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‘Welcome to your ABC Starter Kit’: Examining Entryway Paratexts in *Grey’s Anatomy* and *Private Practice*

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Abstract: In the DVD distribution of both *Grey’s Anatomy* and *Private Practice*, Buena Vista Home Entertainment have included what is called an ‘ABC Starter Kit’. These kits, designed and produced by the (North) American Broadcasting Company (ABC), refresh the audience on characters, key plots, and themes. The Starter Kit plays automatically before the first episode of the season, making it what Gray would call an ‘entryway paratext’ (2010, p. 23). Entryway paratexts attempt to control the audience’s entry into the text according to the desired meanings of the producers. These Starter Kits are presented as part of the creative content of the texts through their presentation as entryway paratexts. However, because they are promotional content created by ABC, these paratexts provide a different representation of the show’s characters to that actually contained within the writing of the series. Within the Starter Kits, characters are often simplified such that the challenges to stereotypical representations of women in popular culture offered by the main texts are often nullified in the paratexts. A comparative analysis of the representations of the characters within the ABC Starter Kits and those within the series *Grey’s Anatomy* and *Private Practice* reveal the direct tensions between promotional and creative content that can occur through the release of DVDs with special features.

Introduction

Both *Grey's Anatomy* (2005-ongoing) and its spin off series *Private Practice* (2007-2013) are well known medical dramas created by Shonda Rhimes and produced by the American Broadcasting Company (ABC). Both of these series, though particularly *Grey's Anatomy*, would be classified as popular culture aimed at women. They both draw a high number of viewers and are distributed on an accessible broadcast television channel. For the purposes of this paper, popular culture is content in the media that is easily accessible and recognisable by large audiences. In the case of popular culture aimed at women, this "easily accessible" content is generally concerned with female experiences told from female perspectives. A very common example of popular culture aimed at women is the genre of chick lit or its visual counterpart, "chick flicks". Cabot states that this genre generally features single women 'navigating their generation's challenges of balancing demanding careers with personal relationships' (in Ferriss & Young 2006, p. 3). This summary of the genre characterises both *Grey's Anatomy* and *Private Practice* loosely, in that both series focus on the lives and work of female characters – though these female characters often challenge stereotypical representations of women that are commonly seen in chick flicks and chick lit.

As chick flicks are representations of women, generally written by women, with the intention of reaching a female audience, they often present themselves as having some kind of "feminist" element. However, this feminist element is often removed from any desire for political change or contestation of the status quo. Rabinovitz argues that 'television allows for the expression of a feminist critique but represses feminism's potential for radical social change' (in Lotz 2001, p. 110). Dow suggests that liberal feminism is the preferred feminism represented on television (in Lotz 2011, p. 110). However, Lotz argues that there are some postfeminist perspectives emerging in United States popular culture (p. 113). Lotz uses Brooks' definition of postfeminism as focusing on debates about difference rather than equality. As a result, this type of feminism is 'capable of giving voice to local, indigenous and post-colonial feminisms' (p. 113). Often postfeminist narratives explore the 'diverse power relations women inhabit', the variety of feminist solutions to issues of inequality, and the

deconstruction of a gender binary (pp. 115-116). More commonly expected in chick flicks (or other popular culture aimed at women), however, is neoliberal feminism. According to Rottenberg, the subject of this type of feminism is aware of the inequalities between men and women, but takes full responsibility 'for her own well-being and self-care, which is increasingly predicated on crafting a felicitous work-family balance' (2014, p. 420). This definition of neoliberal feminism is extremely similar to Cabot's definition of chick lit. According to Rottenberg, by placing the responsibility on the individual subject, neoliberal feminism purges itself of 'all the elements that would orient it outwards towards the public good' (p. 431). In the case of the series *Grey's Anatomy* and *Private Practice*, the Starter Kits suggest that the shows contain characters who are struggling with this work-life balance. The creative content of these shows, however, deals with work-life balance in ways that challenge stereotypical representations of working women in popular culture.

