on the idea that women are more emotional than men. The Stunt Girl relies on the idea that strong independent women are amusing oddities, who can be sent out to try things and new experiences, but ultimately they are not the norm among women, they are anomalies. Both of

these archetypes play off of society’s pre-existing thoughts and expectations that women cannot be professionals unless they use their emotions or unless they are turned into a spectacle not representative of normal or average women.

4.3 Modern Female Journalists in TV/Films

Although the second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s pushed forward the social and political rights for women, the portrayals of women in film didn’t change that much, as most female characters were stuck playing out the long understood archetypes found within Hollywood films. That being said, portrayals of female journalists at this time often were presented alongside the ideas of feminism. As media scholar Amanda Lotz notes, “television often used the workplace as a site for presenting and debating feminist discourses.”\footnote{Amanda D. Lotz, “Postfeminist Television Criticism: Rehabilitating Critical Terms and Identifying Postfeminist Attributes.” Feminist Media Studies 1:1 (2001) Pg. 107} However, while the portrayals flirted with notions of feminism, they still were stuck within the long-standing archetypes, storylines and themes offered to female characters. As Haskell noted, “Sexual liberation [had] done little more than re-imprison women in sexual roles, but at a lower and more debased level.”\footnote{Molly Haskell, From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) pg. 31} Although women had an increase in character options, their messages were the same. Two films, which, were made after the second wave and focused on the role of female journalists were: Absence of Malice (1981) and The China Syndrome (1979).

The film Absence of Malice (1981) stars Sally Field as journalist Megan Carter, who is a reporter for the Miami Standard. Megan is working on a story following a governmental investigation of liquor wholesaler Mike Gallagher and his role in the disappearance and suspected murder of a local longshoreman union leader. The character of Megan Carter aims at breaking stereotypes, hunts for stories and is driven in her reporting. Just like most women characters, throughout the film she is complemented on her appearance and is flirted with by men whom she crosses paths with. Megan politely brushes off these flirtatious, and on the surface she seems to be a product of the women’s liberation movement as she embraces aspects of women’s empowerment. She is an unmarried woman in her 30s who is career driven and supports herself. However throughout the film her character, her moral code and her professionalism as a journalist are repeatedly called into question. Morally, her actions are highly
dubious throughout the film. The most notable scenes include when: she willingly wears a hidden microphone when interviewing a source, she snoops through the leaked classified file then continues to use the information found from there without disclosing or justifying her actions to readers, and most significantly she enters into a close personal and sexual relationship with the main news source. Howard Good makes note of the relationship stating that, “Their romance is brief, not because the film doesn’t sanction it, but because Megan is too much of a careerist to sustain it…she has blown her chance to be his wifely supporter – or in a word, fulfilled.”56 Megan’s failure to sustain the romantic relationship with Gallagher marks a sacrifice on her behalf as she choses to pursue her career instead of romance. This fits within Haskell’s themes found within “woman’s films” as Megan sacrifices one aspect of her life for another.

As previously mentioned, Megan’s morality is continuously called into question throughout the film, and as a result of this her professionalism as a journalist is also highly questionable. In regard to journalistic practice, Megan’s behavior does not meet basic Journalism 101 guidelines, and shows a high level of inadequacy in her work. Megan does not collect enough evidence when briefly questioning the government official’s motive behind leaving the investigation document out and well within visibility for her reporter eyes, nor does she consider the possibility of malicious intent. Megan does not seek comment from Gallagher until a lawyer suggests that it may be wise to get a comment from him, something which a trained journalist has drilled into them when training or in journalism school. By the end of the film Megan realizes her wrongdoing but in the process has destroyed the lives of two innocent people -

Gallagher and his long time friend Teresa Peron (who killed herself due to the story being published). *Absence of Malice* marks a negative portrayal of a female journalist, who’s ineptitude and unethical behavior ruins her reputation as a journalist and also ruins the reputation of the newspaper. Although originally shown as a strong woman, Megan’s strength quickly deteriorates when faced with issues regarding morality and professionalism.

In the film *The China Syndrome* (1979) Jane Fonda stars as broadcast reporter Kimberly Wells, whose normal segment sends her to various locations around the Los Angeles area to cover soft news piece or human-interest stories. This type of reporting fits her into the stunt girl reporter archetype. Throughout the film, Kimberly is commented on her looks and pays attention to how she is presented on television. She is often seen fixing her hair or makeup as her image plays an important role in being a television presenter. In the film, Kimberly is sent to film a soft news piece for the evening’s news about a nuclear reactor outside of Los Angeles. While at the nuclear plant, Kimberly and team, cameraman Richard, and soundman Hector witness the plant going through an emergency shutdown. In similar ways to *Absence of Malice* the female journalist character of Kimberly embodies a false sense of empowerment and liberation. She is a career woman who has a good job at the television network and openly admits her dreams to pursue something bigger career wise. However, when faced with a complex developing new story, Kimberly quickly relies on the men in her team and turns emotional.

Although covering the story at the nuclear power plant makes her character grow both morally and professionally, this growth of character is under direct male supervision. In the process of reporting the story she is being shaped by two competing men in her life: Dan the station manager who wants to keep the ratings successful by keeping Kimberly (and her image) working on trivial news stories, and Richard who wants Kimberly to be more than a TV personality. Richard wins the struggle after he eggs Kimberly on by calling her a “piece of talking furniture” and an “asshole” which propels her to begin asking serious questions about the safety conditions at the plant. During the initial visit to the plant, Richard secretly films inside the plant control room, and thus has evidence that something serious occurred. Although Kimberly is ardent about pursing the story, she is reliant upon Richard’s footage of inside the power plant in order to bring the story to fruition. Kimberly’s questioning ultimately leads to a shootout in the control room where the chief engineer, Jack Godell is killed. Since Godell was Kimberly’s primary news source, she is horrified when the utility company tries to spin the story
by telling her Godell was emotionally unstable and a drunk. Kimberly challenges the lie on camera and whilst sobbing she states, “I’m sorry I’m not very objective.” This statement and scene questions Kimberly’s ability to handle and do the job of being a reporter.

Kimberly crying on air after covering the events at the nuclear reactor.\textsuperscript{58}

Kimberly’s emotional behavior and her loss of self-control in front of the television cameras play into and reinforce the western-cultural belief that women are not as tough or reliable as men. It also plays into the archetype of the sob sister reporter, who covers the emotional side of news stories, as women are more in tune with their emotions. There are other aspects to Kimberly’s character that the film questions, specifically that of her relationships with others. One of the key scenes in the film that emphasizes Kimberly’s lack of relationships to others is of when Kimberly comes home from work late at night. When Kimberly arrives home after a long day at work, she is greeted by her pet turtle and a voicemail machine full of messages left by her mother. By emphasizing Kimberly’s independence as a woman in a negative way, her character reads more depressing than empowered. As Professor Howard Good notes, the film “can’t illustrate the intensity of her work ethic without simultaneously illustrating the depth of her loneliness.”\textsuperscript{59} This scene is intended to highlight the fact that Kimberly has had to sacrifice relationships to pursue her career, fitting within the described Haskell’s themes

\textsuperscript{58} The China Syndrome, Directed by James Bridges, Written by Mike Gray, T.S. Cook Columbia Pictures, 1979.
\textsuperscript{59} Howard Good, Girl Reporter – Gender, Journalism, and the Movies, (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1998) Pg. 129.
mentioned earlier in this thesis. Although the film follows Kimberly facing stereotypes and gender norms of the 1970s head on, her character is an elusion of an empowered woman. She still falls into the trap of tropes set out for female journalists, as she is a prime example of the stunt girl reporter at the beginning of the film, being sent around the city to report various spectacles and in the end falls into the sob sister as she weeps on TV talking about the man she met during her reporting of the disaster at the nuclear reactor.

For many scholars and researchers who examine the image of journalists in popular culture, both Absence of Malice and The China Syndrome were seen as positive developments in the field of journalist portrayals. This is because both of these films had female characters as main protagonists. These women were meant to represent a changing of film narratives, ones in which women would be the primary focus. While having women as protagonists does mark a significant development in the field of journalist portrayals in television and film, the fact that the women in both of these movies still had to rely on old character structures, archetypes and themes does not support the idea that these movies were significantly influenced by the women’s movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Instead both of these movies present the idea of strong independent women, but ultimately they continue to rest on long standing problematic portrayals of female journalists in TV and film.

60 The China Syndrome, Directed by James Bridges, Written by Mike Gray, T.S. Cook Columbia Pictures, 1979.
5 Analysis and Findings

5.1 The Newsroom

The Newsroom is an American drama created and predominantly written by Aaron Sorkin. Although, Sorkin comes from a theatrical and drama based background, he spent time in several real-world cable newsrooms in order to collect research for The Newsroom. The show aired on Home Box Office (HBO) from June 24, 2012 until December 14, 2014. The show depicted the lives of the staff at the fictional Atlantis Cable News (ACN) channel and chronicled the changing of their main news program, News Night. The show begins with News Night’s anchor Will McAvoy (Jeff Daniels) being a guest at a political journalism lecture at Northwestern University, where he is asked to seriously answer, “Why is America is the greatest country in the world?” The question sends McAvoy into a critical diatribe causing controversy for the network and damaging his image of being politically neutral on TV. When he returns back to work from vacation after the event at Northwestern, he finds that the majority of his newsroom staff has left the show to work with another news anchor Elliot Hirsch for his ten o’clock program Right Now with Elliot Hirsch. While Will was away on holiday, the president of the news division, Charlie Skinner (Sam Waterston) makes the authoritative decision to hire Mackenzie “Mac” McHale (Emily Mortimer) to be the new executive producer for News Night. Mackenzie also happens to be an old girlfriend of Will’s who hasn’t seen or spoken to him since they broke up three years earlier. It is mentioned in the pilot episode that Mackenzie and Will’s relationship was tempestuous making her arrival at ACN potentially problematic. We later learn in the season that the reason why they broke up stemmed from Mackenzie cheating on Will with her ex-boyfriend, which resulted in Will seeking advice from a psychiatrist and Mackenzie taking up a job as a war correspondent as a means to get away. The pilot episode marks the first time they have seen each other in three years.

The premise of the show revolves around the news team changing the News Night show into something more enlightened and honest, which they deem “News Night 2.0”. Their goal is to be the voices of the public holding politicians and correspondents accountable for words and actions, to make sure the public is getting the best and most informed version of the news. This version of News Night is focused on the content rather than the ratings, much to the exasperation of Reese Lansing (Chris Messina) President of Atlantis World Media (AWM) and his mother Leona Lansing (Jane Fonda) CEO of Atlantis World Media. The show is set in the recent past.
(2010 to 2012) and follows stories both parallel to and inspired by real life events. Examples include: the BP oil spill, the capture of Osama Bin Laden, the Casey Anthony trial, the shooting of Gabrielle Giffords, and the misreporting of war crimes, just to name a few. While the characters try to find their way in the new reporting style of the news program, they also try to find their way in their own personal lives within the newsroom itself.

Although the show features several female characters, only three out of the eight main characters are women - Emily Mortimer as Producer Mackenzie “Mac” McHale, Alison Pill as Will McAvoy’s assistant Margaret “Maggie” Jordan, and Olivia Munn as Senior Financial reporter Sloan Sabbith. Although these female characters have strong credentials and the drive to report the news as truthfully as possible, throughout the series they are noticeably portrayed in a less positive manner than the male journalists. When examining the portrayal of these female characters, patterns of behavior and performance begin to emerge. These can be group into two distinct traits - Inadequate at their jobs (unprofessional and unethical) and Motherly and emotional. This pattern of character writing and portrayal is not the first time writer and producer Aaron Sorkin has been criticized for his female characters. Other research has been done on his past TV shows, such as The West Wing and Sports Night. What is interesting is that Sports Night also dealt with the genre of journalism. This will be further explored in subchapter 5.1.3, which looks specically at Sorkin’s writing of characters.

5.1.1 Character Analysis
Mackenzie “Mac” McHale

Mackenzie is a well-respected executive producer in the news industry who also happens to be a former girlfriend of News Night’s anchorman, Will McAvoy. After the break up Mackenzie took assignments throughout the Middle East as a war correspondent and was embedded for a total of 26 months. This earns her a lot of credit in the news world, as “war reporting is traditionally seen as a “macho” pursuit – a culture in which women correspondents struggle to find a place.”61 Arguably this also makes her a sort of spectacle, as women war correspondents are not as well represented in the media compared to male correspondents. This could fit into the stunt girl reporter model, simply due to the uncommon nature of female war

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reporters and the fact that society sees them as oddities within the journalistic world. While embedded, Mackenzie was stabbed in the stomach whilst covering a Shiite protest in Islamabad and was shot at in three different countries. Mackenzie has faced the same psychological and physical hazards as a male war correspondent would. Therefore, Mackenzie’s time as a war correspondent earns her high praise equivalent to that of a man, giving her a “symbolic male” status within the newsroom.

Her job within the newsroom is to lead rundown meetings with the staff, leading the discussions and keeping on point throughout the meetings, and maintaining authority in the control room during broadcasts (controlling the connection feeds, the audio, and the graphics). Mackenzie often has to cut connection feeds, mute speakers, or threaten to change the graphics in order to assert her authority and power as executive producer. This behavior can either be seen as masterful or as childish, especially when faced with situations, which are personal rather than professional. Mackenzie strives to balance her work professionalism, her feelings for Will, and her desire to produce the news well. She wants to gain the trust of the news department while also trying to work things out with Will. Mackenzie’s arrival to the newsroom marks a changing of the running of the show, and a shift in moral values and virtues.

In the first season the staff at News Night talk about Mackenzie’s reputation admiringly and in amazement. She’s been to exotic and dangerous places, she’s won awards for her journalism, and she has romantic history with Will McAvoy. She’s older, wiser and full of experience. On paper she has all the qualities to be expected from a well-regarded executive producer, however throughout the series her job as executive producer seems to be better suited for her role as “office mother” for the rest of the staff. Mackenzie quickly gets invested in the lives of her staff members, and this will be further explored in the in-depth scene analysis section of this chapter. Mackenzie can never run away from her history with Will, and neither can the audience. With Mackenzie in the office, the drama associated with Will and their past relationship is always strung throughout the show, whether it be from gossip circulating among the news team or from direct dialogue between Mackenzie and Will.

Many of Mac’s storylines throughout the first season have an emphasis on Mackenzie trying to figure out how the office works, and finding her footing as executive producer. One of the most notable storylines is when Mackenzie accidentally sends an email to the entire office instead of just to Will, which stated that she was the one who cheated in their relationship. When
she realizes this mistake, she grabs one of the staff member’s phones, throws coffee on it, tosses it to the ground and stomps on it. Mackenzie’s inability to figure out technology plays into her characteristics of being spacey while also insinuating a certain level of ineptitude in her work skills. She is often seen losing her train of thought halfway through a sentence, having to count on her fingers to do basic addition, and often struggles at coming up with witty comebacks. Her inability to be quick witted marks a certain level of humor within the show, which is directed at her instead of with her. These disconnect between the portrayal of the character and the reputation of her position in the field decreases her credibility as a strong female journalist in charge.

