

**Viewing Postmodernist
Television:**
*Moonlighting, Twin Peaks,
and The Simpsons*

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary life is distinguished by a massive capacity for exchanging information. Increasingly comprehensive, global communication networks allow discrete realities to be linked. These prolific sources of representation generate a "membrane" of mediation, and a formal regime of fragmentation, depthlessness and allusiveness (Chambers, 11). These economic, epistemological and aesthetic conditions constitute postmodernism. This dissertation addresses the theoretical challenge of form by attempting to craft an approach commensurate to such semiotic density (Wollen, 65).

Since formalist approaches have been criticised as ahistorical, attention is given to the concept's social dimensions hence the history and production context of communication technology is considered. The inquiry also acknowledges the specificities of its location. The matrix of unfamiliar allusions which characterises the South African experience of American texts, embodies the multi-tiered allusiveness of postmodernist texts. It also illustrates the cult precept that quotation can be appreciated even when its source is not recognized. Cult theorises viewership as active yet ambivalent (Eco, 1988, 454).

The initial chapter delineates parameters in postmodernism, narrative, genre and cult theory. Subsequent chapters examine three postmodernist television series: *Moonlighting*, a detective series, *Twin Peaks*, a soap opera, and *The Simpsons*, an animated sitcom. Deploying parody, self-reflexivity and intertextuality, each has a complex relation with genre. Tony Bennett conceives of the latter as zones of sociality which constitute and are constituted by other zones (105). Changes in genre therefore articulate changes in modes of thinking and inscribe different reading strategies.

The relation of technology to perception and meaning is explored through Walter Benjamin's modernist theory of film.

Peter Wollen develops this argument for the age of "electronic intertextuality" (65). The latter examines the emergence of dominant visual conventions simultaneously with the inception of cinema and Fordist industrialism. The verisimilitude of the film image results in the transposition of cinematic principles onto perception of "reality". The metaphoricity of this model is repressed in "realist" narrative.

Through the ideology of realism, signs of production are excised from vision. Media representations produce not only information, but also subjectivity (Giroux and McLaren, xxiv). Realist cinema promulgates a subjectivity linked to commodification. Wollen and Richard Ohmann outline the link of technology to consumerism. Narrative cinema is further examined through Laura Mulvey's and David Bordwell's theories of subjectivity.

The specificity of *postmodernist* subjectivity is self-consciousness. Postmodernist texts address the complexities of the medium of television through the stylised use of conventional generic topoi. A different textual response has revisited the form of allegory, either repressing its figurality (Collins, 1993, 259), or exploiting its multiplicity to fit conspiratorial narratives (Jameson, 1992, 5). Both of these avenues provide unique theoretical challenges. The postmodernist texts studied in this dissertation subvert generic conventions and thus turn attention to conventionality itself. While they do not produce unconstrained subjectivities, through stylisation, these texts offer to restore the metaphoricity of the realist visual paradigm.

INTRODUCTION: TELEVISION AND POSTMODERNISM

Moulding Imaginaries and Shaping Symbolic Worlds

We live in an age "saturated by television" (Anderson, 1991, 81). The medium is the nexus of a global infrastructure of culture and, for at least two decades, its circulating texts have formed the nucleus of most of the world's cultures (Bondebjerg, 173). The impact of television has been both intimate and social, altering the boundaries of the personal as well as the public. Its ubiquitous images, extending from individual portraits to international spectacles, have reshaped audiences' symbolic worlds as well as their national identities (McLeod, 69). Television has also brought an exponential increase in the human experience of narrative. It has both intensified prior experience and caused a qualitative change in the reception of narrative (Williams, 1990b, 59). The stream of television texts both generate and are experienced in the context of media immersion, or what Iain Chambers calls a "communication membrane" (11). Developments at levels beyond the text also influence the encounter with the medium. The past decade has brought live, internationally-broadcast, 24-hour news channels like *Cable News Network* and *Sky*. Amendments to communication legislation are helping to close the remaining gaps in a worldwide circulation of information. Since the technologies of computing, telephony and television are merging, the future holds the prospect of even more comprehensive networks of information exchange. As I will show, this immersion is thought to generate the condition termed postmodernism.

The magnitude of the role of television in contemporary society indicates an urgent need to study the medium. It is evident that a new conception of culture for the age of television is necessary. Such a conception is provided by Cultural Studies. The latter defines its subject as those conditions *actually* experienced by people, and engages with

the popular "on its own terms, and in its own language" (Hebdige, 204).

Despite the magnitude of television's impact on contemporary society, such studies have to contend with an intellectual prejudice against "visible" objects (Naremore and Brantlinger, 4). Of all the media, television is identified with "extreme visibility" (Morris, 19), so television texts are especially hard to conceive of in an academic context. Though the arcane terminology of postmodernism threatens its accessibility, I believe that the great benefit of the postmodernism debate is that it addresses the role of popular culture in contemporary society (Arac, xxiii). I endorse Jeanne Allen's assertion that the relation of popular television to the public sphere must be studied (1992a, 180).

In its theoretical and textual emphases this study therefore addresses the question I consider the most compelling in Cultural Studies: what is the significance of postmodernism for meaning in a televisual age? The texts examined provide insights into the process of viewership in an age where television's discourses are pivotal to the representations that govern our media-centred cultures (Bové, 6). Some of the discourses of the television age, for instance, nationality, operate within the context of a global distribution of fictional texts like the ones studied. I would argue that enquiries into postmodernist texts such as *Moonlighting*, *Twin Peaks* and *The Simpsons* examine the point where texts cross national borders.

I would also argue that this study is necessary precisely because it originates in a country outside of the mainstream of Cultural Studies. Because America has the world's most developed television industry, the medium is an effective channel of programmes and advertisements from America to other countries (Allen, 1992b, 24).¹ John Fiske notes that American

mythology is easily absorbed into the culture of other countries (4). Some theorists are concerned about the potential for cultural imperialism (Waugh, 1992, 9), but I believe that there is also a need to study how texts become local. This is an area where South African Cultural Studies can make a critical contribution. In South Africa, due to the boycott by British Equity during apartheid, television schedules are dominated by American programmes. Because they confront the relation of viewership, representation, the local and the international, cultural theory from countries outside America and Europe is increasingly important to Cultural Studies (Stratton and Ang, 4-8).

The engagement with the popular - and how it articulates with structures of power and subjectivity in television and postmodernism - is the substance of this dissertation. It commences with an outline, in this prefatory section, of the theoretical concepts which will inform the rest of the study. My own position will be delineated in the course of navigating theories of television, postmodernism, narrative, genre, parody and cult. Subjectivity and viewer competence in realist film and television, and then in postmodernist texts will be examined. In succeeding chapters the television series *Moonlighting* (1984-89), *Twin Peaks* (1990-91), and *The Simpsons* (1987-), respectively a detective series, a soap opera and an animated sitcom, will be analysed.