In terms of explicating the author of this challenge, the DVD consumption of these texts and their content becomes complex as multiple authors of a text are revealed through DVD extras. The "authors" to be discussed in this paper include the creative author Shonda Rhimes, the showrunner of both programs, and the commercial author, the ABC network which is responsible for promotional material. This is not to say that there are not other groups or individuals who assist in the creation of these series, but rather that these two particular authors and the tensions between their representations of the characters of *Grey's Anatomy* and *Private Practice* are the focus of this paper.

In the DVD distribution of both of these series an 'ABC Starter Kit' is included. The ABC Starter Kit claims to be responsible for providing the audience with 'everything they need to know' about the series they are about to watch (Serien-Network's Youtube 2010; Steve 2013). Dawson explores the history of promotional shorts such as the Starter Kits. Shorts were initially developed as a cost effective method for television networks to establish an online web presence while avoiding risks of piracy (2011, p. 209). While the length of these shorts were initially a product of the restrictions of technology, their brevity has since been 'transformed into an aesthetic signature' (p. 210). Digital shorts are identified by Dawson as 'branded entertainment ... in that they function as advertisements for the brands of the television series on which they are based' (p. 222). Digital shorts such as the Starter Kits can therefore be thought of as a promotional paratext.

Specifically, the Starter Kit is what Gray would refer to as an entryway paratext (2010, p. 23). While the term “paratext” refers to all instances of information surrounding and informing a text, depending on their placement, these paratexts can serve different functions. The Starter Kit self-identifies as an entryway paratext by claiming that it prepares the audience for the series they are about to watch. The ABC Starter Kit is four to five minutes in length and in both series opens with the line: ‘This is your ABC Starter Kit, everything you need to know about [title of series]’ (Serien-Network’s Youtube 2010; Steve 2013). The introduction of the Starter Kit already signals a departure from the creative author in that Rhimes is not mentioned, only ABC. While Rhimes is responsible for the creation and script writing of *Grey’s Anatomy* and *Private Practice*, it is the commercial author ABC who is providing the audience with ‘everything you need to know’.

The placement of these Starter Kits is what enforces both their claim to have ‘everything you need to know’ and my categorisation of them as an entryway paratext. The Starter Kits play automatically when the viewer hits ‘play all’ on the first disc of the series. The Starter Kits differ from other DVD special features in that they are not able to be located in the DVD extras and will only play as a prelude to the first episode of the season. Egan and Barker have conducted research on how audiences use DVD extras. In their chapter studying reading practices of *The Lord of the Rings* cinema franchise, Egan and Barker undertook an ethnographic study of fans of the movies (2008). Findings from these interviews indicated that many participants of this study did not feel they had all the information they required to fully appreciate the movies until they had come out on DVD and they had a chance to access the extended edition (p. 99). However, unlike the DVD extras studied by Egan and Barker, the audience is not guided to watch the Starter Kits after viewing the series. This would indicate that unlike other DVD extras, the Starter Kits are intended to inform the initial viewing of a series rather than provide an enhanced understanding of the text after it has been watched. Because of its placement, the Starter Kit tends to directly juxtapose the work of the commercial author with the work of the creative author.

Creative and Commercial Authors of DVD Content

There are two authors under discussion in this paper, what I have termed the creative and the commercial author respectively. These two categories of author obviously do not cover

all the people responsible for the creation of the shows *Grey's Anatomy* and *Private Practice*. In an interview with *Entertainment Weekly*, Rhimes herself attributes the creation of one of her characters in a later show (*Scandal*) to the way the actor played her (Maerz 2015, p. 27). However, as this paper is specifically addressing the tension between the content of the Starter Kit produced by the ABC network and the creative content of the show (more precisely, the way that the characters have been written), only the commercial author and the creative author will be considered.