In an attempt to move on from her past relationship with Will, Mac begins dating an Assistant District Attorney named Wade Campbell. Although Mac’s relationship with Wade is only seen on screen by a few fleeting scenes where Wade comes to visit her at work, it is referred to that she allowed him to be a source for the News Night program on several occasions. When Charlie (head of Atlantis Cable News) learns that Wade will be running for congress, he tells Will that other media sources may publish information linking Mac’s approval of Wade as a source for News Night as an unethical attempt to help her boyfriend get elected. When Will confronted Mac about the prospect of Wade running for congress, she had no idea that this connection marked a conflict of interest. Although this storyline is short and not one of key significance to the rest of the season, it marks an implicit flaw in Mackenzie’s professionalism. It also highlights a level of inadequacy not expected from someone of such positive regard and standing. By including this slight detail within Mackenzie’s storyline, it brings forth the notion that Mac is capable of committing potential ethical lapses of judgment.

Sacrifice is a threaded theme used throughout Mackenzie’s storyline in season one, as the audience is frequently reminded of her failed relationship with Will. While her relationship with Will failed, her career has been one of notable achievements, yet the audience is shown their breakup as something that still holds Mackenzie back. This use of sacrifice fits Haskell’s description of how woman are portrayed in “woman’s films.” Even with her career achievements, Mackenzie and Will’s break up mark a loss for her character. Although The

62 The Newsroom, “News Night 2.0”, S1E02, Directed by Alex Graves, Written by Aaron Sorkin, HBO, July 1, 2012.
Newsroom is not a “woman’s film” it still relies on the same use of theme and character structuring. Mac relationship past is yet again emphasized when Will enlists Mackenzie’s old boyfriend Brian Brenner to do an in-depth magazine piece about the changes at News Night. This move on Will’s behalf is especially poignant as Brian is the ex boyfriend that Mackenzie cheated on Will with.

This move brings in the theme of choice, reminding the audience of Mackenzie’s choices regarding romantic suitors, past and present. Sorkin explains how in this instance, Will doesn’t really understand why he is using Brian, however according to Poul, Will brings Brian in because he is both a “good writer” and also “the ex boyfriend that Mac began sleeping with behind Will’s back.” Will also states loudly in the office that he brought Brian in to “punish” Mackenzie. If Will is setting out to punish Mackenzie, then it can be inferred that Mac is then a victim in this situation. Brian’s article ends up being a hatchet job, causing Will to spin out of control and self medicate for depression causing Will to end up in hospital. It is here where, Will mentions leaving a voicemail for Mackenzie, after their broadcast of Bid Laden’s capture and killing. Mac never got the voicemail, proving that Reese had been hacking News Night staffers phones to get tabloid stories on Will. The contents of this voicemail are subject to a continuing storyline, which goes on into season two.

In the second season, Mackenzie’s storyline has two predominant aspects - figuring out the falsification of the Project Genoa story and trying to figure out what Will said in the voicemail he left for her last season. Jim goes on the road to follow the Romney campaign, leaving Mackenzie to fill the role of senior producer to Jerry Dantana, a producer from the DC office. Once Jerry arrives, he pitches scoop to Mac regarding a military project called Genoa. Essentially, Operation Genoa was a presumed military operation in Pakistan, in which the US Marine Corps allegedly used illegal sarin gas on civilians. News Night’s pursuit of the Genoa story is the main storyline for the second season of The Newsroom.

As executive producer for News Night Mackenzie’s role in bringing the Operation Genoa story to air is massive, and ultimately damaging as the story turns out to be falsified as Jerry doctored a source’s response. Mac is the one who discovers how Jerry altered the sources’ answer, by watching the clock shown in the corner of the screen from an interview clip. Over the course of the story, Mac’s physical appearance changes. Mac is shown as sleep-deprived, with no makeup and limp hair. In reference to Mackenzie’s appearance, at one point Will even makes
the comment “You look like you were grown in an environment where it’s dark and damp.” It is worth mentioning that Mac is the only character of the senior level whose physical appearance is affected by the Genoa story. Mackenzie and her appearance take on the toll for the failure of the Genoa story. Mackenzie tries to carry the guilt for everyone on the staff, and ultimately this is because Mackenzie represents the moral center of *The Newsroom*. Mackenzie’s role as the moral center character throughout the series is not further explored. Instead her role is assumed from the beginning as she is brought into the office to portray a changing of values and moral virtues as well as lead the staff as the “office mother”.

With the stress and guilt from Genoa sitting firmly on her shoulders, Mackenzie out of desperation moves on to try and find out what Will’s feelings are towards her. Mackenzie confronts Will about the voicemail he left for her after the coverage of the capture of Bid Laden. While high, Will left a message intended for Mackenzie where he openly admits he still has feelings for her, however Mac never got the message due to her phone being hacked. Mackenzie is determined to find out what Will said in that voicemail, as she believes it has proof (which is does) that he still has romantic feelings for her. Mac goes on to confront Will about his feelings for her, by specifically mentioning an engagement ring he had previously bought for her. Will tells Mac that the ring was a practical joke, which went too far. Mac feels like Will has

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64 *The Newsroom* “Election Night: Part I” S2 E08, Directed by Jason Ensler, Written by Aaron Sorkin, HBO, September 8, 2013.
65 Ibid.
intentionally hurt her after telling her about the ring. Later in that episode, Charlie mentions to Will how the staff cannot blame themselves for what happened with the Genoa story, leading Will to the realization he wants to be with Mackenzie. Will takes the very real, non-practical joke engagement ring out from his desk and runs through the office until he finds Mackenzie. Will proposes to Mac in a flurry of mumbling words, and Mac says yes. After two seasons of being reminded of their failed past relationship, Mac and Will are officially back together.

The third season is focused heavily on the issues surrounding citizen journalism, whistleblowing, and media buyouts. Mackenzie’s role of office mother is key to her storyline throughout season three, as she becomes the sole person responsible for keeping the newsroom running through flurry of changes. At the beginning of the season, Neal is contacted by a whistleblower that leaks classified documents regarding American involvement in Africa. While he is in the process of vetting the documents, Neal flees the country as the FBI pursues the case in order to find the source of the leak. Before he leaves, Neal gives the name of the source to Will. As a result of knowing the source, Will is arrested and held in contempt for not revealing the name of the source. With Will in jail, Mac and Charlie are left to keep the news department running and functioning. However, ultimately the functioning of the newsroom falls on Mackenzie’s shoulders as Charlie caves to the pressures of the new boss.

Before the whistleblower storyline even begins, we first see Mackenzie in the middle of planning her dream wedding. She’s planning to have a big wedding, with numerous bridesmaids and over the top gowns. The mentioning of wedding details and planning play into the role of “women’s interests” as well as highlighting the role of consumerism found within a post-feminist discourse. However, when ACN is hit with the whistleblower story and the subsequent legal issues surrounding it, Mackenzie is forced to change her focus.

Mackenzie decides to support Neal in running the story about the leaked documents. After Neal flees the country and after Will gets called to go to court, Mac has to figure out if it is worth running the potentially damning story, when she is approached by the whistleblower while attending the governor’s ball. The theme of affliction is touched upon within this part of the series, as Mackenzie must hide her knowledge of the source from the rest of the News Night staff. Unlike Neal and Will whose knowledge of the source’s identity is known among the rest of the staff, Mac keeps her knowledge of the source a secret and carries the burden of knowledge.
There is added drama as Mackenzie gets caught between running the story while ACN is in the middle of being bought out by a new owner. Reese tells Mackenzie that if she runs the whistleblower story that the buyer of ACN will pull his bid. In order for the company to stay afloat, Mackenzie is forced to not run the story.

Because if his knowledge of and his refusal to identify the source, Will is sent to jail for holding court in contempt. With Will heading to jail, Mackenzie decides to rush the wedding to before he is locked up. Will and Mac have a simple ceremony in city hall, which is created and put together on short notice by the rest of the News Night staff. Although it is not Mackenzie’s dream wedding it still utilizes typical wedding imagery and traditions. This emphasis on marriage plays into the double entanglement of postfeminist women who like Mackenzie “value autonomy, bodily integrity and the freedom to make individual choices, however what is interesting is the way in which they seem compelled to use their empowered postfeminist position to make choices that would be regarded by many feminists as problematic, located as they are in normative notions of femininity. They choose, for example, white weddings…”

Mackenzie’s need for a wedding marks a desire for traditional femininity, something which is marketed as individual choice in a post-feminist discourse however this negates the role of societal influences and socially constructed ideals.

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Mackenzie and Will’s “simple” wedding ceremony is still full of traditional wedding imagery.\(^6\)

Although ACN never runs the whistleblower story, Will remains in jail for over 52 days, during which time ACN undergoes massive changes (these changes are further explained and relevant in Sloan’s character analysis). Will is only released from jail after Mackenzie finds out through a news alert that the whistleblower killed herself. With all of the changes at ACN, Charlie loses his control over the newsroom, leaving Mackenzie to be the one to try and keep the program on track. Charlie caves to the new demands of the new owner of ACN, sacrificing his integrity to report the news in the spirit of News Night 2.0. Charlie’s frustrations and desperations get the best of him and he suffers from a heart attack and dies. Charlie’s funeral service provides the key setting for the last episode of the series, as well as providing the opportunity for the show to flashback to characters interactions with one another from before the beginning of the series.

In the last episode of the series, Mackenzie finds out that she is pregnant and is told by Will that she has been given the job of president of ACN. With the news of both of these developments, Mackenzie’s character goes from an ordinary woman who has struggled in that past to being the extraordinary woman who can have everything life has to offer - the job, the husband, and the child. However this is a false sense of extraordinary, as she is still conforming to societies expectations of a post-feminist woman. While both of these are significant developments for Mackenzie’s character, neither of them marks the most significant moment in the last episode for Mackenzie. The most significant scene in the last episode regarding Mackenzie’s storyline is a flashback to when Charlie convinced Mackenzie to become the producer of *News Night*.

Charlie approached Mac after she had returned from war reporting in Afghanistan and was at a low point in her life. In the scene, Mackenzie is wearing oversized sweatpants and a baggy army shirt whilst she is bowling and drinking beer at 11am. This emphasis on Mackenzie’s appearance as disheveled fits within the postfeminist media culture view that a

\(^6\) *The Newsroom* “Contempt”, S3 E04, Directed by Anthony Hemingway, Written by Aaron Sorkin, HBO, November 30, 2014.
woman’s body is a reflection of the individual’s interior life. Thus allowing the audience to read her as going through an emotional time. Mackenzie was out of work, and couldn’t find any producing jobs or journalism jobs until Charlie approached her with the opportunity to produce *News Night*. Charlie tells Mackenzie she can make Will a better person, and stop him from his downward spiral. Initially she scoffs at the idea, but Charlie reassures her that it is a mutual benefit for both her and Will as they better each other. Mac quickly realizes that Charlie is offering her the job because of her past relationship with Will and that by having them work together, *News Night* could become something worth being proud of. When Charlie asks Mackenzie what is her goal in life, Mackenzie responds with: “I want to do an hour of news that’s a genuine public service, something worthy of a great nation. There was a time when journalism wasn’t a career, it was a calling.” Although Mackenzie always had the drive to report the news and be a journalist, this scene implies that Mackenzie needed a man to help guide her back to her calling. Charlie gives her the opportunity and lifts her out of a depression. Although having her at ACN is beneficial for him as well, he is the one who has to persuade her to get back into the job she is so well respected for doing.

**Margaret “Maggie” Jordan**

Margaret “Maggie” Jordan is a member of the *News Night* staff who started out originally as an intern. In the first episode of the series, the audience learns that Maggie has been given a promotion by Will to be his assistant, however this was by mistake as Will cannot recall who his actual assistant is. Instead, Maggie is there to fill the role as assistant, even when Will mistakenly calls her “Ellen” throughout the first episode of the show. When Mackenzie McHale arrives as the new producer for *News Night*, Maggie is faced with the difficult decision of either staying on the *News Night* team or moving to the 10 o’clock show, which will now be produced by her boyfriend, Don Keefer. Maggie makes the decision to stay with the *News Night* team out of “loyalty”, and upon hearing this Mackenzie promotes Maggie to Associate Producer. Throughout the first season, the audience sees Maggie develop her skills as a member of the News Night team, even whilst she struggles with her social awkwardness and confidence. Maggie is

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presented as endearing and scatterbrained. Both of which are meant to emphasize characteristic aspects of femininity, as though it is something that has been lost. Maggie also fits well within McRobbie’s definitions of a “working girl” within the post-feminist masquerade, as she is well educated and “takes up her place in the labor market and she enjoys her status as a working girl without going too far. She must retain a visible fragility and the displaying of a kind of conventional feminine vulnerability will ensure she remains desirable to men.”

Maggie works hard and is an active member of the News Night staff, often pitching story ideas during the “rundown” meetings with the staff and producers. From episode to episode, Maggie sways from being highly professional and skilled in her reporting to clumsy and inept. The very first scene the audience sees of Maggie in the pilot episode is of Maggie and Don arguing in the middle of the newsroom over Don’s refusal to meet Maggie’s parents. Throughout this scene Don tells Maggie multiple times he’d like to get back to work and that they can talk about it later. Instead, Maggie continues to argue trying to get nearby co-workers to give input about the situation. Later in the episode, while she is working she uncovers damning information about the Minerals Management Service responsible for inspecting the oil wells in the Gulf of Mexico whilst researching information for the BP Deepwater Horizon oilrig explosion. When she secures the source for the show she so shocked that she managed to get the source that she hyperventilates. In the very next episode, Maggie blows the interview with the Arizona Governor’s press aide to discuss the proposed immigration bill in the state. Although she assures Jim that she can handle the interview, she neglects to tell Jim that she had previously dated the press aide in college, something that wavers on unethical behavior. Maggie subsequently embarrasses the press aide during the interview, resulting in News Night losing the Governor as a key guest on the night’s program. Maggie’s quality work and her ability to produce content, oscillates between these two extremes throughout the series.

Maggie frequently feels the need to prove her worth and value as a staff member. Although she is shown to be a determined and motivated member of the News Night staff, a large part of her storyline and character development is focused on her romantic attraction to Jim Harper, News Night’s Associate Producer and close coworker to Mackenzie McHale. In order to prevent her feelings from developing even further, Maggie initially sets Jim up with her

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71 Ibid. Pg. 79
roommate Lisa Lambert. Throughout the season Maggie has other romantic drama as she and Don break up and get back together frequently. This love triangle (or at times love square) is an ongoing story line throughout the first season. The first season ends with Maggie and Lisa having a fight over men. Maggie runs after Lisa to apologize but instead gets splashed by a Sex in the City tour bus driving by. Maggie soaked and frustrated shouts out her complex love situation to the world, only for Jim to be sitting on the bus hearing everything. Jim dramatically jumps off the bus and runs after her. Maggie and Jim kiss in the street admitting their feelings for each other but rejecting the idea of getting together. The season ends with them awkwardly remaining friends while Maggie accepts the offer to move in with Don.

All of Maggie’s storyline developments revolving around romance continuously play with the themes of choice and competition. Right from the very beginnings of The Newsroom Maggie is presented with the choice of two potential romantic suitors. At the same time, right from the very beginning, Maggie creates a competition between herself and other women; in season one it is with her roommate Lisa. With all of the romance drama surrounding her character, Maggie passively becomes the victim within her situation, which she created. Maggie fits the image of an ordinary woman as described by Haskell as Maggie’s character relies on the assumption that she’d rather be “stuck than sorry.”

