The COVID-19 Crisis and Its Impacts According to American Feminist Magazines (Bitch, BUST and Lilith)

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Diplôme : Master en communication multilingue, à finalité spécialisée en langue et culture
Année académique : 2021-2022
URI/URL : http://hdl.handle.net/2268.2/14740

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Mémoire présenté par Meyer, Mireille
en vue de l'obtention du grade de Master
en Communication multilingue.

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Année académique 2021/2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people are to thank for the completion of this work. First and most importantly, this essay could not have been achieved without Ms. Herbillon's support, guidance and advice. I am deeply grateful for her patience and constructive feedback all year long.

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to read this text, from the dissertation committee to my close ones.

I am thankful to my parents and Nadja, who all proofread and questioned every part of this work. Finally, special thanks to Jihane and Claudia, who encouraged me along the way for five years.

INTRODUCTION

"Popular media do more than reflect social and cultural values—media shape them." This quote by Pamela Hill Nettleton (142), found while researching for this work, could sum up the importance of media in general. Magazines among others shape their readers' perspective on the world. In a social system that remains patriarchal, and whose values rely on sexist premises, feminist magazines question the status quo; or at least, they claim to do so. This work will focus on the analysis of feminist periodicals; more precisely, on the COVID-19-related articles within three American quarterly publications, namely *Bitch*, *BUST* and *Lilith*.

The first part of this work will center on feminism, on the magazine medium, and on the treatment of feminism by the mainstream media. It will explain the selection of corpus and place it in its context of publication. This chapter will aim to define concepts related to gender, intersectionality, readership, and political ideologies. This theoretical part will provide a first presentation of each magazine analyzed in this work. It will conclude with hypotheses that were formulated before starting the analysis, based on the aforementioned research and on the self-presentation of the magazines.

The second part of this work will consider the content and the form of COVID-19-related articles in the periodicals. This analysis will refer to the theoretical part and the concepts defined within it. It will provide an overview of the presentation of COVID-19 and its consequences in each magazine, and it will offer a more precise textual analysis when relevant; finally, it will compare the publications in both form and content. This dissertation will mainly provide a textual exploration of the corpus; however, as will be explained further, illustrations are a crucial characteristic for magazines. Thus, pictures will be discussed when they are relevant. The conclusion will summarize the main points of the analysis and compare how each magazine discusses the pandemic, and how their content and tone differs.

THEORETICAL PART

INTRODUCTION

Feminist magazines do not appear to be the most popular genre of magazine. When it comes to what could be broadly described as 'gender issues', gendered magazines seem more popular: men would be able to find answers to their problems in men's magazines, and women in women's magazines.[1] However, feminist magazines examine these concerns not from a perspective conforming to social norms and gender roles, the way gender-oriented magazines do (as will be developed later), but from a feminist perspective. This expression might appear vague, which is why a part of this work will focus on feminism itself.

In the United States, 'feminism' seems a difficult word to use. Indeed, gender equality is generally supported, but not always associated with feminism (Minkin, *PewResearch.org*). This detachment might be due to the fact that women's rights are still regarded by some as obtained to the detriment of men (Barroso, *PewResearch.org*). Thus, magazines overtly claiming that they offer a feminist perspective on social issues might seem unpopular. Nevertheless, the three magazines analyzed in this work have been published for decades as of now, even though *Bitch* has announced its closedown in 2022 ("Bitch Comes to a Close," *BitchMedia.org*). As will be argued in this dissertation, most popular media have failed to offer feminists a space to express themselves without seeing their concerns oversimplified, demonized, used to pit women against each other, or simply misrepresented. Feminist magazines give the opportunity to their writers and readers to engage in discussions, in order to present a different narrative from the traditionally male-based frame of mainstream media (Beck; Loke et al.). Hence, a feminist perspective aims to (re)shape its readership's values.

This study will focus on three feminist magazines, namely *Bitch, BUST* and *Lilith*. They were chosen partly due to the article "Body Politics: Coverage of Health Topics and Policy in U.S. Feminist Magazines," which explores the political and ideological meanings of health-related articles in *Bitch*, *BUST* and *Ms. Magazine* (Jenkins and Johnson). However, only three issues of *Ms. Magazine* were published instead of four in 2020, and, as the year 2020 will be an important part of the selected time period, the material would have been considerably reduced compared to the other two magazines. *Lilith*, another feminist magazine, was thus chosen to replace *Ms. Magazine* in the corpus. Given the lack of literature found on *Lilith*

[1] According to *MagazineLine.com*, *Cosmopolitan* would be the ninth most popular magazine in the United States in 2020 and the most read women's magazine ("[w]ith a print readership of 14 million people and a total reach of 66 million people across platforms"). It is immediately followed by *Woman's Day*. *Men's Health* reaches the twenty-fourth place and is the first men's magazine in the ranking. No magazine in this list of "the 50 most popular magazines" is described as "feminist."

itself, this work attempts to draw a perspective on this lesser-known Jewish-American feminist magazine.

The United States was chosen as geographical landmark for this work, given the predominant development of the pandemic in this place. Because the pandemic only gained importance during the second quarter of 2020, the magazines analyzed in this dissertation have been selected in order to cover the first year of the pandemic in publication; the selected issues range from summer 2020 until spring 2021. Each magazine publishes four issues per year, one every three months.

According to a *New York Times* article, the first case of Coronavirus in the United States was confirmed on January 21, 2020. A little more than a week later, the World Health Organization (W.H.O.) declared "public health emergency of international concern" (Taylor, *NYTimes.com*). In February, the W.H.O. named the virus "COVID-19". At the end of March 2020, the United States reported the highest number of cases of all countries, and by the end of May 2020, the American death toll was the highest in the world. Millions of people in the country lost their jobs, causing them to be deprived of health insurance. In December 2020, over 300,000 people had died because of COVID-19 infection in the United States (Taylor, *NYTimes.com*).

The COVID-19 crisis has had many effects, not only health wise, but also in the economic, social, political, cultural, and domestic fields. Countless studies on this topic have been developed, and many more are still being produced; it would be impossible to enumerate here all of the effects of this pandemic. However, a few of them can be mentioned. Without ignoring the global effects that the health crisis has caused on the majority of people, because this dissertation will focus on feminist magazines, it seems relevant to highlight the gender-based inequalities that have affected women in 2020 and early 2021. In April 2020, the United Nations warned against several repercussions of the health crisis on women and girls: they would endure worse economic consequences, have less access to health services while being the major part of the health workforce, and play a bigger role in unpaid care work. Gender-based violence, including domestic violence, was expected to become an important issue of the lockdown ("Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women"). In 2021, United Nations Women confirmed those effects ("Women and Girls Left Behind. Glaring Gaps in Pandemic Responses"); a few studies will now be mentioned to illustrate some consequences of the health crisis on American women.

The loss of jobs has already been mentioned: in April 2020, the unemployment rate in the United States rose to 14.4%. Women, especially non-White women, immigrants, young

adults and people with lower levels of education were more impacted by job losses in April and May 2020 (Kochhar, *PewResearch.org*). Because women are overrepresented in jobs involving contacts with other people (teaching, healthcare, service jobs, and personal care), they were more susceptible to either lose their job when the lockdown policies were enforced or, if they were essential workers, to be exposed to COVID-19 (Albanesi and Kim).

The lockdown of March and April 2020 saw an 8.1% increase of reported domestic violence acts in the United States. Not only has the lockdown potentially aggravated existing factors causing domestic violence such as stress and financial problems, but it has also prevented victims from seeking help, since they were separated from their social network ("Domestic Violence during COVID-19"). According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, women are more often victims of domestic violence than men ("Statistics," *NCADV.org*).

Psychological effects are also highly discussed. The Kaiser Family Foundation has found out that many adults have suffered from mental health issues that stem from stress over the health crisis. Young adults, people having faced job losses and/or financial instability, mothers, Black and Hispanic people, and essential workers were more likely to experience anxiety and depression symptoms, to have suicidal thoughts and to suffer from substance use (Panchal et al., *KFF.org*). Two studies have shown that pregnant women were at a higher risk of developing anxiety and depression during the COVID-19 crisis (Thayer and Gildner; Liu et al.).

As intersectionality will be a topic of importance in this essay, it should be noted that sexism is not the only system of discrimination and oppression at play when discussing the effects of COVID-19. For example, African Americans, Native Americans, homeless people and the prison population were more at risk to contract the virus (Shadmi et al.). Asian, Black and Hispanic people have experienced more racism since the pandemic has begun (Ruiz et al., *PewResearch.org*). Finally, LGBTQIA+ people's mental health was more impacted than non-LGBTQIA+ people (Dawson et al., *KFF.org*).

This is a very brief summary of some highly-discussed issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic; it will be interesting to see whether the magazines focus on these topics or choose to explore lesser-known ones. This theoretical part will discuss feminism, media and magazines. Each of these themes will be developed for themselves and linked to the other ones (feminism in the media, magazines as media, etc.). This part will be essentially based on existing theories and literature, and will aim to offer a reading strategy of the aforementioned magazines. A description of each magazine will then be presented. This will lead to the

construction of hypotheses on the way each magazine has written about the COVID-19 crisis. These hypotheses will be either confirmed or denied in the second part of this work, which will offer an analysis of each magazine, its different issues and articles.

FEMINISM: DEFINITION(S), WAVES, IDEOLOGIES AND POLITICS

Since this study will focus on American feminist magazines, this part will aim to analyze definitions of feminism from a few mainstream American sources. It will then outline the division of feminism into waves, which will allow for a short summary of each generation's concerns for women's rights. The relations between feminism and political ideologies will be discussed. As one can imagine, there is such a great number of sources on feminism that it would be impossible to offer here an anthology of definitions and opinions. The following part mainly offers a perspective on feminism, its definitions, and the contradictions between these definitions, since feminism is supposed to be at the core of the magazines analyzed.

The first reaction of many people, when they do not know the meaning of a word, might be to look it up in a dictionary. Online dictionaries are easily accessible, offer a range of possibilities that print does not offer (such as listening to the pronunciation of the word), and are easily updated by their editors. To compare definitions of feminism, three well-known and reputable dictionaries were chosen; all three provide American English definitions. The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines "feminism" as "an organized effort to give women the same economic, social, and political rights as men." While the British entry belongs to the "politics" section, the American one belongs to the "world history" field. Thus, the American definition might suggest that "feminism" changed the world in the past, but is now outdated. On the contrary, the political field, which the British entry belongs to, appears active and ongoing. The *Lexico* (previously known as *Oxford English Dictionary*) defines feminism as "[t]he advocacy of women's rights on the basis of the equality of the sexes." According to *Merriam-Webster*, "feminism" is the "belief in and advocacy of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes expressed especially through organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests."

These three definitions are similar in some aspects. To begin with, they highlight the participation of a number of activists with expressions such as "organized effort" and "organized activity." The word "advocacy" itself denotes "[p]ublic support" according to *Lexico*. Additionally, these definitions put "women," "women's rights," and "women's rights and interests" at the center of feminism. All definitions pair feminism with a search for gender equality: "the same economic, social, and political rights as men" (*Cambridge Dictionary*), "on the basis of the equality of the sexes" (*Merriam-Webster*), "the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes" (*Lexico*). These definitions also imply that, according to feminism, gender equality has not been reached yet. Finally, both the *Cambridge Dictionary*

and the *Merriam-Webster* entries define a scope of "rights" or "equality": "political," "social," and "economic."

However, there are also differences between the definitions. The *Cambridge Dictionary* uses the word "give" (in context: "an organized effort to give women the same economic, social, and political rights as men"). The use of this term could undermine the fact that equal rights were not given to women, but have been fought for, sometimes for decades, before they stopped being withheld from them. Moreover, it could lead to believe that women were 'offered' equal rights. If the word "give" was to be replaced as follows, one could argue that it would better convey the notion of activism and advocacy of women's rights that the rest of the definition seems to get across: "an organized effort *for women to obtain* the same economic, social, and political rights as men." The *Cambridge Dictionary* definition appears to regard feminism as "an organized effort," but the use of the word "give" could cancel out this nuance of action and activity.

Out of the three definitions seen above, the *Merriam-Webster* entry seems to associate the most feminism with an ideology. This definition, unlike the other ones, encompasses an ideological part (the "belief") and an active part (the "organized activity"). The "belief" is here associated to an opinion, a way of thinking, an acknowledgement. On the *Merriam-Webster* website, the term "ideology" refers to "a systematic body of concepts, especially those of a particular group or political party." It is "a manner or the content of thinking characteristic of an individual, group, or culture" or "the integrated assertions, theories and aims that constitute a sociopolitical program." The *Merriam-Webster* definition of "feminism" could fit the definition of an ideology, whereas the other definitions of "feminism" fall short.

According to *Merriam-Webster*, the first known use of the term "feminism" would date back to 1893; the term "feminist" would have been first used, as far as is currently known, before the term "feminism," in 1852. According to historian Claire Goldberg Moses, "[t]he word seems to have been invented in the 1880s in France simply by joining the word for woman—in French, *femme*—with 'ism' (the suffix that identifies a political position)" (763). Although she notes that the word has had different meanings and connotations over the span of over a century, Moses highlights the similarities between the definitions: "[i]n Western Europe and the Americas, historians typically use the word 'feminist' to describe women's collective activities to advance women's condition; but the meaning of 'feminism' is neither stable nor fixed" (760).

This analysis of a few definitions of feminism shows how they all center feminism around "women," their "rights" and "equality." Therefore, one might ask how feminism

interacts with gender. Searching for a definite answer to that question would yet dismiss the fact that, as Moses argues, the word "feminism" refers to a varying concept. Feminists do not agree on everything, as a closer analysis of the relation between feminism and political ideologies will show. Only analyzing a few writings or speeches would be reductive and counterproductive. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the fact that gender alternatives (in other words, non-cisgender people) are gaining more prominence. A recent article of the *Washington Post* highlights the demographic importance of non-binary people: "[t]here are about 1.2 million nonbinary LGBTQ adults in the United States, according to the first broad-based population estimate of this kind." The visibility of non-binary people has improved in the 2010s; young people between the age of 18 and 29 constitute the majority of genderqueer people (Anders, *WashingtonPost.com*).

Hence, the question of relation between gender and feminism arises: if a person, regarded by society as a woman, identifies as non-binary, it does not mean that they will not face sexism, in addition to queerphobia. If feminism was only focusing on "women," this issue would be dismissed, as it does not concern a cisgender woman. Indeed, all three aforementioned dictionaries consider a "woman," in their American definitions, as "an adult female human being." This definition would lead to the exclusion of anyone who is not a cisgender woman from the concerns of their vision of "feminism."

Nonetheless, there are assertions that feminism is for and can help everyone. As Laura Bates puts it, feminism can help men dismantle hurtful stereotypes on masculinity ("Feminism doesn't mean a battle of the sexes"). To move beyond gender binary oppositions, Clare Hemmings states that ambivalence must be accepted as a part of feminism: indeed, "feminist and queer understandings of gender, race, and sexuality" could lose in meaning and insight if they were to be defined with certainty (1). As argued above, there is no definite answer to the question of the relation between feminism (or rather, feminists) and gender. Likewise, it could be argued that the definitions of feminism seen previously would not be entirely accepted by every person identifying as a feminist. Nevertheless, comparing these sources, especially the definitions of dictionaries accessed by many, can help with the analysis of so-called feminist magazines. While reading them, one can wonder what definition of feminism fits these magazines the best, or how the magazines portray gender concerns.

Not only has the term changed in meaning over time, but feminism is also usually divided into waves as a historical phenomenon. Although the term "waves" is often used, one must be careful to remember that the analogy is geographically situated. The chapter "The Waves of Feminism as a History of Feminist Theory," in *Feminist Theory and Pop Culture*,

provides a summary of the different phases of feminism. The author, Adrienne Trier-Bieniek, first explains the "wave analogy": according to her, a feminist wave is "[j]ust like a literal wave, as one wave moves out another comes in but still retains much of the structure of the original wave" (xv). Trier-Bieniek adds that this analogy could also convey an ideological meaning; the succession of the waves would be "a demonstration that women have not yet received the equal rights and the women's movement is an ongoing process" (xv). As this dissertation will refer to these different time-periods, it is important to understand which concerns and notions were introduced and developed during each era of feminism.

According to Trier-Bieniek, the first wave of feminism in the United States began in 1848 with the Seneca Falls Convention. The first wave of American feminism focused on women's right to vote, on the right of property, on reproductive rights, and for some feminists on the abolition of enslavement. It is nevertheless worth noting, as it has influenced the next waves, that the first wave did not take non-White women into account; for example, White suffragists kept African-American women away from their movement (Waxman, *Time.com*).

The second wave of feminism started in the 1960s, over a century later than the beginning of the first. The scope of topics addressed by this generation of feminists was larger than the first one: "[t]his wave became focused on women pursuing careers, reproductive rights, addressing violence against women and pay equality (to name a few) as well as a focus on laws like the Equal Rights Amendment" (Trier-Bieniek, xvi).[2] In 1960, the first birth control pill was approved for sale by the United States Food and Drug Administration ("Our History," *PlannedParenthood.org*). The racism problem mentioned above started to be addressed, for example by bell hooks. In 1989, Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term "intersectionality," which helped describe problems falling under the scope of more than one systemic oppression ("Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality, more than Two Decades Later"). Overall, the second wave of feminism was so influential in the United States that it is often known as "women's lib" (Trier-Bieniek, xvi).

The third wave of feminism in the United States is generally considered to begin in the early 1990s. Its presence in "pop culture" and the arrival of "the cyber age" were important dimensions of this wave, which differentiated it from the two previous ones (Trier-Bieniek, xx). The third wave also had to face the racist and Western-centric legacy of the previous

[2] It should be noted that the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was first proposed in 1923; it was approved by the Senate in 1972; it was ratified by the minimum majority of 38 states in 2020. However, it has not been integrated in the U.S. Constitution as of November 2021. If integrated, it would make discrimination on the basis of sex illegal ("Equal Rights Amendment", *Britannica.com*).

waves. Postfeminism, which will be discussed later in this work, was similarly an obstacle to third-wave feminism.

Despite the fact that it might be too early to make a definitive statement on that notion, the existence of a fourth wave of feminism is largely discussed. Its start seems to be situated in the early 2010s. New technologies and "digital culture" would be crucial parts of this wave (Trier-Bieniek, xxii). The 2017 Women's March is also regarded as an essential event of the fourth wave (Gheorghiu and Praisler). According to Negar Shiva and Zohreh Nosrat Kharazmi, fourth-wave feminist campaigns appear to have mainly focused on sexuality, whether it was on sexual assault and rape culture (#MeToo, Time's Up) or on slut-shaming (SlutWalk). Like the third wave, the fourth attempts to address concerns left behind by the first and second ones, such as intersectionality, racism, classism, queerphobia, etc. Climate change is also said to have an influence on the concerns of the fourth wave.

It might seem unnecessary to discuss the history of the feminist movement in the United States in this study, since the earliest magazine of the three is *Lilith*, founded in 1976 ("Mission and Masthead," *Lilith.org*). However, Trier-Bieniek's summary offers an outlook not only on the feminist movement itself, but also on its different issues, and on some of its failings (the understanding of intersectionality, for example), which are still discussed to this day. It is also important to place each magazine in its context of creation (which will be developed later on): *Lilith* was founded during the second wave of feminism, whereas *Bitch* and *BUST* were first published during the third wave.

Although the term "feminism" has been used in the singular form so far, it is possible to argue that there is neither one "feminism," nor one feminist approach. Not only has feminism been divided chronologically into waves, but it can also be defined in terms of ideologies, political beliefs, philosophies, etc. A few types of feminisms will be given as examples. In relation to the subject of this dissertation, it will be argued that their definitions appear blurred and contradictory. In "Body Politics: Coverage of Health Topics and Policy in U.S. Feminist Magazines," Joy Michelle Jenkins and Erika Katherine Johnson explain how the coverage of health issues in three feminist magazines correlates with political variants of feminism. This article will be discussed later on this study; it will first be argued that political divisions of feminism are unclear and contradictory. As a consequence, it would be counterproductive to analyze the articles and magazines in terms of political sensibilities.

Nikolay Popov describes feminism as an ideology in itself that can be used in addition to other systems of thinking: "feminist ideology develops and enriches not only its own system of beliefs, it also helps to enrich others" (374). This approach highlights not only the

fact that feminism is a political orientation in itself, but also that it is compatible with other ideologies. Nonetheless, some ideologies are also considered by some incompatible with feminism: it is the case of postfeminism. Rosalind Gill has written extensively on postfeminism; she argues that it is "a sensibility" existing in cultural objects ("Postfeminist Media Culture," 148). Gill develops a number of characteristics of the postfeminist sensibility, for example: "the notion that femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; […] a resurgence in ideas of natural sexual difference; a marked sexualization of culture; and an emphasis upon consumerism and the commodification of difference" (149). Gill notes that gender is not the only inequality forming postfeminism: "'race' and ethnicity, class, age, sexuality and disability" contribute to this discourse (149).

In "Postfeminism, Gender and Organization," Patricia Lewis, Yvonne Benschop and Ruth Simpson reflect on postfeminism, mainly as a "discursive formation" and a "cultural phenomenon" (215). The authors identify five characteristics of postfeminism, similar to those developed in Gill's article: the detachment from a feminism that demands collective and structural changes; the balance between 'femininity' and a feminism that is considered 'masculine'; the requirement for women to transform themselves to conform to 'masculine standard';[3] the justification of inequalities as the result of personal decisions; and the rejection of "radical interventions" such as quotas (219). The authors compare postfeminism and neoliberalism for their focus on the individual.

The article "Body Politics: Coverage of Health Topics and Policy in U.S. Feminist Magazines" argues that "[m]edia discourse has taken on postfeminist tenets, such as relying on the concerns and voices of a small group to generalize about the concerns of women as a whole, reinforcing a neo-liberalist understanding of social conditions (Vavrus, 2002)" (266). This article is the second source presented here linking postfeminism to neoliberalism. According to this article, there are three other main types of feminist discourses: "liberal feminism," which considers that women and men have equal opportunities in the current society; "socialist feminism," which believes that women are excluded from the said systems; and "radical feminism," which acknowledges the dominance of men in social spheres (including the media) and advocates the creation of women's media (265-266).

[3] The authors write: "[i]t can be seen as the organizational extension of women's magazines (Kauppinen, 2013) and self-help books for career women, that also specifically encourage middle-class, white women to adhere to a specific cultural project of subjectification and self-management (Kenny and Bell, 2011, 2014)" (218). Here, the print media seem to be of particular importance.

Since postfeminism has already been introduced, neoliberal feminism might be a topic of interest. Catherine Rottenberg describes it as "perfectly in sync" with neoliberalism (54). As explained with the postfeminism approach, neoliberalism recommends that the individuals who face discrimination take action on themselves rather than on the system oppressing them. According to Rottenberg, the feminist part of this ideology forms the linguistic aspect of the discourse used by neoliberal feminism, while the beliefs themselves actively attempt to dismiss the existence of sexism.[4] While postfeminism is not explicitly related to a political ideology, neoliberal feminism is political in its denial of gender prejudice in "political and legislative" dimensions of society (53).

