CHAPTER 2

“Curiouser and Curiouser”

A Mad Hatter’s Tea Party of Junk Food News in 2018–2019

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When logic and proportion have fallen sloppy dead
And the white knight is talking backwards
And the red queen’s off with her head
Remember what the dormouse said
Feed your head, feed your head

—Grace Wing Slick

Entertainment news is akin to the little white rabbit, whose eye-catching appearance intrigues consumers, guiding them to an escapist realm far from the conflict-focused headlines of corporate media. However, once we tumble down the rabbit hole of BuzzFeed’s “Best Lewks from the Barr Testimony,” or the E! channel’s investigative reports on the latest Kardashian rancor, we find ourselves in a tizzy, jostled by empty-calorie nonsense. Project Censored founder Carl Jensen coined the term “Junk Food News” back in 1983 to describe the rise in trite sensationalist stories that consumed the major news media. These were news-less news stories that often crowded out the kind of investigative journalism required to maintain a healthy democracy. Thanks to Jensen, the news equivalent of late-night bingeing a bag of Oreo Minis finally had a name. Project
Censored has covered the Junk Food News phenomenon ever since and charted its unfortunately meteoric rise.

In recent years, Junk Food News has taken a darker turn down the rabbit hole, absent from the light of morality and further blundering into the unknown blackness of deceit, lies, and farcical reporters talking backwards. During the 2018–2019 news cycle, logic and proportion fell sloppy dead, torn apart by headlines that spread disinformation, propaganda, and utter nonsense. In this last year we as consumers have ended up in Wonderland, and who knows what we will find. Maybe that’s the Cheshire Cat beaming down from the trees, or perhaps it is South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham giggling at passersby. Perhaps we will run into Tweedledum and Tweedledee, or maybe we’ll just discover House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and President Trump in matching striped T-shirts exchanging savage put-downs. The Red Queen may have added a splash of red paint to her roses, or perhaps it’s her new accent piece—Arizona Representative Paul Gosar’s “Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire” poster from the Michael Cohen testimony—that’s attracting all of the White Knight’s attention.³

At the Mad Hatter’s tea party of the most popular Junk Food News stories from the 2018–2019 news cycle, Cardi B overshared birthing stories while eating marzipan bites, Meghan Markle and Prince Harry sipped on Darjeeling while nursing their newborn, representatives from the Kardashian clan (America’s royalty) and Fashion Nova exchanged biting remarks over finger sandwiches, and leftover pound cake was used to dampen the Notre-Dame fire. While the focus on the foibles of both British and American royalty at first seemed delicious, these empty-calorie stories distracted from the relevant news that galvanizes civic action and engagement. The impending climate crisis is real, and we as humans have an opportunity to take measures to address and offset some of the damage we have done. If we spend our time consumed by the flashy Junk Food News headlines that read “eat me” and “drink me” at this Mad Hatter’s tea party, we’ll never be full or secure, but we’re sure to get curiouser and curiouser.
THE BIBBED PRINCE AND THE GLOBAL PROBLEM CHILD

Since the day Meghan Markle and Prince Harry said their vows in St. George’s Chapel, the world has been holding its collective breath for when they would spawn a rosy-cheeked, royal diaper-wearing, tabloid-bait baby. Then came October 2018, when every fan of the royal couple got the announcement they were waiting for: ROYAL BABY ON THE WAY! The Sun and People speculated on the pregnancy: Would the baby be American or British? Did Markle secretly have an in vitro fertilization (IVF) procedure done? How was she able to conceive so “late”? She’s not in her birthing prime anymore, will she miscarry? How would Harry evolve from a “partier” to a responsible dad now? Establishment news websites were flooded with in-depth reports on every detail of the pregnancy, including extensive photo galleries that showcased Meghan’s baby bump and think pieces on which designer dresses made her POP! During Harry and Meghan’s Royal Tour stop in Australia, all attention was on the Australian governor general’s gift to the unborn child. In the eyes of the corporate media, the contents of the gift basket were decidedly more relevant than the increasing influence of a global activist movement, Extinction Rebellion.