I believe, with Peter Wollen, that a new understanding of meaning must be commensurate with the formal complexity of the time (65). The examination of form is therefore central to this enquiry. Postmodernisation - or the conditions which constitute postmodernism - is signified by a new relation between form and content. The role of form becomes invested with epistemological meaning. Contemporary culture is characterised by a dense intertextuality or "semiotic glut" (Bondebjerg, 173). The use of the media in the service both

of "truth" and fiction, of the news and an industry of publicity, makes the study of form crucial. Roland Barthes terms this the investigation of "ideas-in-form" (1973, 112). In his noted study, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Jean-Francois Lyotard poses the defining question of the postmodern condition as the epistemological significance of form (22-23). Technologies such as the vast, decentred communication networks become figures for the operation of the contemporary world. The figure provides a superlative fit with the spatial yet invisible dynamics which govern the world system. This system is simultaneously present to people in its effects on their lives, and invisible, since it ex-nominates itself. Therefore, it cannot be thought in any other way except through the figure of an intangible but powerful network. Consequently, postmodernism has been marked by the rise of allegory. Allegory seems to provide a solution to the questions of form, simultaneously providing simplicity and complexity (Jameson, 1992, 4-21). Yet the use of allegory itself becomes a source of complexity, and a valuable area of discussion, taken up again in Chapter Three on *The Simpsons* and in the conclusion. Postmodernist texts address the allegorical relation between form and content by indexing their own mechanisms (Zizek, 1992a, 5).

The question of the significance of form for subjectivity - or patterns of ideas and actions in "reality" - must be also confronted. Since I consider genre and narrative my arguments emphasise formalist and structuralist elements. Such approaches have been criticised for constructing subjectivity as universal, ahistorical and apolitical (Norris, 10). I hope to counter such criticism by attending to the social dimensions of form. Television is the major arena of public discourse, and literacy has been redefined by visually-based media. I believe strongly that further study of the mechanisms of viewership is necessary. Viewership constitutes an ever more important role in contemporary life. Nationhood,

community and individuality are all discourses inscribed in viewing, and postmodernist television holds important insights about viewership.

These texts operate within specific historical and economic conditions, which will be outlined briefly here. The media environment has been changed fundamentally by recent developments in the communications industry. Legislation now allows American television networks to broadcast and syndicate their own programmes. Before this, the process of syndication produced a forced symbiosis between producers and broadcasters of television texts. The commercial American networks, ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox, do not produce their own prime-time programming. Instead, they license the rights to broadcast series made by independent production houses or by Hollywood studios. Once a series has been shown for approximately four years, or has accumulated at least 100 episodes, it can be syndicated. It is here that production companies see massive returns on their investments, since broadcast fees generally do not cover the costs of producing programmes. The numerous commercial television stations in America receive only a part of their programming from the networks to whom they are affiliated. The rest of their schedules must be filled by programmes bought through syndication. The American market for syndication is huge and, because of its profitability, Hollywood products can be sold at minuscule prices internationally. International markets are increasingly profitable to Hollywood; in 1994, twenty-five percent of Disney's profits came from overseas sources (Frankel, 29).

The prospect of new legislation has introduced a level of "vertical integration", or control of both production and distribution of texts, not seen since 1948 (Gibbs, 36). In that year the United States Justice Department ordered Paramount studio to sell its interests in movie theatre chains, signalling the end of the dominance of the studios

over film (Anderson, 1991, 83). The current shifts in the media environment go much further. The consolidation of large media companies such as Capital Cities/ABC and the Disney corporation, current negotiations between Time-Warner and Turner Broadcasting (which includes CNN), the establishment of international media corporations like that of Rupert Murdoch, and the merging of computer, telephone and entertainment companies, have created multi-billion dollar organisations with global interests in television, publishing, and multi-media (Roberts, 24). Access to information has increased massively. At a time in which the circulation of media images is overwhelmingly American and increasingly concentrated, the "complex allusiveness" of postmodernist television parody does not assume a position outside of the culture in which it is implicated. Instead, it self-consciously rearticulates media culture from within media culture (Collins, 1992, 335).

The confluence of the terms "television" and "postmodernism" demands careful exploration. The range of writing on television and postmodernism makes these fields daunting to review. The terms are complicated by their very familiarity, and the frequent appeal to one to describe the other. Television is described as the exemplar of postmodernism (Collins, 1992, 327), and the postmodern proliferation of meaning is simultaneously ascribed to a surfeit of televisual texts (Bondebjerg, 173). The danger in theories which see television as the embodiment of postmodernism is that television then pre-empts all the analytical tools provided by postmodernist theory (Connor, 168). I will show that there is an intrinsic if not redundant connection between the two.

How does one answer the question, what is "postmodernism"?

Partly, the answer is determined by approach. Some theorists welcome postmodernism as a critical discourse which reveals ironies, paradoxes and similarities (Featherstone, 9). An aesthetic approach such as Todd Gitlin's sees postmodernism in

terms of the features of cultural products. Negative approaches portray it as a means for intellectuals to comply with the seductions of consumption (Kinder, 234). Fredric Jameson is the primary exponent of the periodising model derived from Ernst Mandel's analysis of the three stages of capitalism. In his recent study, *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Jameson portrays postmodernism as the cultural manifestation of late capitalism. According to this model, postmodernism is "a closed social system in which the economic cycle of production and consumption is validated and steered by the political order" (Angus, 336). Jameson sees postmodernism in the context of a commodified cultural sphere which has invaded every other sphere in society. Such totalising conceptions condemn all of popular culture, especially television, as corrupt and complicit with capitalism (Connor, 165-72).

The negative approach has been vigorously rebutted by the other wing of postmodernist theory, here represented by Linda Hutcheon. Hutcheon presents postmodernism as a progressive rather than radical development in aesthetics, acknowledging that postmodernist works are implicated in the systems of authority and production which they seek to critique (1988, 106). If postmodernism undercuts modernist seriousness by the use of parody, pastiche, and irony, Hutcheon asserts that postmodernism also closes the gap between high and low art (1988, 44). For critics like Terry Eagleton, however, this playfulness amounts to the betrayal of the avant-garde ideal of a radical, committed art (386).