However, Michaele L. Ferguson disagrees with this vision of neoliberal feminism as an "impostor" (223) to feminism, a form of neoliberalism using feminist works: "feminists are not passive victims, but active producers and reproducers of neoliberal feminism" (231). Ferguson identifies some characteristics of neoliberal feminism: regarding gender inequalities as a result of the individual and not of the system; the predominance of private reactions rather than political ones; and the defense of capitalism as a tool for gender equality. In contrast with Rottenberg's chapter, Ferguson's essay searches for the causes of the rise of neoliberal feminism, whether political, cultural, psychological, or rooted in the history of feminism itself. According to Ferguson, neoliberal feminism is a new type of feminism that deserves to be studied and not denigrated. With sources conflicting with each other, it is difficult to have a clear vision of what neoliberal feminism really is. Hence, it would be problematic to search for neoliberal feminist perspectives in this analysis of magazines.

The prefix "neo" might allude to the existence of a "liberal" feminism, prior to the neoliberal one. As with the approach of neoliberal feminism, definitions diverge. According to Amy R. Baehr in "A Capacious Account of Liberal Feminism," liberal feminism would include a range of ideologies. Essentially, "liberal feminists endorse constitutional democracy and hold that the internal workings of arrangements of associational life should be just because this is necessary if society is to have a just basic structure" (2). In the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Baehr defines liberal feminism as "a family of doctrines that emphasize the value of freedom and hold that the just state ensures freedom for individuals.

[4] "Using key liberal terms, such as equality, opportunity, and free choice, while displacing and replacing their content, this recuperated feminism forges a feminist subject who is not only individualized but entrepreneurial in the sense that she is oriented toward optimizing her resources through incessant calculation, personal initiative, and innovation. Indeed, creative individual solutions are presented as feminist and progressive, while calibrating a felicitous work-family balance becomes her main task. Inequality between men and women is thus paradoxically acknowledged only to be disavowed. And the question of social justice is recast in personal, individualized terms" (Rottenberg, 59).

Liberal feminists embrace this value and this role for the state and insist on freedom for women." The entry then divides liberal feminism into two main subcategories ("classical" and "egalitarian"). Citing several references of discussion on liberal feminism, Loretta Kensinger, in "(In)Quest of Liberal Feminism," claims that values uniting all types of liberal feminism are "rationality, rights, self-development, and self-fulfillment" (184). Kensinger also argues that liberal feminism is not a unanimously defined concept, and that the liberal feminist writers most often cited are mainly White women. The definitions of liberal feminism are thus quite different from one another, and rather imprecise. In contrast to the definitions of neoliberal feminism, which pointed toward concrete characteristics, even though the authors disagreed on the legitimacy of its belonging to feminism, liberal feminism seems to contain a range of ideologies. It is again dubious to understand clearly how an article could convey a liberal feminist message.

Socialist feminism is closely associated by Linda Gordon to the second wave of feminism. She identifies its outlook on gender inequalities as its distinctive trait; sexism would be part of a system reinforcing other types of injustices:

> [f]rom conceiving the structures of male domination as somewhat autonomous, it followed that, in any given situation, no one of them was always the key factor, which in turn meant that gender issues would not always be foremost, nor should they always be a priority. (22)

Gordon describes the socialist feminism of the 1960s and 1970s, but acknowledges the influence of this movement in more recent times (2013 as the year of publishing). Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy confirms that socialist feminism was concerned with class and race oppressions: "socialist feminists saw the fight to end male supremacy as key for social justice, but it was not *the* primary contradiction, rather it was one among many" (500). Nonetheless, Kennedy also notes that feminists in the 1960s and 1970s did not necessarily differentiate their political orientations. Radical and socialist feminisms in particular were often assimilated for one another.

Ellen Willis, who includes herself as part of the radical feminist movement, defines it as follows: "radical feminism began as a political movement to end male supremacy in all areas of social and economic life, and rejected the whole idea of opposing male and female natures and values as a sexist idea" (91). Like socialist feminism, radical feminism is linked to the second wave of feminism. Céline Morin describes its aim as follows: "radical feminism goes beyond the sole conquest of the public sphere to help raise crucial issues such as the politicization of intimate relationships and the systematic reorganization of the patriarchal order in both public and private spheres" (164). Willis' definition makes clear reference to the

1960s (the article was published in 1984), while Morin's discusses radical feminism as a movement that still exists or reemerges in 2019 (Morin mentions "the return of radical feminism," 164). Both definitions are similar in their identification of the aim of radical feminism: dismantling patriarchal oppression in all fields, whether public or private. The slogan "The personal is political," largely used in second-wave feminism, could represent the commitment of radical feminism (Kelly, *Britannica.com*). As mentioned above, radical and socialist feminisms were terms often used for one another, when they were used at all. Once again, the definitions are rather imprecise and could be mixed up.

If definitions of political ideologies and their relation to feminism diverge or merge, it will hardly be possible to categorize a feminist magazine or article as neoliberal, liberal, socialist or radical feminist. A definition of each movement retaining only what the articles cited above agree on would be quite lacking. Rather than relying on such incomplete definitions, which are quite reductive and would not form a reliable basis for analysis, a series of topics, already brought up by some of the authors cited above, might be focused on while reading the articles in the feminist magazines: the readership the articles are written for, the calling for activism, the reaction to social norms and gender roles, etc. The presentation of each feminist magazine, later on in this work, will show how they position themselves on these topics.

This part of the dissertation has attempted to define feminism as a core element of the subject, but has also raised a number of questions. As seen above, common definitions of feminism are generally similar, while scholars insist on the fact that feminism is a variable concept. Generally speaking, it is an organized movement and an ideology shared by people who believe in the social, political, and economic equality of human beings regardless of their gender. The readers of feminist magazines will yet have to look for the definition of feminism that these magazines present. Indeed, it has been argued that feminism is not a homogeneous ideology: it has been divided chronologically into waves, and politically into several movements. However, regarding the latter, the distinctions between the movements are often unclear, and their definitions vary.

The main questions raised this far are: what are the relations between the magazines and gender? Do they take into account intersectionality, which represents more than one system of oppression? What are their ideological messages and how are they conveyed? This theoretical part of the dissertation was based on a number of different sources, as it could be argued that feminism contains a multitude of voices. It would be overly challenging to represent all of them here; likewise, it would be inconceivable for the feminist magazines to represent every

reader's experience. Editorial choices are thus being made, taking into account who reads the magazine and who might be interested in each article. The topic of inclusivity will be of particular importance in this study, both when it comes to health topics and in relation to the COVID-19 crisis.

MAGAZINES, WOMEN'S MAGAZINES, FEMINIST MAGAZINES

This part will explore magazines as media, focusing on their characteristics as a unique form of expression and discussion. It will then take a look at the representation of feminism in the media and at gendered magazines, in order to understand why feminists have considered it necessary to launch several different magazines over time. A presentation of each magazine analyzed in this work will then be provided.

Despite being focused on French media print, Jean-Marie Charon's article "La presse magazine: Un média à part entière ?" provides a list of characteristics of magazines which is worth looking into. Even though this article was published twenty years ago, when the Internet did not offer the possibilities of electronic subscriptions to the extent it does now, it is worth considering it relevant. Indeed, many magazines now offer electronic and print options that do not differ from one another. Charon's article will then be compared to more recent material on the topic. Charon considers five characteristics of magazines, each having its own implications.

The first one is the prevalence of visual support: the magazine must be aesthetically pleasing for the readers. The visual construction of the magazine allows the readers to read or flip through it as they want: their reading path can be individualized thanks to, firstly, the table of content, and secondly, thanks to the construction of the open double page itself. The second characteristic depends on the time of publishing: contrary to daily newspapers, magazines do not inform only on current affairs, especially if they are only published every three months, as is the case for the feminist magazines discussed here. Magazines "have to produce by themselves, in a way, the reality on which they will work" (61). This implies a requirement of creativity; magazines must also take the readers and their interests into account. This leads to the third characteristic: a part of the general public is identified as interested in the magazine, whether because of inherent characteristics, or because of preferences. Unlike daily information sources, magazines are conscious of the fact that they are not the only media that the reader consumes in relation to their particular topic of interest. Thus, the magazines are not necessary to the reader. This relation between the choice of the magazine and the choice of the reading public is called "reading contract" (67). Magazines are also aware of the fact that, as society evolves, they might be of no interest anymore to their readers, and hence cease to exist. In the fourth place, the internationalization of magazines might concern less the selection for this dissertation; indeed, these feminist magazines are American-based. Finally, the publishing industry of the magazine itself is divided into "editorial, advertising, and commercial" scopes (71).

Noliwe Rooks, in *Women's Magazines in Print and New Media*, considers another important characteristic of magazines, namely their reciprocal influence on the readers, as illustrated by the following extract:

> [o]verall, magazines occupy a place of importance within both mass and popular culture and as such have long played a key role in the everyday lives of readers across class, race, and gender and are a fertile space for the expression of social and political philosophies. […] As such, through image and text, they serve a particularly rich and potent site for understanding cultural shifts and transformations, and are important outlets for defining what it means to be part of a certain community, class, or even generation. (2)

This excerpt is worth commenting on for different reasons. Firstly, Rooks acknowledges the extent of the reach of magazines in terms of readership with the use of expressions such as "mass and popular culture" and "readers across class, race, and gender"; this feature resembles Charon's third characteristic of a specific public of readers, as suggested by the terms "part of a certain community, class, or even generation." From these two sources, it can be understood that magazines try to appeal to as many potential readers as possible, while still representing the experience of a specific target group. Rooks also argues that the relation between the magazine and its readers provokes discussions, an opinion that Laurel Forster shares in *Magazine Movements: Women's Culture, Feminisms and Media Form*: "[i]ts convention of articles, snippets, features, letters and so on should be viewed as hospitable to diverse opinion, as storehouse forms rather than necessarily cohesive texts" (4). In addition, Rooks claims that magazines influence "everyday lives." As does Charon, she insists on the importance of visual support, the effects of magazines extending "through image and text." Finally, Rooks highlights the possibility for magazines to undergo "cultural shifts and transformations," in other words to change with their society and public. In short, according to Rooks, magazines try to appeal to everyone while representing a specific experience; they allow for a range of opinions but still influence their readers; their illustrations are important; and they have the opportunity to evolve over time.

Forster goes a step further concerning the influence of magazines, considering them forms of authority: "[m]agazines are perhaps the ultimate zeitgeist media form. It is precisely this expansive authority, dealing in the detail of lives that draw both readers and critics" (1). This "authority" is not, however, hegemonic: "[s]tudies in print media have demonstrated that magazines and periodicals express an exchange of ideas, not a static pronouncement" (5). Forster explains this eagerness to discuss with the readers as a way for the magazines to better themselves: the dialogue with readers "refines [the magazines'] form and content; it keeps [the magazines] current" (5); the same way, they seem to allow the readers to improve their lives with the advice provided in the articles. Thus, even the position of authority of the

magazines relies on its relation to the readers. Magazines could hence appear as democratic supports, illustrating social values, opinions, concerns, etc. As Forster argues, the general aim of magazines is to present to readers "a better version of themselves," and thus they have "a political agenda" (1).

As has been developed above, magazines need to appeal to a part of the public in order to exist. They could attempt to attract as many readers as possible, but one specific group is more generally targeted, whether because of inherent traits or because of its interest for a chosen topic (see Charon's third characteristic). It has been argued, in the theoretical part of this work about feminism, that the latter is concerned about gender equality, but each feminist outlet can decide which gender identities it will focus on. It was then mentioned that the relation of each feminist magazine with gender would be analyzed. At this point, it is difficult to say whether feminist magazines target communities on the basis of inherent traits (such as gender identities). It is, however, possible to argue that feminist magazines could target people who are interested in feminism and gender issues.

Yet, as Charon has developed, magazines on a specific topic of interest are only a part of the range of media discussing the said topic. There are feminist podcasts, books, documentaries, websites, etc. If consumers choose to buy a magazine corresponding to their interests, rather than enjoy free resources (as are some websites, podcasts, videos, etc.), one can suppose that the magazine medium offers possibilities that the other media do not. If the relations between magazines and readers are to be regarded as mutual, one can then wonder why feminist magazines started being published in the first place, or in other words, why feminists decided to use the magazine media form to share their ideas.

The first question, concerning the consumer's choice to read a feminist magazine, could receive a range of suggestions based on Charon's characteristics. Firstly, the visual impact of feminist magazines is clearly greater than the one provoked by a podcast. The structure of magazines, which according to Charon allows for a personalized reading, differs from the linear construction of books, songs, films, etc. Contrary to blogs, websites or social media platforms, which need to upload content regularly to generate views and thus might tend to comment on current events, magazines do not rely exclusively on news. They can then focus on creativity and on the narration of stories that demand more investigation. The feminist magazine medium is hence unique for its prevalence of visuals, its structure, and its partial independence from news. These characteristics might attract readers who pay more importance to one or more of these criteria.

The second question concerns the need for feminist magazines from the perspectives of their creators. A few reasons will be developed further in this work: the lack of or negative representation of feminism in the mainstream media; the stereotypical portrayals of men and women in magazines dedicated to their gender and the reinforcement of traditional gender roles; the problems caused by the advertisements found in gendered magazines; and the general lack of women in positions of control in the media industry. These reasons are essential to grasp, because it can be supposed that feminist magazines, which were created in reaction to mainstream representations of feminism, to support the feminist cause and to offer alternatives to gendered magazines, want to create a type of content that is totally different from the ones they detach themselves from. As Laurel Forster puts it, "it has been the silence and/or indifference to a cause in the mainstream press that has often provided a catalyst for reforming groups to 'create a periodical under their own control'" (222).

The representation of feminists in the media has long been identified as flawed. In 1998, Debra Baker Beck highlighted the fact that "[w]hile most American women support the basic concepts of feminism, they tend to shy from the feminist label" (140). Feminist issues are reframed as gender oppositions, and as most journalists are men, objectivity on such a topic is impossible to reach. Feminists themselves are described with negative terms, and their protests are shown as petty "catfights" (144). They either receive bad press or no press at all. With such a representation of feminism, it is understandable that its members would want their own media, which would reflect their issues and fights in a more positive light. It is also worth noting that this type of media could give more control to women. As Beck's essay was written in the late 1990s, one could argue that it could be used to illustrate third-wave feminist issues with postfeminism rather than show why, more than twenty years later, the existence of feminist media is necessary. As will now be argued, the representation of feminists is still either lacking or largely unfavorable.

In 2015, Jaime Loke, Ingrid Bachmann and Dustin Harp looked into the coverage of feminism and feminist issues in American news websites from 2007 to 2011. Their research paper argues that the coverage of feminist debates was due to the visibility of women in politics during that period (Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin or Michele Bachmann, to name only a few). It concluded that news media gave an oversimplified definition of feminism (in the singular form), allowing for conservative-oriented adaptations of the term. The media also tended to consider feminism an identity and not an organization or ideology. These discourses were mainly written by women. The authors defend the same position as Beck, namely that feminism is given an incomplete and rare coverage; when it finally receives more attention, it

is in an antagonistic way: "[w]hile there is no consensus on what feminism means – indeed, there exists a plurality of feminisms – throughout the years in US news media, it has consistently been portrayed in one way in the media – disruptive and negative" (Loke et al., 129). Still in 2015, Tauna Sisco and Jennifer Lucas came to the same conclusions as the previous article, in regard to the presidential elections of 2008 and the framing of feminism. Each of three politicians (Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin) was linked by the media to a type of feminism, while the same media still debated about whether the candidates represented feminism as a whole. Feminist issues were also generally disregarded compared to lifestyle topics. The authors concluded: "the national news media portrayed the movement as both fractured and trivial" (502).

Andrea L. Press contends that the American media mix feminist and postfeminist attitudes, leading to a hurtful situation for women, a "double jeopardy" (110) that pressures women into fitting into both feminist and traditionally sexist ideals. Rosalind Gill admits that the media now show more interest in feminist topics and make feminism more visible compared to earlier times. Nevertheless, the media still privilege a postfeminist approach, regarding gender and other inequalities as individual responsibilities. Gill links the rise of neoliberal feminism and celebrity feminism to some women's magazines (Gill mentions "*Cosmo* and *Elle*," "Post-Postfeminism," 617). Finally, in 2020, in *Men Who Hate Women*, Laura Bates has maintained that the mainstream media have contributed to the negative response to the #MeToo movement, citing articles from *The Week, New York Times, Today, The Times*, etc. With such evidence that feminism is regularly oversimplified, represented in a negative light, or used to promote a political candidate over another (particularly if they are women), it is understandable that feminists would choose to create their own media, in which they could discuss topics without fear of being misrepresented. However, this might not be the only reason, since this argument has been primarily focused on news coverage. The following part will show how gender-based magazines portray men, women, and gender issues.

If feminist magazines are concerned with gender issues, one might think that it is also the case of gender-oriented magazines. One could imagine that a magazine written and published for women would cover topics affecting women's lives because of their gender, in other words misogyny and sexism. However, Rosalind Gill claims that "[m]ost mainstream women's magazines are framed around a perspective located in the worlds of fashion, media, and corporate culture. This celebration of new feminism is no exception—celebrity status is required even to count as an 'activist'" ("Post-postfeminism," 623). The differences between

gender-oriented magazines and feminist magazines will now be discussed. Extensive research has been conducted on women's magazines and men's magazines, sometimes comparing both categories. This part will thus only attempt to give examples and reasons as to why the representation of gender issues in gendered magazines has been considered problematic by many feminists.

The relation between the exposure to men or women's magazines and sexual coercion or intervention has been examined in a 2019 research paper. On the basis of previous research, the authors acknowledge that gender-oriented magazines promote a vision of women as having to be attractive for men, while also being responsible for their own sexual safety. Men, on the other hand, would only have to care for their own pleasure. The article demonstrates that the consumption of men's magazines is "associated with intentions to sexually coerce" and that women's magazines do not condemn sexual coercion, nor encourage their readers to intervene if they witness such behavior (Hust et al., 1724).

When it comes to domestic violence, Pamela Hill Nettleton argues that, from 1998 to 2008, men's magazines have undermined or even mocked this issue. Women's magazines have placed the responsibility on women themselves, even though "[m]en commit 100% of the rapes, 92% of the physical assaults, and 97% of the stalking acts against women" (141). Women's magazines also tended to devote longer articles to domestic violence issues than men's magazines, probably because they considered women to be responsible for ending domestic violence, while men's magazines dismissed the issue and some went so far as to reject its potential solutions as "'profeminist'" (153).

The topic of body image as portrayed in men and women's magazines has also produced extensive research; this argument will only focus on recent (21st century) research focusing on American magazines. In *Men's Health* and *Women's Health*, health is equated to thinness for women, and men's muscularity is regarded as ideal; objectification is an issue not only for women, but also for men (Bazzini et al.). Another research paper has shown how four popular magazines presented exaggerated body ideals in a heterosexual perspective to their readers; in other words, how women were represented as thinner than what the average man thought was attractive for a woman, and how men's bodies were over-muscular compared to what women were attracted to. The researchers concluded that this perspective of 'ideal' bodies has an impact on the readers' content toward their own, and added that "[t]he media highlights high-status individuals who display extreme versions of the bodily traits at issue, fueling prestige competition" (Frederick et al., 85). Finally, the analysis of eleven women's magazines during the year 2002 concluded that younger women were over-represented and

"less clothed"; women over 45 years old were represented as larger than younger women; all women represented were still thinner than the average American woman (Bessenoff and Del Priore, 220). In short, gender-oriented magazines offered different body ideals depending on the gender of the reader, often with the reasoning that these body types were more attractive to the opposite gender; they hence focused on a heterosexual perspective.

Other topics, which might not be regarded as gendered at first sight, are treated differently in men's magazines and women's magazines. For example, the case of mental illnesses can illustrate the differences between men and women's magazines: the analysis of articles from ten different gender-oriented magazines between 2009 and 2013 showed that women's magazines wrote about it in a less stigmatizing way than men's magazines, although both types generally regard these pathologies as an individual responsibility (Yang et al.).

The research summarized above show that when it comes to rape, domestic violence, body representation, as well as other topics, gendered magazines of the 21st century often fail to offer a feminist perspective; they mostly reinforce stereotypical gendered roles and ideals. Gender issues are mainly handled in women's magazines, but according to Gill are mostly associated with celebrities and neoliberalism ("Post-Postfeminism"). The research presented above seems to corroborate this claim, as it has shown that women's magazines tend to consider women responsible for their own safety, regardless of the fact that they face gender-based violence from men, and that their own behavior is not the issue.

Another topic of backlash among feminists against gendered magazines is advertisement. As Charon argues, advertisement is an important part of the magazine medium. In gender-oriented magazines, advertisement aims at a particular public, and could suggest solutions to problems, or at least improvements, specifically for this readership. As with the topic of content of articles in men and women's magazines, a large body of research has analyzed over the years the specificities of advertisement in these magazines. This part will aim to present a few reasons why advertisement in men and women's magazines could be seen as problematic from a perspective taking gender (in)equality into account.

Eating is necessary to everyone's survival; however, food advertisements in women's magazines are more often linked to health than the ads in men's magazines (Nan et al.). It could seem strange, given the claim made above that men's magazines tend to promote muscular bodies. However, this interest on the part of women in eating healthy might come from the previously discussed postfeminist perspectives of individual responsibility (in this case, for one's health) and of need for self-transformation. As has also been developed above,

women's magazines tend to represent mainly thin women, and to depict an exaggerated version of thinness as most attractive to men.

Christina N. Baker finds that women are sexualized in the ads of both men and women's magazines. In women's magazines, their sexualization is supposed to influence the (female) reader to buy a product to be as attractive as the model; in men's magazine, the sexualization of the female model is used to promote a product supposed to make the (male) reader more attractive to women. Even though White women tended to be more objectified than Black women in Baker's corpus, Black women were still under-represented in the advertisements. Baker concludes on this racial difference: [t]his means that the mainstream image of sexuality and beauty is still highly associated with Whiteness. […] This confirms and emphasizes the racial hierarchy of sexual attractiveness in mainstream society" (Baker, 26). This argument shows the general disregard that gender-oriented magazines seem to demonstrate for intersectionality, an important modern feminist topic.

Still on the topic of sexualization, Julie M. Stankiewicz and Francine Rosselli found that, in the Summer 2002 issues of fifty-eight magazines, half of the advertisements that portrayed women sexualized and objectified them:

> [w]omen were most likely to be depicted as sex objects in men's, women's fashion, and adolescent girls' magazines. Three of four advertisements that featured women in men's magazines portrayed women as sex objects. Approximately two of three advertisements that featured women in women's fashion magazines and adolescent girls' magazines presented women as sex objects. (586)

Women were also regularly portrayed as victims, sexualized or not. These findings are linked by the researchers to pornography, a topic on which feminist discussions often focus.[5] A reason for the promotion of the female submission in these advertisements is suggested: "[b]acklash against women's increasing power in society may serve as one explanation for the pervasiveness of sexually objectifying imagery and the existence of sexually violent imagery in advertisements" (Stankiewicz and Rosselli, 587). Thus, the development of women's rights and the progress toward gender equality, although it still has to be attained, would cause this sexist reaction in advertisement. It could also explain why the images of women as sexualized victims are predominant in men's magazines.

