

LATIN LOVERS, *CHISMOSAS*, AND GENDERED DISCOURSES OF POWER

The Role of the Subjective Narrator in *Jane the Virgin*

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Jane the Virgin, a prime-time television show that debuted in 2014 on the CW network, is a melodrama made self-conscious by the inclusion of an unnamed, subjective Latino narrator.¹ The seemingly omniscient narrator provides recaps, background information, and reflective metacommentary on our protagonist—the twenty-three-year-old virgin Jane Villanueva, who finds herself artificially inseminated by accident during her yearly visit to the gynecologist. *Jane* received only one Emmy nomination after its first season, which was surprising given the show’s critical success and actress Gina Rodriguez’s Golden Globe wins. The nomination was for Anthony Mendez, who voices the narrator, in the category of “Outstanding Narrator.”

This chapter examines how the narrator is central to *Jane’s* messaging in seasons 1 and 2. It argues that through the inclusion of a fallible narrator, *Jane* offers a critique of masculinist authorial power. In this text we see an unraveling of the idea of white male objectivity—that is, the idea that an objective narrator exists, and that this person is unencumbered by identity markers such as gender and race and must therefore be a white male. *Jane* unpacks the hierarchies of power upon which the idea of objectivity relies through the inclusion of a Latino narrator who initially appears objective, but is soon revealed to be emotionally invested in the characters’ situation and, occasionally, caught off guard. In presenting a narrator who is both subjective and unreliable, *Jane* echoes the critiques of objectivity put forth by many generations of feminist thinkers.²

Additionally, the fact that *Jane’s* narrator is Latino also serves to rewrite hegemonic notions of Latino masculinity. Although the character appears at first to be a stereotypical depiction of the “Latin lover” trope—he is named as such in the script—in actuality the narrator exhibits multiple characteristics that upend traditional ideas of Latino masculinity. Among these are his nonromantic investment in Jane, his willingness to display emotion, and his

propensity to lose control of the narrative. As such, the depiction of *Jane's* subjective narrator forces viewers to question their assumptions about masculinist authorial power, while also encouraging them to reconsider the very notions of Latino masculinity upon which these assumptions rely—namely, the idea of the Latin lover as suave, sexual, and in control.

Unfortunately, credit for writing *Jane's* narrator goes disproportionately to non-Latinx writers. Of concern is not just the fact that *Jane* is written in a predominantly non-Latinx writers' room, but also that the show demonstrates a concerning trend in television whereby Latinx writers are concentrated at the lower levels.³ During season 1 and most of season 2, *Jane* did not have any upper-level Latinx writers on its staff, only adding one upper-level Latina writer as a consulting producer at the end of season 2. The disproportionate presence of Latinx writers at the lower levels can create an atmosphere in which Latinx writers do the work of validating “diversity” while not being allowed to drive the storytelling, receive producer credit, or share proportionately in the profits. This is of particular concern in *Jane*, because the inclusion of a Latino narrator gives the impression that a Latino is telling the story, while obscuring the inequitable distribution of both income and credit among the actual storytellers. As we will see, this also misleads Latinx audiences by suggesting that through their viewership they are supporting largely Latinx content producers.

This chapter will first examine the role of the narrator in seasons 1 and 2 (2014–15 and 2015–16), with particular attention to how he is used to critique masculinist authorial power and offer a nonhegemonic notion of Latino masculinity. It will then consider how the demographics of the *Jane* writers' room, the CW network, and the industry at large can help shape our understanding of the work the show's Latino narrator does to conceal the structural inequities of the writers' room. It will end by suggesting that the complicated work performed by *Jane's* narrator points toward the larger power dynamics that affect Latinxs behind the cameras in Hollywood.

A Critique of Objectivity and Hegemonic Masculinity

Living with her mother and grandmother, Jane is religious, and thus has decided to wait until marriage to lose her virginity to her boyfriend, police officer Michael Cordero. The show's action begins when she is accidentally artificially inseminated by her doctor, Luisa Alver. Luisa impregnates Jane with sperm donated by Rafael Solano (Luisa's brother, a rich hotel magnate), which was intended for his wife Petra Solano. In the episodes that follow, Jane and Rafael must figure out what to do with this unintended baby while also—much to their respective partners' dismay—developing feelings for one an-

other. This complicated situation is made even more volatile by the fact that Rafael and Petra are involved with the criminal underworld, which means that the show is intermittently punctuated by murders and disappearances.

