Does a political "fringe" still exist in today's digital world? During the GOP debates, Rep. Michelle Bachmann attacked Gov. Rick Perry for mandating HPV vaccines. Bachmann, citing a mother alleging the vaccine harmed her daughter, accused Perry of being a "crony capitalist" and Big Government flunky. Bachmann reiterated her concerns the following morning on the Today Show. Immediately, the story, along with an embedded video of Bachmann's appearance, appeared in several major news outlets, with the Huffington Post headline terming the HPV vaccine issue a "debate." The American Academy of Pediatrics quickly issued a statement debunking Bachmann's claims. The same day, Reuters published an online report interviewing several physicians complaining about the role of the Internet in the anti-vaccine sentiments, lamenting that no amount of proof will suffice for those deeply convinced, on an affective level, of vaccines' dangers.

The Bachmann example illustrates how politicized affect can quickly travel in an intertwined and interconnected media system, creating debates, dialogues, and pushing "fringe" views into mainstream visibility. Bachmann's function in this system supplants her role as a subject in control of her utterances. She herself never spoke the word "autism," yet this facet of vaccination backlash entered the discourse. Bachmann's virtual body functions as a hyperlink.

Margin/center interplay has major implications for media, citizenship, and subjectivity. In 2009, the cable network Tru T.V. picked up Conspiracy Theory, hosted by former Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura. The show features Ventura and his assistants, who self-identify as citizen journalists, investigating grand conspiracies perpetrated by pernicious, powerful, and all-knowing agents-conspiracy's essential qualities. Conspiracy

Theory is a trans-media event that unites a cable program, a call-in web chat, an interactive website, and ads for Ventura's books. It invites viewers to construct their understanding of current events on the register of affect and certainty. Repeated mentions and shots of Ron Paul and Tea Party Patriots link it to contemporary expressions of populist dissent. This interplay builds the conspiracy across platforms. In the midst of quick cuts, jarring sound effects, and split screens, a bundle of utterances emerges. British Petroleum is part of an "evil government conspiracy." Obama is a terrorist and a CIA asset, conspiring to use the gulf oil spill as a "WMD." Right-Wing populist Internet radio personality Alex Jones, appearing on the show as Ventura's "conspiracy insider," has sponsored contests encouraging fans to circulate infamous images of Obama as the Joker (from *The Dark Knight* film). Jones' presence feeds a bit of data into the system-that of Obama as a monstrous other. Obama Joker is a staple Tea Party protest signs, signifying how such an image can easily traverse mainstream and marginal political formats.

Ventura, in voice over narration, praises Paul and wonders if displaying a Paul bumper sticker could be construed by the conspirators as subversive. Ventura has maintained a media presence, crossing over into more mainstream channels. On September 17th, 2012, Ventura appeared on Piers Morgan's CNN Program, discussing topics ranging from big political controversies (Romney's "47%" remarks) to conspiracy theories (9/11). The interview has over 64,000 You Tube views, and has garnered overwhelmingly positive reviews.

Dismissed as a "tinfoil hat wearer" by Rush Limbaugh (which further circulates and normalizes the conspiracy narrative), Paul is also a conduit for conspiracy affect that

flows between highly visible pundits and political figures, contributing to an expansive grid of political intelligibility. Watching Jon Stewart's Ron Paul interview on You Tube, for example, enables You Tube's algorithm to suggest additional material of possible interest, including video clips from the 2011 Republican debates. The first comment following this clip calls for viewers to be "keyboard warriors" for Paul and bombard the Internet with supportive tweets. Paul has refused to go quietly into the political night, leading one Huffington Post blogger to wonder if his followers would revolt at the RNC, and possibly upstage Romney.

A desire for masculine agency undergirds these narratives of resistance, stressing the need for fearless gonzo journalism and to stand up to the bullies as practices of brave citizenship. Perhaps this is symptomatic of perceived loss of phallic power, as agency fades into the framework of the virtual body, becoming, ironically, a reproductive organ for circulating affect. The conspiracy theorist produces fantasies of ultimate agency, fearsome and formidable. Perhaps, in an era of increasing digitization, where insecurities and disempowering realities of technological saturation manifest in everyday ways, such as privacy concerns (will they not hire me after Google-ing me?), conspiracy theories offer comfort. They provide attainable agency and clearly defined enemies-evildoers and populist heroes-when it seems that sophisticated technologies are often in control. Through harnessing and utilizing digital media, conspiracy cultures both enact citizen resistance, and reveal anxieties of loss endemic to the digital age. Perhaps their ability to speak to these fears explains their ubiquitous presence in mainstream media.