My own position on postmodernism negotiates a path between these divides. To me, postmodernist theory acknowledges the role of popular culture in theory, approaching it as an arena in which social and economic relations may be contested (Arac, xxiii-xxx). Furthermore, I do not believe that a universal condemnation of postmodernism or postmodernist texts is

sustainable. The range of texts explored in this dissertation alone makes such a position hard to defend. On the other hand, postmodernist analyses should not be limited to listing changes to convention. Instead, as I hope to show in the following discussion, the allusive nature of the texts I have called postmodernist, makes connections to economic and social factors inevitable. In the animated debate outlined above it is important to remember the original, dissident impulse of theorising the postmodern (Bové, 5). I will show that postmodernist texts engage critically with the formal density of the time. As this density is intimately related to the media, let us briefly consider the relationship of postmodernism to the media.

Having discussed approaches, we can look at the substance of the arguments about the connection between television and postmodernism. The defining question of an investigation into the terms concerns the relationship between fiction and reality. In order to examine the role of television in representing reality, I must locate the medium in the history of communication technology. In a century of mass media television is "the exemplary mass medium" (Schwoch et al., 1). The media age was initiated around the turn of the twentieth century, crucially with the inception of the cinema and aided by the presence of other technologies of mass communication - newspapers, magazines, the telephone, the telegraph, and radio. Among these, the visually based technologies are particularly influential. While the latter appear to reflect reality, they actually structure vision (Benjamin, 224-26). The belief in the verisimilitude of the image produced by the camera is demonstrated by the early use of film technology for scientific research (Stephenson, 7). Its subsequent, massively successful use for fiction exploited this apparent ability to reproduce the real (Brophy, 67). In the resulting reinforcement of visuality in our culture, the model of

reality used by cinema lost its metaphoricity (Cholodenko, 1991a, 18).

The conceptual metaphors of vision which underlie the camera are suppressed by the ideology of realism. This ideology predates cinema but realised its apotheosis in it, resulting in a bias in cinema in favour of realistic genres. The seductiveness of the realist narrative and the primacy of sight are means of distraction from the awareness of process. The presence of the camera is suppressed in order to ensure the authenticity of the world which its images generate. Though early cinema was by no means exclusively realistic, the camera was represented as an instrument of perfect transparency and made to signify cinema as a whole (Ulmer, 8). The cinema's accentuation of the visual - through the illusion of a transparent copy of reality - inculcated a culture of "visual primacy" (Brophy, 67).

The impression of a transparent reality created by the camera facilitates a culture of commodification, as the following argument shows (Ulmer, 8). The "invisible style" of Hollywood narrative films suppresses the production process and promotes the consumption of the product as though it were "natural" (1). This process of commodification is discussed in some detail in the chapter on *The Simpsons*. Inscribed in the ideology of the visible, the viewers of fictional films in the early part of the century learned "a discourse inseparable from the circulation of commodities" (Ohmann, 39).² Raymond Williams refers to this discourse of commodification as "the magic system" (quoted in Ohmann, 34). Its "magic" lay in the creation of a new consciousness, or the effective redefinition of reality. Imperceptible new relations were established between the texts of the new technologies and advertising. The media - mass circulation newspapers, magazines, radio, film and, eventually, television - converted their readers, listeners and viewers into consumers.

Television too adopted the tradition of realism. Five decades of television viewing have been characterised by pervasive naturalism. Through this mimetic tradition, television:

has produced some of the most dominant ways of seeing and understanding one's world (or the world as one's own) and of organising the temporal and spatial features of everyday life. (Hay, 356)

Thus, the past century of mass media has coincided with an "aestheticisation of reality" (Benjamin quoted in Jameson, 1991, x). My intention in this dissertation is to confront the commodification of vision by recovering the conceptual metaphoricity of realism and revealing the conventional nature of the "reality" it produces.

In order to do this I turn to the operation of realist narrative, and the apparatus of vision which operates in cinema and television. Realist film and television both inscribe viewing, and hence subject, positions. While Bill Nichols criticises David Bordwell's formalist theory of narrative film for its conflation of point-of-view and subjectivity (69), I contend that, since the invention of technologies of visual reproduction, perspective has attained a specific importance for subjectivity. After reviewing the subject position created by realist narratives, I examine the implications of non-realist and postmodernist modes for subjectivity.

Narrative is crucial in considering the relationship of fiction and reality. The human narrative tradition is thousands of years old (Eco, 1994, 8). Fictional narrative gives shape to events, and its audience is constantly tempted to imitate it by giving shape to reality (99). In the last hundred years, variously through cinema, radio, television and computers, humanity has been exposed to narrative on a scale qualitatively greater than has ever been experienced before (Williams, 1989, 4-5). For these various audiences, the operation of narrative is the main source of pleasure and

consequently, narrative has attained a new force (Neale, 13). In effect, increased exposure has redefined the relation of fiction to reality. It is therefore crucial to examine the workings of realist narrative, the primary mode of both film and television. After examining the subjectivity created by realist film, I will examine the different economy of television texts.

The realist perspective determines that the world exists independently of its representation, and this existence testifies to the validity of its representation (Hartley, in O'Sullivan et al., 257). My position would be that narratives are rather a version of reality whose validity is determined by convention. Unlike the category of facticity which governs scientific paradigms, narrative truth is judged by verisimilitude (Bruner, 4-13). M. H. Abrams defines verisimilitude as the "achievement of an illusion of reality in the audience" (211). This is ensured in the realist text by metonymy, or what Jacques Lacan calls the "alibi" of detail (97). The verisimilitude of the camera's image along with the narrative organisation of events into temporal and spatial patterns, grants the media's representations "an almost unreal quality of reality" (McCleod, 71).

The achievement of this seamless rendition of reality through narrative has been analysed by Laura Mulvey. The concept of "suture" in cinema explains the effect which binds spectators to the illusion of absolute reality through the working of the cinematic "apparatus". The theory of apparatus investigates the ideological dimension of technology (Ulmer, 1). Through editing which appears to be determined by the action, the narrative is experienced seamlessly and invisibly by the spectator. The second effect of suturing is to "stitch" the spectator into the narrative by suppressing the presence of the camera and giving the illusion that the screen provides unimpeded access to the action.

In her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" Laura Mulvey shows that realist narrative formulates a coherent subject position for patriarchy. According to Mulvey's reading, in realist cinema a unified subjectivity is constituted for the spectator through a complex interplay of a masculine gaze and a feminine object. Both the gaze of the camera and that of the spectator are subsumed in the active gaze of the male protagonist, as the spectator identifies with the latter figure. Though the impulse of the narrative is directed along the syntagmatic axis, the woman's presence in the narrative threatens constantly to arrest the action in "moments of erotic contemplation" (1989d, 19). The delicate coordination of looks therefore creates a subjectivity corresponding to the neurosis of the ideal male spectator (17-25). Mulvey conceives of the "structures of fascination" of realist narrative cinema as part of the apparatus of patriarchy (18). By making its representation seem "natural", cinema's high verisimilitude represses the awareness that "reality" is a cultural construction (Chatman, 49).