Much of the discourse on diapers, crown-jeweled pacifiers, and royal bibs overshadowed crucial news about the global problem child, climate change. While corporate media obsessed over Markle’s pregnancy, members of Extinction Rebellion protested government inaction on climate change in London. Extinction Rebellion protesters have used a variety of nonviolent techniques, ranging from gluing their hands to the gates of Buckingham Palace, to planting trees in Parliament Square, to digging a hole and placing a coffin in it to represent humanity’s future if no further action is taken. Extinction Rebellion began to act in response to the 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report that warned humans have only twelve years remaining to prevent the catastrophic effects of climate change. These effects include a massive loss of biodiversity, elevated sea levels, and the forced migration of millions of people.

Extinction Rebellion’s primary goal is to create a “Citizens’ Assembly” that would evaluate current research on climate change
and map a strategic course for action to prevent its detrimental effects, for government and citizens alike. Extinction Rebellion has successfully pressured the United Kingdom government to declare a global “climate emergency.” While this is largely a symbolic gesture, it demonstrates the movement’s effectiveness at raising awareness among politicians and the public. Still, Extinction Rebellion has made it clear that more action is necessary than simple symbolic declarations. Their powerful activism is primarily supported by crowdfunding and grants from nongovernmental nonprofit organizations—not the glitz and glamour of royal money. Corporate media have largely avoided covering Extinction Rebellion, mainly because climate change isn’t a feel-good celebrity story or a delicious inside scoop, but merely a daunting, unavoidable reality inconvenient to the powers that be. When the movement is covered, it is generally presented as radical and unnecessarily disruptive.

Inspired by Extinction Rebellion, a group of activists has taken to “birth-striking” in response to climate change. Birth-striking is a form of protest where people vow not to conceive children in response to the grim consequences of climate change. Many birth-strikers cite concerns about the ethics of bringing children into a world already burdened by overconsumption. Rather than address the legitimate issues raised by birth-strikers, the corporate media had a field day with the whole concept of birth-strikes. It was as if the corporate media had found their Wonderland. After learning of the birth-strike movement, Tucker Carlson, one of the great sages of Fox News, told a birth-striker, “Have some kids, it’ll make you happier.” Unfortunately, it seems Tucker missed the point of the movement. As it is, corporate media would prefer to share junk news on Markle’s pregnancy over reporting on the birth-strike and the context of its cause. While the IPCC report warns that there may be only a dozen years left to prevent the consequences of climate change from becoming irreversible, at least corporate media has thoroughly enjoyed the minute-by-minute updates on the diaper-wearing prince. After all that hard-hitting news coverage, now he, and all the rest of us, have only eleven more years to go!
THE BALLAD OF THE BROKEN VAGINA

American rapper Cardi B publicly revealed her pregnancy in April 2018 while thousands of low-income immigrant women of color were ending theirs preterm. As Cardi spent the ensuing months dressing up her baby bump and taking pregnancy photoshoots amidst brightly colored floral arrangements, hundreds of low-income pregnant immigrant women wondered if they would be able to have a safe abortion or if they would have to self-induce it. Motherhood, like so much else through the looking-glass, is a vastly different experience depending upon one’s privilege and socioeconomic status. For Cardi B, a celebrity worth millions of dollars, the corporate press voraciously reported whatever puff pieces about her pregnancy she would give them. Rumors of Cardi’s pregnancy surfaced before she even officially announced it. Entertainment reporters followed the clues that her uncharacteristically boxy dresses were evidence of the musician’s maternity. At last, Cardi B gave birth to her daughter Kulture in July 2018, surrounded by friends, family, and her publicist. Her husband, rapper Offset of the famed music group Migos, filmed the birth, a move that was later criticized as using Cardi’s pregnancy as a springboard for his own career and fame.