Season two begins with Maggie trying to distance herself from the situation with Jim while also trying to further prove her value to the News Night staff. At the beginning of the season Don and Maggie are still together, however this quickly changes as Don comes across a YouTube video of Maggie’s breakdown in front of the Sex in the City tour bus. After Don breaks up with her, Maggie goes to move back in with Lisa, who also ends up seeing the video. After being dumped and losing her best friend, Maggie is struggling to find value in herself. Maggie desperately wants to be a “go to” person on the News Night staff, meaning she wants to be the expert on a certain topic, which would increase her value and credibility on the team. With this in mind, Maggie starts focusing heavily on Africa. Maggie pitches several stories to Mackenzie, and eventually is given the go ahead to go to Uganda to do a report about American soldiers stationed over there.

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72 Molly Haskell, From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) pg. 31
The trip to Uganda is made on the condition that Maggie and Gary (a fellow News Night staff member) must also do a human-interest story about soldiers working to improve conditions at a local orphanage. The same day the trip is approved there is a deadly attack in Kampala. Instead of telling Mackenzie about the attack, Maggie pleadingly asks Gary if he still wants to go, to which he says he’s still up for it if she is. By not telling Mackenzie about the attack and by almost begging Gary to still be willing to go on the trip, it marks poorly on Maggie’s professionalism. Maggie is willing to put others and herself in danger as a means to pursue her quest for self discovery.

Before heading to Uganda, Maggie gets the recommended vaccines and medication for the trip. From experience, Mackenzie advised Maggie to get one type of anti malarial pill as the other one can cause extreme side effects such as nausea or hallucinations. Maggie, playing into her scatterbrained characteristics, mistakenly gets the other anti-malarial pill. When Maggie is told about her mistake, she begins to freak out in the conference room during a meeting about having taken the pill already. Mackenzie, playing into her mothering role in the office, calms Maggie down and tells her to change the prescription. Once Maggie and Gary arrive in Uganda they head straight to the orphanage to get the human-interest piece done as quickly as possible. Immediately, Maggie is drawn to one particular little boy named Daniel who is sitting alone.

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WOMEN FIRST, JOURNALISTS SECOND

Maggie proceeds to read a book to Daniel several times and Daniel strokes Maggie’s hair, as he has never seen blonde hair before. Maggie and Gary are made to stay the night at the orphanage as their soldier travel convoy refuse to travel after dark in order to avoid “cattle raiders” men who steal cattle and will kill anyone who tries to stop them or gets in their way. Later that night, the orphanage is awoken by gunfire and shouting. While evacuating the orphanage, Maggie carries Daniel on her back towards the bus. However during the escape Daniel is hit by a bullet, which seemingly was intended for Maggie.

Maggie’s trip to Uganda plays a central role to her storyline and character development throughout the second season. Sorkin described that when writing Maggie’s storyline for season two he wanted to analyze what it takes for one to be a journalist, what makes someone cut out for that type of work. Sorkin explains, “Maggie is questioning, does she have that gene in her? Does she have that enzyme? Because how is it that Mackenzie and Jim and all these people who have seen terrible things, how is it they’ve all so quickly and fully recovered? Maggie is just crushed by what happened in Uganda. Maybe, isn’t that a sign that she’s just a civilian and not a newsperson.”

Throughout the season Maggie carries a burden of guilt, blaming herself for Daniel’s death. After returning to New York from Uganda, Maggie tries to give off the impression that she is a hardened woman. Maggie is forced by Human Resources to see a psychologist and is prescribed antidepressants, but refuses to take them. Instead of seeking further professional help to deal with her traumatic experience in Uganda, Maggie self-medicates by drowning her sorrows with men and alcohol. Her problematic behavior becomes so apparent, that at work Jim makes a comment to her that she should switch to drinking vodka as it isn’t so strong on her breathe and that she shouldn’t wear the same clothes to work two days in a row, indicating having a one night stand. This troublesome behavior eventually spills into her work and affects her work performance. When editing the George Zimmerman 911 call, Maggie edits out a key segment of the call, leading to Will having to make an on-air retraction.

Maggie’s trauma isn’t only manifested in her behavior but also in her appearance. When Maggie returns to New York she cuts off her hair and dyes it red. This action is loaded in symbolism, as her hair was a unique feature of her image especially in Uganda. Maggie’s

dramatic haircut fits within postfeminist media culture’s view that a woman’s body is a reflection of the individual’s interior life. This means if a woman is seen taking poor care of herself, or if her appearance is considered to be disheveled in some way, we are invited to read this in psychological terms as indicative of her having an emotional breakdown. When Jim confronts Maggie about her cutting her hair she replies, “He’d never seen blonde hair before. While I was reading to him, he was playing with my hair. So I cut my hair.” Jim tells Maggie that her actions in Uganda were brave, and that she is a stronger journalist than she gives herself credit for. However Maggie’s actions upon returning from Uganda do not reflect those of a “fully recovered newsperson.”

Although it is evident that Maggie’s trip to Uganda made her undergo radical changes throughout season two, it is important to analyze her reasoning for making the trip in the first place. When season two begins, Maggie is desperately trying to find meaning and value in her life. After being dumped by Don and losing Lisa as a friend, Maggie has no one left to turn to for support. This is even more notable after Jim runs off to follow the Romney campaign as a means to get away from the office, especially to get distance from Maggie. While Maggie insists that

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76 The Newsroom “Election Night: Part II” S2 E09, Directed by Alan Poul, Written by Aaron Sorkin, HBO, September 15, 2013.
78 The Newsroom “Unintended Consequences” S2 E04, Directed by Carl Franklin, Written by Aaron Sorkin, HBO, August 4, 2013.
her drive to go to Africa is in order for her to gain the experience and skills needed to become a “go to” person in the office, it is also very apparent that Africa represents an escape for Maggie. As noted by Margaret Brooks, who wrote in her critique of *The Newsroom*, “What should have been a professional development trip and opportunity for real-world experience becomes a backhanded reaction to issues with men and friends.” This is further evidence and supported when analyzing an earlier scene between Mackenzie and Maggie prior to the trip to Uganda. When Mac tells Maggie that the Public Affairs office is threatening to pull the clearance due to increased violence in the region. Instead of reiterating the importance of getting the stories from over there, Maggie takes her frustration out on Mac by saying, “God. Jesus. Let me blow off some steam, cause I didn’t say anything when I got YouTubed, and Don kicked me out, or Jim started treating me like a sister, and Lisa stopped speaking with me because I had this thing, I had Africa.” Africa was never truly intended to become Maggie’s “go to” skill; instead she used Africa as a means to try to “discover” herself and distract herself from the problems at home. By the end of season two Maggie is starting to heal from her experiences in Uganda and takes the initiative to keep working.

At the beginning of the third season, Maggie is shown as focused and healthy. She exercises as a form of therapy to deal with her issues from last season. Her hair is back to being blonde and mid length, indicating that she has healed herself from her emotional wounds from Uganda. Sorkin explains that season three “…track[s] Maggie’s strength and she really becomes her own person, very strong, very confident.” Right from the outset of the season, Maggie is put to work. She is sent to Boston to help cover the Boston Marathon bombing. Jim vouches for Maggie and convinces Will, Charlie and Mac to send Maggie as a test to see if she is truly healed from her trauma and cut out for a career in journalism. While in Boston, Maggie has to take over the role as reporter for Elliot after he gets an allergic reaction to walnuts. Maggie is able to deliver the report without problems on such short notice. This proves to herself and to the rest of the *News Night* staff that she has moved on from her difficulties and can be a journalist. After

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79 Margaret Brooks, “Money Honey” or “Moral center”? A Feminist Rehetorical Critique of female characters in *The Newsroom*, Arizona State University, accessed via www.academia.edu/5543194/Money_Honey_or_Moral_center_A_feminist_rehetorical_critique_of_female_characters_in_The_Newsroom pg. 16
seeing the report from Boston, Charlie makes the comment, “Is it just me, or did she age 10 years this week?” This scene indicates that Maggie has finally grown into her own as a journalist.

Maggie covering for Elliot in Boston marks the beginning of a confident Maggie.\(^{83}\)

Maggie’s confidence begins to grow, and on the train ride back to New York she manages to book an exclusive interview with the US environmental protection agency as well as give out her phone number to an ethics professor named Jack Spaniel. Maggie dates Jack for a bit, but it becomes very apparent neither Maggie nor Jim have gotten over their feelings for one another. It is interesting to watch Maggie’s confidence grow as it coincides with her backing away from the pursuit of Jim. In seasons one and two, Maggie’s storyline is constantly revolving around her pursuit and feelings for Jim, which often affected the quality of her work. McRobbie describes this behavior among post-feminist women as “The risk that she might let the right man slip from under her nose, so she must always be on the lookout, prioritizing this over success in the workplace.”\(^{84}\) However, in season three Maggie begins to prioritize her success over romance. This could arguably be a form of sacrifice, as Maggie stops pursuing men for the benefit of her career.

At the beginning of the season Jim is dating Hallie, the online reporter he met while on the Romney campaign trail. Hallie’s character initially represents another woman competition for Maggie, in regard to her romantic attraction to Jim. Jim manages to get Hallie a job at ACN in

\(^{82}\) *The Newsroom* “Boston”, S3 E01, Directed by Anthony Hemmingway, Written by Aaron Sorkin, HBO, November 9, 2014.

\(^{83}\) Ibid.

the digital department after the campaign ends, however Hallie is fired after posting an inappropriate tweet regarding the Republican Party and the Boston Marathon bombing on the ACN twitter account. After Hallie is fired, her relationship with Jim begins to fall apart and Hallie ends the relationship. After Hallie leaves Jim, Jack confronts Maggie about her feelings for Jim. Knowing that he cannot nor should not compete for Maggie’s affection, Jack breaks things off with Maggie. With both Hallie and Jack out of the picture, it is evident that Maggie and Jim will end up together.

When the FBI raids the News Night offices, Maggie is able to highlight her growth as a journalist and member of staff. With the FBI raiding the office the staff threatens to broadcast to the public what is happening. This threat is a bluff, however when Don and Jim go into the studio control room to bring up the broadcast, they cannot figure out how to control the switchboard. When Maggie enters the room she immediately is able to figure out the buttons and the switches, amazed at how neither Don nor Jim could figure it out. The scene marks Maggie’s growth and is fitting that it occurs in front of her two main romantic interests throughout the series. Both Jim and Don comment on Maggie’s new found confidence:

“I’m not sure how I feel about new confident Maggie.” – Jim
“She’s looking good.” – Don

Although Maggie’s growth is indisputable, she still often relies on the men in the office to give their sign of approval of her work. When Maggie has to take over the report for Elliot in Boston, he cheers her on and gives her a hug of admiration. After scoring the interview with the EPA administrator, Maggie asks Jim for guidance to make the interview more interesting. When the interview goes badly, Jim admits his failure to help because he was distracted by relationship problems with Hallie, however Maggie is also partly responsible for the interview’s failure. In an earlier scene, Maggie is shown to have highlighted every sentence from the EPA report, thus failing to pick and chose the key points to center the interview on. Maggie is faced with another tough job when she and Jim are sent to the Moscow Airport to wait out the developing Edward Snowden story.

85 *The Newsroom* “Main Justice”, S3 E03, Directed by Alan Poul, Written by Aaron Sorkin, HBO, November 23, 2014.
While at the airport, Maggie brings up Jim and Hallie’s break up. Maggie convinces Jim to call Hallie to try and win her back - Jim goes off to make the phone call but unknown to Maggie, he never makes the call. After a struggle to get tickets onto the flight, Jim and Maggie board the plane, only to have Edward Snowden not show up for the flight. Frustrated and on the plane, Maggie asks Jim if he made the call to Hallie, to which he says no, unsurprising Maggie who shakes her head in disapproval. Maggie continues to ask Jim why he didn’t call Hallie, to which Jim finally replies, “I like you [Maggie] and I don’t really know why you don’t know that.” After sharing his feelings, Jim moves to another seat in the plane to give Maggie some space. Maggie quickly realizes her feelings for him are still there. Maggie gets Jim to come back to his original seat and she kisses him, dramatically signaling that they can finally pursue their feelings for one another.

In the very last episode of the series, Maggie gets an interview for a job as field producer at the Washington, DC job of ACN. When sharing the news with Jim, Maggie finds out that Jim was the one who recommend her. Maggie is initially worried after hearing this, as she believes it could be him trying to get rid of her. Maggie asks Sloan about the situation, to which Sloan reassures her that Jim recommended her because she is the best candidate. This scene plays into Maggie’s characteristics of overacting and worrying. When Mackenzie is promoted to head of ACN, she promotes Jim to producer of News Night, who in turn tells Maggie that he wants to promote her to senior producer. While flattered, Maggie declines the opportunity and still has her sights set on the field producer job in DC as she wants to work her way up the corporate ladder. By rejecting Jim’s offer, Maggie is portraying the image of the empowered post-feminist woman who has working-class ambition to climb her way through the man’s corporate world. With Maggie’s eyes set on DC and Jim staying in New York, they decide to make the long distance relationship work, ending their storyline on a happy note.

Maggie’s overarching storyline fits well within Haskell’s description of an ordinary woman to extraordinary woman. Maggie starts out as a common woman who is passively accepting of the world around her. She avoids confronting her feelings for Jim in season one and remains in a relationship with Don because it is better than being alone. When she is faced with the emotional trauma from her trip to Uganda, she has to undergo a mental breakdown before

86 *The Newsroom* “Oh Shenandoah”, S3 E05, Directed by Paul Lieberstein, Written by Aaron Sorkin, HBO, December 7, 2014.
evolving into a strong and confident woman. However the depiction of Maggie becoming an extraordinary woman is superficial. Her confidence is shown through the changing of her appearance. She starts dressing better, in clothing that fits her well and wearing makeup that doesn’t age her. Although she is getting better at getting stories, she still relies on the approval of the men in the office to encourage her to continue her work. When Hallie breaks up with Jim, no longer does the threaded theme of competition plague Maggie’s storyline. When Maggie tells Jim to win Hallie back, it seems very forced and insincere, as the audience knows she still has feelings for him. Overall, Maggie’s character presents elements of Haskell’s women and themes, while also fitting within McRobbie’s discourse for the post-feminist working girl.

Sloan Sabbith

Sloan is ACNs main economic news correspondent. She earned a doctorate degree in economics from Duke University and is an adjunct professor at Columbia University whilst also working at ACN. Sloan often is a correspondent on Elliot Hirsch’s ten o’clock show, hosts five minutes every night on News Night, and hosts her own economic show at four o’clock. She is fluent in Japanese and has been offered many lucrative jobs down the road in the financial district. Will has said throughout the series that Sloan is like a little sister to him, and that he is protective of her. However, Sloan shows throughout the series that she can be a strong and assertive woman in her own right, often speaks her mind and fights against gender stereotypes. When asked by Don why she is single, Sloan replies, “A lot of men are intimidated by my intelligence.”

Although her intelligence is often well regarded, Sloan is frequently confused by other peoples’ behavior and actions. She fails at finding suitable dates for Will on two occasions, and frequently acknowledges that she is more “book smart” than “people smart.” Her strengths in logic and reason emphasize more commonly accepted masculine traits (stereotypically of course); where as her lack of relationship expertise notes an insufficiency of a classically seen feminine attribute. This dynamic is characteristically unusual for a female character and is intended to be entertaining. She greatly looks up to Will, and often takes advice from the senior men on the staff, such as Will and Don. Throughout the series, Sloan has many humorous one-

87 The Newsroom “The Greater Fool” S1 E10, Directed by Greg Mottola, Written by Aaron Sorkin, HBO, August 26, 2012
liners, however her jokes often relate direction to patriarchal values and society’s expectations of women. Her looks are often the subject of the jokes, and with her lack of understanding people’s behavior it often comes at her own expense. Sloan’s character is very much a product of the male gaze. Her appearance is frequently commented on and brought up in conversation throughout the series. Although her intelligence is highlighted throughout the series, it tends to be in conjuncture with comments made about her looks. Her clothing is usually form fitting, and often with lower cut necklines, which draw the audience to her cleavage.