The conventionality of realist narrative can be grasped by abstracting its basic form. While realist texts suppress their narrative structures and appear transparently to reproduce reality, by a crucial paradox, realist narrative can be represented in the non-realistic form of a diagram. The shape of the parabola, with its symmetrical incline and decline, haunts narration. Indeed, "parabolic patterns attract narrativisation" (Mulvey, 1989b, 160). The dominant narrative tradition practised by Hollywood is based on the "geometrical" plots described above (Elsaesser, 274). Their skeletal structure consists of "emblematic" particulars whose resonance invites viewers to fill in the gaps in the narrative. Realist narratives therefore generate competency among readers (Bruner, 7).

Realist narrative is the basic component of the generic texts under discussion. Narrative and genre are interdependent; genres are modes of narrative (Neale, 7). On the other hand, narratives are "embedded" in genre, and this "genericness" aids the understanding of narrative (Bruner, 14). The classic detective story exemplifies the parabolic form of narrative. In the detective genre the plot structure consists of the rearrangement of the elements that constitute its pretext - initial equilibrium, disruption, then resolution, and modified equilibrium (Schatz, 1990, 30). Its strictly causal structure intensifies the impulse toward a logical conclusion, secured by rationality and logic. This basic narrative formula is embodied in the standardised plots of numerous television detective series. William Spanos posits that, as a result, the paradigmatic postmodernist genre is the anti-detective story (80). Both *Moonlighting* and *Twin Peaks*, programmes I have designated "postmodernist", radically modify the television detective genre. I will return to discussions of genre and generic innovation after discussing the televisual apparatus.

Mulvey's essay was written in 1975 and manifests a strong structuralist influence. While reviewing her own writing on narrative force in fiction, Mulvey detects a "spatial patterning of ideas" (1989b, 163). In a crucial insight she postulates that the pervasiveness of realist narrative in fiction could generate wider effects. The implication is that the conditioning effect of massive exposure to narrative, with its drive toward telos or closure, could have political implications in reality, and that:

the forms of ... 'conceptual topology', as I have called it, might affect the formulation of the ideas themselves and their ultimate destiny. (Mulvey, 1989b, 163)

Mulvey thereby suggests the importance for both an intellectual and a political practice of recognising "the moment in the life span of a political or aesthetic movement that is, itself, subject to a parabolic curve" (1989b, 163).

James Hay terms this the impact of narrative agency on culture and ideology, manifested in the way the narrative logic of a social group enables and constrains future narratives. Like Mulvey, Hay is interested in the ways in which ideology is generated through narrative and language (359-65). An analysis of television journalism confirms that news discourse shapes events into easily-digested narratives (Fiske, 29). Importantly, the imperative to craft a plausible story with a beginning, a middle, and end can impart false closure to a matter. This practice has resulted in the habitual simplification of complex issues (Schwoch et al., 51-56). As demonstrated in this example, narrative is the organising principle of television (Ulmer, ix). The medium broadcasts a stream of narrative in the form of drama, news, and advertisements (Kozloff, 68).

The primary criticism of formalist models such as Mulvey's structuralist theory is that they construct subjects ahistorically. Her theory produces undifferentiated spectators, who are unable to resist subjection and uninflected by history. By contrast, theories of television construct more historically-situated viewers. While similar to film in its realistic bias, television interpellates the viewer as a fragmented subject. The interpellation is itself fragmentary and, in contrast to the fascinated subjects of cinema, television's viewers must constantly be cajoled back (Kaplan, 1987, 29).

Whereas realist cinema fuses narrative and spectacle, television holds "no reverence for the image" (Kaminsky and Mahan, 29). In contrast to the unity and plenitude of the subject position inscribed in film narrative, television narrative:

embed[s] distraction in its very core, fragmenting vision into a plurality of views, rupturing primary identification and amplifying secondary identifications. (Flitterman-Lewis, 238)

The multiplicity of television narratives thus play a paradoxical role in subject formation. Television's narratives are characteristically fragmented, interrupted, and provisional. They give rise to fragmented, distracted and contingent subjectivities, which are, nonetheless, shadowed by the appeal of wholeness. Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren find that:

television [is] implicated in both the decentering of the historical object and the reconstitution of the subject according to normative cultural maps of reality. (Giroux and McLaren, xxi)

This decentring operation of television generates much of the disjunctiveness that defines postmodernism. Paradoxically, because it imparts coherence, realist narrative itself provides the "normative" maps which create the sense of reality (Fiske, 130).

The explanatory appeal of narrative emerges from our lifelong reliance upon similar conventions in engaging with reality. The primary narrative conventions - causality, telos, and closure - construct our experience of reality. Narrative is, in fact, a mode of thinking (Hutcheon, 1988, 121). Narrative comprehension is one of the earliest skills learned by human beings. It structures our experiences and our memories, and therefore, instead of referring to "reality", narrative actually creates it (Bruner, 4-13).

Since television is dominantly realist, the correlation between the televisual economy of subjectivity and consumption must be examined. The process which propels subject formation in the televisual apparatus deploys an infinitely deferred prospect of plenitude (Kaplan, 1987, 28). Television:

instil[s] a desire for continual consumption (not only of its programs but of the products that it sells), and trad[es] on the powerful sense of immediacy that it creates. (Flitterman-Lewis, 238)

The desire which impels subject formation is channelled into a desire for commodities. In his analysis of Disney television

Christopher Anderson notes that the animation studio provides a model for the economic and textual integration of American media. The *Disneyland* programme of the 1950s was so structured that the line between narrative and advertising disintegrated (1991, 99). The "total" advertising used in the programme leads to fascinating insights for textuality and narrative closure:

A trip to Disneyland offered the family viewer a chance to perform in the Disneyland narrative, to provide unity and closure through personal experience. (Anderson, 1991, 98)

Disney promised to recapture the unmediated reality which the media can only evoke (1991, 98-99). This interlocking structure of fiction and reality brings me back to postmodernist theory.

As has been demonstrated above, the relation of fiction to reality has been complicated by the operation of the media. Television obscures the distinction between fiction and non-fiction (Flitterman-Lewis, 238). The use of the same forms to serve very different purposes signifies the need to investigate the role of form, a task which I take up in the section on parody. Besides such blurring, the world has also been transformed by the media's allusive strategies. Ian Angus posits the idea of a multiplicity of media sources which form a "media environment", that constitutes reality rather than merely reflecting it (342). This environment does not presume the prior existence of events before they are represented. Instead, different media refer to one another's versions, and in "translating" these versions, the identity of an event is constituted. For Angus, this creation of "reality" through the circulation of the media, constitutes its postmodernism (339-42). Of the media, television is the primary agent of such a postmodern environment. Ib Bondebjerg ascribes the excess of meanings in postmodernism to the surfeit of television forms (173). This, then, is the connection between the two terms.