Many have noted that one of *Jane's* most compelling components is the narrator. Jennie Snyder Urman—the show's creator, who is incidentally a white non-Latina woman—has said the following of the narrator: "Incorporating the narrator, having a connection between the narrator and the narrative, at least in my mind, all of those things unlocked the piece."⁴ Snyder Urman notes here that it is important that audience members understand narrator and narrative as two separate entities that are ultimately connected. The narrator makes this understanding possible by having a particular personality and point of view, which he uses to reflect upon the narrative laid out in the show. In this way the narrator mediates between the audience and the narrative, offering his own take on the action and thus *unlocking* the show for viewers, who can become invested not only in the protagonist but also in the narrator himself.

Moreover, the narrator is compelling as a character. As Laura Bradley describes it in a *Slate* think piece, the narrator has "Jane's kindness, mixed with her father Rogelio's bravado. He also has an occasionally wicked sense of humor."⁵ These characteristics intentionally mark the narrator as subjective, according to showrunner Jennie Snyder Urman. She notes: "I know who it is. It's not a connection that unfolds, at least not for the first two seasons. But he's definitely somebody with a point of view and skin in the game."⁶ Although the audience does not yet know who the narrator is in the first two seasons, his presence serves a function. He makes manifest that this narrative—like all narratives—is told from a particular point of view. In this way he situates the show as critiquing the notion of objectivity, by consistently reminding viewers that the character whom they trust to tell them the truth is, too, telling them his version.

Indeed, the insertion of the narrator marks the show as a postmodern narrative of sorts, in which an objective narrative is neither provided nor desired by Snyder Urman and the show's creative team. Rather, the narrator's subjectivity becomes one of the show's calling cards as he regularly intervenes in the narrative. In this way he performs all five of the narratorial functions Gerard Genette first presented in his study of narratology.⁷ The narrator of course narrates, but he also interrupts (directing function), addresses the viewers (communication function), expresses his emotions (testimonial function), and makes larger sociopolitical commentary (ideological function). He does all of this as either a semiomniscient narrator or a character recounting the story from the future.

The fact that this narrator is Latino—identified by his accent, his sporadic use of Spanish, and occasionally his point of view—is of particular

interest because it means the character is simultaneously undermining the notion of objectivity and rewriting tropes of Latino masculinity. He performs a double move: both pushing viewers to question their assumptions about masculinist authorial power and encouraging them to reconsider the very notions of (Latino) masculinity upon which these assumptions rest. Indeed, the narrator is referred to in both the script and the closed captioning as “Latin Lover Narrator.” This trope—usually identified by a male character’s exoticness, his suave way with women, and his effortless control of the situation—has been identified by scholars such as Daniel Enrique Pérez as a fantasy projection of white culture.⁸ In fact, when voice actor Anthony Mendez, a Dominican American actor who previously had trouble landing roles because of his accent, was first contacted about voicing the narrator, he had the following reaction:

“It said telenovela announcer with a Hispanic accent. The role literally said ‘Latin Lover Narrator.’ And I was like, I don’t wanna do this. This sounds like a joke. Stereotypical stuff. So I put it away,” he says. At first glance, Mendez thought it was yet another role poking fun at Latinos.⁹

Mendez decided to take the role, however, and play it in a way that did not sound stereotypical, yet provided viewers with an aural reminder of the Spanish language (he narrates in English). His choices include performing the role with a Spanish accent, while speaking slowly and overenunciating. The result is an identifiably Latino narrator who sounds not just polished but thoughtful. Additionally, Mendez incorporates pauses into the narrator’s speech, which occur before he announces a particularly juicy piece of gossip. The result is a comedic effect akin to the narrator winking at the audience. Mendez describes the character he ended up with as “almost Antonio Banderas—ish, a smooth talker. Sassy pillow talk.”¹⁰

Although the narrator does display characteristics of the Latin lover trope—his accent can be read as exotic and he does in fact sometimes take control of situations—he also inverts this trope in his own narration. Mendez’s use of the term “sassy pillow talk,” a formulation usually gendered female, points toward this inversion of masculinist tropes. Both Mendez’s performance of the narrator and the writers’ crafting of the character present a version of nonnormative Latinx masculinity that includes displaying a nonromantic interest in Jane, expressing emotions, and losing control of the situation.