Post-pregnancy, Cardi B shared details about her experiences as a mother. She revealed that she was offered millions of dollars to sell pictures of Kulture to a media outlet, but decided against it since she wasn’t “ready yet.” Much to the delight of the establishment press, Cardi B finally shared a photo of her daughter’s face in December 2018 for fans to obsess and ogle over. Cardi B also opened up about her struggles with childbirth and motherhood, lamenting on live television that Kulture “broke [her] vagina” and that she had to get stitches. On this subject, an article from Condé Nast’s Self magazine argued that Cardi B used her fame to highlight the overlooked difficulties of childbirth: “postpartum complications . . . aren’t talked about beforehand. . . . That’s why it’s so important for people like Cardi B to talk about what they experience publicly.”

Yet while Cardi B has the platform, the resources, and the media attention to speak out about her vaginal complications, an entire population of low-income immigrant Latina women must suffer through
their pregnancies in silence. The fervent anti-immigrant, anti-Latinx sentiment from the current administration is a significant source of trauma and stress within the Latinx community in the United States. As a result, Latina mothers are more likely to experience health complications during pregnancy and childbirth. According to a study released in the Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health, the rate of preterm births for foreign-born Latina mothers increased from 7.3 percent prior to Donald Trump’s presidential nomination to 8.4 percent following his inauguration. This is in stark contrast to the nearly unchanging preterm birth rates for women who were born in the United States. It is difficult, after all, to feel safe in a country whose president has called your people rapists, criminals, and drug smugglers.

While Roe v. Wade, the historic 1973 Supreme Court case that legalized abortion, is at risk of being overturned, reproductive activists are raising awareness about drugs, such as Misoprostol, that allow women to terminate their pregnancies on their own at home. For immigrant women of color, however, obtaining such drugs at a clinic comes with risks. Navigating reproductive health clinics pres-
ents a series of threats, including potential harassment from protesters and being reported to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). In one study cited on Rewire.News, 39 percent of undocumented Latinas said that they felt reluctant to seek healthcare for fear of being deported; moreover, if they’re caught obtaining pregnancy-terminating drugs illegally, they know that they’ll likely face imprisonment. More and more immigrant women are consequently carrying unwanted pregnancies to term or self-inducing abortion solely because of the risks that accompany visiting a health clinic.¹⁶

Furthermore, the scarcity of Latinx-specific health services and support—especially for mothers and children—makes their struggles that much more severe, as they have a higher chance of mortality during childbirth than their white counterparts.¹⁷ Such struggles don’t just affect the current generation, but generations to follow. By the year 2035, one in four American women will identify as Latina. The issue thus clearly presents itself as a national crisis.¹⁸

Unlike Cardi, undocumented women of color rarely give birth in hospitals surrounded by an extensive support system, much less a publicist. They don’t have access to the resources a pregnant US citizen might have, so they don’t consider the same opportunities when making important decisions regarding their pregnancies. They are largely silenced by the Trump administration’s anti-immigrant, anti-Latinx hate speech. While the corporate press retweets a GIF version of Cardi B’s broken vagina comment, they compound the isolation of pregnant Latina immigrant women by neglecting to share their stories. This diverts attention from the issues that force a critical analysis of our country’s actions and policies. The effective censorship of undocumented Latina immigrant stories makes the corporate media less of an independent fourth estate that maintains checks and balances on government, and more of an arm or adjunct of the Trump administration. Cardi’s topical comment will quickly be replaced by a new, equally provocative remark from the rapper, who savors every morsel of her tabloid fodder. While these stories don’t hold those in power accountable and continue to keep the issues facing Latina immigrant women in the dark, the corporate press is guaranteed to report on whatever Cardi B breaks next.
ASHES TO ASHES

The devastating Notre-Dame Cathedral fire that destroyed pieces of the famous Parisian Catholic monument in April 2019 drew international donations and messages of support. Even the land of the free and the home of the brave gave a fair share of contributions to the Cathedral’s reconstruction fund. While American corporate media created supportive hashtags, slow-motion drone footage compilations, and even animated simulations of the fire, they failed to report on other fires that destroyed places of worship in the United States.