The matrix of dissolving boundaries in their medium is addressed by postmodernist television texts themselves. The self-reflexive texts I will analyse explore the "totalising world" of television, in which the fictional dissolves into the "real" (Flitterman-Lewis, 220).

Paradoxically, amid the shifting boundaries between fiction and reality, television has also become the "certifying agent" of the postmodernist age (Mcleod, 75). The principal mode in which television operates, the "relay", simulates the unmediated transmission of reality. This is true even with fictional television (Connor, 159). The verisimilitude of the fictional image has consequently given renewed importance to form. The parodic texts analysed in the following chapters highlight the way television "generates the real" (Morris, 18).

Fictional television is usually categorised by "genre", and it is to this concept that I will now turn. The three series considered in this study are variations on genres which television has known since it began (Deming, 126). I examine the significance of genre for television because conventional series have become the preeminent vehicles of pleasure and meaning on television (Bondebjerg, 167). As forms which articulate both newness and nostalgia, genres demand attention. How, though, does one speak of genre?

Tony Bennett's conception of genre acknowledges its irreducibly social dimension. To Bennett, formalist definitions of genres succeed only in regulating reading practices. Bennett contends instead that genre theory should look at the conditioning function of genre and at the composition and functioning of generic systems. The fact that they are culturally and historically specific means that changes in genres can be used to analyse changes in the practices of reading and writing (1990a, 81-105).

Furthermore, since genres inscribe relationships between individuals and society, they express significant cultural meanings (Turner, 110). This is relevant to my study since its texts are American and the viewing context South African.

Besides criticising formalist theories, Bennett contests the implication of sociological approaches that texts and society are separate and hierarchically ordered. The latter approach conceives of art as a reaction to a previously-constituted society emerging from the already-formed subjectivities of society's agents. Instead, Bennett believes that genres construct "organised spheres of sociality of which their textual components are but a part" (1990a, 105). Generic forms are determined intertextually; and in establishing the parameters of reading practices, they also establish writing practices which sustain the conditions which produce them. This approach undercuts the essentialism of taxonomic approaches to genre, as well as the crude reflective paradigm in sociological approaches (105-110).

Bearing in mind that Bennett conceives of changes in genre as articulating new modes of knowledge, we need to look now at the way genre has been written about historically. The history of genres of visual texts begins with the earliest films, such as *The Great Train Robbery*, a western made by Edwin S. Porter in 1903. Westerns, crime stories and slapstick comedies were an immediate success with the mass audience. The relatively stable characteristics of these forms were standardised as a cost-saving measure for the film industry, and soon precipitated into genres (Bywater and Sobchack, 80-81).

Genre works similarly in television, integrating economic considerations with textual economics. Like other forms of popular culture, television is heavily reliant on genre (Feuer, 1992, 157). The link between narrative and genre is

evident. The latter can be grasped as a way of understanding narrative (Bruner, 14). To Steve Neale, genres are modes of narrative (7). As has been shown above, narrative works differently within the fragmented structure of television viewing. Thus Jane Feuer argues that genre is not television's main structuring principle. Instead, television is organised by flow and interruption (1992, 157).

Feuer also warns against a static conception of television genres (1992, 156). Stephen Neale has provided an influential definition of the latter as "systems of orientations, expectations, and conventions that circulate between industry, text, and subject" (6). This dynamic conception is drawn from actual texts, and is therefore able to accommodate changing conventions. Because the theory is sensitive to individual programmes, the study of generically ambivalent texts like *Moonlighting*, *Twin Peaks*, and *The Simpsons* enables us not only to trace the evolution of genres, but to analyse through them movements in television and cultural history (Vande Berg, 93).

Feuer argues that the evolution of television genres is not teleological, but cyclical. Even one text may change a genre, as the latter follows cycles of self-consciousness and classicism (1992, 156-57). Such cycles are evident in the genre of the sitcom, to which *The Simpsons* belongs. The situation comedy is the medium's most basic genre (146). Its half-hour length, its comedic base, the recurring characters who face different "situations", and the achievement of closure within each episode have remained generally unchanged since the 1950s. The sitcom has been conceived variously as regressive in its validation of patriarchy, or ritualistically reassuring in the triumph of the social group over the challenge of the many "situations". The genre has also been perceived as satirical and progressive, since its characters are "flat", which prevents the recuperative identification invited by more rounded characters. According to this model,

the situations become the site for testing assumptions (146-50).

Like other genres, the sitcom develops intertextually and within specific production contexts. During the 1970s and 1980s, the American sitcom moved toward the serial form (Feuer, 1992, 146). The Networks, particularly CBS, had redefined their audiences to include favourable economic profiles rather than simply measuring the size of the audience. Other genres too were becoming more serialised (152). There was a period of marked innovation and risk-taking in the 1980s, led by the ABC Network. With their hybrid genres, the 1980s were a rich period of contestation. Gender became one of the issues redefined in television programmes of the decade. Robert Deming writes that television's representation of masculinity was reworked in such programmes as *Miami Vice*, *Wiseguy*, and *thirtysomething*. Citing *Moonlighting*, he also detects the renegotiation of femininity (131-37).

Amidst this generic innovation, the domestic comedy modified its formula to include social issues. The kind of problems or "situations" changed and the nature of character changed. The introduction by the MTM production company of character development into the structure of the sitcom led inevitably to the start of serialisation in previously episodic genres. This trend was found not only in comedy but also in drama. The extreme character evolution in the context of daytime serials was a television standard and the success of prime-time serials provided a new paradigm for television narratives. New sitcoms had characters with complex and evolving lives. The MTM trait of introducing social or "lifestyle" issues, such as feminism changed the conception of character in the genre. The MTM sitcom became the paradigmatic form of the sitcom in the 1980s, satisfying an upmarket audience with a more literary conception of

television. Thus characters changed over time, and plot lines developed. The sexual tension between the protagonists of *Cheers*, for instance, was based on a history shared by the characters. The changing form of the sitcom paved the way for the success of serial drama; in the 1980s serialisation entered the quality sitcoms of the decade (Feuer, 1992, 152-56).