Calcagno argues that the 'multiplicities of interpretations bespeak the impossibility of identifying and pointing to a specific author or singular meaning of a text' (2008, p. 37). This argument reiterates the post-structuralist claim that there is no singular author for a text in contradistinction to older, formalist analyses of texts. Such arguments are made in part due to the changing discourse surrounding the production of texts and their dissemination. Calcagno goes on to suggest that just because it is impossible to identify a single author of a text, this does not mean the author is "dead" or has "disappeared" (p. 38). Rather, as Moulaison, Dykas and Budd suggest, 'the author is transformed into the "author" or, more appropriately, the site of the author-function. The author-function does not signal ... the disappearance of the author' (2014, p. 32). The author-function exists on a "site" signaling the existence of multiple individuals or groups performing as authors for a single text. The site of the author-function is a useful way of thinking about the space of the perceived "author" of a text and its relationship to a text. For the purposes of this paper, I relate the author-function to the role of creating content (paratextual or otherwise) for a text and suggest that there can be multiple individuals' or groups performing this function for a single text, as is the case in *Grey's Anatomy* and *Private Practice*. However, this multiplicity can create inter-textual tension between promotional and their corresponding texts, as I will discuss later.

Despite scholarly arguments that we cannot identify a single author (Calcagno 2008, p. 37), culturally the perception of the author as a single individual persists. Brookey and Westerfelhaus identify that a single "author" can be created through marketing and then used as a promotional tool (2005, p. 112). They give the example of the Walt Disney Company in which Disney himself became the auteur and face of Disney, despite the multiple bodies that made their media possible. In the same way, many people are

responsible for the creation of the series that Rhimes has penned, though she has been named as creator and (other than actors) is often the only name connected to her shows. Similarly, there are many contributors to the commercial, promotional, and marketing material of the shows *Grey's Anatomy* and *Private Practice*, but through the Starter Kit the company ABC identifies themselves as a single body responsible for the release of such material.

Calcagno again makes clear that the author-function is largely created through discourses surrounding the author noting, 'the "author function" is not a universal or constant in all discourse' (2008, p. 40). In line with a discursive requirement for authorship, Brookey and Westerfelhaus suggest that the format and expectations surrounding DVDs and their release are a particular case where the author-function is enacted differently to other texts. Quoting their earlier work 'Hiding Homoeroticism in Plain View' from 2002, Brookey and Westerfelhaus argue:

Primary and secondary texts are usually physically distinct from one another and are often read at different times, creating an intertextual relationship that is marked by both temporal and physical distance. However, by including such distinct but interrelated texts in a self-contained package, the DVD turns this intertextual relationship into an intratextual relationship ... in which the promotion of a media product is collapsed into the product itself. (in 2005, pp. 111-112)

This collapse is likely to highlight tension in the representation of the content of the text in question because the work of multiple authors for the same text now exist in the same place – the DVD – and are no longer separated by temporal or physical boundaries. In the texts examined in this paper, character complexity has been condensed within the ABC Starter Kits, essentially undoing much of the creative work that Rhimes has performed in her script writing. The Starter Kits may necessarily be condensed due to the limitations of time and their role as an early initiation to the show. However there are several signs that dispute these economic exigencies. Firstly, while the Starter Kit appears on the DVDs of multiple seasons of each series, it does not develop alongside the story. Secondly, in multiple interviews, Rhimes suggests a tension between the content of her writing and the "barriers" put in place by networks. In an interview heard on *Fresh Air*, Rhimes indicates that she has had to 'fight' for her creative vision. She claims this has required her to be 'incredibly

creative within our fences' (Fresh Air 2015). This statement is made specifically in relation to the coining of the word 'vajayjay' in the series *Grey's Anatomy*, because while there was no limit to the number of times the script could say penis, there was studio pushback about the word vagina being said too many times in an episode. This statement suggests that the fences Rhimes references are those put in place by the networks associated with her shows, such as the ABC. The Starter Kits are promotional paratexts created by the commercial authors, and my examination shows how they blunt the creative complexity of characters and often undermine challenges made in the shows to stereotypical representations of women in popular culture.

