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Donald Trump: Live from New Yawk

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iterates how U.S. Presidential aspirant, billionaire businessman Donald Trump sounds eerily like a cast member of The Real Housewives of New York City

Jeb Bush’s campaign ad’s overarching accusation, though is that Mr. Trump is from New York. Within the span of one minute and 21 seconds we are reminded of where he comes from three times, his provenance presumably his greatest sin. The next time someone asks Donald Trump if he is a real Republican, he might answer, ‘Of course I am. Don’t you know where I live?’—Ginia Bellafante, “G. O. P. Can’t Stop Thinking About Gomorrah,” New York Times, September 6, 2015, 1,6.

Bravo’s Andy Cohen used his appearance on Real Time with Bill Maher on Friday night [November 20, 2015] to discuss politics, and ended up comparing the candidates to stars of The Real Housewives. This was, surprisingly, a pretty good way of explaining what’s happening.... Here’s how Andy Cohen explained Trump:

“I’ve been watching Donald Trump—who came, obviously, from a reality show. He reminds me of a first-season Orange County housewife. I know you may not be familiar with the show, but he really does. Because:

They have delusions about their place in the world.

They will say anything—they will say any damn thing and there aren’t always repercussions....

Considering that the media can’t figure out how to deal with Trump when he says irrational, untrue things, maybe thinking of him as a House-

“I’m not a housewife but I am real,” proclaims Bethenny Frankel during the opening segment of The Real Housewives of New York City. She signals that “housewife” has lost its denotative meaning. Frankel, a divorced highly successful entrepreneur, is categorized as a “real housewife.” Six of the eight New York “housewives” are either widowed or divorced. The two married cast members work outside the home. All of the “real” New York “housewives” are really not housewives. To add further lack of clarity to “real housewife of New York City,” I wish to apply this term to a particular man: Donald Trump. New York Times critic James Poniewozik positions Trump in terms of Survivor, The Bachelor, and The Apprentice (“Trump’s Campaign Classroom: Reality TV,” New York Times, October 10, 2015, C1, C5). It is important to add The Real Housewives of New York City to Poniewozik’s reality show list. Trump’s “attention to surface appearances” and his “idea of wealth that was brazen and crass” (Poniewozik C5) smacks of the New York Housewives. He causes “real housewife” to become synonymous with “real Republican” presidential race candidate.

Trump is bringing New York style verbiage to presidential politics. Unlike polite and controversy avoiding real politicians, Trump, true to his outer borough roots, says exactly what he thinks about everyone and everything. Using a lower tone male voice register, he echoes Frankel’s quick witted directness. Trump is the ninth “real housewife” of New York.

Michael Newman, a City University of New York linguistics professor, notes that Bernie Sanders and Trump’s “similarity is how they talk. Not what they say, but how they sound: Like they’re from New York” (“Voters May Just Want to ‘Tawk,’” New York Times, October 5, 2015, A23). Like Poniewozik, Newman also misses the point. Trump, in addition to speaking like a New Yorker, is using New York female speak; he mouths political discourse which adheres to the worst characteristics of stereotypically feminine conversation. His emphasis upon the catty and the back biting is girl talk—Joan Rivers’ “can we talk?” No hormone popping Caitlyn Jenner, Trump has transitioned to female speak, a language which differs from conservative Republican science reality denying double speak.
sity linguistics professor Deborah Tannen, in *You Just Don’t Understand: Women and Men In Conversation*, explains that women and men speak differently. Not so for Trump who talks like a New York “real housewife.” Bethenny, who does not reach the rhetorical heights of, say, Mario Cuomo, would certainly say something to the tune of Trump’s opinion that Carly Fiorina is too ugly to be President. Trump’s “[l]ook at that face! Would anyone vote for that? Can you imagine that, the face of our next president” sounds just like it emanates from Bethenny’s direct New York female mouth.

Real Housewife cast members dress well, live well--and argue well while engaged in endless trivial verbal pursuits. Trump acts in kind. This similarity holds true for what he sells as well as what he says. Like Trump, Housewife cast members Sonja Morgan, Kristen Taekman, and Heather Thomson have clothing and accessory lines. Clothing and accessories are not the interests of real he men.

Echoing the latest spat between “housewives,” Trump specializes in banality. His response after Megyn Kelly asked him why he has called women he doesn’t like “‘fat pigs,’ ‘dogs,’ ‘slobs,’ and ‘disgusting animals’”: “Only Rosie O’Donnell.” He translates a serious charge into gossip girl speak. He spews trivial invective instead of focusing upon important issues. Trump’s version of *The Real Housewives’* opening self-descriptive sound bites: “Make America great again.”