Norman Lear, of Tandem Productions, introduced the other new element into sitcom: the inclusion of political issues. In considering subsequent developments, Feuer's caution against a teleological model of television genre is justified. Instead, a cyclical pattern of sitcom development can be detected. In the 1970s a move to the office redefined the ambit of the domestic comedy, yet, in the 1980s *The Cosby Show* returned to the territory of 1950s sitcoms (Feuer, 1992, 152-55). Contemporary sitcoms like *The Simpsons* stress class, gender and economic issues which are also political. *Married ... with Children* takes its title from a census category, and seems to revert to the flat Brechtian character-types of the 1960s and 1970s which were popular before the character-based comedies of Lear (155-57). Though such cycles in theme and character can be observed, the return to older traditions is self-conscious and frequently irreverent.

Unlike the sitcom or the detective story, the soap opera has an open-ended structure. The success of *Dallas* and *Dynasty* in the 1980s established the genre in prime-time, but its paradigmatic texts are American day-time soap operas. Though closure is always deferred, the appeal of resolution is deployed in different ways. The multiple plotlines of the narrative are resolved at different times, and resolution is never final. Miniature climaxes are organised around the interruption of advertisement and episode breaks. The programmes are characterised by a marked degree of inter- and intra-episodic redundancy, therefore, plot developments unwind

very slowly because the same event may feature in many sequences of the same episode. In contrast to the syntagmatic impulse of the detective story, the soap opera's narrative achieves great paradigmatic depth through its characteristic redundancy, fervent acting, and use of extreme close-up shots. These characteristics show that the soap opera narrative is closely adapted to the fragmented nature of television viewing (Allen, 1983, 97-104).

The relation of genre to the context of viewing has been carefully theorised. For Rick Altman genre is an ideological practice since it seeks to limit the ways in which a text can signify (Feuer, 1987, 118). While genre is used to "keep the threat of semiosis at bay", this occurs in the particular contexts of reception (Bennett, 1990a, 104-5). I will show that the relationship of the television audience with genre has changed. In examining the social and ideological implications of form, I construct genre as apparatus. Such research has been termed the "psychology of forms" (Burke quoted in Vande Berg, 93).

The reconception of genre as apparatus is supported by Bruner's assertion that genres are:

invitations to a particular style of epistemology. As such, they may have quite as powerful an influence in shaping our modes of thought as they have in creating the realities that their plots depict. (Bruner, 15)

Bennett agrees that generic conventions position viewers by configuring their pleasures (1981, 3). In this paradigm texts mediate between the viewer and the culture in which both viewer and text are embedded. Bennett's theory establishes that genres are intricately situated in society, constituting and constituted by its regulating practices. This is supported by Giroux and McLaren's assertion that structures of communication like genre order the subject's relation to signification and the world (xx). To Bennett, therefore, changes in genre systems "produce new forms of historical

knowledge" (1990a, 104). Changes in genre are therefore significant.

This leads to the question of viewing positions constructed by non-realist texts. Because of the universality of television's formulae, audiences have developed an acute knowledge of generic conventions. The extent of this expertise can be judged from the "shorthand" style used by genre texts (Kaminsky and Mahan, 33). To Leah Ekdorn Vande Berg, the pleasure of innovation in popular culture comes from the recognition of a degree of variation from convention. The subversion of generic expectations can therefore produce potent defamiliarising effects (92).

Genre development has been characterised by two divergent strains. One has been to radically subvert old genres as, for instance, *The Simpsons* does in its parody of the family sitcom. Like *Father Knows Best*, the paradigmatic sitcom of the 1950s, it is set in the town of Springfield. A further development in genres is offered by "recombination" or the splicing of different forms to create new products built around proven tastes (McAllister, 62). An opposing approach to genre, which I will discuss in detail later, is marked by the attempt to recapture the innocence for which genre is now a figure (Collins, 1993, 242). Thus *The Cosby Show*, by contrast with *The Simpsons*, is a respectful contemporary version of *Father Knows Best*. Both *The Simpsons* and *The Cosby Show* are responses to basic conventions of television. Collins observes that the former's self-reflexive recycling of the history of the sitcom is typical of postmodernism (1992, 335). Yet concurrent with this has been the success of programmes like *The Cosby Show*.

Thus far in the discussion, *The Simpsons* has proven to be the exemplary postmodernist text. From the example it is evident that conventional television provides the material of

postmodernism. What distinguishes "postmodernist" television is its engagement with the overwhelming legacy of realism and its elision of representation and the real which constitutes postmodernism. Because the nature of reality has been transformed by the excessively allusive strategies of media, new fictional works which mimic the profoundly disjunctive world of postmodernism, have been termed a "peculiar new form of realism" (Jameson, 1991, 48).

Postmodernist television is therefore meant to be seen in the context of naturalistic television. Innovative series provoke viewers into "oscillating" between ways of seeing (Ledwon, 262). Instead of affirming the conventions by which reality has been constructed, postmodernist narrative:

in its very structures, *disorientates* the viewer smack in the middle of the orientation process which television perpetually uses. It disrupts the patterns that are endemic to television and upsets and exposes the narrative styles of so many of the other allegedly non-fiction programmes. *It shows the frame in the picture, when most television is busy showing the picture in the frame.* (Dennis Potter quoted in Bondebjerg, 168, latter emphasis added).

By calling attention to the role of formal conventions in giving structure to reality, such challenges to genre may embody the hopes of a televisual culture to interrogate itself.

The subjectivity constructed by postmodernist television is not "free" to make meaning. Instead, meaning is always inflected by intertextual and cultural codes (Bondebjerg, 165). In recreating the multiple realities of contemporary culture, postmodernist texts undermine the concept of a unified subject (Hebdige, 185). Hutcheon concedes, however, that postmodernism's multiplicity exploits the appeal of humanist wholeness (1990, 126). Postmodernist television thus works in tandem with the most conventional aspects of the medium to launch an interrogation of convention.

Conventional television generates acute audience expertise. Postmodernist television persistently transgresses conventions so that programmes feel "unnatural" (Glassner, 53). These works produce an intense awareness of constructedness; in fact, the accentuation of formal properties becomes part of the appreciation of the text. Meta-television is the term given to such self-reflexivity and intertextuality on television. In 1987 Scott Olson found meta-television to be the exception (284-85). In the 1990s self-reflexivity and intertextuality are prevalent in the medium (Bondebjerg, 177; White, 193).

What are the features which distinguish the "peculiar new realism" of postmodernism from realist television? In her analysis of *MTV* (Music Television), Kaplan finds that its "subversive" modes with their discordant blend of viewing positions, styles, and genres, ironically resemble the conventional flow of television (1987, 162-63). The technique of direct address, used extensively in *Moonlighting* and *The Simpsons*, is a feature of vaudeville used in sitcoms of the 1950s and revived by postmodernist television. Thus the features of televisual postmodernism can be traced to its most conventional practices.