An example of Sloan’s wardrobe, which highlights her wearing of low cut tops and tight fitting clothing.

In the first season, Sloan’s storyline follows her taking on more work by working on News Night. With Sloan having more work, she has more responsibility and more hosting opportunities. This newfound responsibility proves to be too much for Sloan after she pushes a source too far for the Fukushima reactor story destroys the interview on air and goes rogue. In order to save her job, Sloan has to lie that she misunderstood the source and publicly apologize to save herself, the network, and the source’s “honor”. Initially refused to lie, arguing that it would reflect badly on her intelligence, which is one of her characteristics she most dearly regards. However after Will tells her that he approves of her lying to save her skin, she goes ahead with the decision.

Another key story line for Sloan during the first season is her role in helping Neal infiltrate the Internet trolling community. When Neal approaches Sloan asking if he can use her appearance as bait to try and get into the online community, Sloan coerces him into complimenting her abilities as an economist. When Neal tells her that complimenting her abilities, as an economist isn’t bait worthy, she accepts the fact he must comment on her physical appearance. However, when Neal goes forth to comment on her appearance, she is unsure of the validity of the comments and asks Neal for reassurance. Specifically Sloan worries if her butt is too big.\(^89\) This objectification of her body quickly turns into her own subjectification.

Sloan is initially angry at Neal wanting to say mean comments about her image, but quickly asks him for reassurance about her appearance.\(^90\)

Throughout the series Sloan tries to prove her worth not only as a reporter, an economist but also as a woman through getting compliments. Her uncertainty of these compliments play into her characteristics of being overly logical and lacking social grace. First season ends with Sloan confronting Don about having feelings for him. Don comes to Sloan asking for advice about asking Maggie to move in with him, to which Sloan reassures Don that he is a good guy despite having been told along the way he’s a bad guy. Sloan tells Don that asking Maggie to move in is the right thing to do, even if he doesn’t love her. Don appreciates the advice, and then asks why Sloan is single. At first she avoids answering the question but then Sloan tells him “because you never asked me out.”\(^91\) This response on Sloan’s behalf plays into her perceived


\(^{90}\) Ibid.

\(^{91}\) *The Newsroom* “The Greater Fool” S1 E10, Directed by Greg Mottola, Written by Aaron Sorkin, HBO, August 26, 2012
victimization by perpetuating “the common myths of rejection and self-sacrifice and martyrdom...”\textsuperscript{92} as described by Haskell.

Season two begins with Sloan feeling awkward around Don, after telling him she has feelings for him. The two are able to form a friendship, and throughout the season Sloan and Don are supportive of one another. Sloan’s story arch in season two isn’t very prominent compared to other characters, however Sloan does have one notable storyline, which brings an interesting perspective to her character. Halfway through season two, Sloan is faced with a nude photo scandal after she breaks up with her boyfriend, who prior to this scandal the audience never meets. Photos of her are shared across the Internet without her consent and bring scandal to the network. Reese Lansing and Charlie Skinner scold Sloan for having taken the photos, however they acknowledge that she is the victim in a revenge porn situation. Sloan hides out in Don’s office as the scandal breaks, and Don listens to Sloan’s worries. With Don’s encouragement and support, Sloan confronts her ex-boyfriend by punching him in the face. The scandal is gone almost as quickly as it arose; however it is interesting that when a female reporter is faced with a scandal, it is one that is highly sexualized and relevant to modern popular culture. By having nude photos of her leaked, Sloan failed at “defending [her] own sexual reputation,” however the photos reiterated the post-feminist discourse that states that “Women are not straight-forwardly objectified but are portrayed as active, desiring sexual subjects who choose to present themselves in a seemingly objectified manner because it suits their liberated interests to do so.”\textsuperscript{93} By the end of second season Sloan and Don are good friends, and in a charity event Don anonymously is the one to bids on Sloan’s book donation. When Sloan discovers he is the one who bid on her donation, she signs the book and kisses him passionately in the control room.

When season three begins, Sloan and Don have begun to see each other however they haven’t labeled their relationship. Sloan and Don face having to label their relationship as a proper relationship, after Sloan discovers that Don took finical investment advice from her prior to her broadcasting that advice to the public, thus committing a crime. Sloan discovers this while on a brunch date with Don. Sloan mentions during brunch that she was interviewed by Shape

\textsuperscript{92} Molly Haskell, \textit{From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) pg. 160

Magazine and in the interview she lied about her healthy diet. Because of the interview, Sloan makes Don go to the buffet for her, so she isn’t seen getting unhealthy food in public. Sloan and Don argue about his investments as he passes her waffles in secret. Although the scene isn’t significant to the overall storyline of the season, it marks an interesting development in Sloan’s relationship with Don while also highlighting Sloan’s self-surveillance of her body. When they return from brunch, Sloan and Don comfortably label themselves as a couple.

Regarding work developments, the main thing for Sloan in season three is the arrival of a Bloomberg terminal computer system, which allows her to analyze the financial markets more quickly and affectively. With her new computer, Sloan is the first one in the office to discover that Atlantis World Media is about to bought out resulting a massive restructuring of ACN as well as a new owner of the network. One of the new developments from the network restructuring was the creation of a mobile app called ACNgage. The app, arguably a form of citizen journalism lets users track and note where celebrities were spotted. Sloan makes it her personal mission to get the app taken down, after her friend is stalked by paparazzi using the app. Sloan sees the potential danger, which can come from tracking celebrities but also discredit the work of professional journalists. Sloan asks Don for help to get more leverage to try to get the app taken down. Sloan outsmarts and charms the new tech guy to agree to an interview on News Night. The interview is approved by Charlie and by the new owner of ACN, Lucas Pruitt, as they see it as a promotional piece for the network and the app. Instead, Sloan uses the interview to show how dangerous the app is. Sloan uses the interview as a form of open protest to the changes happening at ACN. This move on Sloan’s behave marks a certain level of unprofessionalism. Not only does it publicize her issues with the new ACN but it also reflects poorly on Mackenzie’s professionalism as she lets Sloan do the interview.

As previously mentioned, when a new owner buys out ACN, Charlie is overwhelmed by the changes facing the network. What prompts Charlie’s heart attack is Sloan’s interview about ACNgage, as she ran the idea by him as a promotional piece instead of Mackenzie. After Charlie dies, Sloan feels as if she is somewhat responsible for Charlie’s death. At Charlie’s funeral, Will tells Sloan that she isn’t at fault for Charlie’s death, fitting within their brother and sister type relationship. Sloan feels relieved and comforted.

In the last episode of the series, the episode has various flashbacks to before the beginning of the show. In one, the audience sees how Sloan first met Don. Both were working in
different divisions at ACN, but met one another due to an argument over *News Night* stealing a guest from Sloan’s show. When Sloan goes back to Don’s office later, she finds out Don has been moved to another show and is no longer the producer of *News Night* (As Mackenzie is being brought in). Sloan says she is sorry to hear he has been demoted, and goes off to pack up and head home. Before she leaves the office for the night she gathers up the courage to ask Don out for coffee, only to see Don kissing Maggie, as this was when Don and Maggie were a couple. This scene provides the audience with further background understanding of why Sloan never went after Don even when it was clear she had feelings for him. Sloan’s decision to keep her feelings for Don secret while also aware of his relationship with Maggie combines the themes of competition and affliction. While Sloan didn’t overtly compete with Maggie for Don’s affection, she still managed to “compete” from a safe distance. The flashback addresses the affliction Sloan had to deal with over the course of the series by keeping her feelings for Don a secret. The scene provides the viewer with a sense of completion and bookending of the storyline.

5.1.2 Scene Analysis

*Season 1, Episode 1 “We Just Decided To”*\(^94\)

*Scene Length: 23:45 – 26:12*

This scene marks the first conversation between Maggie and Mackenzie in the series. The conversation takes place during an awkward time in the office, as the newsroom is empty with all of the staff members having moved to the 10 o’clock show. Both Maggie and Mackenzie are worried about how Will will handle Mackenzie’s arrival in the office. While this is on going, Maggie is also stressing about her dinner plans with her parents, as her boyfriend Don has canceled on joining the dinner. Maggie is hurt that Don isn’t willing to meet her parents, and Mackenzie overhears Maggie’s phone conversation with her dad.

\(^94\) *The Newsroom*, “We Just Decided To”, S1E01, Directed by Greg Mottala, Written by Aaron Sorkin, HBO, June 24, 2012.
Mackenzie: “You said your name was Maggie?”
Maggie: “Yes, ma’am.”
Mackenzie: “Ma’am, how old do I look?”
Maggie: “No! No! No! No! I heard you were embedded for awhile.”
Mackenzie: “26 months. Anything happen while I was gone?”
Maggie: “That’s why I called you ma’am.”
Mackenzie: “So did the marines.”
Maggie: “You sure don’t look like you’ve been in a war.”

These are the first few sentences that Maggie and Mackenzie exchange once meeting one another. What is worth pointing out is that the initial focus goes to looks and appearances. Maggie comments on how Mackenzie doesn’t “look” like she has been stationed overseas as a war reporter. This comment implies that war reporters have a distinct look to them when they return back home. While Maggie is trying to be complimentary about Mackenzie’s appearance, this comment plays up Maggie’s awkward social skills, which are frequently highlighted throughout the series as a key component to her feminine characteristics. This scene also fits within a post-feminist discourse, as it is very heavily focused on the body and how women monitor their bodily femininity. Mackenzie tries to seem relatable but still keep a sense of authority over Maggie by making a joke about how the marines’ called her ma’am as well. Maggie is aiming to be respectful to Mackenzie as she is the new boss but also because Maggie knows about all of the work Mackenzie has done (work which has given Mackenzie honorary man status in the world of journalism).
Mackenzie: “The first thing I did when I got back was buy women’s clothes. I maxed out three credit cards, but I figured, hey, the economy is booming so what the heck.”
Maggie: “Oh god…”
Mackenzie: “I’m kidding”

Humor comes from what we know and what we understand. Although this part of the conversation is taken as a joke, the mention of clothing and fashion mark a writing decision to play up socially expected “women’s” interests. The joke is reflective of Mackenzie, as she is aware of the fact she lives in a consumerist society that sees femininity as a commodity. The world of fashion is based on the buying and selling of feminine imagery, and Mackenzie is a woman of the post-feminist age who is aware of this. She knows women are objectified and as a joke she is mockingly subjectifying herself for a laugh. That being said, Mackenzie is very much part of this consumer culture and also monitors her appearance. This is emphasized by the fact that she buys designer brands, which we can see when she arrives at the ACN building with Jim carrying her Louis Vuitton luggage set.

Maggie: Awkward Laugh and picks up phone call
“Hi dad. I’m fine. I left a message for you and mom cause I wanted to let you know that it will just be the three of us for dinner tonight, Don can’t make it.” Pause “He has to work late. He just does, you know with him running ten o’clock now he’s so” Pause “and he feels terrible about it,”
he was really looking forward to meeting you.” Pause “I know but in this case its true. So great, so I’ll meet you guys in the lobby at 9:15, bye dad.”

Long Pause
Mackenzie: “You okay?”
Maggie: “oh!” Laughs Awkwardly “I’ve just got an allergy”
Mackenzie: “To what?”
Maggie: “Oysters.”

Mackenzie: “I hate lying to my father.”
Maggie: “Oh! I wasn’t lying…”
Mackenzie: “Yeah…Why won’t Don go to dinner? He thinks it’s too early?”
Maggie: “Oh! Don’s not my boyfriend.”
Mackenzie: “He’s in a picture on your desk with a couple of your friends so it’s not obvious but it’s a picture of your boyfriend. I don’t care I’m not reporting you to HR.”
Maggie: “Thank you.”
Mackenzie: “Does he want you to do things in the bedroom you’re uncomfortable with?”
Maggie: “No!”
Mackenzie: “Damn it! These are just routine questions.”
Maggie: “You put that together really fast.”
Mackenzie: “Its not an original story.”

By overhearing Maggie’s conversation on the phone, Mackenzie is now fully invested in Maggie’s relationship with Don. By collecting just one side of the story, Mackenzie begins to give advice and input about Maggie’s relationship. This is problematic in two ways – Mackenzie is there to be Maggie’s prospective boss. It seems inappropriate for a future boss to immediately become involved in the private lives of their staff members. While Don is not a staff member who will be reporting to Mackenzie, it marks potential conflict, as Don and Mackenzie will both be in relatively high-level production positions at ACN. Secondly, journalists are trained to speak to everyone involved in a story before writing about it. In this case, while Maggie’s romantic life is not up for publication, Mackenzie is sharing her advice without having heard Don’s side of the story. As a journalist, it is expected that you talk to all sides or perspectives of a story. By providing her perspective, Mackenzie’s characteristic and role of being the office
mother is highlighted. Of course, in a larger context, Mackenzie’s mothering of Maggie plays into society’s belief that women are inherently “mothering” by nature and that being in tune with emotions is more of a feminine attribute.

Maggie: “My dad knew I was lying, now he’s going to hate Don and that’s not what I wanted to happen.”
Mackenzie gets up to give tissues to Maggie
Maggie: “Oh, I’m fine.”
Mackenzie: “Your eyes are red. Turn and face me,”
Maggie wipes her eyes
Mackenzie: “When he calls you tonight at 11 and wants you to come by, don’t lay on a tone of voice, just tell him real nicely you’re hanging with your roommates and you’ll see him at work. Do that three times and he’ll get the idea.”

This scene is the first in the show that takes place between only female characters. Within this scene there are many factors at work, Mackenzie is in a position of authority over Maggie however she wants to be seen as approachable and a colleague. Mackenzie’s giving of advice to Maggie in regard to Maggie’s relationship with Don is presumptive for many reasons, specifically in that this is the first time she is meeting Maggie and only knows about the relationship between Maggie in Don by making assumptions and piecing together what she overhears when Maggie is talking to her Dad on the phone. Mackenzie’s given advice regarding relationships is questionable, as one of the key aspects to Mackenzie’s character throughout the series is her failed relationship with Will. Mackenzie’s advice also in turn reasserts the sexual difference between men and women when it comes to relationships. This is seen in Mackenzie’s advice to tell the man you will see him at work, indicating that all men are the same when it comes to dealing with relationships. This is indicative of the resurgence in ideas of a natural sex difference, something that is key to a post-feminist discourse.
As previously mentioned, this scene also plays up the “inherent” mothering aspect of female characters, while more specifically giving Mackenzie more room to develop her role of office mother. While Mackenzie is the new producer, she also wants to make sure she is emotionally invested in her staff. This is shown not only in Mackenzie handing Maggie the box of tissues but also by insisting that she gets a look at Maggie’s eyes to help wipe away the tears. The flow of the scene is also distinctly marked by the topics of conversation that Maggie and Mackenzie bring up. The topics of looks, clothing and relationships dominate the conversation where as aspects of professional interest or work doesn’t get as strong of a focus.

Season 1, Episode 2 “News Night 2.0”\(^95\)  
Scene Length: 18:07 – 21:24

This scene marks the first meeting of Mackenzie and Sloan. After hearing about Sloan’s knowledge about economics, Mackenzie wants to offer Sloan an opportunity to have a segment on News Night. When Sloan tells Mackenzie that there are better economists for the job, Mackenzie admits that she wants Sloan because of her appearance. Sloan agrees to do the segment, and in passing mentions that the office thinks Will cheated on Mackenzie and that’s why their relationship failed. Mackenzie freaks out as in reality she was the one who cheated in the relationship and she cannot understand why the rest of the News Night staff do not like Will.