Welcome to your ABC Starter Kit

As a paratext designed by the ABC network for viewing on DVD, the Starter Kit of both *Grey's Anatomy* and *Private Practice* are structured in the same manner. It is important to note also that the Starter Kit changes very little from season to season for each series. In both cases the Starter Kit is responsible for introducing the primary characters, narrative arcs and "lingo" of the series in question. These introductions are integrated with short clips from the series, often taken out of context to support what is being said by the voice over. For example, in the *Grey's Anatomy* Starter Kit, the opening statement, 'everything you need to know about *Grey's Anatomy*' is immediately followed with a clip of the character Izzy Stevens saying to a patient 'you are in excellent hands' (Steve 2013). However, these Starter Kits contain content that simplifies the creative vision of Rhimes evident in the shows. As explained above, this simplification is not explainable as the result of the economy of time the Kits are structured by (since different content with the same time-length could have been chosen). Through the content selection and voice over, the Kits mispresent characters and narrative arcs to the detriment of the show's exploration of women within the workforce that mediates the series as popular and accessible in the first place. This can particularly be seen in the comparison between the character introductions in the Starter Kits and their actual characterisation in the shows. To illustrate this, I will examine the comparison between the character descriptions in the Starter Kits and the program's characterisations of Christina Yang from *Grey's Anatomy* and Addison Montgomery from *Private Practice*. Doing so will reveal how the Starter Kits consistently present the audience with highly condensed character summaries of Rhimes' incredibly complex characters.

The reason for choosing these two particular characters is relatively simple. In an interview with *Entertainment Weekly*, Rhimes indicated that in the *Grey's Anatomy* series she felt that she most identified with the character Christina Yang (Maerz 2015). Rhimes even goes so far as to say that Christina was her 'best friend' (p. 27). Given the focus of this paper on the tension between the creative author and the commercial author, it then seems fitting to analyse the character that the creative author felt most closely represented her "vision" for the show. Addison Montgomery is under study here as she is the primary character of the series *Private Practice* and there were no obvious parallels to Christina's position in *Grey's Anatomy*. Importantly for my analysis, Rhimes has indicated in interviews that she is passionate about creating and developing complex female leading characters. Again in her interview in *Entertainment Weekly*, Rhimes reiterated in relation to the death of the primary character Meredith Grey's husband (from *Grey's Anatomy*) that he is not a major part of the series and that the women and the friendships they make are (p. 28).

The season 5 Starter Kit of *Grey's Anatomy* summarises Christina Yang in a single sentence, with the voiceover stating that '[Meredith's] BFF [acronym for Best Friend Forever] is Christina Yang who could use some work on her bedside manner' (Steve 2013). A supporting clip from an earlier season in which Christina is shown telling an unidentified character to 'shut up' immediately follows this character summary. Avid fans of the show will be aware that Christina is not telling a patient to whom she is a stranger to shut up, but someone that she actually knows – it's not rudeness but friendly banter. Because of this prior knowledge fans will understand that 'bedside manner' is a euphemism for Christina's overall personality. Those without prior knowledge of the show who do not recognise this clip, however, will be led to assume that she is talking to a patient since she is wearing her scrubs when the line is uttered. Thus by taking a clip out of context to summarise Christina's personality, new audiences are led to believe that Christina is an uncaring and rude person in both her personal and professional life. The intra-textual problem with this description is that it portrays the character as exceptionally one-dimensional. Further, this representation of Christina conforms with common representations that driven women do not possess the skills to sustain friendships or romantic relationships (a well-known example of this being Miranda Priestly of *The Devil Wears Prada* [2006]). The content of the show and the character as conceived by Rhimes would contest this. Specifically, Christina's apparent

terseness is used as a prompt to explore the gendered and sexualised constraints placed on working women throughout her appearance in the series.

For instance, Christina's relationship with Preston Burke in the show exemplifies the way that the narrative arc of her character exists in an intra-textual tension with the simplified portrayal in the Starter Kit. The development of this relationship establishes that Christina is neither uncaring in her private life or in her approach to her career, despite how she might present herself and be received by others at times. Preston Burke is a cardiothoracic surgeon and is professionally superior to Christina Yang who is an intern. During their relationship, Preston is shot in the shoulder affecting the nerve endings in his hand (*Grey's Anatomy Season 2* 2006). The result of this injury is that he has tremors in his hand that impair his ability to perform surgery. In season 3, Christina, as his romantic partner, takes on the responsibility of disguising his impairment by completing many of his surgeries and pushing the limits of her surgical capabilities (*Grey's Anatomy Season 3* 2007). When this arrangement faces exposure, Christina reports her boyfriend to the Chief of Surgery in order to protect her career. This narrative arc shows that Christina has a far more complex relationship with her career than the Starter Kit would suggest. Again here it is important to realise that while the Starter Kits are to a point necessarily condensed, they seem to oversimplify the characters in relation to their actual complexity. Indeed the brevity of the Kits could be used to highlight the many facets of a character or upend initial expectations by revealing complexity and different character perceptions of events to better tease and reflect the themes and narrative flavour of the show.