The articles chosen here compare the advertisement in both men's and women's magazines, as a way to show that, since the advertisement is an important part of the magazine, as Charon argues, the ads generally reflect the ideological stances of the magazine

[5] See for example: Cawston, Amanda. "The Feminist Case Against Pornography: A Review and Re-Evaluation." *Inquiry*, vol. 62, no. 6, 2019, pp. 624-658, DOI: 10.1080/0020174X.2018.1487882.

in which they are published. However, one should not forget that human beings make the decision of which advertisement obtains a place in the magazine. As has been mentioned above, one of the reasons for the creation of feminist magazines is the lack of women at controlling positions in the publishing industry. One of the aforementioned articles offers a reason as to why feminism is often misrepresented in the news media:

> [i]t has been argued that news relies on a masculine narrative (Gallagher, 2003; Rakow and Kranich, 1991; Ross and Carter, 2011) and politics is presented in the media as a male pursuit (Ross, 2009). Such gendered categories, posits Barker-Plummer (2010), make news a very difficult medium for critical discourses such as feminism, which seeks to undermine traditional gender divides and inequalities. (Loke et al., 130)

The study "Women and Leadership in the News Media 2020: Evidence from Ten Markets" could offer an explanation as to why the news media offer a "masculine narrative" (Loke et al., 130): women constitute less than 30% of the journalists in the most consulted news media, and only 41% of the top editors (Simge et al.). The Global Media Monitoring Project, which issued its 6th *Who Makes the News?* report in 2020, provides national statistics on the representation of men and women in the media, as actors (reporters, presenters) and as objects (subjects, sources). In the United States, the researchers found that women are only the subjects and sources of 31% of news items offline and 32% online. They are proportionally represented as victims more often than men, even though gender-related topics constitute only 1% of the news items. Both online and offline, they are over-represented when it comes to sharing a personal experience, but are under-represented as eye-witnesses and experts or commentators.

These findings corroborate Loke and her fellow researcher's thesis that a "masculine perspective" is predominant in the news coverage (130). Female journalists are not half of the journalists' workforce, or of the top editors' workforce. They are under-represented as subjects and sources of the news items, in which they tend to be portrayed as victims more than men. The fact that they are over-represented to share their personal experience but under-represented as eye-witnesses and experts or commentators might imply for the viewer that women are subjective sources, unreliable witnesses or ignorant commentators.

In the following part, each magazine analyzed in this work will be introduced, based on its self-description online. Academic sources on *Bitch* and *BUST* will also be used to present these two magazines. Hypotheses on the coverage of COVID-19-related topics and articles will then be formulated before the analysis of the magazines.

SELECTED MAGAZINES

Bitch

According to its "Our History" webpage, *Bitch* was first published in 1996, with the subtitle or slogan "A Feminist Response to Pop Culture." In the "About Us" section of its website, the media company defines its mission in accordance with the characteristics of discussion with the readers and with popular culture seen previously. The readership is defined as "diverse" and "young," but is not characterized in terms of gender ("feminism for all kinds of folks"). This section also presents *Bitch* as a way for people who are not acquainted with feminism to get information on the topic. The focus of the magazine is explicitly put on "popular culture" and "the media": "[m]ovies, television, news magazines, fashion magazines, blogs, comics, advertising, music, computer games — all are media that have traditionally reflected a narrow vision of what women and girls are and can be." Thus, it can be supposed that the magazine focuses more on the cultural aspects of gender equality than on the political, social, and economic scopes. However, the magazine aims to "encourage people to consider feminism as a necessary part of the broader social justice movement." Jenkins and Johnson highlight the focus on diversity of the magazine and praise "the plurality of women's experiences presented, including diverse ages, ethnicities, abilities, sexualities, and cultures" (271).

The name of the magazine seems to have caused much discussion. In an interview, Andi Zeisler, one of the co-founders, explains that the word "bitch" was not as frequently used in the media in 1996 as in 2014, but when it was used, it was to designate women who the speaker did not like and "who stood up for themselves" ("Bitch Media cofounder Andi Zeisler on the word 'Bitch'", *Youtube.com*). The "About Us" section adds:

> [w]hen it's being used as an insult, 'bitch' is an epithet hurled at women who speak their minds, who have opinions and don't shy away from expressing them, and who don't sit by and smile uncomfortably if they're bothered or offended. If being an outspoken woman means being a bitch, we'll take that as a compliment.

The reappropriation of the word is also given as a justification, which, as will be developed later, is a point in common with *Lilith*.

BUST

According to its "About" webpage, *BUST* has been a "feminist lifestyle brand" since 1993. This self-definition is interesting, because it directly places an emphasis, with the word "brand," on the mercantile aspect of the magazine. The term "lifestyle" was used by Elizabeth Groeneveld, in a 2009 article on *BUST*, to argue that "[w]hile lifestyle feminism arguably provides a version of feminism that is friendly and accessible, it does not offer an analysis of collective injustice and cannot serve as a basis for activism beyond individual acts of

consumption" ("'Be Feminist or Just Dress Like One'", 189). The *BUST* brand "is unique in its ability to connect with bright, cutting-edge, influential young women" ("About," *Bust.com*). Here, the readership is clearly defined: "young women" are the focus of the magazine and its main public. This is affirmed again later on in the same presentation: "[w]ith an attitude that is fierce, funny, and proud to be female, *BUST* addresses a refreshing variety of young women's interests, including celebrity interviews, music, fashion, art, crafting, sex, and news." This definition could easily belong to a women's magazine: feminism is barely mentioned, and if the topics are ranked by importance, they appear quite similar to the interests of magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*. It is also quite easy to believe that *BUST* is a women's magazine, because it clearly defines the gender of the targeted readership. The perspective is "female," which might allude to a focus on cisgender women.

Finally, "*BUST* is a cheeky celebration of all things female and a trusted authority on up-and-coming trends among discerning, educated, and culturally aware women." It will be interesting, later on, to analyze how *BUST* expresses this cheekiness, especially since, in this definition, it does not explain against which norm the articles go. The readership is further narrowed down in this last sentence: the women targeted are "educated." This is a quite vague word, but it still expresses a concern in the magazine's desire not to be read by everybody. Contrary to *Lilith*, which targets its readership according to its interests, or to *Bitch*, which aims to inform everyone on feminism, *BUST* selects its readers: "young women" who are "educated." No concern about women's rights or issues is expressed. Until the issue of summer 2020, the slogan on the cover was "for women with something to get off their chests." It could be believed that this slogan has been erased to include a more diverse public in terms of gender; however, the presentation on the website clearly filters who reads *BUST*. Jenkins and Johnson confirm this selection: "*Bust* (*sic*) magazine catered to an audience of mostly White, highly educated, young readers, and coverage emphasized fashion, beauty, and pop culture" (269).

In a 2016 interview, the editor-in-chief Debbie Stoller explains that the magazine was a defense of the "feminine" activities (such as "knitting," "craft," or "nail polish") after the second wave of feminism, which she accuses of rejecting these activities even though some women liked them. Her statements still focus on women as the magazine's readership: "[w]e just wanted to make a women's magazine […] that understood women were interested in more than just fashion, beauty and how to please your man" (Casey, *TheSpinoff.co.nz*). She claims that femininity can be "reclaimed" from sexist ideologies, and can be part of the

feminist movement. According to this interview, the magazine's approach to feminist concerns is neither militant nor direct:

> [e]mbracing nail polish isn't going to save women's rights to abortion, no. But on the other hand, respecting and valuing things that have come out of women's culture instantly gives them a higher and more egalitarian status. I do believe that promoting things of interest to women could end up contributing towards women championing their own rights to abortion.

The power of popular culture is highlighted in this interview: Debbie Stoller compares reality TV to sport news:

> [w]hen I used to watch the news every evening, and they have the sports report – now I know a lot of women like to watch sports too, but not nearly as much as men – I never understood it. […] Now I know what women's sport is – it's celebrity.

It could appear rather contradictory to make claims for variety in the feminist movements while arguing (quite archaically) that women are more interested in celebrities' gossip than in sports.

Elizabeth Groeneveld perceives the trends of DIY (Do It Yourself) in *BUST* as capitalist approaches in disguise. She notes that the magazine seems out of touch with some realities, including social and economic ones: "[t]he reclamation of domesticity within third-wave feminism is not available to everyone, and the discourses of domesticity within third-wave periodicals are marked by privilege and, at times, ageism and classism" ("Join the knitting revolution," 274). In this context, the magazine seems to fail at taking intersectionality into account. Groeneveld remarks that the readership is "young, urban, white, and middle-class" (264); the average reading age of *BUST* is 27 years old, and the public is largely "college-educated" (265).

Lilith

Lilith was founded in 1976, and is thus the magazine of this selection having been in publication for the longest time ("Mission and Masthead," *Lilith.org*). Susan Weidman Schneider, one of the founding members of the magazine, has been editor in chief ever since. *Lilith*'s slogan is: "Independent, Jewish and frankly feminist." According to the "Mission and Masthead" webpage:

> Lilith's mission is to be the feminist change-agent in and for the Jewish community: amplifying Jewish feminist voices, creating an inclusive and positive Judaism, spurring gender consciousness in the Jewish world and empowering women, girls and trans and nonbinary people of every background to envision and enact change in their own lives and the larger community.

Hence, even though the magazine presents a clear focus on Judaism, with a view to conciliating Jewish and feminist values, the last part of this presentation opens the reading of the magazine to a larger public than only Jews ("empowering women, girls and trans and

nonbinary people of every background to envision and enact change in their own lives and the larger community"–only cisgender men are excluded from this targeted public). The "Mission and Masthead" page describes the interests of *Lilith*'s readers, and broadens the readership since it does not target readers according to identity traits but to interests: "Jewish hair, workplace fairness, queer identity, racial justice, gay marriage, fashion, new liturgies, family politics, feminist philanthropy, gender justice, women's Holocaust experience, Israel, sex, circumcision, and lots of other things too." It could be argued that a non-Jewish person would probably not choose this magazine as a regular feminist source, since it would be complicated to engage in discussions about a faith one does not believe in or practice. However, this magazine is unique precisely for its focus: if *Bitch* aims to respond to popular culture in a feminist way, and *BUST* to offer an outlet for feminist voices, *Lilith* attempts to discuss and harmonize two identities. The "Mission and Masthead" page highlights this aim: *Lilith* would offer "a lively take on tradition, celebrations and social change."

The name of the magazine itself deserves some explanation. The "Mission and Masthead" webpage explains it as follows: "According to legend, Lilith was the first woman, created even before Eve. She told Adam, 'We are equal because we are created from the same earth.'" In "The Flight of Lilith: Modern Jewish American Feminist Literature," Ann R. Shapiro offers a brief summary of Lilith's myth:

> Lilith was the first wife of Adam, who was created equally with him. When she refused to be submissive and lie beneath him, he attempted to force her compliance, and so she flew away. God instructs Adam to persuade Lilith to return, but Lilith is recalcitrant. Kabbalistic interpretations, written several hundred years later, add that after fleeing the Garden, Lilith kills pregnant women, injures newborns, and excites men in their sleep, taking their semen to manufacture demon children of her own. (70)

Shapiro also highlights the participation of Jewish women to the American feminist movement. In "Lilith's Comeback from a Jungian-Feminist Outlook: Contemporary Feminist Spirituality Gets into Bed with Lilith," Marianna Ruah-Midbar Shapiro gives a detailed explanation as to why the figure of Lilith made a cultural comeback "from the 1970s onwards" (150). According to the author, Lilith's story has been read by feminists "as an expression of patriarchal oppression" (153), since both God (often seen as a male figure) and Adam try to force Lilith, the first woman, to return and submit herself to Adam. Nonetheless, Lilith could also be considered a kind of feminist utopia, for she does not have to submit to patriarchy: "Lilith was the only woman who did not take part in original sin, and is therefore untouched by the curse of women (Gen. 3.16): male rule, the suffering that comes with pregnancy and childbirth, and death" (152). This particularity places her in a unique position between male and female, from a religious standpoint. One could read Lilith as an

embodiment of several key-themes of feminism: sexual freedom, the demonization of independent women, the rejection of male authority, the relation to pregnancy, etc. Lilith, as a figure that rebels against male authority, is considered an inspiration for many feminists according to Marianna Ruah-Midbar Shapiro.

Each of these three magazines allows some space for advertisement, even though, as Forster highlights, "[f]eminist magazines are often visibly different [from women's magazines]: less advertising and commercial backing lead to a more spartan appearance" (209). Advertisement will not be a focus of this dissertation, which will analyze the articles, but it deserves to be mentioned, as Charon regards the compatibility between editorial and marketing contents an essential feature of magazines.

As magazines of the third wave of feminism, *BUST* and *Bitch* are often compared. It is the case in Brenda M. Helmbrecht and Meredith A. Love's article: the authors argue that the writing in *Bitch* resembles an academic style, whereas *BUST* is not as "rigorous" but trendier ("The BUSTin' and Bitchin'Ethe of Third-Wave Zines," 154). Moreover, *BUST* appears very similar to women's magazines; the authors argue that this resemblance in appearance could be used to attract new readers, unsuspecting of the feminist content of the magazine. They argue that *BUST* places an important emphasis on women's choices, sometimes failing to acknowledge the systems that oppress them. The challenging of traditional women's magazines might also sometimes appear as incomplete, in regards for example to the models' thinness. *Bitch*, on the other hand, encourages its readers to engage in discussions, and uses anger as a form of rhetoric. Unlike *BUST*, *Bitch* has promoted anti-consumerism. The authors conclude: "Just as *BUST* may appeal to the more girly, fun-loving feminist of the third wave, *Bitch* appeals to the feminist who likes her fun but has just as much (if not much, much more) fun critiquing it" (165). *Bitch* has also been praised for its intersectionality: according to Gautschi, the magazine presents a special focus on women that are part of minority groups.[6] These women are under-represented in mainstream media, so *Bitch*'s focus on their issue contributes to counteract a lack of interest from most media.

As mentioned several times in this study, Jenkins and Johnson's article "Body Politics: Coverage of Health Topics and Policy in U.S. Feminist Magazines" was used as a basis for this work. It compares three feminist magazines, their content related to health issues, and

[6] Throughout this work, the term "minority" will describe "[a] definable category of people who share an identity or status and are subject to prejudice, discrimination, and oppression" (definition in the *Open Education Sociology Dictionary*). The word "minority" will thus not only refer to groups smaller in number than the majority.

how this content could be defined in terms of political orientations. Contrary to Jenkins and Johnson, this work will avoid using political notions of feminism, as they seem imprecise and confusing. However, this article offers an academic perspective into *Bitch* and *BUST*'s health-related content; due to the fact that this work will focus on COVID-19 related articles, it is relevant to offer the authors' perspective here. They argue that the articles in *BUST* focus mainly on individual responsibility and sexuality, while *Bitch* uses an activist approach and represents a more diverse readership in terms of "ages, genders, ethnicities, and sexual identities" (275). These findings seem to corroborate what has been developed so far about the magazines' readers and ideology.

QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The analytical part of this work will focus on articles in relation with the COVID-19 crisis. This will include not only health-related articles, but also articles discussing the impact of the crisis on other aspects of the readers' lives (for example, the psychological effects of confinement, the consequences of quarantine on relationships, etc.). Different topics have been developed in this theoretical part, and will constitute the focus of the analysis. They will be summarized below and hypotheses on the communication of each magazine will be developed.

Gender Relations

As has been mentioned, relations between feminism and genders are unstable. The focus of the magazines can be restricted to cisgender women and their rights, or can include non-binary and cisgender people. In this first hypothesis, *Bitch* and *Lilith* would be the most inclusive magazines, because of their self-defined broad readerships. On the contrary, *BUST* would only focus on cisgender women.

Readership

To continue on the topic of the readership as defined by the magazines themselves, the second hypothesis concerns the public targeted by the magazines. *Bitch* would focus on younger people and people who do not know a lot about feminism; since it focuses on popular culture, its aim might be to offer bite-sized, easy-to-read, 'fun' articles for a casual, not necessarily feminist reader. *BUST* would have again the most exclusive public: young, "educated" women. If 'education' refers to higher education (college or university), it could also be argued that this readership will be the least racially, economically, and socially diverse. [7] [8] Finally, even though *Lilith* can also be read by non-Jewish people, it would seem rational to think that the targeted readers are mainly Jewish people, since the magazine's focus is religious.

The readership is an essential element, since it has been argued that the magazines are constantly in conversation with their readers, while still conveying their own opinions.

[7] The U.S. Census Bureau defines race as a social category. The racial self-identification is "not an attempt to define race biologically, anthropologically, or genetically." The importance of racial identification is justified as follows: "Information on race is required for many Federal programs and is critical in making policy decisions, particularly for civil rights. […] Race data also are used to promote equal employment opportunities and to assess racial disparities in health and environmental risks" ("About Race," *Census.gov*).

[8] According to a 2018 Statista survey, 35% of the American population is college-educated. While the percentage of White college-educated people is close to this mean, only 25% of Black people and 18.3% of Hispanic people have received a college education. On the contrary, 56.5% of Asians and Pacific Islanders are at least college graduates ("Percentage of educational attainment in the United States in 2018, by ethnicity," *Statista.com*). An article by CJ Libassi (*AmericanProgress.org*) confirmed the "racial gap." Other studies have shown that social and economic backgrounds play a role in the access to college education (Greenstone et al.).

Helmbrecht and Love argue about *BUST* and *Bitch* that "[n]either zine ignores its audience; rather, both appear to assume a consubstantial relationship with their readers, as they do not so much argue for an ideology as embody it" (153). This leads to a third hypothesis: since *Bitch* would be the most inclusive magazine in terms of public, it would display the most diverse points of views; *BUST* would, in comparison, present rather homogeneous points of view; *Lilith* would show different perspectives from the Jewish community.

Intersectionality

Since *BUST*'s readership would be the least diverse, it could be posited that the content of the magazine would not focus primarily on intersectionality. On the contrary, if *Bitch* was the most inclusive magazine, more articles could highlight different types of discrimination faced by the readers. Because of its orientation, *Lilith* would especially focus on the relation between sexism and anti-Semitism.

Reaction and Ideologies

Each feminist magazine offers a different reaction to popular media. As seen before, the intersections between political ideologies and feminism are often unstable and unclear. However, it is undeniable that each magazine focuses on a specific scope, and thus chooses to highlight a particular dimension of feminism instead of other ones. They would all challenge gender norms with different approaches. *Bitch* defines itself as "a response to popular culture"; it could be hypothesized that this magazine would focus on cultural issues and objects rather than on politics or economics. *BUST*, on the contrary, since it addresses "educated women," could engage with complex topics that demand a basis of formal education, such as politics, economics, sciences, etc. *Lilith* could react to both religious traditions and feminist ideologies, especially by trying to conciliate both.

Illustrations

As Charon argues, illustrations are of particular importance in a magazine. This analysis will mainly focus on the text of the articles, but the images accompanying it will be mentioned, and will be analyzed if they are of notable relevance. The hypothesis here would be that the illustrations would coincide with the type of readership: *BUST* would focus on young (White) women; *Bitch* would be more inclusive and add images of the cultural objects analyzed; and *Lilith* would focus on symbols and images of faith.

This theoretical part has introduced some of the issues encountered by feminism and the media. The second part, namely the analysis of the articles related to COVID-19, will

consider this content while keeping these topics in mind, and confirm or deny the hypotheses formulated above.

ANALYTICAL PART

INTRODUCTION

The second part of this dissertation will explore COVID-19-related articles within the corpus of magazines from summer 2020 to spring 2021. Only the pieces that center on COVID-19 will be considered for the analysis. Other articles, for example some interviews or editorials, mention the health crisis to present the context in which they were written. However, they do not fundamentally help to show the publication's position on the crisis and its effects. Fictions and poems have also been excluded from the selection, because they fall under literary analysis rather than under the scope of media communication. For the same reason, this dissertation will not handle reviews of books, movies, TV shows and podcasts. Indeed, even though they might mention the COVID-19 crisis, the corpus for this work does not contain the cultural objects that these reviews treat.

In *Lilith* more particularly, pieces of writing within the section "Voices" (pages 4-9 of every issue) were not considered relevant for this analysis, because they do not all deal with COVID-19; moreover, they often consist of quotations from articles posted on *Lilith*'s website. One excerpt does not even originate from *Lilith*'s website ("Working from Home" by Jennifer Medina and Lisa Lerer is an extract from an article in *The New York Times*; Summer 2020, 8).

To preface this textual (and sometimes visual) analysis of both form and content, the occurrences of pandemic-related words were considered in order to provide a first insight into the magazines' treatment of the topic. However, they were left out of this work because of their lack of relevance for the overall analysis; indeed, as explained above, COVID-19 can be alluded to outside of articles dealing specifically with the topic. This dissertation will show, nonetheless, that some periodicals have engaged with the topic of COVID-19 more than others; for instance, *Bitch* has only provided pieces that center on the pandemic and its effects in a small number of issues.

Items dealing with COVID-19 matter because the periodicals regard the pandemic as a society-changing event. For example, the title of "No New Normal" in *Bitch* refers to the expression 'new normal', which has been popularized to describe changes that have become necessary because of the pandemic.[9] In a similar way, *BUST*'s "Editor's Letter" of the Summer 2020 issue uses the expression "'back to normal'" with quotation marks (6). In *Lilith*, "Parenting During (*sic*) the Pandemic" mentions the "'before times'" between

[9] See for example: Asonye, Chime. "There's nothing new about the 'new normal'. Here's why." *World Economic Forum*, June 5, 2020. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/06/theres-nothing-new-about-this-new-normal-heres-why/.

quotation marks (19), which could indicate a clear separation between an era before COVID-19 and a time period marked by the pandemic and the changes it produced.

Given these criteria, sixteen items in twelve issues were selected for this analysis. *Bitch* contains the least number of articles centered on the health crisis and its consequences. The issues of Summer 2020 and Spring 2021 do not contain any relevant piece.[10] The Fall 2020 issue presents three articles that are linked to the topic of this work, namely a "[d]ispatch" ("Flipping the Focus: The Reclaimers Are Fighting the Vacant Housing Crisis," 16-17), a feature ("No New Normal: Who Will We Be After This Nightmare Is Over," 24-31), and a Question-and-Answer (Q&A) article ("Talking Kink with Mistress Velvet," 75). The Winter 2021 issue only offers one article related to the COVID-19 situation, an interview that relates to social distancing and isolation ("Lindsay Adams Transforms Fear into Beauty," 13).

BUST's issues include five articles that discuss the COVID-19 crisis and its effects, namely, the "Editor's Letter" (Summer 2020, 6), "Decolonizing COVID" (Fall 2020, 14), "Death and the Maidens" (Fall 2020, 62-67), "Home Is Where the Heart Is" (Winter 2021, 21), and "Behind the Maskne" (Winter 2021, 35). The last issue (Spring 2021) offers no article dealing with COVID-19 or related matters.

Lilith contains the most items that pertain to the topic of the pandemic. Over three issues, a number of collective articles deal with this theme ("Now. Next," Summer 2020, 32-39; "Parenting During the Pandemic," Fall 2020, 18-23; "Is Gen Z Alright?" Winter 2020-21, 18-24). The Summer 2020 issue contains a feature ("Shopping: A Eulogy," 14-19), and the Fall 2020 issue presents another piece related to COVID-19 and its effects ("Commit to Your Creative Work… Even Now," 12-13). This analysis will also examine two editorials (Fall 2020, 3; Winter 2020-21, 3). Like *Bitch* and *BUST*'s Spring issues, *Lilith*'s last issue included in this corpus does not present any relevant article for this dissertation.

The disparities between magazines in terms of the number of article analyzed are already noteworthy. Out of sixteen articles in this corpus, nearly half are found in *Lilith*, while only a quarter of the selection comes from *Bitch*. This difference in engagement with the topic of COVID-19 will be returned to in the conclusion of the analysis.

[10] The article "Silicone Sham" (Spring 2021, 20-21) mentions the effects of the pandemic on sex workers, but as the article centers on the effects of "sex-dolls brothels" (20), it is not considered relevant enough for this analysis.