Mackenzie: “Do you mind coming into my office for a second?”  
Sloan: “Sure.”
Mackenzie: “What’s the difference between a corporation and a person?”  
Sloan: “Have you ever held the door open for someone?”
Mackenzie: “Yes.”
Sloan: “Did you ask them for money first?”

\(^95\) The Newsroom, “News Night 2.0”, S1E02, Directed by Alex Graves, Written by Aaron Sorkin, HBO, July 1, 2012.
Mackenzie: “Nope.”
Sloan: “That’s the difference.”
Mackenzie: “That’s the right answer.”
Sloan: “Am I taking a test?”
Mackenzie: “I’ve asked around and people say you don’t belong here, that you could be making a lot more money as an analyst at Goldmann.”
Sloan: “Couldn’t you be making a lot more money producing reality television?”
Mackenzie: “I do produce reality television.”
Sloan: “I don’t know what to tell you. I like my job.”

Sloan’s initial hostility towards Mackenzie is noticeable and indicates Sloan’s frustration of having to prove to people that she is an economist. Sloan’s attitude indicates that she is often faced with stereotypes due to people making judgments about her off of her looks. With Sloan’s looks being continuous mentioned and highlighted throughout the series, her character quickly becomes trivialized and her image of being an empowered woman is ostensibly lost. Mackenzie’s offer to give Sloan more time to showcase her knowledge of the economy comes at the cost of being sexualized.

Sloan: “Uh, there are people more qualified than I am, I can put you in touch with some of the professors I studied under…”
Mackenzie: “Yeah, the thing is that they’re not going to have your legs. I’m sorry but if I’m going to get people to listen to an economics lesson I’ve got to find someone who doesn’t look like George Bernard Shaw. I would not ask you if I didn’t think you were qualified.”
WOMEN FIRST, JOURNALISTS SECOND

Sloan: “You want me to do pole dancing while explaining subprime mortgages?”
Mackenzie: “If you’re up to it, sure.”
Sloan: “Alright, I get it.”
Mackenzie: “We’ll start a conversation with Will about our goals and how we’re going to get there.”
Sloan: “Great.”

This scene is significant as it marks the official meeting between two predominate female characters of the show. This scene is also important as it takes place solely between the two women, similarly to the scene where Mackenzie meets Maggie for the first time. This scene has clear issues as both women accept that objectification of women is a means to bring in more of a male audience. This could also be a means to bring in more women as viewers due to women being influenced by the male gaze and also futher the means of self-objectification among women themselves. Although Mackenzie acknowledges that Sloan is “more than qualified” to be an economic reporter for News Night, she still aims to use Sloan for her sexual image and her bodily femininity. With Mackenzie offering Sloan the opportunity to host a segment of News Night under the pretense of using Sloan’s feminine aesthetics, it emphasizes the objectification of women by other women. This plays into the notion of women being participants of the male gaze, as outlined by Mulvey. When Sloan accepts the offer, even under the condition of being sexualized, this works within post-feminist discourse, which notes the predominance of women being subjected to a marked sexualization of culture, and in turn self-objectifying themselves to fit the culture.

Mackenzie: “I think you and I are going to be great friends.”
Sloan: “I’d like that.”
Mackenzie: “Me too. I mean it, I don’t have any friends.”
Sloan: “Oh…you know, you’re new in town.”
Mackenzie: “yeah, yeah…”
Sloan: “You know, you and I have something in common.”
Mackenzie: “What’s that?”
Sloan: “I had a boyfriend who cheated on me too. The week of our wedding…”
Mackenzie: “Ah, oh! I don’t understand.”
Sloan: “I know about Will…”
Mackenzie: “Yeah, yeah…I still don’t understand. Wait! Will didn’t cheat on me.”
Sloan: “I used to deny it too.”
Mackenzie: “Will didn’t cheat on me.”
Sloan: “Oh, okay, sorry.”
Mackenzie: “I can’t talk about what happened but I can tell you that Will didn’t cheat on me.”
Sloan: “You know, I shouldn’t have mentioned anything…“

Mackenzie: “Sloan, listen to me, Will didn’t cheat on me! Yes we were together for two years, and we broke up, I can’t tell you anymore than that but he never ever ever cheated on me. Who told you that?”
Sloan: “Uh, everybody.”
Mackenzie: “That’s what people…No no no! That, That’s not what happened!”
Sloan: “You don’t have to tell me what happened.”
Mackenzie: “I can’t tell you what happened, he doesn’t want anyone in the office to know he made me promise. No, not because…I can’t talk! Ah! Even though in this situation, I’d think he’d prefer, no, he really doesn’t want the office to know anything. He didn’t cheat on me!”
Sloan: “I should get back to work.”
Mackenzie: “You need to tell people that.”

Sloan: “You’re enabling an ass.”
Mackenzie: “Whoa! He’s not an ass. Come here. Will is not an ass, he is the opposite of an ass. And if he did cheat on me, which he absolutely didn’t, he’s definitely not an ass. Do people think that?”

Sloan: “You had to have known that.”

Mackenzie: “I thought, they thought he was gruff but lovable.”

Sloan: “No, they think he’s an ass who cheated on you.”

Mackenzie: “Well that has to be corrected.” Pulls Sloan back into her office.

Mackenzie’s behavior in this scene shows the strong sentiments Mackenzie has for Will. When she learns that the rest of the News Night staff does not like Will and finds him an unlikeable character, Mackenzie is shocked and without hesitation defends him. This also pokes a hole into Mackenzie’s competency and sense of awareness, as when she arrived at News Night she knew that the majority of the staff had left to join the 10 o’clock show due to Will’s tempestuous behavior. What is problem some is how quickly Mackenzie goes against her agreement with Will not to discuss her past relationship with him to the staff. When she discovers that the rest of the staff is under the impression that Will was the unfaithful one in their relationship, She quickly engages in office gossip, which is behavior that is not expected of a senior staff member. Mackenzie cannot separate herself from partaking in the gossip as she feels like the staff’s opinions of Will is unfair and their belief of him being unfaithful to her during their relationship is an “injustice” for his character.96

Sloan: “I have to start the 4 o’clock…”

Mackenzie: “Okay, okay, you need to do this. You need to go from person to person and tell them that Will is an extrodinary with a heart the size of a range rover, that there’s a long story that has to do with, a lot to do with me, but also other things I can’t, I can’t tell you the story of his life, but he’s the good guy. Will you tell people that?”

Sloan: “Every chance I get.”

Mackenzie: “You’re not going to right?”

Sloan: “No I’m not.”

Mackenzie: “Okay…”

While this scene takes place between two of the predominant women characters on *The Newsroom*, it does not present them in positive regard. Sorkin describes Sloan’s character as one who has made for TV looks and is “particularly sensitive to not being taken seriously.” He goes on to explain that part of the reason why she isn’t taken seriously is that maybe “because she hasn’t earned it yet.”\(^{97}\) This comment was in reference to Sloan not having as much interview experience as Will does, however it disregards the fact that Sloan already is hosting her own show for ACN. With her qualifications listed, one has to wonder what Sloan has to do to earn respect and to be taken seriously. Sloan has numerous degrees, is an adjunct professor at Columbia University, and has been given multiple job offers to work in the financial district. Even with all of these achievements, Sloan is still self-effacing when faced with this new job offer. It is troubling to hear Sloan deflect the job to other people, people whom she deems more “qualified.” This is then followed up with her quickly accepting the fact that this type of sexy imagery of women is almost “required” for the job position. The fact, that this conversation between two highly accomplished, well respected women is actually taking place and happening, marks the fact that both Sloan and Mac take this blatant form of sexism as a fact of life and move on.

**Season 1, Episode 3 “The 112th Congress”\(^ {98}\)**
**Scene Length: 29:16 – 35:00 (Scene is intermixed with Koch Brothers Story)**

This scene shows Maggie having a panic attack while pitching a strong story idea during a rundown meeting. When Maggie proceeds to run out of the conference room to get fresh air to help deal with her panic attack, Jim runs after her to see if she is okay. When Jim runs out of the conference room, he first runs into Maggie’s boyfriend Don who assures Jim that Maggie is fine, and that she suffers from panic attacks. Jim follows Maggie out onto the rooftop terrace to walk her through her panic attack. The scene has quick dialogue between Jim and Maggie, which


WOMEN FIRST, JOURNALISTS SECOND

shows the witty, slapstick nature of their friendship. The scene ends with Maggie telling Lisa on the phone about Jim, which is an indication of Maggie’s growing romantic feelings for Jim.

Maggie: “It was a tea party event, the invitation” Clears throat “ah” coughs “the invitation read…”

SCENE CUTS TO WILL’S INTERVIEW OF TEA PARTY EVENT ATTENDERS ON NEWS NIGHT
Mackenzie: “If we review the graphics…”
Maggie: “Would you excuse me for a minute?” Gets up and leaves the conference room quickly
Mackenzie continues the meeting
Jim: “Excuse me” Gets up and leaves the conference room, following after Maggie

SCENE BETWEEN JIM AND DON
Jim: “Hey, Don have you seen Maggie? She seemed a little funny in the conference room and then she walked out.”
Don: “Yeah, she’s, she’s okay. She gets panic attacks, she starts to get dizzy and shake, and she thinks she’s dying.”
Jim: “Is she alright?”
Don: “She’s fine, she just needs to be left alone. She went out on the terrace to get some air.”
Jim: “Okay. You guys did a good show tonight, I wasn’t aware of, you know, what was going on with the McRib sandwich.”
Don: “Yeah. Go fuck yourself.”

SCENE CUTS TO MEETING SCENE WITH CHARLIE, REESE AND LIONA
Maggie: **On the phone with Lisa** “Yeah, about 10 minutes ago. About 10 minutes ago in a staff meeting. Yeah, I have, I need to get back in there. No, they’re not in my pocket, they’re not in my purse, because, no they weren’t in the medicine cabinet. Lisa, the guys you bring to the apartment have got to stop taking my Zanax. It…Shoot! One second but don’t hang up.

**Maggie tries to stand up**

**Jim: Walks onto the terrace** “Sit back down.”

**Maggie:** “I’m fine”

**Jim:** “Sit back down. Tell me what’s happening?”

With Jim running after Maggie to make sure she is all right, the focus is intended to emphasize the budding relationship between these two characters, as it shows Jim’s concern over Maggie’s wellbeing. However, when Jim runs into Don to ask about Maggie, Don tells Jim that she is fine. While Don’s inflection partially gives off the sense of indifference, it also gives off a sense that Maggie’s panic attacks are not out of character for her. Instead of taking Don’s word of Maggie being okay, Jim continues out to the terrace to check up on Maggie. When Jim approaches Maggie, he immediately takes control over the situation, which is not reflective of what is proper protocol in handing panic attacks. One of the golden rules in regard to helping someone through a panic attack is to ask what they need instead of making assumptions. Instead of doing this, Jim’s control over the situation is intended to be endearing and show his concern for Maggie. However as Maggie is someone who has suffered from panic attacks before, having someone come into the situation and take control can arguably be seen as presumptive and patronizing.

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Maggie: “I just need a minute.”
Jim: “I’m going to feel your pulse, okay?”
Maggie: “I…you really don’t need to.”
Jim: **Shushes Maggie** “I’m going to ask you some questions. Where are you right now? Are you having trouble breathing? Can you hear me?”
Maggie: “I’m on the upper terrace of the AWM building, yes and obviously yes. Are you a nurse?”
Jim: “Some guys I was embedded with got panic attacks.”
Maggie: “I’m going to pass out.”
Jim: “It feels like it but you won’t. You’re in the second stage of the A Anxiety table of army field manual FM2251 New Infantry Adaptation to a Threatening Situation.”
Maggie: “I’m in midtown Manhattan Gomer Pyle, You’re in Fallujah.”
Jim: “Stop breathing from your abdomen. Imagine yourself in a safe place, or something you like…YouTube Kittens.”
Maggie: “I wish your face would stop moving so I could punch it.”
Jim: “You’re here, you’re part of this group, everyone likes you, well, except for Carla in book keeping who thinks you’re a roob.”
Maggie: “I should get back to the meeting.” **Tries to get up.**
Jim: “The meeting’s over, stay put.”
Maggie: “Did, um, did the copy for…”
Jim: “Everything’s done, you can check it yourself later. He’s going after the Koch brothers. If you want to panic about something I think its 65 and pickum this time tomorrow and the building blows up. Did you see a doctor?”
Maggie: “Yeah, he prescribed Zanax.”
Jim: “Did you take one?”
Maggie: “I didn’t have them with me.”
Jim: “Someone like you should always have one in your pocket or your purse.”
Maggie: “I’ll remember that.”
Jim: “Keep breathing. You’re safe, you’re awesome, I’m going to check your pulse again?”
Maggie: “How is it?”
Jim: “Better. A minute ago it was like you were taking sniper fire.”
Maggie: “They were good guys? The Guys you were embedded with?”
Jim: “They were the best people I’ve ever met. You guys are a close second.”
Maggie: “Don’s hands are tied. He got marching orders to get the numbers up at 10. And he’s driving a different car than Mac, Elliot is smart but he can’t do what Will does. Plus his salary is tied to ratings.”
Jim: “why are you telling me this?”
Maggie: “He’s a great guy, and you two should be friends.”
Jim: “In the five months I’ve been here you two have broken up 4 times and gotten together 5 times so there must be a strong connection.”
Maggie: “Was that sarcastic?”
Jim: “No.”
Maggie: “Really?”
Jim: “Yeah.”
Maggie: “Alright…That was obviously sarcastic.”
Jim: “It wasn’t.”
Maggie: “I never knew what the word smug meant until I met you”
Jim: “You’re 26 and you didn’t know what the word smug meant until this year?”
Maggie: “Right there.”
Jim: “I wasn’t being sarcastic. You guys obviously have something. My suggestion is stop breaking up. Learn how to have a fight.”
Maggie: “Go on, Dr.Phil”
Jim: “You’re breathing normally?”
Maggie nods
Jim: “Follow my finger.” Does finger test. “We’ve got a graphics producer waiting in the edit bay.”
Maggie: “Are you still there? Yeah, that was him.”

This scene is one of the key scenes in the development of the Maggie and Jim relationship storyline. The scene indicates a turning point in their working relationship and friendship, as it signifies one of the first scenes where both Jim and Maggie acknowledge to themselves that they have feelings for one another. This scene highlights the character aspect of Maggie, in which she depends and seeks the advice from her male co-workers, especially Jim. However, instead of seeking Jim’s advice in this scene, Maggie is given it regardless of her intent. Although Maggie criticizes Jim in this scene, calling him “smug” and “sarcastic” she does so in a joking manner, however the humor in the scene falls back onto Maggie, as Jim points out how she is 26 and only learned what smug meant this year. This plays into Maggie’s “endearing” and “scatterbrained” feminine characteristics.
One of the biggest problems with this scene is how Jim takes control over the situation. Although his control over the situation is meant to be charming, by having Jim explain to Maggie how he knows so much about panic attacks, the audience is indirectly being told that a man knows more about panic disorders than the woman who is actually suffering from the panic disorder. While Jim is being kind towards Maggie in this scene, his control over the situation fits within the problematic behavior of “mansplaining” which is the act of a man explain something to someone (typically a woman) in a manner regarded as condescending or patronizing. 