For instance, the narrator begins the first episode with the words “Our story begins . . .” The inclusion of the word “our” is indicative of his place in

the story itself. He is invested in the outcome and in the fate of our protagonist Jane. Unlike Jane, however, he is either semiomniscient or narrating from the future, so he is able to help the viewer understand how certain events will affect Jane's life. For example, as early as the second episode, he prophesizes the fate of Petra and Roman's relationship by stating, "But there would be no later. Not for them." This foreshadows the fact that Roman will eventually die (or so the viewer thinks), then die again (this time for real) when Petra impales him with a rod later in the season. Informing the reader of this early on is a way to signal that if viewers dislike Petra and Roman—they are, after all, painted as antagonists in Jane's story—then they will be relieved to learn that their story does not end happily. Likewise, when Rafael states his intention to form a family with Jane by saying, "And I'm not giving up," the narrator responds, "Oh, if only it were that easy," referring to the host of relationship troubles that will befall them in future episodes. This serves as a way to build suspense, but also potentially as a way to warn viewers of Jane's impending struggles. The narrator's masculinity is key here, inasmuch as it draws attention to the way we are accustomed to thinking about authority. He, the male narrator, tells us, the audience, what to think about the female protagonist's life.

The narrator's point of view is shaped, however, by his own investments. Rather than performing objectivity, the narrator lets us know that he is favorable to certain outcomes and certain characters. In the first season, he is clear what he does and does not care about. For instance, after describing how Jane is a virgin who is not sleeping with her boyfriend Michael, the narrator states: "It is important to know that Michael Cordero Jr. is not a virgin. Well, it is important to him. I don't really care about it too much." The statement that "it is important to him" makes clear that the narrator's sympathies are not with Michael at this point in the plot.

In order to make sure that the viewer understands Jane as the protagonist and continues to identify with her, the narrator also periodically inserts caring comments about her. In episode 1.11, when Jane is having trouble writing a scene for her father's show *The Passions of Santos*, the narrator tells us cheekily, "However, Jane did manage to write a cute scene anyway. In my entirely unbiased opinion." Once again, he lets go of the idea of the Latin lover who must always be debonair, replacing him with a person who uses the word "cute." In episode 1.17, after a touching scene between the three Villanueva women, the narrator comments while holding back tears: "Excuse me. I seem to have something in my eye. Just give me a moment."

Often the narrator's reactions to Jane are also rooted in his personal experiences, thereby letting the reader know that there is a specific "I" behind the narratorial voice, as the show's creator has suggested in interviews. As

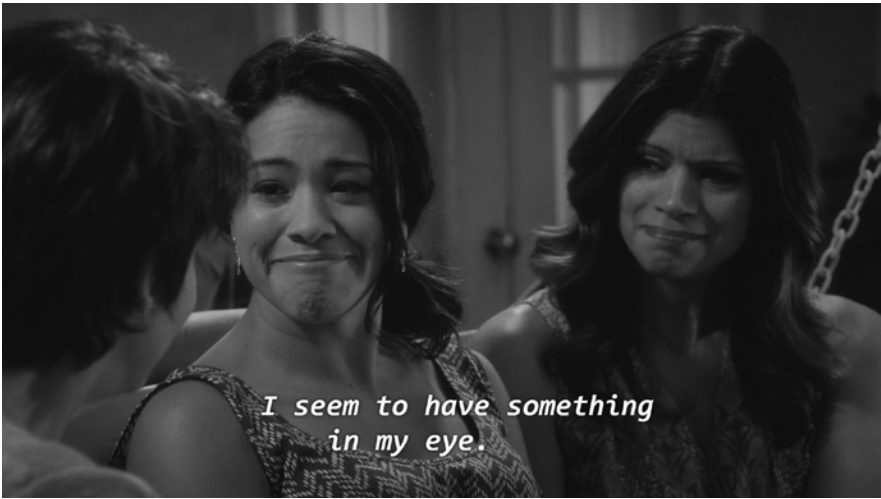


Figure 9.1. "I seem to have something in my eye."

Bradley puts it, "The best moments are when it becomes unclear who the narrator is speaking for—himself, the character he's narrating, or us."¹¹ For instance, when Jane's baby is born in the last episode of the first season, he reacts by saying, "OK, I am not a huge baby person, but that is one cute kid." Sometimes his personal interventions are even more explicit, such as in episode 1.15, when he tries to explain why Rafael has misread Jane's desire to get married by stating, "See, I recently watched a few episodes of a premium cable drama that touches on subjectivity." He then goes on to use flashbacks and subtitles to explain the misunderstanding to us. This particular intervention is also interesting because it suggests that our narrator watches television shows, meaning that he is not just a creator of content. He, like us, is a viewer. Like us, he has opinions.

The narrator's investment in Jane presents a version of Latino masculinity in which a man can care about a woman in a nonromantic and nonsexual way. We do not get the sense that he is in love with her or desires her, as might be the case traditionally with the Latin lover trope. Rather, he seems to genuinely care for her while respecting her as a writer, a mother, and an individual with agency. Additionally, as the show develops, it becomes clear that one of the narrator's main roles is to express his investment in Jane through his emotions. He may have relative power, but he uses that power mostly to tell us how he genuinely feels. This is in contrast to the trope of the Latin lover who presents a suave version of himself in an attempt to woo a woman into bed. Where the Latin lover trope assumes Latino men only display emotion—and only particular emotions, such as desire—within the confines of courting women, the narrator refuses that hegemonic notion of masculinity.