BITCH

As seen above, only four items in *Bitch*'s four issues are relevant for this analysis, including a feature, which will be analyzed first. The textual analysis will argue that *Bitch*'s articles focus on the community rather than on the individual, which leads to a concern for inclusivity. Nevertheless, the focus on community contributes to an anti-capitalist ideology, and causes a lack of explicitly feminist content. 'Feminism' appears absent; several hypotheses will be provided to explain the lack of focus on gender-based issues. *Bitch*'s argumentative discourse seeks to convince the readers to take action against different forms of oppression. The visual analysis will show how illustrations, however unessential, provide some visual complementary sense to the articles.

"No New Normal: Who Will We Be After This Nightmare Is Over?"

This article by Kim Kelly can be found in *Bitch*'s Fall 2020 issue (24-31). The feature is explicitly centered on activism; it expresses support for anarchism,[11] anti-capitalism[12] and prison abolitionism amongst other ideologies. Even though the call to action is not made explicit, solidarity and activism are closely associated. The item develops explanations on many systems of oppression, but not on gender-based oppression. The feminist aspect of this piece seems absent; this article could represent a broader version of feminism as willing to help everyone to achieve equality, since a focus on community could confirm this hypothesis.

"No New Normal" centers on "mutual aid," an expression that is used fifteen times in the feature. In this article, mutual aid contrasts with "the top-down charity model" (26) because of its reciprocity and flexibility. It is defined as "the organizing principle dreamed up in 1902 by anarchist thinker Peter Kropotkin that's based on the idea of exchanging resources for mutual benefit," and becomes closely associated with "the community" (26). The *Cambridge Dictionary*, the *Lexico* and *Merriam-Webster* all define a community as an

[11] The *Britannica (online)* defines anarchism as a "cluster of doctrines and attitudes centred on the belief that government is both harmful and unnecessary." Andrew Fiala, in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (online)* describes it as "a political theory that is skeptical of the justification of authority and power. Anarchism is usually grounded in moral claims about the importance of individual liberty, often conceived as freedom from domination. Anarchists also offer a positive theory of human flourishing, based upon an ideal of equality, community, and non-coercive consensus building. Anarchism has inspired practical efforts at establishing utopian communities, radical and revolutionary political agendas, and various forms of direct action." Equality, community and activism will be essential concepts for this analysis.

[12] Anti-capitalism is the opposition to capitalism. The *Britannica (online*) defines capitalism as an "economic system, dominant in the Western world since the breakup of feudalism, in which most means of production are privately owned and production is guided and income distributed largely through the operation of markets." Sarwat Jahan and Ahmed Saber Mahmud, in the *International Monetary Funds (online)*, identify six capitalist "pillars": "private property," "self-interest," "competition," "a market mechanism that determines prices in a decentralized manner through interactions between buyers and sellers," "freedom to choose with respect to consumption, production, and investment," and "limited role of government."

ensemble of individuals linked by their living area, their interests or their characteristics. All three dictionaries specify that the term "community" can refer to society in general.

As this word appears thirteen times in the article, it seems relevant to wonder which aspect of the "community" is implicitly dealt with. Some occurrences point to a synonymous use to "society." For example, in the following quote, the community-based organizations are said to have endorsed responsibilities that social and political institutions were unable to assume: "[a]t a time when many feel that state and federal governments have failed them and essential workers are being put on the line in service to capitalism, it has been heartening to see community-care projects popping up" (26). Other occurrences seem to refer to a more limited community, such as "the disability community" (27) or "the sex work community" (29); an interviewee mentions "shared community values" (31). In this case, a trait, a profession, or principles characterize the community.

This use of the term "community" does not give indications about the targeted readership; because of the association of the "community" to society first in the item ("helping the community became a new calling," 26), everyone can feel concerned by the article and by the topic of mutual aid. Evidence of this wide target audience is encountered in the acknowledgement of the difficulties of working from home, of losing one's job and of working on-site; the readers will most likely fall into one of these categories if they are part of the working population.[13] The focus on community is justified by an appeal to nature: "[t]he ancient concept of caring for one's community is coded into our DNA" (26).[14] In this case, the term "DNA" could hint at biological elements or invoke a figurative sense, defined by *Lexico* as "[t]he fundamental and distinctive characteristics or qualities of someone or something, especially when regarded as unchangeable."

The article deals with mutual aid and develops the impact of COVID-19 on people who already faced discrimination, stigmatization, or suffered from difficult living conditions prior to the health crisis. More precisely, the item offers the points of view of organizations involved in mutual aid during the pandemic. In order to represent their perspectives, the text includes many interview quotes: in total, eight interviewees from seven different organizations discuss how COVID-19 has affected their work and/or lives. Additionally, two

[13] "For those who have the privilege to work from home, it has brought isolation, alienation, and loneliness; for those who lost their jobs, there is a Byzantine maze of rickety unemployment websites and economic stress; for those who are still compelled to report to work outside, there's the fear of contracting a deadly virus and bringing it home to their families. For millions, the stereotypical 9-to-5 office job evaporated almost overnight, and it looks like it may never return—at least not in the form to which we've become accustomed" (27).

[14] José Miguel Mulet defines the appeal to nature as "an argument or rhetorical tactic which argues that a thing is good because it is 'natural' or bad because it is 'unnatural'" ("The Appeal-to-Nature Fallacy: Homeopathy and Biodynamic Agriculture in Official EU Regulations," 174).

other people (politician Brad Lander and activist Keah Brown) express their opinion without representing explicitly any organization. The range of topics and systems of oppression developed in the article is quite large: the feature examines the effects of COVID-19 on incarcerated populations, Indigenous people, students and university staff, gig workers, and sex workers. Not only does the text represent many experiences, but it also illustrates the intersectionality of the systems of discrimination in highlighting the discrimination faced by Black and trans sex workers (29).

The scope of the article concentrates on social, as illustrated by the use of the term "community," and political issues, as shown when it calls out "politicians [who] have failed to take meaningful action" (26). The tone and the content are far from neutral: the depiction of ideologies behind the organizations denotes an agreeing outlook. Prison abolitionists, anarchists, antifascists, anti-capitalists and anticolonial activists are described as activists for equality: "the activists, abolitionists, and anarchists […] had already been fighting to dismantle the oppressive systems the crisis had since laid bare. For them, organizing was an established practice" (26). Moreover, mutual aid and these ideologies become closely linked: "mutual aid is nothing new for the anarchists and other anti-capitalists who have already built coalitions around antifascism and community self-defense; abolitionist campaigns to free incarcerated people and ICE detainees; and rank-and-file organizations like tenant associations and labor unions" (26). As will be argued, *Bitch* presents mutual aid as the only viable solution in order to survive the pandemic and its fallout. This association of ideologies to mutual aid acts as a support for anarchism, prison abolitionism, etc.

The item presents the activists' fights positively, since the article agrees with the points of view expressed, whether explicitly ("Ramos is right," 31) or implicitly ("[r]eleasing people was the only humane option," 26). For example, the use of the term "heartening" to describe an alternative to "capitalism" supports an anti-capitalist stance in the following quote: "[a]t a time when many […] essential workers are being put on the line in service to capitalism, it has been heartening to see community-care projects popping up" (26). When the article describes "workers in precarious, low-wage industries" who organize against "predatory bosses" (28), it supports unionism or syndicalism. This presentation of union issues reminds of a David-and-Goliath situation, because of its depiction of the bosses as the workers' strong adversaries. It becomes even more obvious when capitalism is connected to its "evils" (31). Moreover, the collective pronoun "we" (that includes the writer and maybe the readers) associates the narrating voice to "the working class": "the working class has notched

monumental victories over the evils of capitalism before, and by Jove, we can do it again" (31).[15]

Amongst the opinions supported, anarchism holds an important place all along the article. Politicians are said not to care about people, leaving mutual aid as the only solution to survive the pandemic: "[w]hile some elected officials made overtures suggesting they would try to use their power for good during the crisis, seeing agents of the state step up in any meaningful way remains a rarity" (29). The following quote, which is emphasized on the last page, summarizes this opinion:

> [u]ltimately, the most important lesson here is that no one is coming to save us. That shouldn't be cause for alarm; if anything, it's a chance for people to come together and fight for a truly revolutionary vision of liberation. (31)

The health crisis is thus seen as an opportunity for political and social change. However, the revolution that is alluded to is neither explained nor developed in the article, thus making the call for action rather subtle. The conclusion of the feature confirms the tone and perspective of the article:

> [b]ut only through mutual aid, solidarity, and radical hope can we continue our collective mission to burn down the old systems of oppression and build something better on their ashes. If we want to survive, we're going to have to save ourselves. (31)

This quote, as the text in general, uses a particular argumentative strategy: it depicts the systems of oppressions that existed before COVID-19, more than the health crisis itself, as problems that must be fixed. For example, the introduction asserts that "[f]or many people, especially those who are overworked, underpaid, criminalized, incarcerated, subjected to violence and oppression, or lacking in basic resources, 'normal' was already a struggle" (26). This targeting of issues described as "old systems of oppression" highlights the advantages of the initiatives described, in the following quote for example: "growing something sweeter on the rotten bones of our old world" (26).

The feature aims to raise awareness about the different causes supported by the organizations, to provoke empathy for people who are discriminated against, and to call for solidarity, or even action. However, in its activist dimension, the text does not explain what the ideologies mentioned (anarchism, anti-capitalism, abolitionism, etc.) entail. The readers are thus presumed to know what these terms mean or even that they already participate in these movements. As explained above, the article promotes activism; nevertheless, it simply

[15] The pronoun "we" usually means "I and at least one other person" or "you and I." The writer of a piece can also use it to refer to themselves. It is hence quite difficult to claim that the use of this pronoun seeks to involve the readers in a certain group; however, the writer includes themselves within it.

encourages its reader to get involved in mutual aid organizations. The conclusion confirms the aim of the feature as trying to convince the readers by associating them to the causes presented and asking a question as a way to engage with the readers: "[h]ow can we ensure that these moments of rebellion and radical care last a lifetime?" (29).

In conclusion, this feature introduces and defends ideologies that the readers probably already know; the text calls for solidarity, or even activism. A general concern for a perspective that includes everyone, which would correspond to the message of the article itself, can explain the lack of gender-related concerns.

General Textual Analysis

The other items in *Bitch* can be likened to the feature analyzed above: they present a focus on the community rather than on the individual, which induces an exploration of many different experiences. This multitude of voices leads to explanations of many systems of oppression and their intersectionality. Because of this focus on the "community" in a large sense (i.e., "society"), the articles tend to engage with as many readers as possible, even though the discussion appears unilateral. The readers are not expected to belong to a certain gender, race or class. The articles rather seem to suppose that the readers have certain interests and an affinity with the ideologies that are presented.

The topics dealt with in the pieces are diverse and usually center on the "community," as defined in the analysis of the feature, rather than on the individual. "Flipping the Focus" deals with reclaimers (houseless people 'reclaiming' empty houses); Lindsay Adams' interview focuses on a sense of group, even though it consists in an individual perspective, as Adams expresses it in the following quote: "I and others can connect with the colors and figures of that story" (13). Nevertheless, "Talking Kink with Mistress Violet" centers on the personal aspect of quarantine, since it explores the issues of sexual life in lockdown. Because of this attention to "community," the articles represent more than one experience on a given situation. Lindsay Adams' interview discusses only one situation, because it is a short interview aiming at presenting the artist; yet, the other three articles contain more than one voice. "Flipping the Focus," in a similar way to "No New Normal," comprises many quotes by interviewees, which helps depict more experiences than simply the writer's position. "Talking Kink with Mistress Violet" is a kind of Q&A, which allows the article to articulate two voices (the person asking the question and the person answering it).

Probably because of this focus on the "community" rather than on the individual, the articles can discuss with any reader – or rather, the readership is targeted because of its interests rather than because of its inherent characteristics. It has been argued that readers of

the feature "No New Normal" probably already knew what prison abolitionism, anarchism or anti-capitalism entail. However, it should be noted that the readers' interests are the only elements of selection. In relation to Charon's essay (see theoretical part) and its concept of "reading contract" (67), it can be argued that *Bitch* does not choose its readers; the readers choose the magazine. An example of this wide targeting can be found in "Talking Kink with Mistress Violet": the person (presumably a reader) who asks the question and their partner's gender(s) remain unknown; Mistress Violet's response does not include specific gender-related elements of response. *Bitch* seeks to encourage inclusivity, and yet its readership is assumed to know some concepts that are mentioned or used in arguments, but are not defined or explained. For example, "Flipping the Focus" does not define the word "gentrifying" (17), although it is a quite specific concept in the urban field. Readers are presumed to know what the concepts mentioned mean, or to check them out.

The pronoun 'we', although it has been argued before that it is difficult to know precisely who this collective pronoun includes, also conveys this sense of community. In "Flipping the Focus," the reclaimers talk in 'we', but the pronoun is not otherwise used outside of the interview quotes. On the contrary, in the other two pieces, the first-person plural pronoun is often used. Shorter articles possibly have less textual opportunity to convey a message of unity and "community"; thus, the use of the pronoun 'we' quickly conveys this effect.

Because of this inclusive perspective, many systems of oppression are acknowledged. "Flipping the Focus" focuses on economic struggle; in "No New Normal," many systems of oppression are evoked and combined, as analyzed earlier. This acknowledgement of all kinds of difficulties contributes to the inclusion of as many readers as possible; readers whose struggles are explained probably feel accepted, and are less likely to suffer from a lack of awareness within the articles.

Most articles do not expect any prerequisite knowledge from their readers, except for a few concepts (as seen above). The texts thus can appeal to a new readership while still interesting a more experienced one with the reliance on recent topics (in this case, the health crisis). The regular readership of the magazine could expect to be offered a certain point of view on these topics. As developed throughout this work, *Bitch* presents an anti-capitalist and collective approach, which centers on the political, social and economic scopes. Regular readers of the magazine would agree with the values conveyed in this perspective.

With regards to the scopes of the articles, they vary, for example from personal ("Talking Kink with Mistress Violet") to cultural ("Lindsay Adams"). Nevertheless, the

economic, political and social aspects are favored in longer pieces ("Flipping the Focus" and "No New Normal"). "Flipping the Focus" looks at the economic ("most of the units on the rental market remain far out of reach for lower-income individuals," 17), social ([Gordillo is interviewed:] "'We look out for each other,'" 17), and political dimensions of the housing crisis ([Escudero says:] "It's immoral for people to be on the streets, and [the government] should do what's necessary. As a community, that's what we did," 17).

Through different points of view, all articles convey a message or arguments that are part of the same ideology. In "Flipping the Focus," through the perspectives of the reclaimers and housing activists, the text argues that the housing crisis is actually a capitalist issue; the central quote on page 17 illustrates this thesis:

> [p]erhaps the real question is not how many houses are sitting empty, but who has the ability to live in these flipped or newly constructed homes—and who is being displaced from cities in order to make room for the wealthy. (17)

In "No New Normal," the article adopts the activists' point, as argued above. Lindsay Adams' interview conveys a feeling of resilience and victory over the circumstances: "[a]rt can build new worlds and help us imagine: beauty when there is pain, and peace when there is pressure" (13). "Talking Kink with Mistress Violet" aims to convince the readers to adapt to quarantine sexually-speaking; the use of imperatives and the authority of a 'specialist' highlight this argumentative aspect. The argumentative dimension of each article and the focus on community point to an anti-capitalist ideology.

As argued above, "No New Normal" presented different ideologies, including an anti-capitalist one, in a positive light. Likewise, "Flipping the Focus" presents the situation through an anti-capitalist lens, although it is not explicitly declared as such. This article values the people's well-being and sense of community over the interests of private corporations because of its focus on the reclaimers' and activists' perspectives. The term "gentrifying" has a pejorative connotation when referring to people able to afford housing in expensive living areas.[16] In short, two items out of four analyzed in this work, and more particularly the two longer pieces, defend an anti-capitalist ideology in relation with COVID-19.

When it comes to the pandemic, the articles introduce a general topic to discuss an aspect of it that is less known. "Flipping the Focus" deals with financial struggle, but the article develops its own angle, namely the Californian housing crisis. "No New Normal" mentions job losses and working from home, but puts the focus on minorities. "Talking Kink with Mistress Violet" starts with quarantine to branch out into sexual life. In all three cases, it

[16] The *Cambridge Dictionary* describes the term "gentrifying" as "disapproving."

should be noted that the issues which are dealt with existed before the health crisis, whether it is the housing crisis, systems of oppression or "a sexual rut" respectively (75). The articles develop how the COVID-19 crisis has worsened the issues, pushing the different people at the center of the articles to adapt.

This overlook of the items then leads to a closer reading, which reveals that the argumentative strategies used in the articles rely on emotion as well as on reflection. The wide targeting of readers, the focus on community, and the anti-capitalist ideology analyzed above rely on feelings as well as a general explicit logical argumentation. The articles appear objective on the first reading; for example, "Flipping the Focus" is a "[d]ispatch from California." A "dispatch" is defined by the three aforementioned dictionaries as "a report" from a distant writer. This term conveys a notion of objectivity to the article; yet, on closer reading, the articles seek to provoke certain emotions, in order to convince the readers to take action. Because of the reliance on the readers' feeling of sympathy or empathy for the grim situations depicted, this argumentative strategy partly relies on pathos, as described by the *Cambridge Dictionary* as "the power of a person, situation, piece of writing, or work of art to cause feelings of sadness, especially because people feel sympathy."

Indeed, the tone of the articles intends to portray actions and activism in a favorable light. Because most texts present first an unfavorable situation and then a beneficial reaction, the form aims to persuade the readers to take action against systems of injustices. The tone produces a positive feeling, but its evolution varies depending on the length of the article. When the form of the piece allows it, the tone highlights disadvantageous circumstances first before focusing on the beneficial reactions to the situation, which creates a stark contrast that favors the initiatives undertaken. The readers are convinced to take action because they first feel empathy for the people suffering; as a result, the longer articles rely on pathos.

The pathos is developed with a depiction of negative circumstances, before the article displays a positive outcome. In "Flipping the Focus," the tone is first gloomy when the text discusses the health crisis ("ghost town," 16) as well as the "capitalist" order that prevents houseless people from reclaiming houses. For example, the following sentence explains how powerless houseless people appeared in front of authorities: "[u]ltimately, Moms 4 Housing activists were removed from the house in an eviction that included armored vehicles and police wielding AR-15s" (17). In comparison, this piece highlights the positives of the reclaimers' initiative ("transforming their newfound shelters into homes," 16; "the Garden of Love and Kindness," 17; "inspired by the sense of community around the movement," 17). It has been argued in the analysis of "No New Normal" that the opposition between a positive

reaction and a negative situation supports an argumentative strategy that convinces the readers to take action.

In shorter items, the tone is almost immediately positive. In "Talking Kink with Mistress Violet," many adjectives denote a positive outlook on a "challeng[ing]" situation ("great," "good," "nice," 75), as well as some nouns ("opportunity," "fun," 75). In Lindsay Adams' interview, the same strategy is at play ("[t]hough the subject matter is heavy, Adams manages to bring a soothing and calming energy to her work," "Adams's project [...] offers a moment of peace in the midst of our dangerous circumstances," 13) to induce an advantageous conclusion ("producing beautiful art," 13).

The articles usually intend to provoke reactions leading to actions in the readership. "Flipping the Focus" aims to convey empathy for the reclaimers and for houseless people; it wishes to provoke reflection on the housing crisis and its causes (short-term renting, gentrification, house-flipping, lack of institutionalized help, etc.). "No New Normal" seeks to raise awareness on social issues, and addresses a call for organization and solidarity. "Talking Kink with Mistress Violet" wants to inspire readers with regards to their sexual life. The only exception might seem to be Lindsay Adams' interview, although the piece intends to promote the artist, and thus to convince people to check out her works. The discussion with readers and the expectations that *Bitch* raises for them are central, and revolve around the key concept of "community." This engagement, however, appears unilateral: the magazine defends a stance, but does not particularly engage with the readers' (counter)opinions.

The discussion with readers is largely based on the magazine's position of authority. In "Talking Kink with Mistress Violet," a Q&A article, an external writer from *Bitch* responds to a question (presumably asked by a reader) with advice, which is marked by incentives and the use of the imperative form. However, not all items aim to discuss with the reader. Lindsay Adams' interview does not especially seek to engage in a conversation with the audience, but rather intends to provoke reflection on the role of art. "Flipping the Focus" informs and shares a point of view; this "[d]ispatch" consists literally of a report, even though not an objective one.

As seen above, since *Bitch* wants to discuss with any reader who chooses to read it, the concern for inclusivity is central. The terms chosen to evoke the situation of discriminated people are hence carefully selected. For example, "Flipping the Focus" differentiates the terms "house" and "home"; it uses the word "houselessness," which is not recognized by the main dictionaries used in this work. Do Good Multnomah, a non-profit organization that offers shelters to houseless veterans, justifies the use of this term:

> [b]ecause a house (or housing) is just a place. It is simply a physical space that they currently do not have. […] Home is so much more than a physical space. By calling individuals experiencing houselessness 'homeless' you may be stripping away that connection. […] Not everyone has housing, but every person has a home.

This differentiation is more obvious in other sentences of the article, such as the following one: "reclaimers are moving forward with transforming their newfound shelters into homes" (16). The term "homeless" is still used when quoting, or when paraphrasing research ("[a]s of January 2019, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development found that approximately 151,278 people were experiencing homelessness in the state on any given day," 17), and because the organization Moms 4 Housing uses the term "homeless," for example on their website (*Moms4Housing.org*). With regards to Do Good Multnomah's explanation of the term, "Flipping the Focus" insists on the humanity of the reclaimers. This awareness is part of a general concern for minorities; it also contributes to the general perspective of the article, which presents the reclaimers' points of view.

The texts avoid exploring relations to gender or gender-related issues. Although "Flipping the Focus" focuses on 'mothers' (Gordillo and Escudero) no piece analyzed here centers on feminism, gender expression or gender-based oppression. One can wonder, when reading the COVID-19-related articles of this one-year time period, where *Bitch*'s feminist approach lies. One could argue that since the longer items put the focus on "community," distinctions based on gender would appear counter-productive; however, "No New Normal" mentions many different systems of discrimination. Another possibility would be that the periodical actually encourages gender equality by ignoring the very concept of gender difference. In "Talking Kink with Mistress Violet," the person asking the question to Mistress Violet and their partner's genders are not specified; Mistress Violet responds without uttering any gender-based indication in the response. Finally, another hypothesis would be that, since *Bitch* describes itself as feminist, its vision of feminism includes everyone suffering from discriminations.

The reduced number of articles analyzed in this corpus cannot represent *Bitch*'s positions as a whole; however, the lack of feminist or gender-related content halts the comparison between the hypotheses formulated earlier, regarding gender relations and feminism, and the results of this analysis. This partial incompatibility between the hypotheses and *Bitch*'s actual content could not be foreseen; however, the hypotheses related to ideologies, readership, and intersectionality are still relevant, because they have been either confirmed or denied above. The contrast between the hypotheses of this work and the conclusions of this analysis will be returned to after the part dedicated to the visual content.