Sorkin explains that for Maggie’s character, she’s “a little scared of the feelings that she has for Jim. Jim is kind of becoming her ‘work husband’ or at least her ‘work boyfriend.’” 

Throughout the series, Jim quite openly shows his distaste for Don, so even when he gives advice to Maggie regarding her relationship with Don there is always a derisive tone in Jim’s responses. At the end of this scene, Maggie indicates to Lisa and to the audience that she has the beginnings of romantic feelings and attraction to Jim. This shift from Maggie being in the midst of a panic attack to her realization of her attraction to Jim indicates a damsel in distress theme. Maggie faces a dire predicament of a panic attack and is rescued by her prince who helps her through the attack. By including this scene and storyline in the series, Sorkin makes it no secret of differential treatment towards women characters in his shows.

5.1.3 Aaron Sorkin’s Writing

When it comes to the writing of female characters, Aaron Sorkin has often found himself in controversy and criticism. Throughout his career, Aaron Sorkin has written female characters that portray women of professional characters. This is seen in his shows: The Newsroom (journalists), The West Wing (politicians), and Sports Night (sports journalists). What is notable about Sorkin’s writing of characters is that throughout all of his shows he always tries to weave in journalism into his storylines. Sorkin has a long standing fascinating with journalism, and The Newsroom marks his second television series, which presents dramatizations of news production and media. Sorkin’s first endeavor into dramatizing the world of broadcast media and journalism was in the short-lived show Sports Night, which aired from 1998 to 2000 on ABC.


The show *Sports Night* centered on a *Sportscenter*-like sports news program, where “sports [became] a metaphor for human accomplishment, drive, pain, loss, and disappointment.”[102] The show had three prominent female characters, Dana Whitaker (portrayed by Felicity Huffman), Natalie Hurley (portrayed by Sabrina Lloyd), and Sally Sasser (Brenda Strong). All three women are producers, as Dana and Natalie produce the show-within-the-show and Sally produces *West Coast Update*, which functions as a sister show. Although these women are in high-level positions and are presented with a certain level of authority, all three of these women face scrutiny. Most notably Dana who is not shown respect from her co-workers, and Sally who is in constant competition with Dana for power and also for the affection of Casey McCall, who is the lead anchor of the show. The use of competition as a theme among the women characters fits within Haskell’s definitions.

After *Sports Night* finished its run on ABC, researchers and scholars began to dissect the show to look at Sorkin’s writing of characters. One of the most notable studies was by Chad Painter and Patrick Ferrucci who looked at Sorkin’s female journalists presented in the show, their findings resemble my own, and indicate a pattern in Sorkin’s character choices. Painter and Ferrucci observed that the female characters looked to the male characters for decisions and guidance. They also noticed that “the women in the *Sports Night* newsroom act unprofessionally, display motherly qualities, choose their personal lives over work, are always deferential to men for ethical decisions, and show a lack of sports knowledge compared to the male characters, who are supposed to be under the females’ supervision.”[103] All of these observations regarding the characteristics of the female journalists emphasize the double entanglement women face in today’s world. While Sorkin presents women under the guise of empowerment he in turn presents female characters that clearly are still subjects to a patriarchal society.

Sorkin has been faced with other criticism of his character writing, not limited to his portrayals of journalists. Researchers “…have argued that Sorkin uses women in positions of power to throw viewers off the scent of sexism and that Sorkin’s female characters are

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‘incapable of existing without the protection, adoration, and support of the men.’”\textsuperscript{104} Critics have also noticed a pattern in Sorkin’s writing, where all of his series focus and center around a primary male character. This is seen in The West Wing as the show centers around Martin Sheen’s character of President Josiah Bartlet, in Sports Night around Peter Krause’s character of presenter Casey McCall, and in The Newsroom around Jeff Daniel’s character of presenter Will McAvoy. Sorkin’s focus on male protagonists is not surprising as “Sorkin is a man, and he thus logically places the final decisions, power, and value in his male characters.”\textsuperscript{105} However what is troublesome is Sorkin’s writing of the supporting female characters who “…[represent] an ideal woman that superficially satisfies liberal feminist goals and provides female viewers with a false notion of their equality.”\textsuperscript{106}

\subsection*{5.2 The Hour}

While The Newsroom lasted three seasons and won several awards, another show within the last decade depicted journalists hoping to present the news the “way it should be” existed only a year prior to the release of The Newsroom. In 2011, the BBC presented The Hour a dramatization, which followed a team of journalists as they launch a modern news program at the BBC in the exciting yet conservative environment of British television post WWII in 1956. Although the show was short lived, lasting only two seasons totaling 12 episodes, it won an Emmy for outstanding writing for a miniseries in 2013. Although, the show is set in the past, the writing of the characters feels as if they have a modern flare to them. The show was written and created by Abi Morgan, a British play write and screenwriter, known in Hollywood for writing the scripts for films such as Shame and The Iron Lady. Morgan described her program as “…[focusing] on newsroom politics and love triangle in which the show’s central characters find themselves.” Throughout the dramatization, the blending of personal storylines mixed with news stories worked harmoniously. While the characters fit the motif of the 1950s, the number of women who are seen on staff seems rather progressive for the set time period. Out of the five main characters throughout the show, three women make up the majority. These characters are:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{104} Chad Painter, Patrick Ferrucci, “His Women Problem”: An Analysis of Gender on The Newsroom, The Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture, 6: 1-30 (2015) Pg. 6
\item \textsuperscript{105} Ibid. Pg. 7
\item \textsuperscript{106} Kirstin Ringelberg, “His Girl Friday (and Every Day): Brilliant Women Put to Poor Use” in Considering Aaron Sorkin: Essays on the Politics, Poetics and Sleight of Hand in the Films and Television Series, ed.Thomas Fahy (Kindle Locations 1365-1366). Kindle Edition.
\end{itemize}
WOMEN FIRST, JOURNALISTS SECOND

Isabel “Bel” Rowley (Romola Garai), Lix Storm (Anna Chancellor), and Marnie Madden (Oona Chaplin).

The first season focuses on developing stories stemming from the Cold War - espionage and revolution. One of the main storylines throughout season one is Freddie’s investigation of a debutant’s suicide and murder of a spy. The other main storyline weaved throughout season one is the role of revolution, as seen in the developing news stories from Egypt, where the Suez Canal Crisis unfolds, and Hungary, where the Hungarians revolt against their Soviet oppressors. Season two keeps its focus more domestic as it focuses on crime, corruption, and immigration affecting the changing landscape of London. In the background the development of the nuclear arms race adds to the tension while also creating setting reflective of the late 1950s.

5.2.1 Character Analysis

Isabel “Bel” Rowley

Isabel “Bel” Rowley is a reporter at the BBC who has been selected by her mentor Clarence Fendley to become the producer of a new BBC weekly current affairs program entitled The Hour. Bel’s previous experience as a reporter has been working in the newsreels with her best friend and fellow reporter, Freddie Lyon. Bel initially hesitates telling Freddie of her job promotion, as she knows of his own ambitions of being a producer. Bel was educated at a leading ladies college, and is the daughter of a banker and a former showgirl. Bel rarely sees her father however she often sees her mother who has rejected married life and divorced her husband after a very public affair, which caused scandal in the press. This is evident in the show, as Bel’s mother is seen in a handful of scenes whereas the audience never meets Bel’s father. Bel is professional and organized in the office, as she is responsible of keeping the program running smoothly. She skillfully delegates the staff to cover a range of incoming news stories. Bel’s character is modeled after Grace Wyndham Goldie, who was a producer and executive at the BBC in the fields of politics and current affairs. She worked for the BBC from 1944 till 1965. Goldie was one of the few women who held her own in an establishment dominated by men. Throughout the series Bel often has to prove to the men around her that she is capable of being professional.

producer. However many of the men in the department who work below her, don’t question Bel’s authority when delegating the staff.

An example of Bel producing an episode of The Hour.

Season one puts emphasis on the themes of sacrifice, competition and choice in regard to Bel’s character developments and storyline. From the beginning of the series it is apparent that Freddie has had romantic feelings for Bel for a long time, however neither have pursued a relationship beyond friendship with one another. Bel continuously vouches for Freddie’s talents as a journalist even when he argues and disagrees with the established corporate structures of the BBC. As Freddie pursues a story about a debutante’s mysterious suicide that is linked to espionage, he becomes more disillusioned and paranoid. Throughout this storyline, Bel continues to look out for Freddie, covering for him when the secret service comes to the office looking to interview him, and helping him file stories for the news program. Bel shows her vulnerabilities from time to time throughout the series, indicating she stresses over her job but when at work she holds herself together.

Bel’s main storyline during season one involves balancing the high stress of being producer whilst also entering into a secret affair with Hector Madden, the host and public face of the news program, The Hour. Upon first meeting Hector, it is unmistakable that Hector wants to be romantically involved with Bel, as he is overtly flirtatious with her. Initially, Bel returns the

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108 The Hour Season 1 Episode 6, Directed by Jamie Payne, Written by Abi Morgan, BBC, September 21, 2011.
flirty exchanges until she discovers Hector is married and meets Hector’s wife, Marnie at the launch party for *The Hour*. Although she originally plans to back away at the prospect of being with Hector, in episode three they begin their affair while spending the weekend in the country at Marnie’s family estate. The companionship of Freddie and the flirtation with Hector mark a dilemma of choice for Bel. By entering into an affair with Hector, Bel is creating a competition between herself and Marnie for Hector’s affection. This is simultaneously occurring as Bel also is faced with choices regarding romantic suitors. Although Bel doesn’t consider Freddie a serious romantic suitor in season one, the fact he has romantic feelings for her indicates the potential for her to chose him. Of course, Bel doesn’t make her final decision until the last episode of the series, as the prospect of choice provides buildable storylines and plot. Both the themes of competition and choice presented in Bel’s storyline fit within Haskell’s framework of woman’s films.

As Bel becomes more distracted with the affair, her focus at work begins to waver and it doesn’t take long for the rest of the office to notice that something is going on. With Hector spending more time away from home, Lix notices Hector wearing the same necktie day after day, while Bel begins to suspect that Marnie is also aware of the affair. At the same time, Bel’s job begins to get more stressful as stories of revolution and conflict come streaming out of Egypt and Hungary. Not only must Bel try to produce a fair and balanced program but she must also do so under the watchful eyes of the BBC as well as the government. This is seen through her frequent strife with press advisor and liaison between parliament and the BBC, Angus McCain. Not only does McCain try to prevent interviews on the show (one scene in particular will be analyzed more in depth later) but also he openly discredits Bel’s qualification for the job. McCain tells Bel that she was only given the job as producer because as a woman she’d be “easier to steer.”[^109] When Bel confronts her mentor Clarence, he admits that there was a certain level of truth to that statement. Although she is never challenged by the men who report to her, the men who are higher up the corporate ladder than Bel regularly challenge the quality of her work due to her gender. As the show is set in the 1950s this criticism is presented to be a reflection of the era and the levels of pervasive sexism, which were found in society back then. However the challenging of women’s professionalism and quality of work are still found in

[^109]: *The Hour* Season 1 Episode 4, Directed by Harry Bradbeer, Written by Abi Morgan, BBC, September 7, 2011.
today’s society as well, indicating that women must be regarded as women first, and their profession second.

Bel’s professionalism and behavior is further questioned by the men higher up in the BBC as Clarence goes on to scold Bel for partaking in an affair with Hector, asking her “…to explain to me why you are throwing away your career for an affair that means nothing, that will not last beyond this news story…”\(^{110}\) What is interesting is that not once throughout the season is Hector scolded by the other staff members for his behavior or involvement in the affair. Instead, everyone sees this as acceptable male behavior and Bel is seen as the foolish one for getting involved with a married man. This is further shown in the scene where Marnie confronts Bel about the Affair. Marnie makes it clear to Bel that this is not the first time Hector has been unfaithful in their marriage. After her meeting with Marnie, Bel is the one who decides to end the affair, as a means to save both Hector and herself, as well as their careers. When faced with Bel’s rejection, Hector retreats back to the comforts of his wife and the influence of his father-in-law. Bel sees this as “Ambition over integrity.”\(^{111}\) Bel’s decision to end the affair with Hector marks a sort of sacrifice on Bel’s behalf, as she gives up the affair for her career as well as for Hector’s own wellbeing. This fits Haskell’s description of sacrifice perfectly as sacrifice can be made for the woman’s behalf but also for the behalf of others. However, it should be noted that this sacrifice doesn’t leave Bel feeling distraught about her decision. Instead it was a sacrifice made for practicality rather than for emotion, which is a distinction worth mentioning.

Season two starts nine months later from where season one left off, and a lot has changed in the time between seasons. The most noticeable difference is Freddie’s initial absence as he is traveling around the world after being let go from the BBC for his volatile behavior on the last episode of The Hour. With Freddie gone, Bel is left without her “right hand man.” Freddie soon returns, and is quickly promoted by the new head of news, Randall Brown, to be co-host for The Hour as Hector has become increasingly unreliable as he parties everyday at the clubs in SoHo and drinks to excess. This promotion is not brought to Bel for approval, making Bel feel insignificant and creating conflict with Randall. By Randall promoting Freddie without Bel’s approval, indicates a disregard towards Bel’s professionalism. Freddie’s return sparks a change

\(^{110}\) The Hour Season 1 Episode 5, Directed by Jamie Payne, Written by Abi Morgan, BBC, September 14, 2011.
\(^{111}\) The Hour Season 1 Episode 6, Directed by Jamie Payne, Written by Abi Morgan, BBC, September 21, 2011.
in Bel’s feelings towards him, as she realizes that she does have romantic feelings for him. Bel’s realization of her feelings for Freddie reintroduce the theme of choice, however it comes at a poorly decided time as Freddie did not return to England alone, but instead returned with a wife named Camille, whom he met while living in Paris. With the arrival of Camille into the storyline the theme of competition reemerges for Bel further creating drama to unfold as the season advances.

![Bel visibly confused and shocked at meeting Freddie’s wife.](image)

Season two follows the crime scene in the bars and clubs in SoHo as the main source of news stories for *The Hour*. This is directly related to Hector’s storyline as he is a frequenter of the clubs in SoHo and faces a false accusation of beating up a showgirl before *The Hour* begins their investigation into corruption at a club. At the same time, the BBC is faced with competition from rival network ITV as they have launched a parallel investigative news show called *Uncovered*. This network rivalry creates additional drama throughout the season as Hector is poached by ITV to join *Uncovered* while the producer of *Uncovered*, Bill Kendall, romantically pursues Bel. With Kendall entering Bel’s life at the same time she realizes her feelings for Freddie, the theme of choice resurfaces yet again. By combining the themes of competition and choice into Bel’s romance storyline, the audience is given plenty drama surrounding Bel’s personal life. Bel’s life at work is not without drama as well as she runs into conflicts with the new head of news Randall Brown, and faces threats from gangsters running clubs in Soho as she pursues stories about corruption and crime. By having unfolding aspects to her storyline coming from both her personal life and her work life, Bel’s storyline provides the audience with a complex plot to be followed throughout the season.