Despite choosing her career over her boyfriend in this instance, Christina also displays her willingness to make sacrifices for those she loves, challenging the notion of the Starter Kit that she is characteristically unfeeling. In season 3, after reporting Burke to the Chief of Surgery, Preston proposes to Christina and she accepts (*Grey's Anatomy Season 3* 2007). This proposal also challenges stereotypical representations of working women in popular culture. Christina's desire to have a successful career does not actually damage her relationship, but solidifies it. In this way, while she has a work-life balance crisis for an episode, she does not actually struggle with this balance and the proposal seems to suggest that women can in fact "have it all". Christina's wedding also challenges commonly held beliefs that women who are highly career driven are selfish or incapable of sustaining a

romantic relationship. During the process of planning the wedding she slowly gives up things that are important to her and definitive of her personality in order to please Preston. She gives up her beliefs opposing marriage, gives in to his desire for a large wedding and allows his mother to plan the wedding to make him happy. However, this culminates with Christina's hesitation to walk down the aisle, spurring Preston to leave her at the altar. When she returns to the apartment to find his things gone and, while being cut out of her wedding dress, she cries 'I'm free' (*Grey's Anatomy Season 3* 2007). Ironically, Christina's relationship with Preston was not actually ruined because of her passion for her career, but because of the traditional expectations of femininity that he placed on her and the sacrifices she had to make in order to conform to these expectations. Christina's unsuccessful wedding also differentiates this series from others by eschewing the 'anxious glorification of marriage' (Tasker & Negra 2006, p. 174). The Starter Kit seems to suggest that audiences of *Grey's Anatomy* will be viewing stereotypical representations of women. In the show however, these stereotypes are challenged, particularly in the representation of women within the workforce.

The simplification of Christina's character in the Starter Kit is not an isolated instance of the promotional paratexts creating intra-textual tension with the key themes of Rhimes' shows. Another character, from a completely separate series with the same creative author reveals similar promotional strategies. *Private Practice* is a spin off series from *Grey's Anatomy*, also created by Rhimes and produced by the ABC network. In the Starter Kit for season 4 of this series, the main character Addison Montgomery is simply described in relation to her career: 'Addison Montgomery's neo-natal expertise has made Oceanside wellness a first rate practice' (Serien-Network's Youtube 2010). As with the description of Christina, this is not untrue. While Addison is a neo-natal surgeon, this description once again reduces the character to a one-dimensional creation rather than the complex figure portrayed in the series. Further, Addison is reduced to solely her career. By doing so, the Starter Kit appears to set the scene for narrative arc involving a woman "struggling" with work-life balance, though this isn't necessarily reflective of the series' core concerns. With both *Grey's Anatomy* and *Private Practice* there is a conflict in the promotional and creative representation of characters.