Freed from the confines of hegemonic notions of male sexuality, the narrator can gossip with us. For instance, in episode 2.1, the narrator recaps the previous season's plotlines. In the middle of this recap—a typical convention of telenovelas—he shouts, “OMG!” and, “Straight out of a telenovela!” In episode 1.1, when Jane gets a call from Rafael after they've kissed, the narrator responds “OMG! It's him! It's him!” This could be interpreted as the narrator giving voice to Jane's inner monologue, or as his own genuine excitement. If we understand it as the latter, then we can note that the narrator's masculinity is not in fact that of a “Latin lover.” He is what we might call in Spanish a *chismosa* (a gossip).¹²

Likewise, when Petra's character becomes more developed—she turns out to be not just a manipulative person but also someone who is being manipulated by a crazy ex-boyfriend—Jane and the narrator both become more sympathetic toward her. In a scene in which she tries to outrun Roman, who is threatening to kill her, the narrator yells: “Run, Petra! Run!” This suggests that we, the viewers, are supposed to be on her side, even though previously she has been the antagonist. The narrator tells us where our allegiances should lie by telling us where his own allegiances lie—inevitably with Jane.

Because the narrator is more invested in sharing his emotions with us than he is in controlling the narrative, he often loses his grasp on the plot. In contrast to Jane's character, who always seeks to be in control, the narrator is consistently surprised by twists in the show or even confused by plot points. In these instances, the narrator's masculinist authorial power is undermined. He not only doesn't know everything, but also fails to see things coming. In episode 1.12, the show unveils its biggest plot twist up to that point when it reveals that the villain Sin Rostro is in fact Rafael's stepmother Rose. It does this by placing subtitles that say “Rose” underneath the character's face and then adding and replacing the letters necessary to turn the name “Rose” into “Sin Rostro.” At this point, as the audience is assimilating the fact that Rose is actually a villain, the narrator says, “I don't know what to say. I'm as surprised as you are.” Positioning the narrator as surprised or confused chips away at assumptions about Latino masculinity in particular and masculinist authorial power more generally, inasmuch as it pushes us to see the narrator as not only imperfect but also willing to admit it. The narrator does not embody the aspect of the Latin lover trope that assumes suaveness or extreme self-possession in any situation. Rather, he loses control, then admits it.

In another example, episode 2.5 ends with Michael being fired and getting into his car, only to be held at gunpoint by his former partner Nadine. At this point the narrator admits that he has become overwhelmed, stating, “OK, you know what, this is way too stressful. I'm out.” The screen then cuts to white, followed by the words “To be continued.” Here the narrator,

unlike the audience, has the power to dictate how we experience—or stop experiencing—the action via a carefully timed cut to a blank screen. Similarly, after Jane gives birth in episode 2.1, the narrator says, “Let’s give her some privacy,” when she is about to breastfeed her baby, Mateo. There is then an immediate cut to another scene. In these examples, when the narrator feels overwhelmed with emotion, he has the power to change the narration.

The narrator also occasionally changes the narration out of concern for the viewer. He is invested, it would seem, in making sure the viewer keeps up with Jane’s version of the story. In episode 1.13, after Jane finds out that Sin Rostro is Rose, the narrator says: “I don’t want to interrupt. But I do think it’s important that you know what Jane’s thinking.” Of note here is the fact that although he does shift the order of the narration, he does so begrudgingly—“I don’t want to interrupt”—and only to make sure that Jane’s voice is heard. At that point subtitles appear, telling us exactly what Jane is thinking. The word “important” here is key, because this information is only “important” inasmuch as it maintains our connection with Jane as the protagonist. In this way the narrator is exerting his narratorial power in order to make sure that we, the viewers, still empathize with Jane.

However, the narrator does not always have absolute control of the narration. In episode 2.1, the narrator displays his ability not only to know something that the viewer does not, but also to forget it. As the episode seems to be ending, the narrator stops the closing credits from appearing by exclaiming that he forgot something. We are then transported to a scene in which a villain orders that Jane and her baby be targeted. This is the missing information necessary for the viewer to understand why Jane’s baby was stolen after its birth. Yet, after the narrator presents this scene, he seems rattled. He states: “I could really use some ‘It’s going to be OK’ theme music right about now.” He does not actually get any music, however, and his statement is uncharacteristically followed by several seconds of silence and then the words “To be continued.” This suggests that someone else is in control of the narrative, effectively stripping the narrator’s authorial power from him. It reminds the viewer that although the narrator has more power than us, he has less control than the people who actually shape the narrative (the showrunner and writers).