112 *The Hour* Season 2 Episode 1, Directed by Sandra Goldbacher, Written by Abi Morgan, BBC, November 28, 2012.
Similar to Bel’s protection of Freddie in season one, in season two Bel looks out for Hector as his performance at work suffers due to his reckless behavior. Randall denounces Hector for his reckless behavior, calling him an alcoholic. Yet Bel still looks out for and defends Hector, making sure his work performance just skims by. This support of Hector creates tension between Bel and Randall, as Bel knows Hector is the face of the program and Randall wants a well functioning news presenter. Although Hector’s professionalism is wavering due to him dealing with his personal issues, Bel looks out for Hector as she doesn’t want ITV to steal him away from the program. Bel’s protection of Hector does not come from a position of romantic interest in Hector, as it is very apparent that she has moved on from her attraction to him. Instead Bel’s protection of Hector arguably comes from a position of maternal instinct and emotion, as she see’s Hector reeling from the false accusation of beating up a woman as well as dealing with the disintegration of his marriage to Marnie.

In her pursuit of following stories of corruption and crime in SoHo, Bel begins to receive threats from one of the club owners. This threat is taken further as one of Bel’s key sources for the developing story turns up murdered after having talked to Bel and Freddie. While the rest of the staff sees this as reason to go forth with running the story, Bel is hesitant, as she feels partly responsible for the woman’s death. Bel becomes emotional over the death of the showgirl, which plays into the sob sister archetype. While the rest of the staff separate themselves from the death of the showgirl, Bel cannot separate her emotions from the story, which shows her inherent female frailty.

As the series works its way towards a close, Bel is still faced with the conflict of choice regarding her romantic prospects. Throughout the season as Bel pursued the developing stories from SoHo, she did so with the close support of Freddie. Because of Freddie and Bel’s close work relationship and friendship, Freddie’s wife Camille immediately feels competition between herself and Bel. As the season progresses and the news staff work towards airing the corruption story, Freddie spends more time at the office and thus more time with Bel. After Freddie and Camille get into a fight, she leaves to visit a few of her friends only never to return. With Freddie’s marriage over, Bel no longer has competition for Freddie’s affection and in turn Freddie realizes he still has feelings for Bel. Bel’s conflict of choice also comes to an end by the end of the season as her short lived relationship with Bill Kendal ends over an argument about how ITV planned to swindle Hector in his contract with Uncovered. In the last episode of the
series Freddie and Bel finally kiss, and acknowledge the feelings they share for one another. Right as they can begin their relationship, Freddie is beaten up after getting a source to come forward for the developing story. In order for the story to come through, Freddie sacrifices himself so that the story can be shared. Freddie being beaten ends the season on a cliffhanger, which is never concluded. The series ends with Freddie being discovered outside of the studio barely conscious as Bel reads the letter she intended to send to Freddie whilst he was away traveling throughout North America.

**Lix Storm**

Lix Storm is a renowned war correspondent for the BBC. She is comfortable being one of the few female journalists in her field but her experiences reporting war have continued to haunt her after returning back to Britain. She worked as a correspondent during WWII and the Spanish Civil War. She has sharp wit and is quick on her feet. She drinks throughout the day to deal with her emotional scars from war reporting, however even though she’s a drunk, she works competently. Never once throughout the series does Lix’s drinking affect the quality or professionalism of her work. In the series, Lix is often shown working overtime, late at night and on the weekends. As she is not married or in a relationship, her constant presence in the office leads the audience to believe she is married to her job. Lix is unique in her fashion choices, as she is always seen wearing pants instead of the more traditional form fitted pencil skirt often worn during the 1950s. She also is seen wearing flat shoes instead of heels, marking a unique distinction in her image compared to the other women in the show. Although Lix’s character doesn’t get a lot of airtime in *The Hour*, her character is full of unique perspectives. She’s been a war reporter, she’s unmarried and she has no children. All of which are unique characteristics for a female journalist in the 1950s.
An Example of Lix’s wardrobe, notice the pants instead of a skirt and the presence of a vodka bottle on her desk.\textsuperscript{113}

Lix’s characteristics arguable fit the definition of a “phallic girl” as outlined by Angela McRobbie. Qualities of a phallic girl are that they “[give] the impression of having won equality with men by becoming like [their] male counterparts.”\textsuperscript{114} This entails taking on behavior and habits of masculinity, such as “heavy drinking, swearing, smoking, getting into fights, having casual sex…”\textsuperscript{115} Although McRobbie’s example of a phallic girl fits the societal behaviors and culture of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, Lix’s behavior and attitudes would have been considered rather masculine for the 1950s. Lix drinks at work, smokes frequently, and engages in casual sexual flings, all of which would have been considered more masculine behaviors for the time. Because of Lix’s experiences being a war correspondent, she is seemingly held to a different standard in the newsroom as she has a “symbolic male” status. This is similar to Mackenzie’s status within \textit{The Newsroom}.

In the first season, Lix is appointed the foreign affairs desk for the developing news program \textit{The Hour}. This is much to Freddie’s dismay as he was hoping to be offered that desk, as a consolation prize for the fact he wasn’t considered for producer. Lix without hesitation tells Freddie she got the desk and deserves it. Lix is confident in herself and does not apologize for

\textsuperscript{113} \textit{The Hour} Season 2 Episode 3, Directed by Catherine Morshead, Written by Abi Morgan, BBC, December 12, 2012.
\textsuperscript{114} Angela McRobbie, \textit{The Aftermath of Feminism – Gender, Culture and Social Change} (London: Sage Publications ltd, 2009) Pg. 83
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
WOMEN FIRST, JOURNALISTS SECOND

her confidence, something which is striking for her character considering the setting of the 1950s, where women were expected to be modest. Considering her experience as a war correspondent, Lix is well suited to be the head of the foreign affairs desk for The Hour. Once on the desk, Lix immediately begins to pay close attention to the developing tension in Egypt regarding Nasser and the Suez Canal. It is only when Nasser takes over control of the western (British, French, and Israeli) controlled Suez Canal from that the rest of the office listens. Lix’s sharp perception isn’t just seen in her ability to sense developing news stories but is also seen in her observations of her fellow coworkers. This is proven by the fact that Lix is one of the first people in the office to notice Hector and Bel’s affair as noted by her comment to Hector about wearing the same tie two days in a row. Lix isn’t a stranger to office affairs or casual sex, as she herself partakes in the activities, however she is much more discreet in her behavior. This is seen in the episode were it is Freddie’s birthday. After a long night of partying and drinking, Lix and Freddie return to the office and have sex. In the morning both Freddie and Lix accept the fact that the event was a one off and neither feel attachment to one another. Both Freddie and Lix go about doing their jobs and don’t let their one night stand affect their professionalism or their friendship.

Lix and Freddie having a casual one night stand at the office.116

In the second season, the audience discovers that Lix and Randall Brown (the new Head of News for The Hour) were formerly in a relationship. However the rest of the news staff never find out about the past relationship, although Bel suspects it. Lix’s decision to keep her past relationship with Randall a secret from the rest of the staff indicates an attempt to keep her private life separate from her work life. It also introduces the theme of affliction into her

116 The Hour Season 1 Episode 4, Directed by Harry Bradbeer, Written by Abi Morgan, BBC, September 7, 2011.
storyline, as Lix keeps a secret from the rest of the staff. Lix is also faced with the theme of sacrifice in season two, as it is discovered that while stationed in Spain during the Spanish Civil War, Lix had a child with Randall. Lix’s decision to give the child up for adoption is a sign of sacrifice on Lix’s behalf as she sacrifices her child for the child’s welfare. This act presented in Lix’s storyline fits Haskell’s theme of sacrifice. The audience learns that Randall has come to work at the BBC so he and Lix can search together for their long lost daughter. It becomes apparent that Randall is more invested in finding their child, whereas Lix wants to move on from the past so as not to get hurt.

When Randall and Lix go to the French embassy to find out more information about their daughter, they are given information about another child. Randall is sent the correct information, only to find out that the child was killed during an air raid over Paris during the war. Randall lashes out in rage at hearing the news, where as Lix holds back tears and internalizes the sadness. Lix comforts Randall, has a quick cry in the toilet stall, and then goes back to work. Although both Randall and Lix have personal issues to work through, the fact that they were previously in a relationship does not influence the quality of their work nor do they change their levels of professionalism.

**Marnie Madden**

Marnie Madden is the wife of Hector Madden, the host for news program *The Hour*. Marnie comes from a wealthy family, as her father made his money as an industrialist and has ties to the government and the BBC. Although she is not a journalist, she is one of the main female characters in *The Hour* and plays a main role in the depiction of women on the show. Marnie’s life is on track when Hector gets the job on *The Hour* and although their marriage is not perfect, Marnie makes sure that they project the image of one. Marnie applies self-surveillance and discipline in regard to maintaining her image. Her need to perform and present images of success which fit within the 1950s societal expectations of marriage and womanhood fit exactly within the postfeminist analysis, which stresses, “Monitoring and surveying the self have long been requirements of the performance of successful femininity…”

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In the first season, Marnie frequently visits the offices of *The Hour* in order to get to know Hector’s coworkers while also being the attentive loving wife who visits her husband at work. Initially, Marnie is hopeful that Bel and Freddie are together, but she quickly notices the increased flirting between Hector and Bel. When Bel begins having an affair with Hector, it doesn’t take Marnie long to realize what is happening behind her back. Marnie confronts Bel and tells her that Hector has had several affairs during the course of their marriage. For Marnie, Bel represents everything opposite of what she aspired to be. Bel is a career woman who has sacrificed the prospects of marriage and children, whereas Marnie strives to be the perfect housewife who is there to support her working husband. After Bel ends the affair, Hector doesn’t handle it well. He stays at the office to avoid going home and facing Marnie. At the end of season one, Marnie gives Hector an ultimatum insisting that Hector comes back home or else she will divorce him. Hector bows to the pressure and returns home to Marnie.

At the beginning of second season, Hector is spending a lot of time away from the house, by going out to clubs in SoHo and drinking to excess. Instead of sitting back and accepting Hector’s behavior, Marnie takes her frustration with her marriage and puts it towards something productive for herself. Marnie begins to cook and bake as a means of distressing at home. Her cooking also signifies her struggle to keep up the appearances of a functional home. While hosting a dinner party, the police come to the Madden residence to take Hector into the station as a performer from the club be frequents in SoHo has accused him of attacking her. In fact the real attacker turns out to be Hector’s friend Commander Laurence Stern, who is the head of the metropolitan police, this is a storyline, which plays out throughout the season. Hector being arrested at home embarrasses Marnie, and is the final blow to Marnie’s illusion of a functioning marriage. Instead of going straight to the police station to get Hector released, Marnie turns her focus onto herself by auditioning for a job as a TV host for a cooking program on ITV. After Marnie gets the job at ITV, she goes to pick Hector up at the police station, there she stands up for herself and tells Hector that their relationship is over. They will continue to live together and give the illusion that they are together when in fact they will live separate lives. Although seeing Marnie stand up for herself shows a new found empowerment in her character, her gaining of a job at ITV marks the loss of her relationship with Hector. Arguably this change fits within Haskell’s theme of sacrifice as Marnie pursues her career at the cost of her failing marriage.
As the season progresses, Hector is further poached by ITV to consider making the move to *Uncovered*. Since Marnie is working at ITV, the prospect of working together at the same network begins to rekindle their broken relationship. Hector comes to the decision to make the move to ITV for Marnie as a sort of consolation for how terrible he has treated her. However, right when Hector is about to sign his contract with ITV he is scandalized in the tabloids for being at a club in SoHo as it was raided. Because of this Hector’s offer at ITV is retracted and Marnie is fired from her cooking show. Although Marnie was at the club as well, her image is not dragged through the tabloids like Hector’s is. Instead Marnie is fired as a result of her husband’s defamed image, reinforcing 1950s societal beliefs that a wife is a reflection of her husband. In the last episode of the series Marnie finds out she’s pregnant, which alludes to her having an affair with another man during her separation with Hector. When Marnie tells Hector of her pregnancy, Hector is happy for Marnie and the prospect of her becoming a mother. Hector tells Marnie he will be there for her, even if the child is not biologically his. Even after their turbulent marriage, Hector and Marnie end up back together supportive of one another.

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118 *The Hour* Season 2 Episode 5, Directed by Jamie Payne, Written by Abi Morgan, BBC, December 26, 2012.
5.2.2 Scene Analysis

Season 1, Pilot
Scene Length: 24:00 – 24:38

In this scene Freddie is indignant after he botches his interview with Clare. Freddie is irritated that he was not considered for the job of producer before Bel and takes his frustrations out on her. Freddie insists that the BBC is just using Bel, and in reality they don’t want a woman producer. Freddie uses her gender against her to criticize Bel’s potential work ethic. Bel responds to Freddie’s criticism by telling him to just watch her do the job and do so with dignity.

Bel: “A new program, a new era, and they want me as producer.”

Freddie: “They’re humoring you. They don’t want a woman. A woman is difficult, hysterical and you can never find one who will really stay. A couple more years you’ll probably want a baby…”

Bel: “Oh, don’t speak.”

Freddie: “Even if they don’t say that to your face, that’s what they’re thinking. Anything else is just your vanity making you believe it.”

Bel: “That what? That I can do it? That I can actually do this? Watch me.”
Although Freddie is considered to be a close friend of Bel’s, he is still a product of 1950s society. This scene emphasizes the level of sexism that Bel has to face everyday when it comes to her profession. When Freddie is not offered the job of producer, he immediately uses Bel’s gender to work against her. Instead of directly criticizing Bel’s work ethic, Freddie criticizes the fact Bel is a woman, and therefore she is unreliable as all women are temperamental and desire motherhood. Although Freddie brings up this criticism by saying ‘this is what the executives think and I’m being honest and telling you’ Freddie is no better than the men he insists think this way about Bel. By reducing Bel’s character down to society’s expectations of women, Freddie is in turn dehumanizing Bel’s character as well as reiterating the ideas of natural sexual difference between men and women. While this scene is intended to highlight the level of pervasive sexism that was found within 1950s western-society, even in today’s world women still face this type of prejudice when pursuing professions.

Season 1, Episode 1
Scene Length: 26:03 – 26:20

In this scene Freddie makes it no secret of his frustrations regarding his newfound role in The Hour’s news team. When Freddie does not get the job of producer, he vies for the job of foreign desk. Instead, the job to man the foreign desk for the new program is given to Lix as a result of her war corresponding experience. When Lix tells Freddie to cheer up, he snaps back at her insisting he deserved the foreign affairs desk.

Lix: “Don’t sulk, it spoils your face.”
Freddie: “They could have at least offered me foreign affairs.”
Lix: “Already taken.”
WOMEN FIRST, JOURNALISTS SECOND

Freddie: ‘‘You? Traitor! I want my desk back!’’

Lix: ‘‘As I recall I won this desk.’’

As a distinguished war correspondent, Lix’s statement about winning the desk seems fitting with her reporting background. Yet, even with her experienced background Lix still faces criticism and doubt regarding her professionalism. Lix has more experience than Freddie as a journalist, and even so Freddie still questions the executive decision to give her the desk. Freddie’s behavior indicates his interdental feelings of entitlement in regard to his profession. Seeing as Lix is an empowered woman, she represents a threat to Freddie and thus he must take away her power in other aspect, thus he questions her qualifications and calls her a traitor. What is interesting is that instead of caving to his criticism, Lix remains unabashed in her exchanges with Freddie, noting her brazen nature as a journalist and as a woman.