The “housewives” are known by their first names. The Republican Party front runner is called “The Donald.” “The Franklin” was not an appellation
**Up:** A promotional still for Donald Trump’s appearance on the weekly comedy show *Saturday Night Live*

**On Page 38:** A promotional still from Trump’s presidential bid for 2016

**On Page 39:** A typical still from Trump’s very own reality show ‘The Apprentice’ that went on to make him a Reality TV personality.
married woman, is a more real housewife of New York than Bethenny and her seven compatriots. Hillary does have viable future employment potential, though. Hillary, unlike Trump, is a real politician from New York.

Reality television is now ensconced in American culture to the extent that a front runner presidential candidate metaphorically cast as a male “real housewife” is as American as apple pie. Trump’s feminine reality television sodden speaking style is perhaps useful. His unreal “real housewife” stance deflects attention from the garden variety Republican candidates’ usual departure from the reality community. When Trump says that Megyn Kelly had “blood coming out of her wherever,” he at least is not denying scientific fact or trying to establish a Fundamentalist theocracy. Instead of saying something presidiously profound such as “ask not what your country can do for you,” Trump speaks in terms of Eve Ensler’s The Vagina Monologues. No harm is done when Trump proclaims that Heidi Klum is no longer a “10.” He explains that he knows about the military because he watches generals speak on CNN; Bill Clinton and Obama also lack military experience.

More power to this self-obsessed blow hard who is taking the wind out of Republican candidates’ sails. The Donald has saved us from The Jeb. Successful business man—and New York “real housewife”-- Trump deflects attention from deleterious Republican business as usual.

Trump is no John Kennedy. But John Kennedy hails from a bygone era. Turn on the applause sign if Trumps’ trivial “real housewife-esque” diatribes relegate Jeb to past history. Trump becomes a new thing under the political sun by casting himself as a male who speaks fluent “real housewife” language. Apresidential race frontrunner who expresses himself in the manner of a Bravo network star is concomitant with present American media reality. If Trump’s political candidacy newness--his feminized male “real housewife” language--results in Hillary becoming the first real female President of the United States, then bravo The Donald.

During The Real Housewives’ reunion show (August 18, 2015,) Dorinda Medley said that Hillary’s campaign called to say that Hillary enjoys watching Dorinda. Perhaps Dorinda enjoyed watching Hillary
appear on *Saturday Night Live* (October 3, 2015). A very large audience had the opportunity to watch Trump host the show (November 7, 2015). Efforts to mimic Jewish New York speak—to echo, say, Bethenny Frankel--pervaded the telecast. Kate McKinnon, when imitating Hillary, said, “I also love New York with their ah bagels and their lox as I could never forget about it.” Shiksa incarnate McKinnon as a linguistic stand-in for someone who sounds like Bethenny? Forget about it.

Host Trump spoke in the manner of McKinnon/ Hillary’s Jewish New York cadence wannabe. His response to the appearance of the second Trump imitator to appear on stage: “Oy yui look at this.” And his response to Larry David yelling “you’re a racist”: “Who the hell is oy I knew this was going to happen. Who is that?” Despite the fact that his non-Jewish inflected “oy” emanates from a native New York mouth, it goes over as well as a led balloon—or a frozen bagel.

Trump the male *Real Housewife* linguistic clone is no Larry David. His comedic command is not huge enough to equal the uproarious impact of David’s impersonation of Bernie Sanders. David/Sanders, after explaining that the United States’ infrastructure needs to be fixed and it is too dangerous to drive over bridges and through tunnels, says, “I keep a kayak strapped to the top of my car. Whenever I get to a bridge, I park, abandon my car, and paddle to the other side. So if you ever see a soaking wet man pulling a kayak out of a river and screaming about bridges give him a hand because he’s ya next president.” Outsider candidate Trump cannot speak as far outside of usual presidential tone as David/Sanders.

David’s comedic trumping of Trump underscores that Donald is no comedian. Donald is also no politician. While playing himself in the *Saturday Night Live* skit called “White House 2018,” he enacts a science fiction scenario which is as unreal as *The Real Housewives*. The skit portrays a Trumpian utopia in which the President of Mexico hands President Trump a check for the wall. Secretary of the Interior Ivanka Trump (played by herself) revamps the Washington Monument using a golden glass façade. The future truth of a Trump presidency would be more dystopic.

In *Language and Neoliberalism* Dublin City University Professor Marnie Holborow discusses the “commodification of language” which describes how the ideology of the marketplace finds expression in language. A Trump presidency, the ascendance of the un-politician who sounds like a “Real Housewife,” would signal the new age of unprofessional commodification. In other words, President Trump would travel in an Uber limousine and the Trump White House’s rooms would be for sale on Airbnb. Bethenny and her colleagues could head out to Washington and hang out with the Trump family while fighting over which White House room they will rent. Hopefully “White House 2018” will fail to become Trump’s dream come true. Perhaps the American public will fail to buy the vacuous *Real Housewife* speak commodification of language he is selling.

Live from “New Yawk”—it’s The Donald as real male housewife. Or, in David/Sanders’ true New York Jewish “undulcet” tone: “Live from New York, eh you get it.”