Addison first appeared in *Grey's Anatomy* in the final episode of season one (*Grey's Anatomy Season 1* 2005). She is introduced as the heretofore unknown wife of the primary character, Meredith Grey's, boyfriend. However, before leaving *Grey's Anatomy* in season 4, her development is such that she has a large enough fan base for the spin off series *Private Practice* to be bought into existence. In her three seasons of *Grey's Anatomy* and *Private Practice*, Addison is portrayed as an exceptionally qualified and talented surgeon who is also capable of forming romantic and platonic bonds with others. Addison is an interesting character for analysis in that she struggles with social pressures while also challenging them. Towards the end of season 3 of *Grey's Anatomy* (*Grey's Anatomy Season 3* 2007), Addison attempts to undergo in vitro fertilisation (IVF) only to find out that she only has 2 eggs left. This complication means that much of Addison's narrative throughout *Private Practice* focuses on the priority she has given to her career in the past. However, despite this focus, Addison does not suddenly prioritise a search for love, and in fact often makes decisions that delay the possibility of her finding a romantic relationship. For example, in season 3 of *Private Practice* (2010), she falls in love with her best friend, Naomi's, ex-husband, Sam but she refuses to date him for the sake of her friendship with Naomi. Addison's narrative also challenges traditional representations of how families are established and notions of how establishing a family works (or doesn't) with women's careers. In season 5 of *Private Practice* (2012) Addison decides to adopt a baby, despite not being married or even in a stable relationship. While this is a luxury afforded to her because of her status as an affluent woman, it is important to note that this choice is enabled in part because of her career. Furthermore, her career also aids in her journey to find a child to adopt. After multiple disappointments, Addison is offered the opportunity to adopt Henry because his biological mother had been a former patient of Addison's. Addison's narrative arc does not follow the typical work-life balance that a viewer would expect from the Starter Kit. Addison's characterisation challenges popular stereotypes of working women in that she is not made irrational by her fear of never having a child, and that her ability to have a child is attributable to her successful career.

What becomes obvious through comparing the Starter Kit summaries of both of these characters to their program characterisation, is that the Starter Kit simplifies these characters into one-dimensional caricatures in order to render them palatable for new

audiences. This analysis reveals that there is a tension between the content created by the commercial author and the creative author, particularly in relation to representations of characters given to audiences that have implications for the gendered critiques of labour and sexual expectations placed on women that Rhimes wishes to advance through the shows.

Paratexts/texts: multiple authors and their multiple audiences

The Starter Kit is a perfect example of what Brookey and Westerfelhaus are referring to when they discuss the collapse between a product and its promotion (2005). Gray believes that due to this collapse, DVD extras have more authority in their conveyance of information about a film or series (2010, p. 89). For the purposes of this paper, placing the Starter Kit as an entryway paratext positions the former with the same level of authority as the content of the series itself. However, as analysed above, there is a very distinct difference in the content produced by the promotional authors and that produced by the creative authors of the shows.

Gray argues that creators try to ‘assert authority and try to maintain the role of the author’ through the use of DVD extras (2010, p. 110). Often this is done through extras that encourage a particular reading of a text. An example of this can be seen in Egan and Barker’s work on fans and DVD extras of the *Lord of the Rings* movie franchise. Egan and Barker argue that the special features on the *Lord of the Rings* DVDs concerning the adaptation process often make justifications for the changes made to the original novels (2008). By doing so, the DVD extras of *The Lord of the Rings* attempt to influence the reception of the movies by audiences who first read the book by emphasising the films’ faithfulness to the source material. In this way, the DVD extras for the films are thought to form an ‘intricate argument of reinterpretation and justification’ for the decisions made by the creative authors (p. 95). Brereton supports this in her argument that special features generally offer clues for audiences to better understand a text (2012). It is perhaps for this reason that Parker and Parker argue that paratexts in the form of DVD special features aid in creating a ‘related yet distinctly different experience for the viewer’ (2011, p. x). Paratexts generally inform and orient audiences towards viewing the featured media as the “main” text. The information that they communicate to an audience often encourages a specific reading of the text and it

is for this reason that they provide a different but ultimately coherent inter- and intra-textual viewing experience.

By contrast, the Starter Kits and their relationship to the series they open create intra-textual tension and work to undermine the creative author. On the one hand, the network associated with the series is asserting their authority as author of the promotional content by claiming that they can provide the audience with ‘everything you need to know’. On the other, Rhimes’ creative authority is asserted through her very obvious placement in the opening credits in which she is titled ‘creator’. DVD extras are paratexts specifically created by networks and studios so that audiences can better understand or be drawn into the text. In the case of the Starter Kits, however, there is a very obvious tension between the actual content of the main text and that marketed by the promotional authors.