In conclusion, this textual analysis has shown a focus on inclusivity, community in a large sense, and activism against inequalities; the articles adopt anarchist and anti-capitalist ideologies while focusing on social, economic and political topics. The assumed readership is not targeted according to inherent characteristics; instead, given the unilateral discourse and the lack of explanation around the defended ideologies, readers choose to read *Bitch*'s COVID-19-related articles because of an affinity with these ideologies. One could wonder why *Bitch* would try to convince readers who already agree with the defended stances. However, the items are highly argumentative and persuade the readers to engage in activism. They seek to provoke reflection, and more importantly, action. They argue that the health crisis made visible systems of oppression that existed before COVID-19 has broken out; in other words, the problem according to these articles is not the pandemic, but the systemic inequalities that the crisis reinforced.

Visual Analysis

The shorter pieces, "Talking Kink with Mistress Violet" and "Lindsay Adams," only contain small illustrations, presumably of the person interviewed. The longer articles include more visual supports, but they are not essential to the comprehension of the text. "Flipping the Focus" comprises a photo of reclaimers in front of a house they seem to have taken over (16). Some reclaimers on the porch of the house are fixing a banner that appears partly unreadable ("shelter from the storm," according to the text, 16). The reclaimers are simply standing outside, some of them holding a rope, probably as a defense for 'their' house; they appear calm. This picture confirms the perspective of the article: the item looks at the reclaimers, who stand for their right to occupy a house. Offering a visual portrayal of the group helps the readers to construct a mental picture of the reclaimers' situation.

"No New Normal" contains illustrations that resemble collages. The first picture of this kind includes a person tying up their braids in a ponytail (24-25). The illustration gives an impression of a movement that was broken down in several images, as a way to slow down time or to take breaks to examine an evolution. Another image follows the same pattern (28); the last image does not seem to decompose a movement, but involves a person smiling (30), as if announcing the positive conclusion to come on the following page. As the article itself is composed of many pieces of interviews, as well as different ideologies, and mentions various systems of oppression, these illustrations could announce that the text will 'break down' the topic of mutual aid and organization for the readers.

Conclusion

To wrap up this part about *Bitch*, this conclusion will compare the hypotheses formulated in the theoretical part with the results of the analysis presented in this section. It will elaborate on the different textual and visual strategies used in the articles to convey specific points of view. The lack of explicitly feminist or gender-related content will be taken into account.

It was first hypothesized that the items in *Bitch* would be inclusive in terms of gender. This was indeed confirmed, but gender-related oppression itself appears absent. This lack of concern for sexism could be considered irrelevant in a broader context of concern for inclusivity and community; however, it is difficult to find an explanation, in this case, as to why other systems of oppression are mentioned in the articles, but not patriarchy itself.

It was presumed that *Bitch* would target a younger readership and would take on a pedagogical role. This analysis has argued that, on the contrary, the lack of targeting for a precise readership leads the readers to choose *Bitch* for its ideological orientation. The articles focus on economic, political and social issues, without omitting some cultural or individual aspects. They are far from the 'bite-sized', 'fun' pieces that were expected prior to this analysis. Inclusivity, as a central concern for the magazine, leads to a multiplicity of interviewees; the discussion with readers, nonetheless, seems unilateral. *Bitch* seeks to convince readers who already agree with the collective approach of the magazine to step into anti-capitalism and anarchism. The variations of tone show a call for organization and action; the magazine acts as a form of authority on the readers. The points of view expressed are diverse, but they ultimately all converge toward the same ideology.

Intersectionality is mentioned, and many systems of discrimination are exposed. In relation to the pandemic and its effects, the articles consider that the pandemic revealed inequalities that pre-existed. The health crisis does not seem to be the main problem that the articles tackle; various forms of oppression need to be challenged instead. In this sense, COVID-19 and its consequences might be an opportunity for social, political and economic change. The fact that the texts introduce a well-known perspective in order to develop their own angle around it, highlighting discriminations as problems and (re)actions as the solution, confirms this implicit outlook.

The articles analyzed in this work do not challenge gender norms, contrary to what was assumed. However, ideologies and reactions are strongly expressed, as seen above. Finally, the illustrations add meaning to the longer pieces, although they are not necessary to their understanding. The assumption that *Bitch* would examine cultural objects and thus represent them was nullified, since the focus of the articles is for the most part not cultural. In short,

most of the hypotheses that were formulated prior to this analysis were not confirmed. The lack of cultural and feminist content could not be predicted based on the magazine's self-description and existing research regarding *Bitch*. As a consequence, the results of this analysis might appear lacking or disappointing; nonetheless, the reduced number of COVID-19-related articles must be considered in order to understand these conclusions. *Bitch*'s engagement with the topic of the pandemic and its consequences appears weak compared to *Lilith*, as seen above. The conclusion of this work will consider a comparison between the magazines to comment on the discussion around the pandemic and the (lack of) feminist perspective.

BUST

As seen before, out of five COVID-19-related articles in *BUST*, only one is a feature ("Death and the Maidens"); it will be analyzed first separately. Indeed, many arguments from the analysis of the feature will be useful for a general textual analysis. The textual analysis will argue that the items focus on a specific ideal reader, namely a White woman, who has had access to higher education and/or is working from home. Thus, the texts lack in diversity and in intersectionality; postfeminist characteristics and a noticeable excess of optimism reinforce this perspective. This disproportionate optimism leads to an implicit undermining of the health crisis and its consequences. COVID-19 and 'feminism' are absent from the articles. Finally, the discussion with the readers seems unilateral. The visual analysis will show how some pictures confirm the hypothesis formulated above, while some partly denied it.

"Death and the Maidens"

This feature by Christine Crudo Blackburn is part of the Fall 2020 issue (62-67). It focuses on the evolution of women's rights in times of pandemics. Two examples of pandemics are presented, namely, the 14th-century Black Death and the 1918 Flu. "Death and the Maidens" develops how these outbreaks have influenced women's rights to property, access to labor and right to vote. This article is interesting for several reasons: firstly, it conveys a clear idea of the assumed readership of the magazine; second, it shows the magazine's center of interest when it considers 'feminism', or rather women's rights; finally, its relative inaccuracy contributes to an over-optimistic tone and a postfeminist ideology.

The feature aims to discuss two previous cases of pandemics and how they would have given women "opportunities" to obtain rights that were then withheld from them. It first examines the Black Death, also known as the Plague, and how it benefitted "women." These women's nationalities are not mentioned, although the article situates this pandemic in "Asia and Europe" (64). The text refers to the Plague's aftermath as a "'Golden Age' for women" (64). There would have been drastic improvements in women's access to the workforce and apprenticeships, in their wages, in their "economic independence" (64), and in their "control over whether they wanted to marry, and how many children they wanted to have" (64). However, experts in the field contradict some of these assertions. For example, Jane Humphries quotes the expressions "golden age" and "economic independence" in a 2014 article; she explains that in England, two 14th-century laws were passed that "included a ban on wage increases, a requirement that every under 60 joined the workforce and restrictions on movement in search of work." The aftermath of the Plague was not as bright for gender equality as *BUST*'s article claims; indeed, Humphries concludes that "[t]he idea that the Black

Death created opportunities for young unmarried women able to exploit annual contracts that tempted them to delay marriage and reduce fertility turns out to be a myth." Michael J. Phifer also qualifies the assumption that women's right to property would have improved in England: "[a]fter the Black Death [...] the trend to reinforce women's property rights changed dramatically. Socially women's property rights weakened. [...] To complement the empowerment of the patriarch, women's property rights were avoided or eliminated" (285). *BUST*'s feature article can thus appear misleading in this overly optimistic view of women's rights post-pandemic.

BUST's piece then explains how the 1918 Influenza, also known as the Spanish Flu, aggravated the workforce shortages in the United States. These shortages were primarily caused by the men's conscription during the First World War. "Death and the Maidens" describes the situation as full of job opportunities for women, including in positions of leadership. Yet, compared to a review of Maurine Weiner Greenwald's book *Women, War, and Work: The Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States* by Lynne Withey, this account of women's entry in the workforce as an entryway for gender equality lacks in nuance:

> women's gains in the labor force as a result of World War I were concentrated in fields that were already becoming stereotyped as women's work. Those women who went into clearly male-dominated fields did so only temporarily and, in most cases, were forced out of their jobs when the war ended. (111)

BUST's article insists on the advantages of newly available positions "for white women," but argues that "Black women" experienced even more drastic positive changes: "[f]or Black women, who prior to the war were mainly limited to domestic work, the increase in job opportunities was even more dramatic" (65). Even if the role of Black nurses is acknowledged, the pieces barely glosses over the difficulty of their integration in the army: "[w]hile at first only white nurses were admitted, by 1918 the shortage became so great that 18 Black women were selected to fill army nursing posts, and many more were recruited to serve on the home front" (66).

In reality, Black nurses faced racism before and while serving in the army, as Marian Moser Jones and Matilda Saines have argued in 2019. In "The Eighteen of 1918–1919: Black Nurses and the Great Flu Pandemic in the United States," they give a more precise account of the Black nurses' experiences during and immediately after the First World War. Black nurses were first repeatedly excluded from the Red Cross; when a tiny number of the three thousand Black nurses who had applied for military duty was finally accepted, their badges indicated that they were women of color. Moreover, they were not assigned to military duty, which

prevented them later on from accessing veteran benefits, contrary to White nurses, and from using their service as an argument for the defense of their right to vote. This refusal to accept Black nurses, including in areas where they would have been needed, stemmed from racist attitudes from both army officials and White nurses. After the Armistice, eighteen Black nurses were called to Camp Sherman to be on military duty, where they faced racist comments and attitudes from their supervisors. Although Moser Jones and Saines acknowledge that the participation of these nurses in the war effort helped to advance their situation, their overall opinion is more nuanced than the optimistic message conveyed in *BUST*'s article: "such meaningful expansion of opportunity only occurs when communities organize and unite to push for greater inclusion before, during, and after the crisis. Furthermore, it indicates that lasting gains from such 'crisis opportunities' may take generations to manifest" (882). Their essay highlights the intersectionality of both sexism and racism faced by the Black nurses: "many Americans viewed military nurses as needed symbols of wholesome womanhood in the masculine war zone, and prevailing racist ideologies held that only White women could truly embody feminine virtue" (879).

"Death and the Maidens" explains that the war effort in which women took part helped to advance the suffragist cause; however, as Moser Jones and Saines' article explains, the large exclusion of Black nurses from the Red Cross and afterwards from military duty did not offer them the same benefits. "Death and the Maidens" concludes that COVID-19 could either be detrimental to women, or turn out to be a new opportunity for "a better work/life balance" (67), since working from home would allow women to handle the majority of the childcare while having a paid job. This view, which can be largely viewed as a postfeminist statement, will be returned to later on.

In order to understand the presumed readership and the points of focus of the article, the following extract is particularly useful:

> [o]ur participation in the workforce has increased, our political power and economic independence has increased, and often, societal norms have changed for the better as men learned to view women as more equal partners. While the COVID-19 crisis may not open up the workforce to women through labor shortages like in the past, the lessons we're learning now by working from home could create a future economy that includes more women than ever before. (67)

Due to the men/women dichotomy used all along the text, the reference to a collective group ("our") can be understood as 'we women'. The second sentence refers to "working from home" as a general option, without mentioning that many women do not have this opportunity. As developed in the theoretical part of this essay, women are over-represented in essential jobs, care-taking jobs and teaching, in other words in jobs that can hardly, if ever, be

accomplished from home. Since *BUST* claims to discuss with "educated women" (see theoretical part), the item's perspective is based on the assumption that the readership is composed of women whose jobs allow them to work from home, and that are generally held by people having had access to higher education (Richter, *Statista.com*). Although the impact of COVID-19 on jobs, especially on positions held by women, is mentioned in the article, the focus keeps on coming back to women who have the possibility to work from home.

A focus on 'educated' women further reinforces this presumed readership: "[t]hese educational deficits become more difficult to make up the longer schools remain closed, limiting opportunities that otherwise would have been available to highly skilled women" (67). The article's assumption that the option of working from home would be beneficial for women's place on the job market relies on two inaccurate premises: on the one hand, that women mainly work from home; on the other hand, that the possibility of working from home will improve gender equality. The first premise appears fallacious because even though women have been working from home more than men in 2020, they were still spending more time in the workplace than working from home, as was the global working population ("Nearly Half of Employed Women Worked at Home on Days Worked in 2020," *BLS.org*); this could be due to the nature of women's jobs, as seen previously. The second premise is problematic because, while working from home could help the insertion of women in the job market, it does not develop whether this situation will be possible long-term wise. Indeed, since women still endorse the larger part of childcare and household responsibilities, as the article acknowledges, the option of working from home does not challenge the disadvantages faced by women; it barely adapts to them.[17] In this scenario, women would be able to work from home while still caring for their children, despite the fact that research has shown that women are less happy than men to work from home.[18]

If this item presents a feminist perspective on COVID-19, one can wonder what type of feminism it introduces. As developed before, the history of women of color during the 1918 Influenza is severely reduced and over-simplified, to the point of blatantly omitting the racist attitudes faced by the Black nurses. While evoking the current era, it is mentioned that "[w]omen of color have already been displaced disproportionately from their jobs and will likely suffer from a greater lack of employment if the economy is slow to recover" (67).

[17] According to a 2020-study, "moms working from home spend 49 minutes more per day on housework compared to telecommuting dads." Moreover, "telecommuting moms spend 33 minutes more per day working while their children are present compared to fathers working from home" (Cummings, *YaleNews*).
[18] "Some 79 percent of men said they have had a positive work-from-home experience during the pandemic, compared with just 37 percent of women, according to McKinsey" (Molla, *Vox.com*).

However, because of the inaccuracy developed earlier in this work and because the article ends up on a positive note,[19] intersectionality and realism are not at the core of this piece.

Moreover, *BUST*'s perspective on the consequences of COVID-19 focuses on 'educated' women. This is confirmed by the view of working from home as a viable solution, since working from home is mainly possible for people who have received a higher education, as seen above. The expected readership for this article consists of White women, who have (had) access to a higher education and/or work from home, and who are not going to fact-check the article. In other words, the assumed readership appears unaware of racism and intersectionality, and ready to believe what the article claims.

Finally, one can wonder why the tone and content of this article appear so optimistic, including when imagining the future, as illustrated in the following quote: "knowing the vastly different directions the pandemic could push women's rights and economic independence could help cultivate a more positive outcome" (67). The theory on postfeminism could provide an explanation: according to Rosalind Gill, gender and "'race'" inequalities (Gill uses quotation marks; "Postfeminist Media Culture," 149) play a role in postfeminism, or rather are denied. As seen with Lewis, Benschop and Simpson's essay, the absence of call for change on the part of society characterizes postfeminism, among other traits; indeed, postfeminism demands from women to adapt to patriarchy. "Death and the Maidens" favors this perspective by asserting that pandemics have given opportunities to women to advance their rights.

The term "opportunity," whether in the singular or in the plural form, can be found eleven times in the six-page article. This word contains a positive connotation: according to the *Merriam-Webster*, *Cambridge* and *Lexico* dictionaries, it consists of a chance of betterment, specifically related to an action that can be undertaken. In "Is an Opportunity a Possibility and a Chance?" Karin Sandström argues that the term "opportunity" is a synonym for "chance" or "possibility" that relates specifically to the professional and educational lexicons. Given how postfeminism insists on the importance of women's actions and effort to adapt to social expectations, the repetition of this term in "Death and the Maiden" leads to the impression that the pandemics have provided women with chances of improvement of their situation; they should take these chances. In fact, the article positions itself as offering women

[19] "While the COVID-19 crisis may not open up the workforce to women through labor shortages like in the past, the lessons we're learning now by working from home could create a future economy that includes more women than ever before" (67).

a possibility to better themselves: "knowing our history certainly puts us in a better position to shape our future" (62).

Similarly, the term "independence" is used six times; the adjective "economic" precedes it five times and the adjective "financial" once. The notion of economic independence has already been nuanced while discussing the description of the Black Death. These idioms contribute to a postfeminist emphasis on capitalist consumption, as argued by Gill, since consuming requires means to purchase; this insistence on economic independence, although an important point of feminist concerns throughout the movement's history, points out to the appeal of the article for financially independent women. As will be developed in a more general analysis of *BUST*'s items, calls for charity detach people in need from the magazine. As seen in the theoretical part, financial struggles and job losses have impacted women disproportionately during the early COVID-19 era; this article chooses not to discuss with women having suffered from the situation.

General Textual Analysis

Although the number of articles in *BUST* that focus on COVID-19 is limited, the topics are varied, and range from the impact of COVID-19 on the magazine ("Editor's Letter") to the acne that is provoked by wearing a mask ("Behind the Maskne"). The subjects transform chronologically from solemn and serious to more trivial; the first text that mentions COVID-19 evokes death, grief, job losses and essential workers ("Editor's Letter"). "Decolonizing COVID" and "Death and the Maidens" center on the consequences of the pandemic on Indigenous people and on women respectively. "Home Is Where the Heart Is" gives ideas for volunteering while keeping some social distance; in the same issue, "Behind the Maskne" handles skincare. The scope of the articles gravitates toward social issues (except for "Behind the Maskne," which is meant for individual purposes), sometimes focusing on economic and political matters; indeed, "Decolonizing COVID" raises awareness for a crowd-funding campaign and mentions the neglect faced by Indigenous people from the political authorities. No item deals with the cultural aspect of COVID-19 and its consequences.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic is glossed over. Surely, the "Editor's Letter" mentions the death toll, the job losses and the struggles for essential workers; yet, it attempts to offer a distraction to these concerns with a hopeful tone and an introduction to the issue. "Decolonizing COVID" argues that the negligence of Native Americans is not new,[20] even though the disregard of the Indigenous population has been worsened by the health crisis; this

[20] "From food, to housing, to health care, indigenous people in America have been exploited and neglected by the governments set up by European colonizers since the 1600s" (14).

points undermines the article's argument that the COVID-19 crisis is hard on Indigenous people. Indeed, by placing the neglect faced by Indigenous people during the health crisis in its historic context, the piece could convey the impression that 'things have always been that way' rather than call for change. The shortness of the article also contributes to this lack of call for action. The feature "Death and the Maidens" evokes job losses and working from home, but seems rather focused on people able to work from home and White women, thus demographic categories already benefitting from privileges. "Home Is Where the Heart Is" offers socially distant possibilities to volunteer, but the highlighted organizations adapted to COVID-19; they were not created because of it. Finally, the article "Behind the Maskne" mentions a secondary effect of COVID-19 ("maskne"), which appears trivial when compared to other concerns for women, such as those evoked in the theoretical part of this dissertation (job losses, domestic abuse, etc.).

Little to no focus on 'feminism' is displayed in these articles. The feature describes the advancement of women's rights with the pandemic as a result of the circumstances, an "opportunity," as seen above. Yet 'feminism' itself as an ideology or as activism is absent. The pieces are not especially 'feminist', in the sense that they do not present gender inequalities or fight against them. It is true that "Home Is Where the Heart Is" presents two organizations focusing on women and girls. Nonetheless, as seen in the theoretical part, feminism deals with both gender relations and calls for change, whether these calls are more ideological or activist. *BUST*'s items offer close to no perspective on gender relations, and the calls for change are rather calls for solidarity or charity.

The articles never challenge a sexist status quo, and except for "Death and the Maidens," no piece presents a feminist perspective on COVID-19 and its effects. The "Editor's Letter" mentions the luck of people who are able to work from home in quarantine, compared to people who cannot or have lost their jobs, but it aims at presenting the issue first and foremost. "Decolonizing COVID" depicts the experience of Indigenous people on the reservation and the neglect they face from the political instances. "Home Is Where the Heart Is" does not develop explanations on systems of oppression; it barely introduces the organizations' work. "Behind the Maskne" deals with advice for skincare rather than with systems of oppression. Overall, the articles related to COVID-19 matters do not explore relations to gender. "Death and the Maidens" uses the men/women dichotomy, but since the piece explores the historical subject of pandemic, it uses the gender distinction that was prevalent historically speaking.

The calls to action are actually calls for solidarity or charity. Chronologically, they appear vague, like in the "Editor's Letter": "[i]f we're lucky, we'll be able to help those who fared worse than we did" (6). This statement, a bare wish, cannot be considered a call for solidarity nor a commitment to actually help people in need. Calls for action then find their way into *BUST*'s pages, but remain subtle; in "Decolonizing COVID," there is no direct demand for donation, the link of the fundraising campaign is simply given. Some imperative forms in "Home Is Where the Heart Is" finally make a clear call to volunteering. In short, solidarity or altruism were not important concerns in the first moments of the pandemic, but they became so with time and when the "'back to normal'" times did not come ("Editor's Letter," 6). Because the calls for solidarity are first vague, then subtle, and finally uttered once in a more direct way, and because they do not come back in the last issue considered for this work, they seem a secondary concern for the magazine. These calls for solidarity imply that the readers do not suffer from financial struggles; the ones needing help are 'others', outsiders to the magazine and its readership. Moreover, the struggles faced by people of color or essential workers (as mentioned in the theoretical part) during the pandemic are glossed over. As will be argued throughout this analysis, *BUST* tends to focus on (White) women who are able to work remotely.

As seen in the theoretical part, the magazine's relationship with its readers constitutes an important element of the periodical medium. *BUST* discusses unilaterally with the readers; this could be linked to the lack of relatability of the articles for some readers (such as POC, essential workers, and people in need). The "Editor's Letter" is a monologue; "Home Is Where the Heart Is" and "Behind the Maskne" engage with readers by giving them advice (or acting as an authority for improvement, whether through direct authority or with the help of a specialist respectively). "Decolonizing COVID" presents a situation without really engaging with the readers. However, the articles help to place the magazine in a position of authority, as seen when discussing the call for solidarity.

One can then wonder who the articles are written for. Overall, the texts do not exclude readers explicitly, maybe with the exception of the most 'feminist' piece, "Death and the Maidens," because it associates the collective pronoun 'we' with women. At first reading, *BUST* does not seem to target readers on the basis of their inherent characteristics. Nonetheless, some articles make assumptions about the readership. For example, "Home Is Where the Heart Is" presumes that the reader has a "giving spirit"; it is an essential premise to grab the reader's attention for what is to come (a call for solidarity). "Behind the Maskne" presumes a lot more about the readers than most articles: the reader would feel anxious ("[a]s

if pandemic stress wasn't triggering enough," 35); some readers would work on site, even though *BUST*'s COVID-19-related articles tend to focus on people working from home ("[h]ow often will depend on your skin type, but in general aim to exfoliate after every time you wear a mask for eight-plus hours (like for a work shift), or after exercising," 35); finally, the reader must prioritize protection and then their "skin's happiness" ("protection is the number-one priority. But your skin's happiness can be a close second," 35). It is not clear whether "skin happiness" is the appearance of the skin or the feeling of it. The article assumes that readers must be wearing masks, but it does not provide sources on how to choose one. The piece does not deal with concerns such as the (dis)comfort of wearing a mask, the price of the masks, or the capacity to wash them regularly.

Everyone can read these articles, because of the simplicity of the style and the absence of prerequisite knowledge. Nonetheless, people of color, essential workers, and people in need are othered, excluded from the presumed readership. The items are not written for them; they are written for (female) White readers who are able to work from home, which could have to do with their education. Everyone can read *BUST*, but the periodical do not treat all its readers the same way, giving White 'educated' women a privileged focus.

Overall, the articles aim to induce hopeful emotions. The "Editor's Letter" first provokes sadness by recounting an experience of illness, death and grief; but it ends on an optimistic note.[21] The two pieces that raise awareness and try to motivate the reader to donate time or money to a cause ("Decolonizing COVID," "Home Is Where the Heart Is") call for empathy. "Death and the Maidens" seeks to offer hope about the future of women's rights after the pandemic. In a way, by providing advice to improve one's skin, "Behind the Maskne" can give hope to people who suffer from acne.