The features of postmodernism may best be explained with reference to the texts which will be analysed in detail later. The postmodernism of *Moonlighting*, *Twin Peaks* and *The Simpsons* may be judged by their overt allusiveness. Their quotation of archetypal elements of their genres is not subsumed into a coherent narrative structure. Instead, these elements are left deliberately suspended and the gaps between them exposed. The series' narratives also deliberately oscillate between genres. Whereas realist narratives consist of a highly artificial basic structure, the illusion both of reality and of a coherent subject position is achieved by filling in the gaps in the narrative structure (Chatman, 49). By contrast,

these series decline the authority of a centralised voice, substituting it with the pluralistic narration typical of postmodernism. Using the technique of bricolage, the texts consist of incomplete fragments of texts which refuse the redeeming order of realist narrative. They suggest the "unreality" of reality by intensifying the conventions by which we know the "real". For example, since bricolage plays on surfaces, the deliberate artificiality of setting and character in *Twin Peaks* undermines the verisimilitude of the camera's image. The *mise-en-scène* juxtaposes the conventional and the artificial. Style is therefore redefined, and artifice and copying become valued styles in themselves.

In *Twin Peaks*, the formal depthlessness of the work has a counterpart in its emotional tone. Affect is unpredictably allotted in *Twin Peaks*; its narrative shifts disjunctively from the mundane to the horrific. David Lynch's work is frequently criticised for its nihilism. On the other hand, the series invests massive affect in the embodiment of stereotype and expectation, suggesting how these shape reactions in reality. The three series also recapitulate the larger refusal of meaningfulness in contemporary culture. The pervasive self-consciousness of postmodernism recasts sincerity as irony, thus its works are deliberately "blank" of any message (Gitlin, 347).

Negative views of postmodernist television frequently focus on its complicity with the ordinary consumption of television. Bondebjerg, for instance, believes that *Moonlighting* belongs to a commercial, uncritical form of postmodernism. He asserts that such works simply embellish conventional narrative structures, creating a fashionable avant-garde (162-63). Lynne Joyrich goes further, claiming that meta-televisual references encourage the consumption of more television by rewarding esoteric knowledge about the medium. She believes that devices such as self-reflexivity and direct address are

attempts to create an expedient sense of community. Presented as unrehearsed interludes, these inserts suppress their own mediation and interpellate the viewer into their ideological orders (184-91). Her analysis of *Moonlighting* concludes that its avant-garde techniques are used to serve patriarchal and consumerist ideologies. I believe, however, that Joyrich's analysis is flawed by its neglect of parody.

Parody allows postmodernist texts to cite popular culture, while foregrounding formal convention. Form is a crucial area for analysis since fiction and reality are blurred through "hyper-real" signs which have no intrinsic referentiality (Bondebjerg, 167). Postmodernist texts juxtapose the modes of fiction and non-fiction to show the similarities in their form and reveal the narrativisation behind "factual" discourses (Hutcheon, 1988, 128). In fiction, postmodernist texts, unlike realist ones, make the process of representation overt, exposing the constructedness of television's illusion of naturalism. Postmodernist texts therefore foreground the merging of fiction and reality by playing on the textualisation of reality (Jameson, 1991, 397).

In their review of British and American film and television comedy Steve Neale and Frank Krutnik find that self-reflexivity is an almost inevitable effect of television formats (201). Any pronounced style lends itself to parody, since magnifying what is already conspicuous is one of the attractions of parody (Mamber, 31). Early comic programmes used the forms of television to craft a specifically televisual comedy. The American comedy *Laugh In* parodied the pace and disjunctiveness of advertisements, and the BBC's *Monty Python's Flying Circus* created visual comedy by stylising television conventions (Williams, 1990a, 76). Self-reflexivity, which electrified American audiences in programmes like *Moonlighting* in the mid-1980s, had been used in the 1960s and 1970s in *Monty Python's Flying Circus*.

Monty Python's Flying Circus skits demonstrate the correspondence between television and surrealism. Like conventional television, surrealist works operate through the jarring combination of "distant realities" (Williams, 1981, 4). They use traditional narrative structures to subvert textual expectations (5-6). By undermining the conventions of realist texts, surrealism investigates the principles of vision which generate the "observable" world (Waugh, 1992, 13). The programme disrupts the teleology of skits, abandoning them before conclusion. This technique disperses the sense of closure provided by a conventional punchline. Neale and Krutnik find that *Monty Python* comically foregrounds not only the conventions of television, but also the conventions of comic forms themselves. Thus the surrealist comedy of *Monty Python's Flying Circus* serves to reveal the conventions behind "reality", an aim of this dissertation (203-5).

The parodic accentuation of form and style is prevalent in contemporary American television (Schwoch et al., 13). Hutcheon explains that parody is the manifestation of an ambivalent relation to conventional form (1990, 133). It demonstrates simultaneously faith in and revisionism toward form (Mamber, 33). Parody is characterised by a "complex allusiveness" (Thorburn, 637), and the appropriation and ironic quotation of earlier sources (Collins, 1992, 333). These quotations are frequently taken from popular culture and communicate at many levels. Parody's multi-tiered appeal is strategically useful to mainstream television since its texts create "coalition audiences" and thereby satisfy commercial television's demand for the maximum number of viewers (345).

On the other hand, Hutcheon argues that postmodern parody is a formal instrument for politicising visual texts (1990, 128-32). Because of its jarring decontextualisation, parodic television allows viewers an empowering insight into the

mechanisms of the medium (White, 195-96). It is potentially subversive because it invokes and then undermines textual conventions to emphasise the subject's interpellation in discourse. To Hutcheon, parody accentuates the politics of representation (1989, 94). While parody self-consciously reflects the positioning of the spectator, it also invites viewers into a community defined by "inside" information and a shared media culture (Feuer, 1987, 72). Hutcheon calls this the "insider-outsider doubled positionality" of parody (1990, 126). Its re-articulation of sources therefore offers a paradigm for contemporary signifying practices.

The television audience which first appreciated the innovation of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, and later genre parodies like *Moonlighting*, *Twin Peaks*, and *The Simpsons*, had introjected the forms of television (Neale and Krutnik, 207). Simulation, a common technique in postmodernist works, uses this expertise to validate artifice and copies. The use of parody and quotation subverts the myth of originality and authoritative meaning (Hebdige, 191). Ironically, Schwoch et al. find that invoking dominant visual and narrative styles has become a sign of "prestige" in television (13). Thus, for instance, *Moonlighting* was advertised as a programme to watch "when you care enough to watch the very best" (Williams, 1988, 90). Feuer warns that the progressive element of parody can be undermined by the ideology of "quality" (1987, 81).