The ABC Starter Kit is what Genette would call a ‘paratextual threshold’ (1997, p. 2). The function of this ‘threshold’ is fairly similar to other special features in that it acts as a place of ‘transaction’ (p. 2). In the case of *Grey’s Anatomy* and *Private Practice* this transaction involves the movement of ‘strategically’ chosen information between the author and the viewer of the Starter Kits. These paratexts act as an ‘influence on the public ... that ... is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it (more pertinent, of course, in the eyes of the author and his allies)’ (p. 2). However, this argument from Genette is complicated in cases such as *Grey’s Anatomy* and *Private Practice* in that it would appear that those producing the paratexts are not concerned with whether they serve as content “allies” for the creative authors. According to Dawson, what is and isn’t included in a promotional short is indicative of what the producers and distributors believe are important to a text as well as what they feel is important to the ‘ideal’ viewer (2011, p. 220). Dawson also addresses the failure of many shorts to present information that is promotional but also pertinent to the creative content, saying that ‘often they implode under the pressures of balancing their promotional and commercial obligations with any narrative ambitions their creators might harbour’ (p. 222). Given Rhimes’ reference to the network as “fencing” in her creativity, it would seem that the Starter Kits guide audiences towards a reading that is more ‘pertinent’ to the commercial or promotional authors.

I discussed earlier the function of the Starter Kits as entryway paratexts. Gray argues that 'just as paratexts can inflect our interpretations of texts as we enter them, so too can they inflect our *re-entry* to television texts' (2010, p. 42). Following Gray, while the Starter Kits are functioning as an entryway paratext to this particular season of the series (in this case season 3 of *Grey's Anatomy* and seasons 3 and 5 of *Private Practice*) they also have a separate function when considered in relation to the series up until this point. The ABC Starter Kits are not merely a threshold to the season they introduce, but they act as a hallway of sorts as the audience passes from one room (or series) to the next. The transaction of information here then, becomes unique. The information communicated between author and audience is not simply about conditioning the viewer's entry into the text but also influencing their re-entry to the text after the break between seasons.

By acting as both hallway and entryway paratext, the Starter Kit perfectly encapsulates Egan and Barker's notion, discussed earlier, that DVD extras form an 'intricate argument of reinterpretation and justification' (2008, p. 95). What interpretive and justificatory purpose do the Start Kits serve? The tension between commercial and creative authors in the case of *Grey's Anatomy* and *Private Practice* produce tension for the implied audiences in their readings of the texts. As previously stated, popular culture appeals to large audiences through relatable and easily accessible content. Furthermore, popular culture aimed at women often focuses on women dealing with the social expectations of managing both their careers and personal relationships. This focus on work-life balance for women is often based on the reproduction of stereotypes. Negra and Tasker argue that the Romantic Comedy (which as a genre is closely related to the chick flick) 'has shown itself to be extraordinarily adept in pigeonholing the perceived truths of women's experiences' (2006, p. 172). This 'pigeonholing' means that the complexity of women's experiences are often simplified and we end up with stereotypes such as 'the hapless single female professional' (p.174) that is common to chick lit. I propose that the tension in both the authors and implied audiences discussed in this paper lies in the way that *Grey's Anatomy*, *Private Practice* and their respective Starter Kits navigate this balance, particularly in what personal relationships they focus on.

The Starter Kit, as a piece of marketing material presents what is a fairly accepted notion in popular culture aimed at affluent women: that the balance between career and

heterosexual romance is, in fact, non-existent. One either has a career that they are passionate about and as a result fail to maintain romantic relationships, or a career is merely a means to meeting a potential partner. In their study of chick lit, Philips compares the genre's representations of men and women in the workplace, concluding that the 'professional superiority' of the male hero must be well established before romantic fulfilment can be achieved (2000, pp. 246-247). The result of this gendering of work as masculine is that women who prioritise their careers are often portrayed as single (or are the "best friend" rather than heroine) while those that have long lasting romantic relationships are shown often placing these before other friendships and their career. Two examples of these gendered narratives are exemplified in what Ferris and Young label the original 'chick lit' novels, *Bridget Jones's Diary* by Helen Fielding (1997) and *Sex and the City* by Candace Bushnell (2009). In Fielding's novel, Bridget's career is haphazard and the careers of her romantic partners are demonstrated as superior to hers (for instance, one love interest Mark Darcy is described as a 'top barrister' while another, Daniel Cleaver is her boss). Alternatively, in Bushnell's novel, the entire focus is Carrie's career (indeed, the novel itself is comprised of articles that Carrie has written for a newspaper) and as with the narrative formula outlined above, she remains single at the end of the novel.