Millions across the globe expressed sympathy toward the French, who watched in anguish as their Gothic architectural wonder burned. Social media was flooded with prayers, tears, and stories about massively generous donations for Notre-Dame’s reconstruction. Despite proof that the fire was set accidentally, corporate media speculated on hypothetical sinister motives by radical Islamists, stoking the fire of anti-Muslim rhetoric deeply embraced by so many in the US political establishment. Distracted by these Islamophobic delusions, the establishment press overlooked actual incidents of hate-based destruction in the United States.

Across the globe from the corporate media’s main story, in southern Louisiana, three predominantly black churches were consumed by an arsonist’s flames without a glimpse of corporate media coverage. The string of arsons began at St. Mary Baptist Church on March 26, then continued at the Greater Union Baptist Church on April 2, and ended at the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church on April 4. These churches, prominent community landmarks for their majority-black congregations, were all decimated by the arsonist over the course of one week. As closely linked hate crimes, these fires specifically targeted the southern Louisiana black community and reflect the general rise in hate crimes following President Donald Trump’s election in 2016. Since Trump’s presidential election, the FBI has recorded a 17 percent spike in hate crimes across America. In 2017 alone, there were 7,175 reported incidents of hate crimes, and these rates will only continue to rise while President Trump spews white supremacist rhetoric from the Rose Garden.¹⁹

Domestic hate crimes that remain a pervasive threat were given
less attention than the flashy, dramatic story of Notre-Dame Cathedral’s accidental fire. America’s corporate media preferred to show a glamorous, apolitical cathedral turn to ashes in one of the wealthiest cities in the world than to address the racial injustices in their own backyard. America, they would have us believe, is too exhausted by its countless domestic hate crimes to acknowledge yet another one. It seems easier to turn a blind eye to such racially motivated attacks, as they carry political weight and a pressing need to further the conversation on race in America—important topics the establishment media would prefer not to face.

Where were the overwhelming messages of international support and charitable donations when three black churches in Louisiana were targeted and burned down by a white supremacist? While the coverage of the Notre-Dame disaster raked in donations and media attention, community organizers, in lieu of the support that global media attention could bring, created a GoFundMe page to raise money to rebuild the churches in Louisiana. After the drama of the Notre-Dame fire subsided, and after considerable petitioning, the corporate press, no doubt desperate for the next applicable use of the fire emoji in their social media profiles, finally turned to promote the churches’ GoFundMe page and effectively helped raise $1 million in donations. It is worth noting that the corporate media can influence positive change when they choose to do so.

These Baptist churches may not be “the symbol of beauty and history of Paris,” but they are “[l]ongtime pillars of the African American community.” While precious artworks and relics were lost at Notre-Dame, in these church fires the United States lost decades’ worth of artifacts, documents, and speeches from the Civil Rights movement. To honestly face these attacks in Louisiana would require a long, hard look in the mirror, and a sober assessment of current racial politics in the United States. Can White America handle that?

What other fires were not being covered because of the sensationalism of Junk Food News? In the last few years there has been a shortage of news stories on two mosques that were targeted for arson in the United States. The first attack occurred in January 2017 in Victoria, Texas. A suspect was arrested and convicted of this hate crime in July 2018. The other mosque arson was in San Diego, on March 29,
2019. Coverage for this second fire focused less on growing Islamophobic sentiment in the United States and more on the fire’s possible connection to the Christchurch, New Zealand, shooting on March 15, 2019. The establishment press used the fire as an excuse to play True Detective with graffiti that was left in the mosque by the arsonists, as it referenced the Christchurch tragedy. There was also scarcely any coverage of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, which caught fire on the same day as the Notre-Dame Cathedral. Recent coverage of arson attempts on Jewish synagogues, apart from one mention of an arson attack that destroyed the largest yeshiva in Russia on April 19, 2019, have mainly focused on either Jewish contributions to the rebuilding of Notre-Dame, or a baseless conspiracy theory that Jews and Muslims burnt down the Cathedral.