There are times as well when the narrator is aided by textual elements superimposed on the screen. In episode 1.6, as Jane is falling in love with Rafael, the narrator’s voice announces the following: “And so Rafael left Jane with a terrifying thought. A thought she wouldn’t even say aloud.” Typed on-screen, the following words appear: “What if it’s meant to be?” The narrator and the textual elements appear to be working in conjunction in this instance to offer insight into Jane’s experience. However, it is not clear whether or not

the two forms of narration represent the same narrative voice. For instance, beginning in the first episode of the series, text message conversations are displayed on-screen. The text message conversation between Jane and Michael in the first episode offers insight into each of the characters' personal thoughts. While superimposing the content of text messages on the screen is not unusual in television series made around this time period, in this particular series it is one of the more common ways to gain insight into Jane's motivations. In this way the text messages function as a sort of soliloquy for Jane, inserted into most episodes as a way to express to the reader what Jane herself cannot express aloud. The on-screen text here is not necessarily coming from the narrator, and thus it represents a dispersal of narratorial power. He is once again in control, but only up to a point.

In conjunction with the text messages, there are also titles that appear on the screen to either express Jane's point of view or support it, thus further marginalizing the narrator. About the on-screen titles, the show's creator has said: "I think it adds another layer, and it adds another meta layer as well, because we are, in some ways, a meta telenovela. I find that that helps and also just gives it a whole other canvas for telling jokes, making comments, showing the audience how to watch the show."¹³ It is indeed "another meta layer," which further exposes the limited point of view of our already meta narrator.

In general, the narrator and the textual elements guide the action and the audience's perceptions in Jane's favor. In this way both the narrator and the titles are invested in Jane, and thus they put forth a version of events that benefit her. This is true even when Jane herself is not on-screen. In episode 1.5, when Michael and Rafael are becoming competitive over Jane, the two have



Figure 9.2. "What if it's meant to be?"

a seemingly polite conversation, the true intentions of which are translated via subtitles below them: “Stop screwing with us, you arrogant, rich, pretty boy” / “I had an amazing sex dream about Jane the other night.” The fact that Michael and Rafael are pretending to be friendly but are really quite hostile toward one another proves to the viewer that Jane is not in fact imagining this tension. Jane is right, and the screen titles tell us that. Likewise, in episode 1.10 we see Petra trying to get Rafael to trust her once again after the series of lies she has told him. In response to this, Rafael says, “Should we go over all of the crazy lies and the things you’ve done just in the last six months? Because we can.” The narrator, without skipping a beat, replies, “Ooh, yes, let’s,” and immediately titles enumerating Petra’s various lies begin to populate the screen. These titles once again serve to tell us what Jane herself would tell us if she were in this scene—that Petra is a liar and that Rafael should not trust her. The enthusiasm of the narrator’s response—“Ooh, yes, let’s”—points toward his emotional investment in Jane as well as his love of gossip.

The Writers’ Room and the Question of Equity

While the narrator’s voice provides a compelling portrait of nonhegemonic Latino masculinity, the credit for, and profit from, crafting his voice in the first two seasons goes largely to upper-level, non-Latinx writers. This follows a trend in Hollywood whereby Latinx and other writers of color are often present principally at the lower levels. The concentration of writers at the lower levels is due in part to the lower cost of paying a staff writer or story editor as opposed to a writer receiving producer credit. These lower-level writers are oftentimes not promoted to upper-level positions, thereby allowing writers’ rooms to claim diversity while maintaining the concentration of writers of color at the bottom.¹⁴ As Darnell Hunt’s research has shown, showrunners of color are vastly more likely to advance the careers of writers of color than are white showrunners.¹⁵

In the case of *Jane*, showrunner Jenny Snyder Urman is not Latina, and for the show’s first season and most of its second season it had no upper-level Latinx writers. Fans were unlikely to notice this, however, because during season 1, press around *Jane* often focused on Latina writer Carolina Rivera.¹⁶ Rivera is a successful writer and producer of Mexican telenovelas. During the first season of *Jane*, however, she held a staff writer position—the lowest level of writer on the series.¹⁷ In season 2, Rivera would become a story editor (the next level of writer, still a lower-level position).¹⁸ She was joined during the last five episodes of season 2 by Valentina Garza, who was brought onto *Jane* as a consulting producer while wrapping up work on *Bordertown*. Garza would be the first and only upper-level Latinx writer on the show during this

time period. Although Garza's presence was significant in diversifying the show, her upper-level position was the exception rather than the rule.