As seen in the theoretical part, magazines are means for self-improvement (Forster); they do not entirely rely on news (Charon), which allows them to avoid triggering topics. *BUST*'s articles rely on COVID-19 and the lockdown as a whole, and do not use the development of the pandemic as matter for the articles. The tone is often either neutral or enthusiastic. The optimistic language of "Death and the Maidens" has already been analyzed; the short article "Home Is Where the Heart Is" appears enthusiastic ("worthy causes," "gorgeous," "awesome," "boost," 21). This optimism in tone can be linked with the emotions

[21] "So whether you are reading this from a city that feels more or less 'back to normal', or are still sheltering in place like we are in N.Y.C., we hope these stories, along with our other great features—like our profile on the women of Sesame Street and our amazing history of America's only women-led domestic terrorist cell—provide some moments of much-needed relaxation and pleasure. If nothing else, the last few months have re-emphasized how precious every day is. We hope in some small way we are helping you to keep on keeping on" (6).

that the text induces: the use of positive denotations and connotations conveys the emotions better. The presence of puns can be interpreted as a side-effect of the hopeful tone (for example in "Home Is Where the Heart Is," a charity giving bras to women in need is described as a "support group," 21). The expression "worried sick" ("Editor's Letter," 6) could aim to equate the concerns of close ones for a colleague (and maybe friend) to the sickness itself or the risk of catching it. Some terms of "Death and the Maidens" have already been discussed; additionally, some words ("stuff," 62) or expressions ("many believe that," 64) appear imprecise, and thus mirror the inaccuracy of the content. As developed above, "Home Is Where the Heart Is" uses an enthusiastic lexicon. "Behind the Maskne" describes the mask as a "protective accessory" (35); the term "accessory" conveys a connotation of non-essential, superfluous.[22] This concept shows a contradiction with the overall ideology of respect of lockdown policies, since the "Editor's Letter" encourages the readers to respect lockdown policies ("[s]taying home was—literally—the least any of us could do in this crisis," 6).

However, the fact that *BUST*'s articles insist on hopeful emotions can be seen as an optimistic inclination or simply a detachment from reality–a reality that is harsher for the people that the magazine leaves behind (namely, POC and essential workers). Research has established that optimism and hope can be beneficial for individuals in a pandemic, but if they influence a framing effect (a cognitive effect that influences people's decisions by the framing of a piece of information as positive or negative), they can cause either beneficial or damaging medical conditions (Martin-Krumm et al.). Another study has shown that "unrealistic optimism" can result in taking higher risks with one's health (Gassen et al., 1).

In conclusion, *BUST*'s articles related to the pandemic present the bright side of the health crisis. This leads to omissions concerning the situations of people of color, minorities, essential workers and people who struggle financially. "Death and the Maidens" even considers COVID-19 an opportunity for women's rights, in a postfeminist perspective. The tone of the articles contributes to this overall positivity. Although the items discuss unilaterally with 'educated' women, the style remains simple.

Visual Analysis

Of all pieces, "Death and the Maidens" contains the most interesting illustrations, which will now be analyzed. The pictures illustrate the situations that are described in the article; when the period allows for it, the visual support relies on photographs. These pictures portray

[22] The *Cambridge Dictionary, Lexico* and *Merriam-Webster* all define an "accessory" as something that can be added to something else; it can be considered non-essential.

working women, and they are sometimes wearing masks, which can remind the reader of their own situation. Three examples of propaganda posters, which encourage women to work for their country while the men are away, are shown without any explanation or contextualisation (65). This could contribute to an argument explained earlier in the textual analysis: the article considers that the entry of women in the workforce during the Flu pandemic was an opportunity, not simply a temporary fix for workers shortage.

Next to the text evoking the 'opportunities' for Black women, the item displays a picture of some Black nurses in Camp Sherman (66) and a photograph of a Black woman who is working and smiling. The following caption accompanies the second picture: "A photo from Kelly Miller's 1919 book *History of the World War for Human Rights* captioned, 'Cheerfully doing the work required; The colored women did willingly and efficiently their part in helping win the war.'" As with the textual content, the over-optimistic and simplistic tone of this caption is not put into question, reinforcing the omission of racism and of intersectionality between sexist and racist prejudices. The text from 1919, a century before the publication of the article, reminds of the content of *BUST*'s article, as if this narrative was not outdated and had not proven to be false. The last photograph, of a woman working on a typing machine (67), resonates with the conclusion of the article, which is focused on women working from home and thus typing on a computer.

Finally, since it is part of the hypotheses of this work, the illustrations in "Home Is Where the Heart Is" and "Behind the Maskne" include some diversity in skin complexions. Because of its focus on Indigenous people, "Decolonizing COVID" contains a picture of the two Indigenous women quoted in the text; one of them carries a toddler on her back. White women are not the only figures represented, in both cases on the graphic designs that complement the articles. Whereas the illustrations of the feature collaborate with the textual meaning, the pictures in the three other pieces can be considered as simply attracting the attention of the reader on an item that could interest them.

Conclusion

The textual analysis of the articles related to the pandemic in *BUST* showed that gender relations are not a focus in content. The feature discusses mainly with women; apart from that piece, the articles neither include nor exclude readers based on their gender. The hypothesis that *BUST* would only deal with cisgender women is thus partly denied. The readership, however, was shown to confirm to the hypothesis developed in this work: the articles center on White, college-educated women, who have the possibility to work from home.

Nonetheless, the simplicity and lack of precision of the style does not corroborate the assumption that the readership has had access to higher education.

BUST's articles do not defend a particular ideology, but the feature and some parts of the shorter pieces point to postfeminist tones. Indeed, the pandemic is depicted as an opportunity for women; far from acknowledging the challenges faced by women, especially women who are part of other minorities (POC, trans women, etc.) or who struggle financially, the articles dealing with the pandemic are optimistic in tone and suggest that women are responsible for their future. Reactions to injustices or to a harmful status quo would thus appear unnecessary. Both intersectionality and feminism are absent from the pages analyzed; the magazine omits the difficulties faced by women of color.

It was hypothesized that, since *BUST* prides itself on discussing with "educated women" (see theoretical part), the topics analyzed would challenge the readers. Nevertheless, not only is the style imprecise and simple, but topics demanding nuance (such as the role women of color played during the Spanish Flu of 1919) were over-simplified, probably in order to engage with a specific readership and to keep the tone of the article light and cheerful. The magazine does not aim to challenge its readers intellectually; it barely informs or distracts them. This attitude explains why the texts generally end on a positive note: the articles want to reassure the reader about their future during and after the pandemic. It also explains why the discussion with the readers seems unilateral.

BUST does not expect any particular reaction from the readers; some articles indicate solutions for self-improvement, and calls for charity are made, explicitly or implicitly. Yet, these calls imply that the readership is (financially and materially) able to help. The pieces are usually not collaborative, even though they include interview bits; the magazine appears to be its own authority, at the cost of inclusivity.

Finally, the visual analysis showed that, contrary to the hypothesis, the illustrations in the three shorter articles did not exclusively represent young White women. Nonetheless, in "Death and the Maidens," the photographs contribute to the omission of racism, by portraying Black women as happy to be offered new job opportunities. The use of a picture with its original caption, without any new commentary, could be viewed as a lack of critical thinking; but given the general lack of diversity of the articles, and of this feature in particular, it rather seems a matter of deliberate lack of inclusivity.

BUST's articles represent about a third of the total corpus in terms of number of articles (five out of sixteen); if its texts are far from the longest in the corpus, the magazine had nevertheless the opportunity, for a year, to discuss COVID-19 and its relation to gender

issues. As discusses above, the items do not present any explicitly 'feminist' content, since even "Death and the Maiden" does not mention feminism and only focuses on White women's rights (in a sometimes fictionalized way). In a similar way to the analysis of *Bitch*, the conclusions of this analysis can thus appear unsatisfying. Nevertheless, the theoretical part of this work has allowed for some comparison with postfeminism; as discussed before, postfeminism is either rejected as an impostor to feminism or accepted as a part of the movement by researchers. *BUST*'s perspective could thus be considered feminist by some, since it can be linked to postfeminism, or regarded as an imitation of women's magazines rather than a challenge to the status quo. Helmbrecht and Love had already highlighted the resemblance between *BUST* and women's magazines. This work will not discussed whether or not *BUST* should be considered feminist, since definitions of feminism vary; yet, the lack of inclusivity of the articles relating to the pandemic cannot be overlooked either.

LILITH

As shown above, *Lilith* contains the highest number of relevant articles for this analysis. This chapter will first present the editorials, because they make it possible to gain some understanding of *Lilith*'s targeted readership. It will then move on to analyze "Shopping: A Eulogy," a feature, and "Now. Next." The latter consists of a collection of writing (mostly by people outside of the magazine's workforce), similar to "Is Gen Z Alright?" and "Parenting During the Pandemic." A more general textual analysis and a visual analysis will follow.

The textual analysis will show that the articles mainly discuss with Jewish, college-educated women; yet, there are concerns for inclusivity through different points of view and through disclaimers about privilege. These disclaimers can seem empty, however, because calls for charity detach the people that need help from the magazine's readership. Calls for action and calls for empathy are separated in different pieces. The style and the types of articles display a wish for connection with the readers, in order to spark their interest in a variety of topics. The visual analysis will then argue that, although there are not many illustrations, they add meaning to the textual content.

"From the Editor"

These two editorials by Susan Weidman Schneider are respectively subtitled "Can Good Things Possibly Emerge from 2020?"[23] and "How Are We, Really?"[24] The pandemic is the main topic of these two letters from the editor, and as will be argued, it is considered in a similar way in both letters. Both pieces aim to remain optimistic while acknowledging the difficulties of the crisis. They do not wish to diminish the importance of the pandemic; rather, they point toward a possible favorable change through a shift in values on a social level. Finally, they target an unmistakably Jewish readership.

The first editorial ("Can Good Things Possibly Emerge from 2020?" Fall 2020, 3) searches for the positive aspects of the year 2020, marked by the COVID-19 pandemic. Here, the tone and the content appear contradictory: a pessimistic tone describes the pandemic and its effect, while the content highlights the pleasant aspects of the same topic. The argumentation leans more toward a positive outlook; however, the disadvantages could still appear to outweigh the advantages.

The piece begins with the editor describing herself as "not a Pollyanna personality" (3). The Pollyanna Principle is a psychological concept that "states that people process pleasant

[23] (The editorials were not included in the electronic versions of the first three issues of this corpus. They were retrieved on *Lilith*'s website.) Retrieved on https://lilith.org/articles/fall-1976-74/. Accessed March 25, 2022.
[24] Retrieved on https://lilith.org/articles/from-the-editor-124/. Accessed March 25, 2022.

information more accurately and efficiently than less pleasant information" (Matlin and Gawron, 411). In other words, the editor does not characterize herself as particularly optimistic. This mention at the very beginning of the article acts as a response to an adverse answer to the question in the title. It reinforces the arguments for optimism that are to come: if even a person that is not particularly optimistic can see the positives in 2020, then most people can. The editorial, however, acknowledges that the editor has some financial privilege compared to other situations. The optimistic perspective is justified later on in the article: "these glimmers of good news are reminders that we have points of connection available to us still, and that simplicity, born of necessity, brings its own pleasures and poignancy" (3).

The positive points in question either belong to the media scope (the *New York Times* has reviewed more art by people of color, and has focused on smaller food-serving places) or are specific to the Jewish community (new ways of organizing events such as "shivas," "simchas," "bat and bar mitzvah," and "chuppah," 3). Regarding the first point, the letter from the editor places this shift of focus (from expensive restaurants to take-away places, for example) in a broader context of "democratization," leading to a hope for "greater awareness of what's really important" (3). This priority ("what's really important") is not further developed, leaving space for imagination; in the same way, one can wonder if the *New York Times*' forced change of topic means much overall in society or in the cultural field. This mixed opinion, in a contrast between tone and content, is again at work when the author depicts working from home, with its positives (such as a better focus for writing) and its negatives (such as a lack of social interaction with colleagues).

These points nonetheless appear quite weak compared to the disadvantages of the pandemic, which are expressed in a clearly pessimistic tone. The author searches for positives "behind the dark clouds of this pandemic, with its grim losses and its miseries" (3). The article mentions "horrific hunger" and refers to the pre-COVID-19 as the "Before Times" (3); here, the capital letters insist on the importance and impact of the pandemic as a life-changing event.

The second editorial ("How Are We, Really?" Winter 2020-2021, 3) continues this quest for optimism, in a more successful way. The editor mentions how gratefulness has become more common as a result of the pandemic. This feeling is expressed on a personal level and on a more collective, political level:

> [w]e're grateful on this small scale at the same time as we recognize the poisonous behaviors from callow and careless officials who were entrusted with public health and safety and who instead cast aside science, good sense, empathy, responsibility and more to exacerbate our danger rather than ameliorating it. (3)

This criticism of "officials" could refer to many decisions of the Trump administration. From suggesting to inject disinfectant within the body or use UV radiation against COVID-19, to blaming testing for a surge in case, many of Trump's claims about the virus were heavily criticized ("Coronavirus: Outcry After Trump Suggests Injecting Disinfectant as Treatment," *BBC.com*; Ratcliffe, *The Guardian*). A call to solidarity and action follows this feeling of gratefulness in the editorial, as the following quote can illustrate:

> [w]ill the gratitude for our own small and large blessings spill over into good deeds, so that we can be reasonably sure down the line of having good health and good government, more fairness and less bias, more food and less hunger, more safety and less peril? May it be so. (3)

The expression "good deeds" can refer to an act of charity performed according to the moral values of a religion. As the first letter from the editor, the second one focuses on Jewish concepts (greetings in Yiddish and Hebrew) and mentions "attacks on synagogues" (3). Even though "other places of worship" directly follow, the editorials clearly point to a Jewish readership. The first editorial ends with a quote by Arlene Agus, a "prominent Jewish feminist[…]" according to the *Jewish Women's Archive* ("Ezrat Nashim"). This conclusion of the article reminds the readers of the magazine's focal point and orientation.

As will be mentioned a few other times in this work concerning *Lilith*'s writing, the lexicon is usually formal, with very specific terms ("panaceas," "anodynes," "poignancy," in the Fall 2020 issue; "beseeching," "blithe," in the Winter 2021 issue). This use of less common terms indicates that *Lilith*'s readership is at ease with such words.

In short, both editorials deal with COVID-19 as a tragic event that could produce favorable consequences, especially in the second letter. The conclusion of this letter specifically suggests that a greater good could be achieved if the Jewish believers act in a charitable way. Both letters indicate a focus on Jewish culture; their register suggests an expectation of great proficiency of vocabulary from their readers.

"Shopping: A Eulogy"

This article by Sarah Seltzer (Summer 2020, 14-19) reflects on in-store shopping, the effects of COVID-19 on this activity, and the issues that stem from the production of clothing. In between the feature and the opinion piece, "Shopping" relies on personal experiences to develop more global issues around the topic. This structure allows for creating an almost individualized connection with the readers before convincing them of the problematic aspects of capitalism and consumerism. Similarly, the article first centers on Jewish women and girls; it then offers a larger perspective on women and human beings, while acknowledging the issues faced by some minorities. This piece first deals with a narrow theme (shopping in time

of COVID-19 and the experiences of Jewish women); it actually moves away from a focus on the pandemic in order to present a general outlook on consumerism. The tone complements this change of content.

The article first articulates a sense of grief toward in-store shopping: the pandemic has made this activity impossible, and regret is expressed for not being able to see other people in the fitting rooms and create memories around the experience of shopping. The introduction and the conclusion convey this personal feeling in more sensory and less psychological terms, as found in the following quotes: "the touch of fabric, the self-inspection in store mirrors" (16), "the feel of fabric between my hands, the click of hangers as I push them aside" (19). This description of sensations favors engaging with readers by reminding them of perceptions they have experienced too. At the beginning of the article, more crucially, is expressed a sense of grief that is disclosed by diverse terms and expressions. The item is self-described as a "[e]ulogy" (title); this term strongly implies the death of "shopping," and the lexicon starkly relates to death and grief. The verb "[to] mourn" and the adjective "mournful" are used four times, especially in the introduction. Other expressions contribute to this tone: "relic" (15), "the death of retail" (16); some expressions are stronger, for example "'retail apocalypse'" (15); other simply imply a sense of loss, for instance, the very beginning of the text attracts the reader's attention: "[p]icture, if you still can, the packed dressing room of a Loehmann's" (15). This implies that the simple memory of being in a crowded fitting room seems distant, almost unreachable.

However, "it's not all loss and alienation" (16): the article offers to reflect on consumerism and the human costs of producing clothes. In other words, the text's perspective changes from memories and sensations to a more general reflection on the consequences of indulging in fast fashion and consumerism. The following quote, which is repeated at the center of page 17, highlights this shift in view: "[c]an we be appropriately mournful of what we've lost—the touch of fabric, the self-inspection in store mirrors—while looking to a future of consumption that is fairer and more thoughtful than that recent past?" (16). This change of focus allows for a shift from deeply individual traits such as life experiences and perceptions to social and economic concerns that impact everyone, although the item highlights the common experiences of many people in these memories with phrases such as "[t]his scene, once so common" and "for many of us" (15).

This introduces a reflection on many ideologies, such as consumerism and capitalism, and on the systems of oppression that they create. For example, consumerism is described "as a form of cheap therapy" (16), which leads to "inhumane sweatshop conditions" (16).

Capitalism is held responsible for a kind of alienation, a concept explained as follows: "Marxist theory […]—and here I'll be reductive—posits that the further we are swallowed into capitalism's maw, the deeper our alienation: alienation from the products of our own labor, from our fellow workers, and ourselves, our essence" (18). The criticism of capitalism can be found not only in the explanation of its consequences (such as sweatshops and environmental impact), but also in the paradox between the aforementioned alienation from oneself and the others on the one hand, and the deeply personal and social introduction on the other hand. The names of shopping places were characterized first as "bring[ing] up stories for so many: often about mothers and daughters, or grandmothers, or girlfriends" (16). Stores "provided communal spaces where women could be together, learn from each other and participate in an intimate treasure hunt" (15); they are then depicted as "palaces of consumerism" (17), and are held responsible for the alienation of shoppers from themselves and from others. In a sense, the paradox between the feeling of mourning for in-store shopping and the impossibility to accept exploitation is at the center of the piece, again summarized by the question twice asked in the article: "[c]an we be appropriately mournful of what we've lost—the touch of fabric, the self-inspection in store mirrors—while looking to a future of consumption that is fairer and more thoughtful than that recent past?" (16, 17).

Consumerism is related to other systems of oppression, according to Ellen Willis, who is quoted in the article as follows: "[w]hen we create a political alternative to sexism, racism, and capitalism, the consumer problem, if it is a problem, will take care of itself" (17-18). There is a call to (political) action, as well as an acknowledgement of different systems of oppression and how they impact women and society at large. Concerning the term "women," the article primarily focuses on them. As seen with a quote above, shopping is linked to "mothers and daughters, or grandmothers, or girlfriends" (16). The term "woman," whether in the singular or plural form, can be retrieved 21 times in the article; "girls" are mentioned once (17). Women are not only the focus of the article as consumers, but are also described as the primary demographic exploited in order to produce items of clothing. The third part of the article, "Jews Intertwined with Fashion," depicts the oppression of Jewish workers in sweatshops, and then of women being exploited elsewhere. Once again, the view shifts from the particular (the community targeted by the magazine) to the global.

The conclusion mixes the concerns for overconsumption and alienation seen above, and reverses this movement from the global to the individual by answering questions formulated with the pronoun 'we', which seems to include the readers, with a response in 'I':

> [i]n the 'someday' many of us dream about, will we recreate spaces to wander, to touch the garments we're considering? Or will we continue down the road we're on, away from in-person shopping? Will we wear outrageous clothing on the street […] or will homespun become a trend again? I know that I will dearly miss the feel of fabric between my hands, the click of hangers as I push them aside to look for the diamond in the rough. But I don't think I will ever be able to participate in those rituals again without wanting even more of a connection that I once had: not just a connection to the people I'm shopping with and for, but also a connection with and understanding of who made the items I'm touching. (19)

The pronoun 'we' is used throughout the text, and appears to include the readers in order to maintain a sense of engagement with them ("we mourn," 15).

The article explicitly calls out "sexism" (17) and highlights a feminist dimension, more explicitly with the description of historical feminist actions ("the famous Uprising of the 20,000 […] became one of the flash points of Jewish feminism, socialist feminism and labor organizers in general. […] the successful strike changed the garment industry in America," 17). It refers to the working conditions of women in sweatshops as they existed in the 1990s, implicitly offering a parallel with current times and concluding that this feminist protest has not eradicated all systems of oppression ("the people suffering under these conditions were mostly women, sewing monotonously, locked in, discriminated against if they got pregnant, denied bathroom breaks," 17). In short, although this piece recounts the experiences of "Jewish women" as customers and producers of clothes (17), it also takes a step back to reflect on the situation of women in general. The predominance of the Jewish readership can be found in the mention of the "Triangle Shirtwaist" (developed further in the article) and of the "Jewish American princess" (17).[25]

The article shows awareness with regards to other systems of discrimination, such as "race and class status" (18). For all its criticism of online shopping and its regret for the decline of retail shopping, it acknowledges different perspectives on the matter, shaped by other systems of oppression:

> for gender-noncomforming (*sic*) people, for those who were shamed for their size, for disabled folks, many of these shopping rituals I remember fondly carried pain and exclusion. Online boutiques and companies have been popping up to serve niche groups that wouldn't necessarily have found a home in a department store. (19)

In a nutshell, the item provides a focus on Jewish women, but is still mindful of a more global community. The readers are presumably interested in the article because of their inherent characteristics (Jewish women) but also because of their interest (for shopping). Besides, the

[25] About the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire Memorial's website offers a summary of the fire's history and its impact ("Triangle History," https://trianglememorial.org/triangle-history/).
About the "Jewish American princess," Jamie Lauren Keiles describes the expression in *Vox* as an "archetype," an "embodi[ment of] both an attitude and a style of dressing," a "slur," and " a real identity marker."

style indicates a certain readership: the lexicon is literary and formal ("quintessential," 15; "solace," 18; "queasiness," 19; etc.), which could imply a formally-educated readership.

Finally, the sidebar in the yellow frame at the bottom of pages 18 and 19 has not yet been included in this analysis, since it is a separate piece of writing. "Politics Shapes Party Dresses" by Yona Zeldis McDonough (18-19) centers on Christian Dior's rise to fame after the Second World War to draw a parallel between the change of style at the time and what could be expected during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The relationship with gender norms is questioned with quotation marks around the word "feminine" (18); the style appears as literary as it is in "Shopping" ("a wanton squandering," "jettisoning," "triumvirate," 18).

In conclusion, "Shopping" connects with readers by relating shared experiences and sensory perceptions. Its vocabulary centers on grief and death, the recounting of the detrimental impact that is generated by clothing production counter-balances this regret for shopping. It leads to a shift from the personal to the global, with feminist and anti-consumerist ideologies. The targeted readership consists of Jewish women; yet, concerns about exploitation in general are expressed. The form contributes to the effects of the content with changes in tone; the vocabulary is formal and literary, further narrowing the plausible readership.

"Now. Next."