The disparity between the search results for the Notre-Dame fire and hate crimes within the United States reveals deliberate neglect on the part of the corporate press to address domestic social issues in favor of splashy, politically uncontroversial drama. The media should act as the moderators for a healthy debate on race relations in the United States, but instead they circumvent the conversation altogether. This maintains racial tension and allows corporate media sponsors to continue to profit from sensationalist stories that focus on racial conflict. Countering that trend, social uproar attracted media attention to the social justice issue of the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Greater Union Baptist Church, and St. Mary Baptist Church fires. This effective community engagement demonstrates that the corporate press can be held accountable when more people speak their minds, resulting in more voices being heard. If more people work to keep the news media accountable, perhaps corporate media will have no choice but to present more equitable and just representation in their reporting efforts.

**STYLE OVER SUBSTANCE**

In early 2019, corporate media was inundated with updates on the Kardashian vs. Fashion Nova saga, a flame war to end all flame wars. It all started when America’s favorite Kardashian, Kim, stepped out in a revealing vintage 1998 Thierry Mugler cut-out gown for the Hol-
lywood Beauty Awards. Hours after the Hollywood Beauty Awards, a knock-off vintage Thierry Mugler gown appeared on the Fashion Nova website. This was met with accusations that Kim Kardashian has been leaking her designer looks to fast fashion sites like Fashion Nova before she even wears them in public. However, the allegation was apparently false, as it sparked a feud with the online retail site. Kim denied having any involvement with Fashion Nova and slammed Fashion Nova for ripping off her designer looks on Twitter. Fashion Nova also released a statement claiming they have “not worked directly” with Kim.

This tasty, zero-calorie Junk Food News story is one instance of a long-scale, continuous public relations narrative that the Kardashians are the routine victims of fashion plagiarism. Within hours of the stars sporting designers’ couture and vintage pieces, online retailers market knock-off products online. Kim later addressed the situation, claiming, “It’s devastating to see these fashion companies rip off designs that have taken the blood, sweat, and tears of true designers who have put their all into their own original ideas. I’ve watched these companies profit off my husband’s work for years and now that it’s also affecting designers who have been so generous to give me access to their beautiful works, I can no longer sit silent.” Thus started a full-fledged feud between the fashion company and the Kardashian clan.

While a bright-neon yellow vest is decidedly not as high-end as a vintage Thierry Mugler gown, it symbolizes a movement with more considerable societal significance than the Kardashian vs. Fashion Nova debate. While talk of Kim Kardashian’s fashion draws international attention, corporate media in the United States have been conspicuously silent about the Yellow Vest movement in France. Since October 2018, outraged French citizens have taken to the streets to protest wealth inequality perpetuated by the French government. It began in response to president Emmanuel Macron raising gas prices while cutting taxes for the rich. The protesters wear highly visible yellow safety vests—necessary items kept in every car in case of emergency, now made to symbolize resistance against the continued favoritism of the power elite. The protesters utilize anonymity and strength in numbers, taking to the streets in demonstrations and
shutting down traffic to raise awareness for their cause. The Yellow Vest movement is a genuine populist uprising and an example of a continuously sustained protest against economic inequality. It is a revolt of the working and middle class against the power elite.\textsuperscript{10}

But while corporate media focus on Kim Kardashian’s asinine proclamations and assets, they seem content to ignore what economist and professor Richard D. Wolff calls the most critical movement of the 21st century thus far.\textsuperscript{11} Although corporate media do make an occasional reference to the changes sweeping France, their coverage deliberately discredits the Yellow Vest movement. They do this through sensationalizing and ridiculing the movement’s activist efforts in news stories. One such example includes a February 2019 New York Times report, “Anti-Semitic Taunts by Yellow Vests Prompt French Soul-Searching.” The article refers to a recent protest as “another episode of anguished national soul-searching over the problem of persistent anti-Semitism in France, and the evolution of the Yellow Vest movement from gas-tax protest to violent street revolt with hints of menace and hooliganism.”\textsuperscript{13} This rhetoric incorrectly paints the Yellow Vest movement as a racist, alt-right, quasi-fascist movement instead of a legitimate protest by the people against their government. And while it is essential to call attention to problematic associations amongst protesters, this type of coverage trivializes their cause.