The problem of an almost all white writers' room writing the experience of people of color has been well documented. As Darnell Hunt concludes from his analysis of 234 series airing in the 2016–17 season, writers' rooms that underrepresent writers of color are more likely to engage in the underdevelopment and/or stereotypical representation of characters of color, as well as the systematic tokenization and underpromotion of the lower-level writers of color in the room.¹⁹ Of additional concern for this chapter is the question of what role the narrator of *Jane* plays in obscuring the power dynamic of the writers' room. The narrator, unlike the other characters, shapes the audience's perception of the show. Because the show is framed by a Latino voice, the narrator comes to serve as a Latino proxy for a mostly non-Latinx writers' room, giving the false impression that there is some element of equity in the production of the show.

It should be noted that other CW shows have relied upon a self-aware narration style. Both *Gossip Girl* and *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, for instance, are shows that center white female protagonists and accordingly have a subjective narrator who is a white female. In both of these instances, the narrator represents one more character (or version of a character, in the case of *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend's* musical numbers) with whom the viewer can identify. In the case of *Jane*, the Latino narrator is likewise a character with whom Latinx fans can identify. A significant difference between *Jane* and the other CW shows, however, is that in the case of both *Gossip Girl* and *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, the white women who created, developed, and were upper-level writers on these shows align more clearly with the narrators and protagonists.²⁰

Although audience members can understand that the narrator and the show's writers' room are two separate entities, it is not always apparent to the average viewer who the writers of a series are. Even a viewer who searches for this information online may be unable to decode the complex power dynamics of a writers' room when provided only with the names of the writers and their credits. In particular, because press about *Jane* has focused disproportionately on the existence of Latina writers Carolina Rivera and, later, Valentina Garza, it would not be unreasonable for an audience member during the time period I analyze to assume that *Jane* was written largely by Latinas. This assumption might be strengthened by the demographics of the actors and the insertion of a Latino narrator.

In seeking to understand the narrator, we must contend with the fact that some but not all of his intersectional identities are being represented in the writers' room. For instance, I have argued that the depiction of the narrator's nonnormative masculinity is admirable. These critiques of normative

masculinity are being written by several upper-level writers who identify as both male and female. The fact that the narrator's character specifically offers a critique of Latino masculinity, however, is of concern because only one episode in seasons 1 and 2 credits a Latino writer (Christopher Oscar Peña in season 1, episode 10), and because, as mentioned, only one upper-level Latinx writer is credited at all during this time. Thus the critique of Latino masculinity is being written largely by non-Latinxs, making it not so much a self-representation of nonnormative Latinx masculinities as a fantasy projection of Latinx masculinity conceived by non-Latinxs. I do not mean to suggest that the show's Latinx writers have no voice in the process, but rather that the power dynamics of the writers' room make it so that upper-level writers and writers who embody privileged identities have more say in shaping the narrative and getting the credit.

The identifiable Latinness of the narrator is important when we consider the state of Latinx involvement in the television industry beyond *Jane*. The lack of Latinx presence in Hollywood has been well documented, and its reflection in *Jane*'s creative team may be a cause of concern among Latinxs searching for self-representations in Hollywood.²¹ We know, in fact, that "in the 2010 to 2013 period, Latinos comprised none of the top ten television show creators, 1.1% of producers, 2% of writers, and 4.1% of directors. . . . Even more dramatic, no Latinos currently serve as studio heads, network presidents, CEOs, or owners."²² *Jane* has mostly managed to avoid criticism for lack of diversity in the popular press, in large part because of its diverse cast and because it benefits from the continued attention to Carolina Rivera and Valentina Garza.

Latinx presence on-screen and press about Rivera and Garza have unfortunately helped to mask the demographics of *Jane*'s writers' room, and of the power structure of the CW overall. Rick Haskins, the network's executive vice president of marketing and digital platforms, actually said of the Latinx audience: "I personally think it [the Hispanic market] is white space and I think that as the Hispanic population becomes more acculturated, those types of shows are going to become more important on this type of broadcast network."²³ This positioning of the Latinx demographic as "white space"—that is, as a population defined only by acculturation—points toward the network's lack of understanding of Latinx cultures.

