

LH & 13 ODW

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And I couldn't help but wonder...

In the popular HBO TV series *Sex and the City* the freelance journalist Carrie Bradshaw begins her weekly column with a question she “can't help but wondering” about. Her questions are mostly concerned with the mores of life in the Big Apple and her romantic entanglements with Mr. Big, Aiden, Burger and all the other men we, her audience, are introduced to and sometimes grow attached to. Carrie wonders away in her pre-financial-crash-world.

I loved and still love the series, but the triviality of her questions puzzles me now. Carrie's concerns trigger a feeling of detachment. SATC is set in an era that has passed. Her freelance journalism funds a life in Upper Manhattan where she eats out every meal and struggles with a shopping addiction whilst living in a smart little studio flat. This set-up is far from what freelancers now might experience. It is absurd, almost a provocation. In SATC there is no mention of systemic racism, populism, pandemic, or any of the questions or concerns we've been dealing with in the meantime, especially this year. Only recently self-employed metropolitan 'creatives' were pondering Bradshaw-esque trivialities: London or Berlin, Tinder or Bumble, Pret or EAT. All that seems irrelevant now.

A film of the same era and set in the same city is *You've got Mail* starring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan. Hanks' character, Joe Fox, runs a book megastore, he is a good-hearted über-capitalist. Joe Fox does not wonder, he states:

“The whole purpose of places like Starbucks is for people with no decision-making ability whatsoever to make six decisions just to buy one cup of coffee. Short, tall, light, dark, caf, decaf, low-fat, non-fat, etc.”

This abundance of options stimulates our desires and feeling of individuality. The numerous micro-decisions add up to a feeling of agency and particularity: an attitude, a lifestyle.

Carrie's attitude and lifestyle is the thing that makes SATC attractive, still and maybe especially now. It is playful and bold, often dramatic and irrational. As a transformative yet ungraspable tool to navigate the world, her attitude highlights the gravity of illusion. Credos, affirmative slogans and advertisements inspire people everyday. This is where the illusion becomes inspirational.

There is a series of "And I couldn't help but wonder" memes. Carrie's questions are iconic and yet oblivious. As we live in this changed reality—the so-called 'new normal'—our perception and values might shift sustainably. Whether we are a Joe Fox or a Carrie Bradshaw we should be questioning our attitudes and lifestyles. But maybe we also just want to sit back, relax and enjoy our crappy millennial Romcom favorites, just for now.

JR