The corporate media perhaps tiptoe around France’s Yellow Vest movement to avoid discussing similarly egregious wealth disparity—and protest against it—in the United States. Corporate media do not profit by making their sponsors nervous, and the prospect of an anonymous mass revolt against obscene wealth does not bode well at anybody’s board meeting. Celebrity endorsements constitute much safer clickbait for ad revenues than a leaderless revolutionary current, so it’s a no-brainer that the corporate press would rather add fuel to the Kardashian vs. Fashion Nova fire than address the wealth disparity in this country. It may prove dire for democracy, but at least the Kardashians will be on hand to pick up the scraps of the fallen US flag and turn them into their latest fashion statement—that is, until Fashion Nova creates its own Betsy Ross–style knock-off.
MOONWALKING THROUGH MOLESTATION

The infamous Michael Jackson exposé documentary *Leaving Neverland* premiered at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival on January 25, 2019, and was broadcast on HBO in two parts less than two months later, in early March. Directed by Dan Reed, *Leaving Neverland* told the stories of Wade Robson and James Safechuck, who allege that, while they were children, Jackson sexually abused them at his home, Neverland Ranch, and elsewhere over a period of several years. As the documentary aired in the United States and the United Kingdom, sexual abuse allegations against Catholic priests surfaced in the corporate news cycle but were afforded significantly less coverage than the Jackson controversy. The more than 2,600 new allegations of abuse by priests and church employees in the United States reported between August 2018 and February 2019 were just the latest additions to the quagmire that is sexual abuse in the Catholic Church.

For centuries, allegations of the sexual abuse of minors have been made against Catholic priests. According to BishopAccountability.org, a site that keeps a tally of cases of Catholic sexual abuse, the Catholic Church has paid more than $3 billion to settle sexual abuse claims as of 2012. As of 2019, the site found that more than 6,800 priests in the United States have been credibly accused of sexual abuse, with more than 19,000 confirmed victims. In February 2019, the pope spoke publicly on the matter, saying that “in people’s justified anger, the Church sees the reflection of the wrath of God, betrayed and insulted by these deceitful consecrated persons,” and that “it is our duty to pay close heed to this silent, choked cry.” While this impassioned statement may seem like an indication of change for the Church, it was accompanied by no new policies dedicated to preventing abuses and supporting victims.

The corporate press focused on the scandal of sexual abuse allegations against Catholic priests instead of on the critical facts of the crimes. The stories typically highlighted and sensationalized the experiences of the victims. This diverted attention from the fact that the Church actually has made efforts to cover up abuses and continues to employ offenders. For example, most articles that covered the February 2019 meeting in Vatican City which addressed the issue
of child sexual abuse didn’t critique the Church’s responses to those allegations. It was clear that the meeting was designed to serve up fast Junk Food News stories, and the press gleefully chomped down on the empty-calorie performance. The coverage addressed the significance of the meeting and the waning popularity of the Church. Some sources, such as the New York Times, mentioned that the Church’s efforts to curb sexual abuse exacerbated the problem and revealed long-standing structural and institutional issues. Although the Catholic Church released a list of names of pedophiles within the clergy, they published no actual information about their work history or current employment. As indicated by the New York Times, such selective information conceals how the Catholic institution shuffles around known sex offenders so that they can continue to work in the Church.17

Though the corporate coverage of the Vatican meeting was positive, discussion forums and other online communities were quick to point out the irony of the pope’s statements. His subtle framing advanced the narrative that the Catholic Church’s image was tainted by a few bad apples, rather than calling it out as the fundamentally dysfunctional institution that it is. The Catholic Church has betrayed communities and its own moral values by suppressing allegations and allowing abusers to continue to work for the Church. While accusations in recent years have been given the Hollywood treatment, with films such as Spotlight and docu-series on CBS This Morning, these victims’ stories are sensationalized when not outright ignored.