This may be one reason why *Jane* does not have an unusually large Latinx viewership. Although the narrator gives the impression that the viewer is watching alongside a Latino, this is not reflected in the ratings. In truth, *Jane* has a largely white non-Latinx viewership.²⁴ Although the show has a higher percentage of Latinx viewers than any other non-Spanish-language show on the air (24 percent), the total number of Latinx viewers is actually lower than for several other comedies that center the experiences of non-Latinx people

of color, such as *Blackish* and *Fresh Off the Boat*.²⁵ These statistics may be shocking to some, given the show's adaptation of the telenovela genre, its casting of primarily Latinx actors, its use of Spanish, and its complex depictions of Latinx characters. It is not that *Jane* fails to appeal to Latinx viewers, but rather that it is not connecting with Latinx audiences at the rate one might expect given its on-screen talent. Although this is also likely a result of the CW's previous lack of Latinx-centered programming, we must still consider the largely non-Latinx writers' room as one possible contributing factor.

Finally, even if the writers' room produces a compelling Latino narrator despite its demographics, we might additionally consider who makes money off of this critique of hegemonic Latinx masculinity. While the highest-paid actors in the series are Latinx, the same is not true for the highest-paid writers during the time period analyzed. The highest salaries go to writers who earn producer credits, followed by mid-level writers, and so on. In sum, even if we ignore the question of self-representation, we must contend with the fact that the distribution of salaries in *Jane's* writers' room replicates the existing inequitable power dynamics of Hollywood. The fact that the narrator gives the perception of Latinx authorship helps to obscure this problematic fact.

The Paradox of Latinx Narration Without Latinx Authorship

The premiere of season 4 of *Jane* begins with the voice of a Latina narrator. The female narrator, the episode soon reveals, is there to push back against the male narrator's version of the story. She inserts backstory that the Latin lover narrator did not provide and corrects him on small details. She also, at one point, calls him "a dick." This Latina narrator is unnamed, and disappears from the series after this episode. The writing team's decision to include her as a counterweight to the male narration is further proof of the show's investment in critiquing masculinist authorial power. Her role is to highlight the male narrator's subjectivity, and to offer an alternate non-"dick" version of the story. The fact that the male narrator is effectively put in his place by the Latina narrator—she rearranges his storytelling and argues with him about the facts—also serves to push back against the Latin lover trope. She is not amused by him, much less charmed by him. He fails as a Latin lover.

It is perhaps because of this failure that the imperfect and emotional version of Latino masculinity presented in the narrator is beloved by fans, who consistently name him as their favorite character in the show.²⁶ The critique of both masculinist authorial power and the Latin lover trope are thus key to *Jane's* success. Given that *Jane* has offered poignant critiques of pressing political issues such as immigration reform, we might reason that the likeability of the narrator is also crucial to the show's ability to expose its viewers to its political views. Creator Jennie Snyder Urman has suggested, in response to the

show's overt messaging on immigration reform: "The hope is that by making a personal connection it just changes the politics and we start to think about the people behind it."²⁷ This quotation is likely a reference to the grandmother character who is almost deported when she seeks treatment in a hospital. It is also, indirectly, a commentary on the role of the narrator, however. The narrator is one way for the writers to make a "personal connection" between audience and text and thus prompt the audience to start to look at "the people behind it"—presumably the Latinx people whom the show chronicles.

Still, to look at "the people behind" the show is to see an entirely different demographic. Because the *Jane* writers' room in its first two seasons reflects Hollywood's propensity to staff white writers at the upper levels and Latinx writers either not at all or at the lower levels, we must stop short of heralding it as a show with "an inherently Latino perspective."²⁸ Such a claim would need to rely, at least in part, on valuing Latinx voices in the way the inclusion of the Latino narrator suggests. Ultimately, we must see *Jane* for what it is—a show producing a compelling critique of white male objectivity and rewriting tropes of Latino masculinity, while also perpetuating the inequitable power dynamics for Latinxs behind the cameras in Hollywood.

Notes

1. Throughout this essay, I use the nonbinary *Latinx* in place of the gendered *Latino*. Where *Latino* is used, it references a male-identified Latinx person. *Latina* is used to refer to female-identified Latinx persons.
2. Many feminist writers have presented critiques of objectivity and of the presumed universal subject. I find Linda Alcoff particularly compelling on this point: Alcoff, "Problem of Speaking for Others." Although I do not claim that *Jane* is a feminist text, I do believe that it contributes to feminist theorizing on the notion of objectivity. For more on the complexities of applying an English-language feminist label to telenovelas, see Acosta-Alzuru, "I'm not a Feminist."
3. Linda Alcoff's *Visible Identities* and Arlene Dávila's *Latino Spin* have argued for the importance of the concept of "ethnorace," a hybrid category of ethnicity and race. For Latinxs, as Alcoff and Dávila have argued, this is a particularly salient category because changing conceptions of *Latinidad* can mark certain Latinxs as ethnically "Latino" but racially white. It is thus difficult to determine how *Jane's* writers may identify ethnically or racially. Still, because the category of "Latino" remains salient in U.S. popular discourse, as Dávila argues, it is important to continue to consider it as a category through which meaning is made, even if the boundaries of classification are constantly shifting.
4. Andreeva, "Showrunner."
5. Bradley, "Why Latin Lover."