This long section, found in the Summer 2020 issue (32-39), could be considered an article, as all pieces of writing that compose it are united by the common theme of reflections about the pandemic; but as all authors of the piece deal with different experiences that they have had in relation to this theme, it could be viewed as a collection of writings. The section itself is presented as follows: "[a] cross-section of activists and thinkers weigh in on the present and its future—what perils we face, and what we might build from this epidemiological, social and political crisis" (32). The construction of connections with the readers are especially numerous and strong, both in content and form. Indeed, the multitude of experiences encourages the reader's feeling of relatability to one or more pieces of writing. The structure of the section in pieces that include a title and a theme, all independent from one another, allows for a personalized reading of the section, which, as seen in the theoretical part, Charon defines as an essential criterion of the magazine medium. The fact that mostly non-journalists are writing these bits can give the impression that everyone is welcome to collaborate on *Lilith*, not only professionals. This section will analyze each piece of writing to extract a coherent message from them. Each part is introduced by a sub-theme and is signed by a person who is introduced first.

"The Ethos of Rural Life Is Everyone's Ethos Now," by rabbi Rachel Isaacs, is linked to the sub-theme of "self-sufficiency" (33).[26] Isaacs describes the rise in popularity of agricultural practices because of the pandemic; she insists on the Jewish aspect of this self-reliance: "[o]ur brand of Jewish leadership and life is no longer an outlier; it represents a resilient species of Jewish life that is not easily discouraged" (33). The pronoun 'we' used in this piece of writing first concerns the Jewish community, in particular the rabbis, before shifting to a more general focus:

> [y]ou will be visiting us in Maine soon, if not physically, then as observers of, and then participants in, our way of life. Together we will return to a potent awareness of the fragility of our existence, an awareness that would be deeply familiar to many of our ancestors. Our lives will feel dirty, and real, and precious. (33)

In the first sentence, the readers, who are identified as 'you', are detached from a 'we' that could designate Isaacs' congregation. The pronoun 'we' in the second sentence indicates an association of the previous 'we' with the 'you', thanks to the adverb "[t]ogether." The activism lies in a plea for leadership: Isaacs tries to convince the readers to imitate her practices. As seen in the excerpt above, the readers would be "[first] observers of, and then participants in, [the Beth Israel Congregation's] way of life." More than a plea for self-sufficiency then, this bit promotes Isaacs' lifestyle and her congregation.

Concerned with "localization" (33), "Link Food Supplies to Public Health" by Professor Marion Nestle argues that food production relies on unjust social and economic systems, a situation that has been worsened by the pandemic: "low-wage, largely minority and immigrant employees often without sick leave or health care benefits [are] now considered essential and forced to work by government invocation of the Defense Emergency Act" (33). Nestle's bit claims that politics around food supplying are necessary to preserve "public health and environmental protection" (33); activism should support these politics: "what's lacking is political will. How do we get political will? Advocate! Vote! Start now" (34). This piece associates political, social, and economic concerns, and pleads for political activism.

Jillian Steinhauer, an art journalist, discusses "museums" (34) in "I Want Us to View Art Through a New Lens." Her piece denounces "the hypercapitalist, over-professionalized, white supremacist, and ableist system on which the mainstream art world runs" (34). This bit disapproves of the concern for profits, linked to capitalism; it is repeated when Steinhauer advocates for the importance of creativity over money. Steinhauer uses mainly the first-person

[26] Rachel Isaacs is part of the Beth Israel Congregation in Waterville, Maine. This congregation defines itself as follows on its website: "a modern Conservative egalitarian, synagogue where congregants of all genders are active participants in the religious, social, and administrative functions of the synagogue" ("About," *Beth Israel Waterville*).

pronoun 'I'; she adopts the pronoun 'we' only once, in her conclusion by a rhetorical question: "[w]hat better community could we make?" (34). In this excerpt, the term "community" could refer to the art world. In this "community" and in the capitalist system that she denounces, Steinhauer opposes "people" and "profits," "workers" and "donors" (34). However, Steinhauer's part does not gesture toward the reconciliation of the opposites: it pleads for a vision of "people over profits and workers over donors" (34). In other words, this piece is based on an anti-capitalist ideology; it argues for more diversity in the art world, which could become a "community." The scopes are cultural and economic; the writing calls for change, but not for activism.

Yavilah McCoy deals with "racial injustice" in "White Allies Need to Step Up. Now" (34). This piece centers on intersectionality: intersection between racism and sexism ("how commoditized and expendable the bodies of women of color are in a racialized system," 34), between racism and financial insecurity ("how many of my White colleagues and neighbors are still paying the hourly workers, many of whom are people of color, that have regularly taken care of their children, homes and businesses while all are sheltering in place?" 35), and between several systems of oppression ("we are Jews, and we are women and we are also people in gender non-binary Black and Brown bodies who are triply targeted by persistent inequities within our systems that target us daily and threaten our existence," 35).

McCoy's piece discusses many impacts of the pandemic, namely health risks, the impossibility for traditional Jewish burial ceremonies, job losses and risks for health workers, financial struggles, and health risks for the incarcerated population. It addresses police violence toward people of color, and compares it to the pandemic:

> [a]s protests spread across the country, our people are holding the overwhelming disparity and emotional labor of needing to care for and protect our health and bodies from a deadly virus while also needing to protect our health and bodies from policing systems and systemic racism in America that is just as deadly and killing us rapidly. (34)

This comparison helps to raise awareness among "White Allies": by comparing the impact of the pandemic on everyone, including on White people, to the racial injustice faced by people of color, this argument seeks to remind White people that their struggles during the pandemic already existed for people of color before the pandemic hit. This is reinforced by other arguments:

> [m]any have been challenged by having to live in close quarters, for extended periods of time, with parents, children, partners and family while not considering that for many people of color, domestically and globally, sharing living space with parents, grandparents and children has been their only option. (35)

Finally, it should be highlighted that McCoy's part primarily aims at convincing Jewish readers: "[w]e hope that […] the number of partners in Jewish spaces who see our liberation as their liberation and who will work with us to deepen opportunities for wellness and greater equity for all [will increase]" (35). In other words, although the title addresses "White Allies," the piece targets White Jewish people. It calls for change, and maybe even for activism given the title and the political context at the time.

Marion Danis' writing "We're Going to Witness a Surge in the Current Health Inequality" is concerned with the sub-theme "disease" (35). Even though the piece starts on a hopeful note, with parts such as "[b]ut unlike the experience of past plagues, we aren't in the dark" (36), it quickly denounces the inequalities of the American healthcare system. According to Danis, these inequalities result not only from the pandemic, but also from prior policies; health inequality existed before the COVID-19 pandemic (as the words "surge" and "current" denote it). However, the text considers the future problems as an opportunity to call for action:

> [i]t will take remarkable optimism to see much good coming out of this pandemic. But perhaps the consequences will be so dire and the urge to fix the problem will be so great that we will urge or even insist that Congress pass legislation to create guaranteed income and expand health insurance, and demand that the executive branch plan better next time. (36)

As Danis herself admits, this possibility for a change in policies appears (over)optimistic. This piece can be read as a call for activism that relies on economic arguments.

"Abortion for Anyone Who Needs It" by Steph Black covers the sub-theme "access" (36). This article does not particularly place a focus on the Jewish aspect of the topic covered, since Black pleads for a free and easy access to abortion medication for anyone who needs it. The piece argues that information surrounding this topic should be "holistic, demedicalized, and demystified" (36). This 'demedicalization' of abortion is further advocated for later in the piece, when Black declares that the FDA's "refusal to relax medically unnecessary restrictions on the accessibility of these medications is lifethreatening to those who need it" (36). Abortion and the institutionalized discourse around it are presented as non-medical objects. The term "stonewalling" strengthens Black's critical attitude toward the FDA (36); this verb has a connotation of censorship or silencing.[27] The "lifethreatening" attitude adopted by the FDA is literally opposed to the "lifesaving" ability to have an abortion at home (36). Black's

[27] *Cambridge Dictionary (US)*: "to prevent someone from discovering information by not being helpful or by refusing to answer questions."
Lexico (US): "[d]elay or block (a request, process, or person) by refusing to answer questions or by giving evasive replies, especially in politics."
Merriam-Webster: "to be uncooperative, obstructive, or evasive."

piece concludes that "[r]ight now, abortion is essential. In a post-Corona world, it must be freedom" (36).

This text is strongly linked to feminist concerns and activism: access to abortion remains a main feminist topic.[28] Whereas some other pieces focus on issues faced by minorities or by everyone, Black's writing centers on an issue mainly faced by women.[29] Nonetheless, Black mentions "people seeking abortion" (36), in order to extend her argumentation to non-cisgender women; thus, her bit seeks to be inclusive and mindful of non-binary gender identities. The feminist aspect of the text wishes to include everyone in its focus, not exclusively cisgender women. Finally, this piece calls for political changes; the criticism of federal institutions can lead to an implicit plea for activism.

Linked to "spending down" (36), "Global Tzedakah: Save for a Rainy Day? This Is a Downpour" is a piece by Ruth Messinger.[30] The title offers a perspective on an important aspect of this piece: it is completely aimed at members of the Jewish community. Not only does the title refer to "Tzedakah," but it also uses the expression "save for a rainy day," which, as Messinger explains, is a popular expression among the Jewish community.[31] This writing pleads for new actions, opposed to the "misguided priorities" (36) that were part of the pre-pandemic era. With this expression, the text places itself in a position of superiority or authority, by judging that these priorities were wrong, and that it knows which ways of action are the right ones.

The four points defended in this piece are based on patriotic and imperialistic views (the United States would need to remain "a global leader," 36); they include a call for Jewish leadership against "all the systemic inequalities" (36), an argument for financial support from the Jewish community and other religious communities ("an interfaith effort," 37), and a plea for action regarding policy-making, in order to support the points made above. Inequalities (namely, poverty, racism and sexism) are denounced in the fields of healthcare, education, and immigration. The conclusion circles back to the concept of Tzedakah: "[t]he pandemic

[28] See for example the following article: Jones, Sarah. "There's No Such Thing As A Pro-Life Feminist." *Intelligencer (New York Magazine)*. November 30, 2021. https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2021/11/theres-no-such-thing-as-a-pro-life-feminist.html. Accessed March 16, 2022.

[29] The following article offers a nuanced perspective on the description of abortion as either a "people's issue" or a "women's issue," while acknowledging that abortions mainly concern cisgender women: smith, s.e. "Women Are Not the Only Ones Who Get Abortions." *Rewire News Group*, March 1, 2019. https://rewirenewsgroup.com/article/2019/03/01/women-are-not-the-only-ones-who-get-abortions/. Accessed March 16, 2022.

[30] Please note that Messinger's involvement with the Democratic Party is not part of her introduction in *Lilith* ("Messinger, Ruth Wyler," *Encyclopedia.com*).

[31] "Tzedakah" is usually translated as "charity" or "righteousness." It is a key concept in Judaism and a crucial quality expected from Jews according to the Torah ("Tzedakah – Charity in the Jewish Tradition," *BJE.org.au*).

offers us a chance to lead the way in global tzedakah. Let's seize it" (37). However, this concern for others appears interested; for example, the text defends "immigration policies that make it possible for others to make our country stronger" (36). It is difficult to say if the argument considers that all immigration makes the United States stronger, or if only a certain type of immigration should be privileged, so that it benefits the United States. In short, this part aims at Jewish Americans; the plea against inequalities barely brushes the surface of the problems mentioned, contrary to other pieces of writing in this section. The precise targeting of readers allows for a plea for economic and political activism that relies on patriotic and religious arguments.

Michal Raucher's "Dating Apps Aimed at Jews Now Seem Quaint" focuses on the topic of "birthrate" (37). This text deals first with the opposition between the deaths caused by the pandemic to the births wished for by some members of the Jewish community: "[s]ome might say it's fitting to think about 'Jewish continuity' when we are in the midst of a pandemic killing thousands of people every day" (37). Yet, this piece criticizes some criteria put on the Jewish demographics. Raucher questions Jewish identity as an inherent and hereditary quality, in the following quote for instance: "discourse about Jewish demographics includes not just a call for more children but a call for Jewish children, which many institutions insist refers only to those who have been raised by two Jewish parents" (37).

Raucher's part, more crucially for this work that centers on feminism, exposes sexist biases within the Jewish community:

> [W]hen we talk about Jewish continuity in terms of demographics, can we appreciate the fact that women have been expected to absorb all the economic and embodied risk? Despite the communal pressure on women to reproduce, there is no parallel communal support for women's physical or economic security. (37)

In this excerpt, Raucher denounces a paradox between natalist arguments and the lack of support for the "women" bearing the children. It can also be noted that in this piece, pregnancies concern "women," unlike in Black's piece, which involved pregnant "people." The denouncing of a contradiction within the pro-birth discourse allows for a demand "to think about a Jewish future that does not revolve around Jewish women having Jewish babies" (37). The text concludes on a final argument, formulated as a question: "how can we think about reproductive justice instead of just reproducing Jews?" (37). The development from this question allows the writing to circle back to its primary opposition between births and deaths: "larger structural problems like economic inequality, racism, and insufficient medical care […] are resulting in death for so many" (37). This bit focuses on a Jewish readership, but unlike other pieces like Isaacs' or Messinger's, it seeks to criticize certain

outlooks within the Jewish community rather than place the latter in a position of leadership; it does not call for activism, but for change in mentalities.

Elana Rebitzer writes about "cancellation" (37) in "Camp, Even When It's Not Summer." It begins by expressing worry concerning the summer camps' ability to financially survive the pandemic. The rest of the writing appears more hopeful: camps could provide the social interactions lost in the pandemic, making summer camps more attractive; and camps have already adapted, organizing virtual meetings. This piece lays a situation and makes hypotheses from that starting point; it does not offer a plea for an ideology. It could simply be noticed that it focuses on Jewish summer camps ("weekly Shabbat / Havdalah ceremonies," 38).

In "Comedy? You bet," Laura Beatrix Newmark writes about "laughter" (38). It explains how some performances planned before COVID-19 were held virtually, and why comedy matters during the health crisis. This piece, as the previous one, exposes the disadvantages of the pandemic without a call to break the lockdown policies or the health rules. Regarding Newmark's and Rebitzer's texts, it seems difficult to find the "activist" or "thinker" aspect of the section promised in the introduction (32).

Amelia Dornbush discusses "workers" (38) in "Labor Activism Has New Momentum." More precisely, this piece deals with labor unions and pleads for organizing unions. The tone is first pessimistic: "[e]ssential workers are especially at risk" (38), "it seems unlikely that legal avenues will offer much solace now" (38), "unemployment is rising and union members have been hit hard with layoffs" (38). The labor movement is presented as a solution to "build ourselves a new world from the ashes of the old" (38).[32] Indeed, the quote that is repeated on the same page claims that "[t]he labor movement at its core is about democracy and connections among workers" (38). The conclusion contains a quote by Rose Schneiderman, in a plea for "a strong working-class movement" (39). This quote can be considered particularly important for *Lilith*'s regular readers: Rose Schneiderman was not only a labor activist, but also an advocate for women's rights, and helped to rescue Jews around the time of the Second World War.[33] [34] This defense of labor organization relies on a logical structure (offering hope after pessimism) and on a strong authoritative argument given the magazine's readership and

[32] This expression and the theme of revolutionary change can recall "No New Normal" in *Bitch*. A comparison between the magazines will be presented later in this work.

[33] Rose Schneiderman was a labor union activist, and the first woman leader of a national labor union in the United States; she also led many actions in favor of women's rights (Orleck, *JWA.org*).

[34] On *Lilith*'s website, it is possible to find articles in which Rose Schneiderman was mentioned thanks to the search engine ("Rose Schneiderman" on *Lilith.org*, https://lilith.org/?s=%22Rose+Schneiderman%22. Accessed March 22, 2022).

orientation. Indeed, Rose Schneiderman can be viewed as model and embodiment of *Lilith*'s main values (feminism, defense of the Jewish community and culture, and left-leaning positions, as will be explored further). Citing Schneiderman adds value to Dornbush's plea because the readers are probably familiar with her story and the values it conveys.

Yael Schonbrun's "Relative Privilege in a World of Suffering" deals with "parenting" (39). The introduction relates a personal experience:

> [i]n a larger world of suffering over health, economic crisis, and horrifying social injustices, I'm almost embarrassed to admit that pandemic working parenthood has been hard. Like many female co-parents with the more flexible job, I've taken on the bulk of parenting for our three boys. (39)

The two most important themes of this piece can be found in this quote: guilt over the feeling of being overwhelmed by a crisis that has impacted other people harder, and the fact that women hold an unequal part of the parenting charges. This text, however, seeks to show that all feelings of pain are valid, and that ignoring women's unequal part of parenting duty will only cause more gender inequality in the long term. Schonbrun acknowledges her privileges ("enshrined in my privilege of having a job, health, a stable residence, and White skin," 39) while depicting a global picture of domestic exhaustion ("[f]or parents during this time it means the weariness of never having a moment alone, the exhaustion of needing to work late into the night to make up for the day you spent parenting is real," 39). Overall, it is a plea for recognizing a burden, even if it seems unimportant compared to the broader picture they are part of; it calls for personal reflection rather than for action.

Naomi Zeveloff's "A Mirage of Hope for Israelis and Palestinians" covers "elusive peace" (39). This piece is structured in the reverse process of pessimism-optimism most texts that are presented in this work have adopted. Indeed, the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is first presented as being put to the side during the early pandemic. Nonetheless, the piece ends on a more pessimistic note, reflecting a reality that would later be confirmed: the pandemic alone will not solve a decades-long conflict ("the coronavirus turned the world into a small village. But it wasn't enough to keep the village from fraying apart," 39).[35] The Jewish aspect of the piece can be linked to the mention of Israel; however, the writing expresses no support toward this country. It rather yearns for a now non-existent peace, without pleading for activism.

[35] To quote an academic paper on the topic of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the pandemic: "[u]ltimately, conflict-related and political factors were usually more powerful than pandemic-related factors. Although the crisis might have provided an opportunity, the main players did not opt to seize it" (Lehr, 1862).

Generally speaking, the stances and positions of the writings are firm; most pieces imply a call for activism. The economic, political, social, cultural and individual scopes are all covered in the section. Since some texts (like Black's or Dornbush's) criticize the (Republican) government's policies, the overall ideology of the section is rather Democratic or left-leaning; Danis' and Messinger's parts also support this argument. The targeted readership appears clearly focused on Jewish people and Jewish women in particular. Isaacs' and Messinger's texts plead for a leadership of (some parts of) the Jewish community; on the contrary, Raucher's piece argues for a change in mentalities within the community.

Overall, the writings acknowledge the difficulties faced by a variety of people during the pandemic, and rely on personal experiences. For example, McCoy's piece centers on intersectionality and the many different systems of oppression that she faces. The COVID-19 crisis is considered a catastrophe; however, some texts are hopeful for new opportunities in the post-pandemic era. Most bits denounce problems aggravated by the crisis, which need solving so that the post-COVID-19 times can be more favorable; only Zeveloff's piece presents a situation without positive outcome. *Lilith* relies on a multitude of voices in this section, which implies a feeling of relatability for the readers; supported by a feeling of empathy from the readership, the section calls for its readers' involvement in politics and society.

General Textual Analysis

This general textual analysis will examine three articles, namely "Commit to Your Creative Work... Even Now" by Bonnie Friedman (Fall 2020, 12-13), "Parenting During the Pandemic" edited by Sarah Seltzer (Fall 2020, 18-23), and "Is Gen Z Alright?" which is formed by different pieces by various writers (Winter 2020-2021, 18-24). Their analysis will show that they address Jewish women; this assumed readership influences the angle of the items, in the sense that they introduce widely-discussed topics but offer a precise perspective on the said topics. The collaborative aspect of these texts is nonetheless not as focused on inequalities and intersectionality as the disclaimers might make it appear at first reading. The texts call for empathy rather than action; solidarity is held as an important value, but is given no concrete action.

"Commit to Your Creative Work" attempts to persuade the readers to continue writing and creating art in spite of the obstacles of the pandemic, especially for women artists. "Parenting During the Pandemic" is a collection of group emails discussing the difficulties faced by parents during lockdown, mostly on individual and familial levels. Similarly, "Is

Gen Z Alright?" gathers several pieces of writing by young people on the topic of the pandemic.

Every article targets a precise readership, namely Jewish women. As for the Jewish aspect, the items contain references to Jewish culture: "Commit to Your Creative Work" mentions "Kohelet" in a comparison with keeping a cool head (13); in "Parenting During the Pandemic," Chava Shervington uses several expressions of Hebrew or Yiddish origin, such as "Baruch Hashem" (20), "chutzpah" (20) or "shul" (20); other references to Jewish culture in "Is Gen Z Alright?" include "Yom Kippur" and "Im Yirtzah Hashem" (22). It can be assumed that the readership is at ease with these terms.

With the exception of "Is Gen Z Alright?" the articles address women. "Commit to Your Creative Work" aims at women, as the following quote shows:

> it's increasingly difficult for women to get to the desk. Confined to our homes, many of us home-schooling our children and others of us (or the same ones of us) caring for a vulnerable elderly parent while also maintaining our paid employment, we reel from day to day. (12)

This extract associates the "women" of the first sentence to a "we" in the second that seems to include the readers. In "Parenting During the Pandemic," only "mothers" are interviewed (19). It engages with mothers by discussing with them and offering an impression of direct relatability; on the contrary, "Is Gen Z Alright?" examines young adults' views so that their elders can understand the difficulties they face. The following quote shows how it is presumed that the readers are older than the writer: "[m]y freshman year of college probably looks quite different from yours" (18). In short, these articles suppose that their readers consist of Jewish women who are no longer 'young adults'.

The topics dealt with are usually already debated widely in the mainstream media; with the exception of "Commit to Your Creative Work," the other two articles mention the difficulties of lockdown, the struggles of raising one's children at home, job losses, mental health and essential workers. These two pieces present widely-known topics through testimonies and through the perspectives of Jewish women. In this sense, the purpose of these articles consist in offering a more collaborative outlook on the situation, and to shine a particular focus on the impact of the situation on Jewish women.

Indeed, the articles are highly collaborative: "Parenting During the Pandemic" and "Is Gen Z Alright?" are all concerned with discussing with many voices from outside the periodical's editorial staff. These texts each contain a plurality of experiences; they could convey a sense of community related to the topic of the pandemic. The types of items demonstrate a tendency for collaboration with outsiders from *Lilith*'s staff: "Commit to Your

Creative Work" is an opinion piece by a figure of authority (Bonnie Friedman is described as a best-seller author, 13); "Parenting During the Pandemic" is composed of testimonies (one email of presentation, one email of reaction for each participant), which allows *Lilith*'s Sarah Seltzer to engage with non-journalists; "Is Gen Z Alright?" similarly offers outsiders an outlet of expression. This can induce some relatability for the readers, for example with the emails acting as responses to the other women's stories within the group. Since the participants agree with each other, their understanding contributes to a sense of belonging to a group that shares the same perspective. "Is Gen Z Alright?" is a collection of pieces of writing that presents testimonies rather than short opinion pieces. If the writers appear to have a free hand in "Now. Next," in this other collaborative article, the writers describe an aspect of their own experience dealing with the pandemic. In a similar way to "Parenting During the Pandemic," this item aims to create a link of relatability between the writers' pieces (within the magazine) and the readers, who can relate to some feelings or experiences described. If the readers can feel connected to the stories shared in the article, *Lilith* could successfully develop a sense of community.