Season 1, Episode 2120

As the situation heats up in Egypt, Bel makes the executive decision to get an Egyptian diplomat on the show for an interview. Bel knows that in order to have a balanced report, she must seek the perspectives of Egyptians regarding British involvement in the Suez Canal. Because of this bold move, Bel is called into a meeting with head of news Clarence Fendley and government press liaison Angus McCain. In the meeting, Bel is advised by McCain not to go through with the interview as it puts the British government in a precarious situation. Bel listens

120 The Hour Season 1 Episode 2, Directed by Coky Giedroyc, Written by Abi Morgan, BBC, August 24, 2011.
to the advice and decides to still run the interview as it is needed to present a balanced reporter regarding the news story.

McCain: “Westminster is concerned, I wanted to illuminate the situation for you. I, um, thank you, I insisted that it wasn’t just anyone coming down to talk to you, and I realized of course this is all really new for you but you cannot go ahead with this interview tonight.”

Bel: “But I can Mr. McCain.”

McCain: “One must be aware that politicians are very devious. The Arab world has a rich lichry tradition, now this is a very dangerous mix. A politician who understands the power of a good narrative can hardly be called impartial.”

Bel: “And that is why we intend to interrogate him.”

McCain: “I would very much like to help you Ms. Rowley, there are many powerful people who would be very unhappy if you allow Mr. Hafiz onto your program this evening. I really feel it is my duty to protect you.”

Bel: “I don’t need your protection.”

McCain: “Perhaps if the program was scripted and we saw a transcript prior to broadcast?”

Bel: “Then it could hardly be called a live interview.”
McCain: “If you proceed with this reckless behavior, I cannot guarantee what our response in government will be, quite frankly.”

Bel: “I run a news program. It’s my job to cover the news. That’s what I intend to do tonight, anything else is reckless. Now if you excuse me, I have a show about to go on air that I must attend to. It must be those maternal instincts again.”

Bel: “Auribus teneo lupum [Grab the wolf by the ears]. Look it up.”

This scene unquestionably encapsulates the obstacles that Bel faces as producer. Although Bel reports to Clarence, McCain decides to approach Bel as she is the producer of *The Hour*. It should be noted that never once throughout this scene does Clarence step in to speak for Bel, instead his role in the meeting is one of executive supervision. McCain wants Bel to not run the interview, and in order to try and get her to back down; McCain does so in a patronizing way. McCain explains the situation to Bel as if she is unaware of the potential political consequences of running the story, and does so by trying to convince Bel he is looking out for her wellbeing. Bel’s comment at the end of the scene mentioning maternal instincts is a reference to an earlier scene in the series where McCain comments on how Bel’s “mothering” of her staff is wasted maternal instincts, because she has chosen career over children. By insinuating that Bel has given up the prospect of having children to focus on her career, Bel is seen as having made a sacrifice as outlined by Haskell’s themes.

**Season 1, Episode 5**

*Scene Length: 24:50 – 27:10*

In this scene Marnie visits the offices of *The Hour* to confront Bel about her affair with Hector. Initially Bel assumes that Marnie is waiting for Hector to return to the office, and does not want to be stuck entertaining Marnie as she waits for Hector, however Bel lets Marnie stay in her office and way out of politeness. Marnie, visibly agitated quickly turns the scene and confronts Bel about the affair. Throughout the scene Bel listens to Marnie explain how Hector has a history of being unfaithful. By the end of the scene Bel is embarrassed and shaken by the talk.

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121 *The Hour* Season 1 Episode 5, Directed by Jamie Payne, Written by Abi Morgan, BBC, September 14, 2011
Marnie: “At least you’re not his secretary! See, I knew you were an intelligent woman. I knew I wouldn’t have to say much. Normally it is with one of those silly little girls. I’m just glad that with a clever woman like you, you do fully understand.”

Awkward silence

Marnie: “He just can’t control himself. I think it is the creative in him. Picasco has a heap of lovers, not that I’m putting Hector on par with an artist like that, but there is always someone. Normally I have to pick their little fingers from his arm, but it is such a relief to finally meet a proper woman. I do like you very much. You’re such fun. He’s always just on loan and he always comes back. Do you love him at all? I love him, warts and all. That’s me, that’s what I do. And what ever you see of Hector, I know who he really is. Do you?”

Bel: “Would you like me to call you a taxi?”

Marnie: “No thank you. Do tell Hector I called by.”

This scene marks a conversation directly between two of the main female characters. However, the subject of the discussion is based on Hector, which reinstitute the notion that women’s relationships with other women revolve around the influence of men. This scene also highlights the competition between Bel and Marnie as they both seek Hector’s affection. This is inherently problematic, as noted by Sociologist Professor Gay Tuchman, who notes “The focus on women’s relationships with men undermines the importance of female community, as it
WOMEN FIRST, JOURNALISTS SECOND

assumes that relationships with males ultimately have more importance in women’s lives.\textsuperscript{122} Although Marnie is visibly disappointed in the behavior of her husband and of Bel, she goes on to condone Hector’s behavior as part of his nature. By Marnie condoning Hector’s behavior she is instilling a belief of a natural sexual difference between men and women, and reinstating society’s acceptance of male promiscuity. Although Marnie does not explicitly condemn Bel’s behavior, this scene shows Marnie’s intentions to shame Bel for engaging in an affair with a married man.

\textit{Season 1, Episode 5}\textsuperscript{123}

\textbf{Scene Length: 46:58 – 48:52}

In this scene, Bel has an honest conversation with her mother who is staying at her apartment. After her discussion with Marnie in the office, Bel is visibly distressed about the situation she is in regarding the affair with Hector. Although Bel has never been affectionate towards her mother, and in fact is open about her abhorrence towards her, Bel turns to her mother for advice. By talking to her mother, Bel realizes that she can handle the situation she is in.

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\textbf{Bel:} “I used to think the worst possible thing would be to be like you. But I can never be like you. I can never live so lightly. It all matters too much to me.”


\textsuperscript{123} \textit{The Hour} Season 1 Episode 5, Directed by Jamie Payne, Written by Abi Morgan, BBC, September 14, 2011
Verda: Sighs “It all matters very much to me, sweetheart, I just don’t let my face show that. It’s all about how you sell it.”
Bel: “You have a suitcase and five pounds in a savings account.”
Verda: “But that very nice lady who sold me a cup of tea in that little hovel you call a café on the corner, she doesn’t know that.”
Bel: “Well, What does it matter?”
Verda: “Hmm?”

Bel: “Why do we have to be married? Or not married? Why can’t we do what the hell we like? Men can. They can sleep with women without getting a name for themselves, they can have careers…”
Verda: “Darling, you have a career. You have a career.”

Bel: Nods “Well I’m going to do exactly what I like and to hell with the rest of them.”
Verda Smiles
Bel: “What?”
Verda: “You’re more like me than you know.”

This scene is interesting as it takes place between two female characters as they discuss society’s expectations towards women. Instead of being encouraged to fit into society’s expectation of her, Bel is praised by her mother for pursuing a career in a male dominated field and for being free to do “exactly what [she] like[s]”. Bel’s realization that she doesn’t have to fit within society’s expectations of her mark an emphasis on individualism, empowerment and choice all of which are reflective within a post-feminist discourse. Although the conversation does touch upon Bel’s affair with Hector, it does so in a way that she is left feeling empowered by the situation instead of defeated. By talking to her mother, Bel realizes that the men in her life do not define her, but instead she is defined by her own self-worth.

Season 2, Episode 2
Scene Length: 43:00 – 44:35

In this scene Marnie picks Hector up from the police station after he has been falsely accused of beating up a showgirl. With their relationship strained, this accusation against Hector marks the last straw for Marnie to handle. Marnie confronts Hector about his reckless behavior and tells him she no longer wants to be romantically involved with him. Instead of divorcing, Marnie tells Hector that they will continue to live together and keep up appearances, but in secret they will live separate lives. This scene marks a turning point in Marnie’s character as she begins to pursue her own goals and aspirations.

Hector: “Marnie…”
Marnie: “I don’t want to know whether you did it or not. It doesn’t matter.”

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124 *The Hour* Season 2 Episode 2, Directed by Sandra Goldbacher, Written by Abi Morgan, BBC, December 5, 2012.
Hector: “You know I wouldn’t…”
Marnie: “No, I don’t. And what kind of husband does that make you? When your own wife doubts you? Even when you are not lying for once. We won’t talk about this again, but you need to know that while our marriage may be intact on paper, it’s over for me Hector. We will smile, and be the perfect man and wife but from now on what you do with your time is of no interest to me, and what I do is nothing to do with you. I will do what I like. Ms. Rowley came and fought for you today, no doubt. It’s ridiculous. Two sane beautiful women wasted on you. Aren’t you ashamed? The way you have us all falling at your feet. I presume you want to go back to the office.”

Hector nods in agreement
Marnie: “I imagine your friends will be very relieved to hear of your lucky escape.”

Although Marnie is furious with Hector, she holds her composer when she confronts him. What is interesting in this scene is that although Marnie wants to end her relationship with Hector, she does so under the notion of still keeping up public appearances of them being married. Obviously, this is in regard and reference to 1950s society, which looked down upon
WOMEN FIRST, JOURNALISTS SECOND

women getting divorced. However this still implies that Marnie values a certain level of self-surveillance and monitoring of her image, which fits within a post-feminist discourse. Another aspect to this scene, which is worth mentioning, is that Marnie took her time to pick Hector up from the police station as she pursued an audition at ITV. With the prospect of gaining a job Marnie’s decision to end things with Hector denotes a sacrifice on her behalf, as her career begins to blossom she must end her marriage not only for the career but also for both her own and Hector’s wellbeing.

Season 2, Episode 5
Scene Length: 23:18 – 23:45

In this scene Bel and Lix discuss the potential running of crime story in which one of the main sources of information was murdered after talking to Bel and Freddie. While the rest of the staff see the woman’s murder as further reason to run the story, Bel is hesitant of what the consequences could be. As Bel is weighted down by her conflicting emotions, Lix approaches Bel to see if there is anything she can say to help Bel work through her internal conflict.

Lix: “Darling, do you really want to keep this up?”
Bel: “It’s the cost Lix. It’s the cost of what we do. That girl was dumped in a back alley just for talking to us. Does it not weigh heavy on you? Am I the only one? I refuse to become immune to the consequences of what we do. We may work in a man’s world but I will not become as brutal as them.”
Lix: “And this is why we won the vote.”

By emphasizing Bel’s internal struggle in dealing with the running of this potentially damning story, the focus falls onto her emotions, which in turn play into society’s belief that

125 The Hour Season 2 Episode 5, Directed by Jamie Payne, Written by Abi Morgan, BBC, December 26, 2012.
women are more emotional than men. This also plays into the connection between women being emotional and therefore being irrational. While Bel has reason to be weary of running the story, her reasons for doing so are shortsighted. By Bel refusing to move passed the death of the source, she falls into the trap of the Sob Sister reporter. By contrast, Lix is content in running the story as she sees the importance of informing the public about the levels of corruption found within the clubs in SoHo. Lix’s quick quip about women fighting for their right to the vote pulls the audience back to the reality of women being defined more than just by their emotional response to news.

5.2.3 Abi Morgan’s Writing

As a stage writer and a screenwriter, Abi Morgan has gained a lot of success and respect in her presentation and portrayal of women characters throughout her works. Morgan’s most notable works include writing the screenplays for The Iron Lady (2011), Shame (2011), and Suffragette (2015). All of these works have been well regarded in their presentation of complex characters, unique storylines and plots. Although The Hour was a short-lived television series, which does not receive as much admiration compared to her other work, Morgan still managed to gain a lot of admiration for presenting a dramatization of the world of broadcast news.

Morgan’s inspiration for The Hour came from her respect and fascination with news. In an interview, Morgan explained how news is “probably [her] favorite form of entertainment,” and from that she developed the idea of creating a show, which looked at the world of the BBC during a turbulent yet overlooked time in history. Her selection of the late 1950s as the setting was because it was “…an era that was on the edge of change. We can see the 60s ahead but we’re not quite there, and so it’s kind of the final hurrah before we enter the 60s, where the values are changing, the roles of women are changing, and certainly the roles of news are changing.” By including three predominant female characters in the small cast of main characters found in The Hour, Morgan was able to explore the complexities and overlap of the roles of women and reporters. As Morgan notes, “I feel like this was a show that had a lot of women on it. Yet I’m still only one of a handful of female writers around. And invariably that sexism is still prevalent,

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127 Ibid.
still quite relevant to today.”\textsuperscript{128} Morgan’s female perspective is reflected in her story writing, as her female characters are presented with depth and complexity, something that is much needed in Hollywood. As Morgan points out, she is one of few female writers in the film and television industry, which indicates both the levels of sexism found in the industry but also the inherent flaw in the writing coming out of the industry. This lack of women behind the scenes is best summed up by Haskell who notes, “For despite their impact on cinema, there have been few women in positions of creative authority that would have fostered the development of a woman’s point of view.”\textsuperscript{129}

5 Conclusion

Over the course of film history, the portrayal and representation of journalists has been around since the very beginning. Because of its professional disposition, journalism has provided directors, writers and producers the optimal backdrop to develop and create storylines, characters, relationships, and plots. From this, characters of all sorts have emerged from the minds of those creating them. However, while male journalists shown in films and television have more variety in their characters, the characteristics, storylines, and themes in which female journalists face remain more limited. This thesis looked in depth at two television series: \textit{The Newsroom} and \textit{The Hour} to see how the female characters were portrayal and represented. From that analysis, this thesis was able to relate these female characters of modern examples to those of past examples of female journalists, as seen in the \textit{Torchy Blane} franchise, \textit{Absence of Malice}, and \textit{The China Syndrome}.

By analyzing \textit{The Newsroom} and \textit{The Hour} comprehensively, this thesis found that the women presented in these shows fit within a larger pattern found in the portrayal and representation of female journalists. All of the characters analyzed faced long-standing archetypes, storylines, themes and motifs. When feminist film theory and post-feminist discourse was applied to the analysis of these two television series, the female characters were shown to fit within the theories outlines, indicating that these characters do not challenge Hollywood’s


\textsuperscript{129} Molly Haskell, \textit{From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) pg. 33
WOMEN FIRST, JOURNALISTS SECOND

expectations or presumptions of them. All of the female journalists analyzed faced at least one of Haskell’s themes found within “woman’s films” indicating that they must face sacrifice, affliction, choice or competition in their storylines in order to have character developments or representation in the show. The presence of the male gaze as outlined by Laura Mulvey is also applicable to these portrayals of female journalists, as all of the analyzed characters are shown to portray feminine characteristics and imagery in their nature and appearance. Once more, they are expected to show their femininity in relation to the male characters around them.

This thesis contributes to the ever growing collection of the research of the image and portrayal of journalists in popular cultures, specifically that of film and television. By examining the female characters of both series comprehensively, this thesis provides a deeper understanding and insight into these series. As both of these television series aired within the last decade, they present characters and storylines reflective of modern western society and culture. With all of the analyzed female journalist characters still falling into the same sort of representation and portrayal found in those previous to them, this indicates that both film and television have not made significant improvements in how they show characters of female journalists.

Further research can be done to examine more films and television series and their representation of female journalists. Research in film and television markets outside that of the English speaking market could provide different portrayals and representations of female journalists and would greatly contribute to the field. Other research that could be done would be to examine film and television texts, which have female journalists as the main protagonist to the stories. By looking at examples of media, which have the female journalist as the sole focus of the story, the scope of representation and portrayal could greatly be affected. All of this potential research would greatly add to the on going discussion regarding the representations and portrayals of female journalist in both television and film.
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WOMEN FIRST, JOURNALISTS SECOND


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WOMEN FIRST, JOURNALISTS SECOND

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WOMEN FIRST, JOURNALISTS SECOND

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