

Authenticity and How We Fake It: Belief and Subjectivity in Reality TV, Facebook and YouTube. Aaron Duplantier. Jefferson, North Carolina, US: McFarland & Company. 185 pp, 2016. 196 pp. \$29.95 pbk. \$15.99 ebk.

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TV reality shows, so popular at the end of the nineties, gave rise to a fruitful academic tradition of which this book forms a part. Aaron Duplantier, a Ph.D. in English and currently an instructor at the University of Houston, contributes to this tradition. His main research topic is the construction of mediated subjectivity, with special attention to the different forms of consumption and social meaning of reality TV shows. In this book, the author explores his leitmotif while identifying this television genre with other postmodern phenomena.

Three core sections of the book correspond to the three main case studies and they are linked to the examination of the concept "authenticity" in our mediated world. The first chapter defines reality TV shows as a genre, although the discussion of reality TV is presented as a preamble to the understanding of digital media. The author then discusses the consumption of Facebook by rescuing the use of ontology in the context of digital media. Facebook is presented as an advance in the mediation of the digital world because, unlike previous social media platforms, it creates a "persistent identity," and is **technologically more developed**. In the third chapter, Duplantier questions the concepts of authenticity and subjectivity, while reviewing the relationship of the everyday story presented by YouTubers and their interaction with the audiences. Conclusions and introduction sections of this volume present a good summary of the main thesis but also offer an insight into the wider implications of the value of this work.

The text presents some heterogeneity in its style and tone. Using Umberto Eco's terms: some chapters construct an "apocalyptic" view, while other offer a more positive, or "integrated" approach. This conflict is made clear, for example, when the author highlights the differences between "analogue" and "digital" modes as a way to articulate his discourse while defining the ontologies of postmodern subjectivity. His theoretical framework is solid and is rooted in the previous work of prestigious media scholars such as F. Jameson, J. Baudrillard, S. Turkle and M. McLuhan. The case studies offer a good application of these theoretical discussions although readers may need to explore the internet for background. It may not be the case for millennials but for some scholars it will not be easy to identify faces and stories from characters such as the "Fowler sisters" or other fleeting internet celebrities.

At times, Duplantier tends to use a holistic approach, expecting his theoretical framework to illustrate social changes on a global scale. This happens, for example, in the chapter about Facebook, which is supposed to evidence the loss of social values such as individuality and authenticity. Here, the tendency to an ontological approach could come into conflict with, perhaps, a more appropriate pragmatism. In the same way that an analogue product (i.e. TV shows) can no longer be classified as analogue when consumed in a digital form, it is the relationship of the audience with the product and the new contexts of consumption, which change their meaning, rather than narrative formulas associated with a genre or an artistic tradition. The author also makes a distinction between production models and distribution

platform; but this distinction is not entirely clear. As the author himself acknowledges, professionalism (or lack of it) in Youtube videos is not necessarily linked to authenticity, since professionals can adopt these amateur visual styles to fake this authenticity, and the most consumed videos in Youtube tend to be commercial productions, just as online distribution has not eliminated advertising, but only changed the forms it takes. A similar issue arises when examining his assimilation of the modes of reception and the corresponding media, which is a core aspect of the book's structure. Reality TV shows can be consumed in a "savvy" way, but this does not exclude other "magical" receptions. In the same way, criticism is not totally absent from Facebook users, who can also present surprising forms of creative consumption.

The book offers a number of micro-debates of interest to media students and scholars. The YouTube and Facebook cases are presented very accurately in this text, not only as prototypical models of 2.0 digital platforms but also as media in their own right. However, the ontology of subjectivities proposed by the text, and much of the author's project, would be compromised if we only paid attention the gradual decrease of authenticity in society. In fact, these media prototypes (Facebook, Youtube, Snapchat, etc.) can also work as a non-exclusive categories that represent diversity of contemporary audiences. While it is clear that the reception of reality TV shows won't be the same with the gradual transformation of TV audiences into the digital media consumers, it is also expected that these forms of reception will survive the platforms themselves. In the same regard, we can only imagine what will replace Youtube or Facebook, while assuming that the new platform will still provide debates around creative and critical perspective about authenticity and subjectivity.