As seen in the comparative analyses of the Starter Kits and the shows, Rhimes' programs consistently challenge popular cultural preconceptions of women and their relationship to their career. Christina's story arc with Preston in *Grey's Anatomy* valorises her choice to value her career over her romantic relationship. Even more revolutionary, Christina's story arc offers narrative proof that professional women can still maintain sexual and romantic relationships even when their priority is a successful career (evidenced in the narrative choice to have Preston propose to her after she reports him for professional misconduct). Similarly, in the case of Addison, Rhimes writes her as a character who is not only incredibly successful, with more qualifications than the majority of her love interests, but is also capable of sustaining complex and meaningful relationships. Even more challenging to traditional popular culture aimed at women that constructs "life" (that is children and romance) and work as a binary choice, is that Addison actually achieves a work-life balance through first addressing her own career aspirations. Rhimes confirms this challenge to traditional narratives of affluent female identity in her interview with

Entertainment Weekly: 'the crap that women have been fed since the beginning of time hasn't been working. We've been watching very homogenous television written by very homogenous people in very homogenous ways' (Maerz 2015, p. 28). The creative content of the series in question seems to suggest that Rhimes' implied audiences are women who are not what we traditionally see in the dominant media representations of working women.

However, despite Rhimes as creative author making significant challenges to popular cultural representations of women (though these women are mostly North American and affluent) in her programs, the content of the Starter Kits seems to suggest that the commercial authors of *Grey's Anatomy* and *Private Practice* wish to make the show appear as if it were the usual 'homogenous television' to which Rhimes refers. In the Starter Kit for *Grey's Anatomy*, Christina is portrayed as abrasive and career driven (rather than patient-driven) and is merely a best friend rather than a love interest. Similarly, in the Starter Kit for *Private Practice*, only Addison's career is described, rather than showing her as a female who can succeed both in work, friendship, and romantic relationships. It would seem then, that the commercial author of the Starter Kits is concerned with attracting large audiences based on showing them what they already commonly see in popular culture, rather than showcasing the challenging and complex representations of women that Rhimes authors. In this way, the Starter Kit as both an entryway and hallway paratext consistently reinterprets and justifies the content of the series as not as pushing the cultural and gender boundaries that the creative author does.

Conclusion

The ABC Starter Kit exemplifies the key features of an entryway paratext, the most obvious being its placement as a threshold introducing a season. Its placement between seasons indicates that it is also a hallway paratext. In this way it attempts to inform the reader's entry into a text – or their re-entry into a text – by providing information that it claims to be key or 'everything you need to know'. In these Starter Kits, viewers are provided with certain facets of a character that are superficially reflected in the programs. As the Starter Kit suggests, Christina can be abrasive and Addison is indeed a neo-natal surgeon. Through a comparison between the promotional content of the Starter Kits and the creative content of

the series, I have argued that the former creates intra-textual tension by blunting the complexities on offer in the programs.

The comparative analysis of the content within the Starter Kit and the creative content of the series affirms that there are two very different authors at work. Rhimes has explicitly stated that the commercial side of the production of her series are “fences” bounding her creativity. However these commercial bodies who Rhimes identifies as fences are also responsible for the promotional content intended to attract audiences to her creative work. With multiple authors at work, there are also multiple implied or intended audiences. The limited information provided in the Starter Kits seems designed to appeal to audiences who are expecting what they popularly see in the media regarding affluent working women, particularly media that is aimed at women. While the Starter Kits show women who are struggling with the balance between work and relationships, a theme that has been identified as central to popular fiction aimed at women, the series’ themselves represent complex female characters for whom this “balance” is often irrelevant or contested as stereotypical. There are multiple influences and creators of a text and its paratexts. DVDs and their special features reveal the tensions that can occur when the boundaries between the authors of texts and its promotional paratexts are collapsed. In the case of *Grey’s Anatomy* and *Private Practice* it would appear that the tension is formed due to the presence of two highly different implied audiences, attributable to the different authors at work within a single package, the DVD.

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