Meanwhile, establishment and corporate news sources that covered the Michael Jackson abuse allegations rarely focused on the victims’ stories at all, and instead were largely concerned with casting doubt on the victims. Since the documentary was released, prominent celebrities, including Madonna and Boy George, have defended the deceased Jackson. Boy George noted that the word “alleged” is missing from the documentary, and he described how, with the accusations in Leaving Neverland, it is “just taken almost for granted that this is what happened and therefore we all should accept it.”18 The goal of the documentary was to get the victims to talk about their abuse as an act of resistance against a system and a man that had silenced them for so long. The documentary may be the closest the
victims can get to vindication, as the Michael Jackson estate is suing HBO for airing the documentary and speaking against his legacy. In the wake of the #MeToo and Time’s Up movements, this documentary opens up a dialogue on how our society and Hollywood view and address victims of sexual assault, especially children. However, that dialogue is not reflected in conversations about the sexual abuse scandal within the Catholic Church, where victims are not being listened to, but treated merely as PR problems.39

There’s a lot of differences between the Catholic Church and Michael Jackson, but they’re both some smooth criminals. They have both, with the cooperation of the corporate media, silenced their victims, and, in the Church’s case, effectively concealed vital information about the abusers from the public. Both scandals drew massive public attention, yet the perpetrators found ways to slide through the cracks and get away with their crimes. In both the coverage of Michael Jackson’s scandal and the cases of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, we see more attention being paid to the violators than to the victims. While Wade Robson and James Safechuck are relentlessly interrogated by the corporate media, that same media describe the Catholic sexual abuse scandal as a series of isolated incidents by corrupt priests, leaving unaddressed the systemic corruption within the larger institution of the Catholic Church. Substantive news is spun into a web of Junk Food News infotainment, further blurring the lines between Junk Food News and accurate investigative reporting—and as a result, we the public, much like Alice, descend further into Wonderland, undoubtedly to encounter the next moonwalking smooth criminal.

CONCLUSION

Our extended stay at the Hatter’s tea party of Junk Food News has created a global madness. News consumers are getting curioser and curioser, as our hunger for investigative reporting is only fed with Junk Food News, infotainment that says “eat me” in swirly fondant but does little to feed our heads. While we sang “Que Será, Será” to the Catholic Church and wished both US and British royal babies a very merry unbirthday, we neglected the rising influence of activist
movements that may spur substantive change beyond the ubiquitous attention-grabbing GIFs, blogs, and headlines. This chapter is but a small sampling of the cornucopia of absurd events the establishment press found worthy of our time. This is time that we will never get back, and spending it on junk instead of substantial stories, investigations, and activism can make for a very unmerry unbirthday for us all. As we travel further into the Wonderland of the corporate media news cycle, the real world we recognize grows more and more distant, and only time will tell what bite-sized “drink me” and “eat me” infotainment awaits.

IZZY SNOW attended College of Marin in Kentfield, California, for two years and will transfer to Barnard College at Columbia University in the fall of 2019. Izzy has loved working with Susan Rahman and the team at Project Censored for the Censored 2019 and Censored 2020 publications, and as a guest on the Project Censored Radio Show.

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Notes

3. Anne Flaherty, with Benjamin Siegel and Quinn Owen, “‘Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire!’ GOP Focus on Discrediting Cohen, Don’t Ask about Trump,” ABC7 News (San Francisco), March 1, 2019, https://abc7news.com/liar-liar-pants-on-fire-gop-focus-on-discrediting-cohen-dont-ask-about-trump/5159574/.


