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### I'm a Barbie Girl, Living in a Man's World

What is the role of a woman in a “post-gender discriminatory” society? How should women view empowerment when its definition shifts with each wave of feminism? Saturday Night Live’s satirical skit, “President Barbie” provides insight into the intergenerational disconnect between second-wave and third-wave feminism throughout the 2016 presidential elections by introducing to viewers a faux-advertisement for a Mattel “President Barbie” doll. The satire establishes two opposing parties –the young girls offered the doll, and the older voiceover advertising its promotion– representing divergent feminist ideologies. The utilization of specific phraseology characteristic to distinct feminist ideologies constructs these characters as archetypes of second and third-wave feminists respectively, thereby exposing the intergeneration divide. “President Barbie” effectively exposes the generational divide between old and new wave feminists through the distinct characterizations of their varying ideologies. The skit projects these contrasting depictions onto opposing commentaries widespread during the 2016 Presidential campaign, thereby enabling the unsolicited critiques against presidential candidate Clinton to emerge as a secondary satirical target highlighted throughout the video.

By establishing an incongruity between the feminist philosophies within the context of a doll advertisement, “President Barbie” effectively accentuates the rigidity imbued within old-wave feminist viewpoints and their role in maintaining the constraints placed on women’s role in society. The video first highlights this disparity when presenting both characters’ initial

sentiments towards the President Barbie doll; the voiceover, as the primary advertiser, ardently pushes the doll towards the girls, stating they should “play with her,” because “she’s a girl, just like you” (“President Barbie”). The voiceover also paints President Barbie as a symbol of female empowerment by highlighting her position as the “first Barbie commander-in-chief,” in order to “show how far [Mattel] has come” (“President Barbie”). This perspective remains analogous to ideologies of second-wave feminism, especially since it originated within an era contending the singular role of women in society as a homemaker. Therefore, placing any woman in power and viewing that as substantial progress would align with the objectives of second-wave feminism, showcasing the perceptible association between the voiceover and older feminists (Grady). At one point in the advert, the narrator even reminisces about a “time when President Barbie couldn’t even be president,” with the little girls foreseeably countering that they “weren’t alive then” (“President Barbie”). This response foregrounds the generational rift between the two personas.

In contrast to the highly empowering view of Barbie the narrator possesses, the girls remain relatively indifferent towards the doll, electing to play with “Legos” because they “can play with whatever they want” (“President Barbie”). Accordingly, this mindset accurately reflects the ideas related by younger feminists, since a majority of them may not have yet experienced the same level of gender discrimination in their communities as a result of the broadening role of women in society. Instead of regarding any woman in power as progress towards gender equity, newer feminists often recognize the individualism in feminism and define empowerment as exercising their ability to make their own choices (Grady). By representing variants of feminisms through multiple characters and highlighting their unique cultural positioning, “President Barbie” effectively presents a nuanced characterization of older and

newer wave feminism. Further, the advertisement also depicts explicit antagonism between the voiceover and the girls concerning the appeal of President Barbie as a toy. This dissent symbolizes the second-wave versus third-wave disagreements regarding female empowerment and progress. By accentuating the voiceover's derogatory and desperate tone, especially when convincing the girls to play with Barbie after adding accessories like "sunglasses" and a "phone with SnapChat," the skit illustrates the voiceover as a figure actively limiting the choice of the little girls to explore different fields and play with different toys other than dolls ("President Barbie"). This characterization serves as a direct representation of the obduracy and relentlessness in second-wave feminism, which often paradoxically limits the ability of women to choose their individual paths.

Moreover, through deliberate allusions and distinct caricatures of prominent presidential candidates, "President Barbie" contextualizes the discord between old-wave and new-wave ideologies during the 2016 presidential elections, thereby providing a commentary on the unsolicited critiques directed at Hillary Clinton during her campaign. From Barbie's initial introduction to viewers, it immediately becomes evident that SNL constructed "President Barbie" as a direct caricature of Hillary Clinton, a leading candidate in the 2016 presidential elections. The doll's bright blue pantsuit mirrors the characteristic style that Clinton developed throughout her political career in order to "fit in" with the majority of male politicians (Mejia). Even the distinctive cropped blonde haircut is reminiscent of Clinton's familiar look; the shot of the little girls brushing and styling Barbie's hair emerges as an explicit allusion to the outrage from conservative outlets in 2016 in response to Clinton's \$600 Serge Normant haircut or the multitude of other hair-related controversies throughout Clinton's political career (including the infamous Time article "When will Hillary Rodham Clinton settle on a hairstyle?")

(Schulte-Hillen). Consequentially, the voiceover advertising a President Barbie doll to little girls emerges as an apparent substitute for second-wave feminists convincing younger female millennials to vote Clinton over Bernie Sanders in the 2016 Democratic primaries.

In this sense, the little girls' comments on the doll's "stiff[ness]" and "try-hard" appearance serve as a parody of the common remarks made by conservatives during Clinton's campaigns concerning her disposition and tone. Further, the younger girls' indifference towards the doll mirrors the hesitancy of younger female citizens to vote for Clinton in the primaries, which aligns with the third-wave view of separating female empowerment and equality from solely placing any woman in power simply because she is a woman. Many younger feminists even believe that voting for Clinton merely because of her identity as a woman is counterintuitive to achieving true gender equality, which deviates from the older-wave perspective who regard any woman in power, regardless of their beliefs or views on issues, as empowerment for women as a collective (Grady). This disconnect depicted throughout the video exemplifies the divergence of different feminist ideologies and showcases the multifaceted decision that many younger female voters faced during the 2016 presidential elections. In the end, the little girls never outrightly disrespect or denounce President Barbie; they merely showcase their disinterest towards her through their preference for Legos or the old broom, which highlights the significance of the freedom to choose and to make individual decisions in achieving true female empowerment in the 21st century.

By using these characters to differentiate between irreconcilable feminist ideologies, "President Barbie" expertly exposes the pitfalls behind second-wave feminism and its exceedingly generalized portrayal of issues affecting women in society. The skit highlights the ensuing limitations placed on the ability of women to self-determine through contextualization

during the 2016 Presidential elections, a period marked by an abundance of scrutiny towards Hillary Clinton during her time in the limelight as a leading candidate. “President Barbie” provides viewers a comical take on the ever-present intergenerational divide as a result of contradicting interpretations of empowerment and feminism. The history of feminism, however convoluted and complex, provided the basis for many contemporary movements and freedoms enjoyed by many women around the world today. Despite this, the dynamic relationship between society and the role of women transforms and broadens how women approach their societal choices and interpret their individual empowerment. Accordingly, feminism remains an intellectual tradition and social movement constantly evolving as new generations of women endeavor to combat gender inequality in the political, economic, and personal spheres of society. By providing to audiences a funny sketch mocking popular toy company advertisements, SNL helps expose viewers to the nuances in current political events through a format accessible and digestible to all. This ability to resonate with a wide audience became especially important during the Presidential elections, a time when media fatigue plagued Americans tuning in to the relentless flow of unforgiving news and debates. The simple, yet effective sketches aired on SNL have aided in delineating the subtle complexities of real world disputes and controversies.

## Works Cited

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