A general ideology in favor of community confirms this hypothesis, because the content corresponds with the intention of the collaborative form. In "Parenting During the Pandemic," Chava Shervington draws a broader political and social picture from the negative feelings that the mothers who contribute to the article express: "[t]his pandemic has exposed the lack of governmental and societal support for women and children, how structural racism exacerbates that lack of support, and even for those in privileged circumstances demonstrates how necessary a village is" (22). The term "village" could be a metaphor for a sense of community. Katie Colt also yearns for more solidarity: "maybe that's what the future, post-pandemic looks like to me: social contracts of reciprocity" (21); the same way, "Is Gen Z Alright?" contains references to an ideal of community (in the sense of 'people united by a characteristic'). Kira Yates describes feeling closer to other commuters ("[t]he last of us on the train forged a sort of camaraderie—the bond of those who had no other choice," 20) and Ilanna Starr uses the example of performance artists to highlight the importance of teamwork ("[t]his pandemic has amplified for me something I have long known: that my life has been fueled and energized by collaboration," 21). Nonetheless, an interest in systemic discrimination and inequalities only partially accompanies this focus on community and collaborative work.

Many systems of oppression, discriminations and systemic struggles are evoked, but rarely ever developed more. For example, in "Parenting During the Pandemic," the

intersection of sexism with other systems of discrimination is mentioned: "[w]omen, especially women of color, single moms, and working moms, are bearing the brunt of the economic and social fallout: double burdens at home, discrimination at work if work exists, the twin terrors of anti-Black state violence and disease" (19). In "Commit to Your Creative Work," mothers are considered especially vulnerable: "Covid-related job loss has disproportionately affected women, and mothers especially" (12). However, the attention remains on "women":

> [i]n the male life story, obstacles create strength and meaning, and ultimate heroism. Women, however, have been trained to interpret obstacles as evidence one isn't meant to do something: the outer world is saying no and the outer world is wise. Similarly, men historically are admired for having a sense that their projects are important; they are valued for possessing the drive and even obsession necessary to complete their work. Whereas the woman who does not prioritize other people is still seen as not womanly and even inhuman. (12)

This extract shows that the text deals with sexist double standards. "Is Gen Z Alright?" touches on police brutality, racism and queerphobia, but does not elaborate more on the topics, maybe because the focus stays on the topic of COVID-19 and its consequences.

The writers undeniably acknowledge their privileges compared to other people; but these people are, as a consequence, othered. "Parenting During the Pandemic" constantly reminds the readers of the fact that the situations presented in the articles are not the most desperate. Sarah Seltzer announces it clearly: "[h]ere comes the disclaimer (and we all do this) that I am one of the lucky ones, and being with my kids has its blessings, too" (19). In the same way, Arielle Derby discloses her privileges a few times: "I felt grateful to be employed, to have (some) money to throw at our problems" (19), "I know I am lucky" (20), "my skin, my class status, my resources change the level and nature of my affectedness" (21). This acknowledgment of privilege is not accompanied by any call for solidarity. It has been argued in the part concerning the editorials that calls for good deeds and charity were articulated; but no direct solution (the name of a few reliable organizations to donate to, for example) is given to the readers. The readership is made aware of its privilege(s); but the articles do not try to convince it to share its resources. Nevertheless, this recognition of privilege could simply be read as a "disclaimer," as Sarah Seltzer writes (19).

The articles seek to inspire, inform or create empathy, rather than call for action. "Commit to Your Creative Work" wishes to inspire (women) readers to write, and thus to engage in individual action, despite the obstacles. "Parenting During the Pandemic" aims to provoke empathy though a description of the participants' emotions (such as "intense guilt," 19; "a constant succession of Big Feelings, most of them bad," 19; or "feel[ing] like a failure," 20). The readers' empathy is used in this article to promote a vision of community

and to raise awareness on personal struggle; in this sense, it could relate to the notion of pathos as seen for *Bitch*'s articles. "Parenting During the Pandemic" mentions activism, but places it in a distant future because of the pandemic; it is thus reduced to a project. Indeed, Sarah Seltzer concludes on her desire for activism: "I yearn [...] to make marching and organizing a part of my rhythm as I used to do during Occupy Wall Street, during various feminist uprisings, and earlier, during protests of the Bush era" (23). However, this wish seems personal rather than a plea for collective action, given that the entire piece was focused on the mothers' feelings in relation with lockdown. In conclusion, the articles discuss with the readers either by trying to convince them to change something in their lives ("Commit to Your Creative Work"), or by offering relatable and candid testimonies ("Parenting During the Pandemic," "Is Gen Z Alright?").

The reflections that the items aim to incite are mostly personal, since these articles deal with the impact of COVID-19 on the readers' everyday lives. "Commit to Your Creative Work" acknowledges the difficulties faced by women who produce art during times of crisis such as wars or pandemics, for instance in the following quote: "now that we are all at home, the old realities of home predominate" (12). "Parenting During the Pandemic" discusses online classes, working from home, and feeling overwhelmed with the lockdown situation. "Is Gen Z Alright?" is introduced as such: "[p]eer into the Covid-altered existence of 10 writers and artists launching into adulthood as the world falls apart" (18). This collection of writing offers a glance on young adults' lives, and how they were impacted by the pandemic. The idiom "fall[...] apart" conveys a sense of ending opposed to the "launching into adulthood." This combination of opposites introduces a reflection on a sense of loss while branching into something new.

Since calls for action are rather subtle, feminism is rarely ever mentioned as such; paradoxically, the article that presents its writers as "young feminists" mentions gender discrimination the least ("Is Gen Z Alright?" 18). "Commit to Your Creative Work" acknowledges the existence of a sexist system in which women are the primary care-takers, as seen above; yet, no 'feminist' solution is offered, except maybe for trying to face the obstacles. "Parenting During the Pandemic" makes several references to gender inequalities, from the introduction of the article by Sarah Seltzer ("[w]omen [...] are bearing the brunt of the economic and social fallout," 19) to the narration of personal experiences. Katie Colt, Chava Shervington and Autumn Leonard all admit that they bear most of their households' chores.

Nonetheless, the scopes of the items are far from centering exclusively on the individual. The outlooks are varied, and several aspects of a same topic are brought up. "Commit to Your Creative Work" focuses on the cultural and individual impact of the pandemic, more particularly on how the lockdown can affect women writers. Yet, it mentions an economic gap: "[w]omen have lost a decade's worth of financial gains in three months" (12). "Parenting During the Pandemic" deals with the domestic and individual aspect of lockdown, but also mentions political ("[o]ne of the things I struggled with as a new mom in the Trump era is that my body isn't mine to use spontaneously," 23) and social issues related to the topic ("[w]hat are our kids learning about who and what is valued in America?" 21). The testimonies in "Is Gen Z Alright?" frequently report individual, social or economic struggles; one testimony also details its relation to cultural performances ("[i]t is extremely challenging to be an artist right now—but when this is all over my colleagues and I will be there to remind you of live art's value—and how much you missed it," 22). Two quotes in particular, in two different testimonies, cast a particularly critical outlook on politics. Makeda Zabot-Hall sarcastically recounts "the white men who express stronger enthusiasm for limiting reproductive choice then (*sic*) they do about disavowing white supremacy" (18); Kira Yates compares anti-masks protestors to rats ("[t]he scariest headlines, featuring droves of unmasked protesters at conservative political rallies, reminded us of Michael's old landlord: 'Don't mind the boys,'" 21) and expresses anxiety toward that denial of the importance of the pandemic ("[i]t was like watching a house catch fire, only to hear the trapped occupant share how much they loved the smell of barbecue," 21).

As will be elaborated on later in this work, the register in *Lilith*'s articles tends to be formal and literary, which leads to the assumption that the readers have a high level of proficiency in English. With words such as "agog," "solipsistic" ("Commit to Your Creative Work," 12), "empyrean," "tedium," "egregious," "sangfroid," "stultifying" ("Commit to Your Creative Work," 13) or "fraught" ("Parenting During the Pandemic," 20), the style suggests that the readers put up with this register. "Commit to Your Creative Work" even makes reference to the ancient Greek tragedian Aeschylus (13).

In conclusion, this general textual analysis has confirmed a focus on Jewish women. It has shown that pieces in relation to COVID-19 and its effects are highly collaborative, which corresponds to an overall call for solidarity and community. Inequalities and intersectionality are evoked, although disclaimers about privilege often seem performative. Although *Lilith*'s articles occupy the largest part of this corpus, feminism and gender relations are not as present in the articles as could have been expected.

Visual Analysis

The articles do not enclose many visual supports compared to what has been analyzed in other magazines. Collaborative pieces may include small photos of the writers; otherwise, only three items contain illustrations worth mentioning. "Shopping: A Eulogy" introduces, before the text, photographs of clothing shops and women shopping. The collection of photos comprises pictures that seem to date back from a few decades ago. These illustrations contribute to the consideration of shopping as a tradition, an ensemble of memories, and a ritual; as such, it reminds the readers of what is considered 'lost' in the text. Similarly, the two pictures in "Parenting During the Pandemic" complement the message of the textual content. The introduction picture displays the photo of a keyboard surrounded by kid's toys, books and objects, and a bottle of sanitizing spray. It illustrates how health concerns and parenting have taken a toll on parents' work lives during lockdown. The last photograph depicts empty swings in what seems to be a kids' park, again representing a consequence of the pandemic.

In "Is Gen Z Alright?" the last testimony is a two-page comic by Rena Yehuda Newman. The main figure is depicted wearing a kippa, a typical Jewish cap. The color choice is noticeable: decors outside of the drag bar are depicted in shades of blue, which is a cold color; the inside of the drag bar is depicted with warm colors, with orange and red tones. These colors convey the creator's attachment to the bar because of their warmth.

Conclusion

The textual and visual analyses have presented some confirmation and some rejection of the original hypotheses of this work. Concerning gender relations and readership, *Lilith* is indeed quite inclusive, and shows many different perspectives within the Jewish community. However, the focus of the articles is still put on Jewish women, and they are assumed to be the main readership of the magazine. A quote even leads to the supposition that these women would not be young adults anymore. The literary and formal registers of language indicate a formally-educated targeted readership.

Contrary to the parts of this work focusing on *Bitch* and *BUST*, *Lilith*'s analysis has allowed for some exploration of gender relations. The perspectives of various authors have be compared in order to show that while some sought to take into account non-binary people, others relied on the men/women dichotomy. Because of the higher number of articles dealing with the pandemic and its effects in *Lilith*, this analysis was able to comment on gender relations, in a way the analyses of *Bitch* and *BUST* could not. Moreover, some 'feminist' issues such as abortion rights were covered in *Lilith*'s articles.

The topics of the items are already debated in the mainstream media, but *Lilith* provides the perspective of Jewish women on these themes. A variety of scopes are covered (economic, political, social, cultural, individual and familial scopes), which is not surprising, given the number of articles related to the pandemic that were published in the periodical. Intersectionality is a secondary theme in some writing extracts; the texts center not only on the intersection between sexism and anti-Semitism, but also on the mix of other systems of oppression. The reactions to religious traditions are reduced; however, calls for charity use religious values and arguments to convince their (well-off) readers to help those who have less privilege. Sexist perspectives are called out, but calls for concrete reaction rarely accompany the reactions to the status quo. Calls for actions are presented in an article that centered on activism ("Now. Next"), and are not repeated in other articles, which rather plead for empathy. The collaborative nature of the items aims to provoke reflection, and to provide a vision of "community" that the content of the articles complements. The critical outlook on consumerism, capitalism and on the Trump administration indicates a rather left-leaning ideology. Finally, the illustrations do not provide symbols or images of faith. The pictures, whose number and size are reduced, rather confirm the textual meaning of the articles.

Comparison of the Magazines and Conclusion

The theoretical part of this essay has engaged with key concepts in feminist theory (such as intersectionality, gender relations, and postfeminism) and media theory (such as the characteristics of magazines, readership, and reading contract). It aimed to show the purpose of feminist media and periodicals. Given a broader context of gender inequalities in society and the media, feminist perspectives engage with issues that are misrepresented or omitted in mainstream media and in gender-based magazines. The theoretical part discussed how *Bitch*, *BUST* and *Lilith* presented themselves; how their titles could be interpreted; and how research on these magazines defined their readership and their focus. Hypotheses were formulated according to these presentations and the theory described above. Gender relations, readership, intersectionality, ideologies, (feminist) reactions and illustrations composed the main fields of hypotheses.

The analytical part sought to engage mainly in textual analysis, and visual analysis when it was relevant. The corpus was defined, and longer articles were analyzed on their own. Shorter items were used in the general textual analysis of each magazine. Generally speaking, longer pieces, especially features, revealed interesting points that could be found again in the general textual analysis. The visual analyses corroborated the textual analyses, and showed how illustrations complemented the textual content.

Of all three periodicals, *Lilith* engages with the pandemic the most, in a total of six items over three issues. *BUST* follows with five articles over three issues; *Bitch* only provides four pieces in two issues. *Lilith*'s articles in relation to COVID-19 and its consequences are usually longer than the other two magazines'. Moreover, *Lilith*'s issues are only fifty-two pages long, compared to the hundred pages of *BUST*'s issues and the ninety-four to one hundred and two pages of *Bitch*'s issues. *Lilith*'s discussion of the pandemic is thus proportionally higher than other magazines', which allowed for a more complete analysis. As a result, *Bitch* and *BUST*'s analyses may appear unsatisfying. Nevertheless, the latter two magazine's limited engagement with the pandemic is itself a result of their analysis.

All three Spring 2021 issues dedicate no article to the pandemic; although this expression is opposed in *Bitch*, the pandemic has become part of the 'new normal'. Another possibility to explain this absence of article in the last issue would be the emergence of "Covid fatigue," a disgust for a situation that has largely been part of the news since early 2020 ("'COVID fatigue' is hitting hard," *Health.UCDavis.edu*). On the contrary, the peak of engagement with the pandemic is perceived in the Fall 2020 issues of the magazines analyzed; the fact that at this point in time, the pandemic is still 'new' could explain this

interest, since less than a year in this situation has passed. As seen in the theoretical part, the magazines do not depend on the news; since they only launch an issue every three months, they have time to adapt to the context.

COVID-19 is perceived differently in each magazine; all periodicals acknowledge the difficulties caused by the crisis, but still aim to represent it as an 'opportunity'. According to *Bitch*, systems of oppression and discrimination are to blame rather than the pandemic; yet, the health crisis could lead to positive social changes if organization and activism were endorsed. COVID-19 would thus create an opportunity for social, economic and political change. *BUST*'s articles tend to gloss over the negatives of the pandemic in order to focus on 'opportunities' that recall strongly postfeminism. The optimistic tone can be read as a defense mechanism, but could cause more damage than good. Finally, *Lilith* discusses COVID-19 with the help of religious arguments: the pandemic would be an opportunity to help others, if the Jewish teachings about charity are respected. Disclaimers about privileged situations during lockdown are thrown in articles, but they seem performative since they other people who struggle financially from the magazine's readership.

The topics of the items are varied; *Bitch* and *Lilith* focus at first on some well-known aspects of the pandemic with which the readers are familiar, since they are regularly explored in the mainstream media. However, the periodicals differ in their outlook on these themes: *Bitch* use these topics to argue that the problems are perceived as deriving from the pandemic, when they really stem from systemic inequalities; *Lilith*, on the other hand, provides the perspectives of Jewish women on the topics, in highly collaborative articles. *BUST*'s topics are more original and less commonly-explored. The scopes of the pieces are as diverse as the topics. Since *Lilith* provides the most articles related to the pandemic, its array of scopes is the largest. Economic, political, social, cultural, individual and familial subjects all find their way through the magazine's pages. *Bitch*'s articles center mainly on the economic, social and political fields, with shorter pieces related to the cultural and individual aspects of the pandemic. *BUST* treats the pandemic from mostly social and individual perspectives.

To reflect on the pandemic, *Bitch* and *Lilith* rely on different voices within their articles, although they articulate them differently. Indeed, *Bitch* favors interview quotes to represent different perspectives; *Lilith* directly gives Jewish women outside the magazine staff an outlet to express themselves and share their experiences or knowledge. This point is of particular relevance, since it has been shown in the theoretical part that women are under-represented in the media. Since these two magazines plead for a communal vision, the multiplicity of voices

that they allow in their pages justifies itself. On the contrary, *BUST* does not rely on many voices in its articles, aggravating a lack of diversity and inclusivity.

Because *Lilith* presents the most collaborative articles in this corpus, the magazine encourages reflection rather than acts as a form of authority. It seeks to call for empathy in pieces that focus on the personal aspect of the pandemic, for action in the items concerned with activism, and for charity in editorials. In other words, the pleas that *Lilith* offers rely on reflection and are distinct from one another; they adapt to the form and content of the articles. *Bitch* and *BUST*, on the contrary, both present the magazine as a form of authority, although they do so in different ways. Indeed, *Bitch* offers argumentations in order to convince its readers to act a certain way; on the contrary, *BUST* proposes suggestions of actions (such as volunteering or taking care of one's skin) in a non-argumentative way. *BUST* thus appears to possess a form of blind authority over its readers; yet, it mainly informs them rather than calls for action. The opposite way, *Bitch* raises empathy and awareness through reflection and pathos, and calls for action on the basis of this argumentation.

The periodicals' position of authority is conveyed in different ways. *Bitch* calls for action explicitly in its content and through its tone, in a unilateral discussion. *BUST* also privileges a unilateral conversation with its readers, but its pleas for charity or solidarity are rather vague and evolve in such a way that helping others does not appear important for the magazine; it rather shows that its readership does not struggle financially. As seen above, *Lilith*'s pleas are distinct from one another and rely on the collaborative form of its pieces to create a sense of community.

These pleas are strongly linked to the ideologies that the magazines defend; the analytical part of this work tried to identify feminist tendencies within the articles. Apart from *Lilith*'s articles, in which sexism and sexist biases were explicitly exposed, the periodicals do not specifically offer a feminist perspective on the pandemic. *BUST*'s feature centers on women's rights during health crises, but it misrepresents them several times. Furthermore, *BUST*'s othering of people of color and people who do not work from home excludes many women from a possible 'feminist' perspective. *BUST* represents COVID-19 as an opportunity for women, which this analytical part associated with postfeminist characteristics. Feminism and gender inequalities are absent from *Bitch*'s discussion around the pandemic.

However, all three magazines counterbalance the 'male perspective' of the mainstream media; as such, they present a focus on women and women's perspectives during the pandemic. In September 2020, a report by Luba Kassova has shown how the COVID-19 crisis

has aggravated the lack of women's voices in the media in several countries, including the United States. This report highlights the impact of women's absence in the media:

> [a]ctively appreciating the impact of news media frames on policy making is critical for any news provider or movements such as ones advocating for gender equality. Without this awareness, news frames will continue not to provide a platform supportive of gender equality or policies beneficial to women. This exploration has already shown that frames that obscure women's specific concerns dominate the framing landscape. (60)

The articles in this corpus are not all explicitly feminist; yet, providing women's perspectives while they are ignored in the mainstream media could be a feminist act in itself, because it aims to reduce a blatant part of gender inequalities.

Feminism is not the only ideology at play in these magazines; other approaches, for example to social matters, are developed explicitly or implicitly. As seen above, *BUST* privileges a postfeminist outlook on the pandemic. *Bitch* and *Lilith* both criticize capitalism; the analysis argued that *Lilith*'s orientation is rather left-leaning, whereas *Bitch*'s focus on the 'community' supports anarchism. The tones contribute to the defense of these ideologies: both *Bitch*'s and *Lilith*'s tones evolve throughout the article from negative to positive; *Bitch* uses this change in mood to support activism, while *Lilith*'s change indicates that the magazine's 'community' would triumph from the obstacles of the pandemic. On the contrary, *BUST*'s constant optimistic tone denies the consequences of the health crisis.

The assumed readership of each magazine is as much of an important point in the analytical part as the ideologies. In *Bitch*, the mention of intersectional issues, the lack of targeted readership and the absence of gender-related focus point out toward a great concern for inclusivity. Nonetheless, it was argued that the readers are familiar with concepts that *Bitch* does not explain. Hence, *Bitch* does not target readers on the basis of inherent traits or background, but the readers choose the magazine for its political and social orientation. As argued above, *BUST* others people who have financial difficulties during the pandemic, and ignores racism and its intersectionality with sexism. These elements denote a lack of inclusivity; targeted readers of these articles are White, well-off women, who have (had) access to higher education and work from home. Finally, for all its disclaimers on privilege, *Lilith* others people of color and people who face financial problems during the pandemic; at the same time, intersectionality is treated several times in the articles. The periodical's readership consists of Jewish, well-off women, who have graduated from college. When it comes to higher education, it was especially interesting to compare *BUST* and *Lilith*. As seen in the theoretical part, *BUST* prides itself on addressing "educated women"; however, it was argued that *BUST*'s style and lexicon are simple and accessible to everyone. In comparison,

Lilith demands no higher education from its readers in its presentation, but the articles are full of literary and formal terms. In other words, *Lilith*'s texts expect a higher level of proficiency in English vocabulary than a magazine that requires its reader to be "educated." Since higher education is less accessible to people of color and people from a financially unstable background, and because these two categories have been shown to be othered and neglected in *BUST*'s items, the magazine's request for an "educated" readership could be a way to discriminate potential readers in order to keep a White, well-off readership.

Finally, illustrations were shown to generally confirm the textual meaning of the articles. Pictures are not necessary to the understanding of the articles, but they announce the angles to come in the texts. *BUST*'s illustrations also add diversity in short articles while the texts are lacking it; in the feature, however, the visual content confirms a glaring omission of awareness and sensitivity to racism.

While this work was being completed, *Bitch Media* announced its closedown. More than twenty-five years after its launching, the magazine shut down because it was "unable to sustainably continue creating the quality content that [its] readers and supporters expect" ("Bitch Comes to a Close," *BitchMedia.org*). *Bitch* will officially terminate its operations in June 2022, and with its closure, the media world will lose a feminist perspective. This work started with a quote on the influence of media in society, and has insisted on the relevance of feminist points of view in order to challenge the mainstream media, often complicit of the status quo's failures regarding women. These perspectives will become even more necessary with the end of the pandemic. Indeed, Kassova's report stresses the egregious lack of women's perspectives in this pandemic:

> Every individual woman's voice in the news on COVID-19 is drowned out by the voices of at least three, four, or five men. The women who are given a platform in the COVID-19/coronavirus story are rarely portrayed as authoritative experts or as empowered individuals but more frequently as sources of personal opinion or as victims/people affected by the disease. (10)

Kassova's report also explains how the suppression of women's voices could cause horrendous effects in the years to come:

> Given the deeply political nature of the COVID-19 crisis, women's structural marginalization in the political leadership roles established in response to the crisis locks in the suppression of women's voices in the story. This in turn is reflected in a smaller news share for women, which may be exacerbated by journalists' tendency in a time of crisis to revert back to 'established sources' who are significantly more likely to be men.
> The absence of women's perspectives in COVID-19-related news coverage means that women have limited influence over the framing of the crisis in the news and consequently, limited influence over policymaking directions. As a result, women are at ever-greater risk of being further marginalized within different societies amid the most significant global health crisis of our lifetimes. (10)

While issues that are typically regarded as relating to 'feminism', such as abortion rights or reproductive rights, are often questioned, attacked, and criticized, the further decrease of women's perspectives in the media might mean that these issues could no longer even be discussed by women in the media. In other words, issues affecting women and non-binary people could become an exclusively male matter of discussion. Feminist magazines have been considered essential because they gave feminists a freer outlet of discussion; they may now become indispensable to defend women and non-binary people's right of expression.

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