6. Andreeva, "Showrunner."
7. Genette, *Narrative Discourse*.
8. Pérez, *Rethinking Chicana/o*. Pérez goes on to argue as well that the trope has queer dimensions. Although I do not go so far as to call the narrator queer in this chapter, his nonnormative masculinity could certainly lend itself to a queer reading.
9. Chow, "How the Narrator."
10. Shattuck, "'Jane the Virgin' Narrator."
11. Bradley, "Why Latin Lover."
12. Lizeth Gutierrez builds on the work of other Chicana feminists when she argues that *chisme*, or gossip, is actually a form of feminist knowledge production: see Gutierrez, "Queer Chisme."
13. Andreeva, "Showrunner."
14. Wrapped up in this as well is the influence of diversity programs run by major networks, which encourage shows to staff writers from underrepresented groups by paying their salaries for one season. After this season, some showrunners will choose to let the staff writer go, instead bringing on another new hire who will be paid for by the network. While this particular situation did not occur in the *Jane* writers' room, it does point toward the practice of not promoting writers of color to higher levels throughout the industry.
15. This is in keeping with Darnell Hunt's study of the power dynamics of the Hollywood writers' room, which suggests that hiring people of color as showrunners is important because white showrunners are vastly less likely to hire Black writers than are Black showrunners. See Darnell Hunt, "Race."
16. When asked about including Latinxs in the writers' room, showrunner Jennie Snyder Urman responded in 2015: "One writer, Carolina Rivera, came from writing telenovelas in Mexico. This is her first job on an American show. Also, I gave two scripts this year to my writers' assistant, Emmylou Diaz." Urman would consistently point to Rivera when asked about diversity during *Jane's* first two years. She would also occasionally reference her Latina writer's assistant, who would eventually become a lower-level writer before leaving the show. Stacey Wilson Hunt, "'Jane the Virgin' Boss."
17. Rivera was accompanied by lower-level Christopher Oscar Peña, who received writing credit on one episode, and writer's assistant Emmylou Diaz, who received credit on two episodes. In season 2, Diaz would become a staff writer and Peña would leave the show. This finding is in keeping with Dávila's assertion in *Latino Spin* that Latinxs are often inserted into institutions (such as museums, universities, or politics) in ways that prevent them from changing the organization's culture. In this case, having Latinx writers at the lower levels prevents them from shaping the culture of the writers' room.
18. As of the writing of this chapter, Rivera is a mid-level writer and has yet to earn producer credit for the series. Garza remains a consulting producer. Emilia Serrano served as a co-producer during season 3. Other Latinx writers have also written for the series as lower-level writers.

19. Darnell Hunt, "Race."
20. See information for both shows on the website IMDb: *Gossip Girl*, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0397442/>; *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4094300/?ref_=nv_sr_1.
21. See Dávila, *Latino Spin*; Báez, *In Search of Belonging*; Beltrán, *Latina/o Stars*.
22. Negrón-Muntaner et al., *Latino Media Gap*, 3.
23. Holloway, "CW's Male-Pattern Boldness."
24. Nielsen, "Mass Appeal."
25. According to a 2018 Nielsen study, only 24 percent of the viewers of *Jane* identify as "Hispanic" (an estimated 288,000 "Hispanic" viewers per episode in season 1, and 229,000 in season 2). In contrast, Spanish-language show *El Señor de los cielos*, which airs on Telemundo, has a much larger overall viewership that is 98 percent "Hispanic" (2.1 million "Hispanic" viewers per episode). This means that *Jane*'s "Hispanic" viewership is roughly equivalent to that of *Superstore*, which stars Honduran actress America Ferrera. It is lower, however, than the average number of "Hispanic" viewers who watch other popular sitcoms with a majority—people of color but non-Latinx cast, such as *Blackish* (estimated 336,000 "Hispanic" viewers per episode in 2018) or *Fresh Off the Boat* (estimated 306,000 "Hispanic" viewers per episode in 2018). See Nielsen, "Mass Appeal"; TV Series Finale, "Season 2 Ratings."
26. Chow, "How the Narrator"; Bradley, "Why Latin Lover."
27. Andreeva, "Showrunner."
28. Martinez, "*Jane the Virgin* Proves."

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