

Disembodiment and The Heart: Podcasting as a Safe Space for the Discussion of Intimate Embodied Experience

9th July 2021, Copyright:

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The Heart



“The Heart is a podcast about intimacy and humanity. It’s comprised of a community of writers, radio makers and artists who make personal documentary work about bodies, love, power dynamics and all of the invisible things in the air between humans. From Mermaid Palace and Radiotopia”.

<https://www.theheartradio.org/>

Hosted by Kaitlin Prest.

This presentation focuses on *No*, a mini-series of the podcast from 2017 where “Kaitlin explores her sexual boundaries from youth to adulthood”.

She explores an particularly affecting experience with a friend, Jay.

This includes frank discussion of sexual experiences, some negative, which may be upsetting for some listeners.

No

season: no (2017)

Kaitlin explores her sexual boundaries from youth to adulthood.



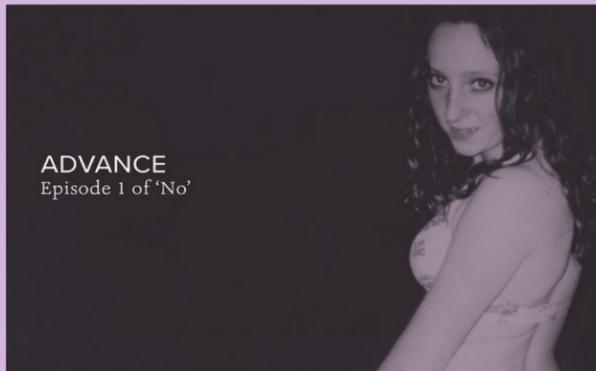
Jun 14, 2017



Jun 6, 2017



May 24, 2017



May 10, 2017

The Need for a Safe Space

Historically, women discouraged from speaking about experiences of sexual violence, harassment or abuse

Shame, stigma, myths and victim blaming permeate discussion of female sexuality

Feminist movement aimed to create supportive environments for women to tell their story

Following the allegations against Harvey Weinstein in 2017, #MeToo normalised women taking ownership of their experiences and underlined the universality of such experiences

Talking about trauma

By using the medium of podcast, Prest makes the private, public

The disclosure of deeply personal, traumatic or intimate information can be cathartic for the speaker, particularly when this goes against a dominant culture of silence

‘Validating to hear experiences reflected back at me’

The speaker is also made vulnerable to discourses of slut-shaming, sexualisation, to disbelief or those who minimise the experience

It can also have a profound effect on the empathetic listener

Taking responsibility?

Prest and her father discuss her experience of acquiescent sex, revealing deeply embedded gendered notions of sexuality.

I warned you about this

He had something different in mind

She also has a conversation with Jay, the friend with whom she had a negative sexual experience

How bad do I have to feel about this?

Affect in *The Heart*

“The amplified voice through podcasting as an intimate aural medium carries with it the possibilities for a deep affective experience for both the creator and the listener”.

‘A Feminist Materialisation of Amplified Voice: Queering Identity and Affect in *The Heart*’, Copeland in Llinares et. al. (2018: 209).

Phone-ins, Podcasting & Intimacy

Phone-in: An illusion of a private conversation where the producer retains control. The audience often identifies with the caller.

“Only a small minority of the listeners who regularly tune in to certain radio phone-in programmes will actually avail themselves of this opportunity (and only a few of those who try will actually get through and on to the airwaves”. [...] Therefore, the appeal of these programmes for the majority of the phone- in audience comes from listening to others participate in radio talk (on behalf of, or as representatives of, the listening community as a whole)” (Shingler & Wieringa, 1998: 114)

Embodiment

“Radio is intensely present tense, yet speaks from outside of time. And while the press of its muzzle against the ear may be intensely intimate, we only know the bodies of our interpolators through the body of their voices”. (Whitehead, 1989: 11)

“Distinct from any other entrance to the human body, the ear is a hole we cannot close, permitting a level of intimacy among perfect strangers which in other media would be literally unheard of” (Whitehead, 1989: 12).

Speaking the Unspeakable - Quiet Activism

The mini-series creates a soundscape which evokes an empathetic, embodied response in the listener

The 'speaking the unspeakable' validates the listener's own similar experiences and provides an example of 'quiet activism'

The listening experience discussed here is profoundly gendered
Further work might explore male responses to the podcast

Thank you

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