The analysis of narrative made closure a point of suspicion (Mulvey, 1989b, 159). Endings usually serve to allay anxiety by promising to contain any threat posed by the narrative (Neale, 13). In postmodern parodies this opposition is undercut. In these texts, narrative closure intensifies rather than dissipates the force of the storyline. The knowingness of the text removes the reassurance of resolution. Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* challenges narrative conventions:

yet it's not anti[-formula] by being esoteric. It totally delivers on the spills and the chills and the laughs and everything, but you can't determine what's going to happen until it happens. (Tarantino, 52)

Robert Altman's *The Player* (1993), Tony Scott's *True Romance* (1994), and episodes of Glenn Gordon Caron's *Moonlighting* (1984-89) perform a similar, self-conscious movement toward ending. They prove that there cannot be too neat an ending.

Patricia Waugh uses John Barth's formulation of parody as the "literature of replenishment" because it brings about the conscious recognition of implication in discourse (2). Jameson, on the other hand, perceives a qualitative difference between parody and postmodernist intertextuality, which he calls pastiche. He points out that postmodernist texts do not only quote material, but use these works as the basis of their structures (1991, 3). The proliferation of styles in postmodernity is reflected by bricolage, which he sees as imitation with a global scope. To Jameson, the indiscriminate appropriation of bricolage makes impossible a coherent position from which to instigate critique. He claims that pastiche consequently abandons parody's liberatory convictions. It is "blank" of any satirical impulse (17). Thus, while Glassner finds that pastiche can generate jarring and potentially liberating decontextualisation (68), Jameson sees it as mere stylistic play (1991, 17-18).

Hutcheon counters Jameson's criticism that postmodernist pastiche is uncritical play. She asserts that parodic texts simultaneously draw attention to the structures of authority within the text, and subvert the ideology of originality which underlies them (1991, 81). Postmodernist texts examine their own implication in the world in which they are produced and received (45).

While Hutcheon asserts that postmodernist works address the process of production, she seems to recast the problem of

production in terms of the workings of the text itself: she sees the operation of the postmodernist text as a self-conscious presentation of the power relations between producers and receivers (1988, 77). Jeanne Allen insists that conditions of production be considered in readings of parody. To Allen, readings which emphasise the resistant possibilities of texts confine themselves to the point of consumption, and leave the crucial areas of politics and production to other commentators. Such readings can simply endorse a new norm of consumption. By contrast, Allen believes that the political role of cultural theory is to uncover the links between representation and politics (1990a, 180). The importance of such links can be judged by recent trademark laws in America which threaten to constrict the scope for subversive representations by claiming that parody "may cause confusion or dilute the distinctiveness of the original trademark" (186). While Allen points to *Twin Peaks* and *The Simpsons* as examples of commercialised postmodernism (186), I contend that these programmes, especially the latter, navigate the role of realism in the commodification of television.

In the light of the postmodernist immersion in media, signs are layered with popular narratives. A radically intertextual visual literacy results. The use of the computer model has changed the way information is transmitted. Signs now take the form of palimpsests, giving simultaneous access to alternative versions and earlier traces. This density is redefining the function of genre. The negotiation of the "communication membrane" of contemporary society, has produced more than one kind of textual response. Postmodernist parody is only one variant. Such texts engage with this semiotic density and, in the process, have created a form of narrative in which the paradigmatic axis is increasingly significant. Topoi become a series of concurrent choices (Collins, 1993, 242-62). Every use of such features implicates all previous uses, in a demonstration of a palimpsestic notion of form.

There has also been a completely different response to media culture, manifested in a new approach to narrative, and a new genericity. Since genres articulate cultural consciousness, this second response presents a challenge to a new conception of form. I will sketch this development in some detail.

This new genre retreats from complexity - it exemplifies a "New Sincerity" (Collins, 1993, 258). Though immersed in awareness of images circulated by the media environment, these texts simulate an oblivious simplicity by recreating earlier genres unironically. Deploying popular, progressive themes such as the empowerment of black families (*The Cosby Show*), and attention to Native American culture (*Dances with Wolves*), these texts are driven by the prospect of "recoverable purity" to seek the solution of unresolvable problems (257). Often, this resolution can be found only in versions of the past rendered in the genre's utopian imaginary (259). While Jameson criticises postmodernist pastiche for evacuating history of meaning, his critique seems more appropriate to these newly sincere texts. Jameson says of the former that, instead of achieving their aim of empowering viewers to deconstruct the narrative structures which create a sense of "truth", they deny history by simulating it:

set[ting] out to recreate not a particular historical setting but the cultural experience of a particular period ... what is evoked is not an actual past, but rather the kinds of narrative experience ... that seem to typify the experience. (Connor, 177)

Texts belonging to the new genre of sincerity go a step beyond the process described in this analysis. Instead of using the relevant narrative to represent a historical experience, the new genre invents a new narrative which excises earlier narratives even while rewriting them. They rearticulate earlier styles and figures, but do so blankly. By self-consciously simulating the "authenticity" of a fictive era, they embody the regressiveness for which Jameson criticises postmodernist pastiche.

In contrast to Jameson I believe that postmodernist works play a crucial role in exposing the narrative strategies of texts which deliberately retreat from the present while exploiting its effects. An opportunity to test this thesis can be found in television history. The contingencies of American television presented a fascinating juxtaposition of three "generations" of television history in 1990. *The Cosby Show*, the celebrated sitcom of the 1980s, seemed to recreate unironically the archetypal family sitcom of the 1950s, *Father Knows Best* (Frazer and Frazer, 172). The opportunity to compare the two occurred when the Christian Broadcast Network rebroadcast *Father Knows Best* twice a day concurrently with *The Cosby Show*, underlining the similarities between the programmes. An even more telling juxtaposition occurred in August 1990 when the Fox network's *The Simpsons* was moved to the same time-slot as *The Cosby Show* on NBC (171). The juxtaposition of the three versions, especially the competition between *The Simpsons* and *The Cosby Show*, revealed the conservative rhetoric and narrative strategy behind the latter, "liberal" family sitcom. *The Simpsons'* acute parodies of the representations of family which have appeared on American television since the 1950s exposed the continuities between the visions presented in the other two sitcoms.

The visions presented by the new genre show an obsession with faith and belief. Moreover, this belief is inherently commodified and patriarchal, consisting of narcissistic fantasies projected onto convenient sites. Along with other features of a complex present, technology is condemned or excised. Ironically, the apparently unmediated vision of these texts frequently requires special effects and enormous budgets. Thus, a retreat from "the corrupt sophistication of media culture" is possible only through the latter's methods. The texts are a technologically sophisticated attempt to capture fundamental simplicity (Collins, 1993, 259-61). Their offer to recover a lost purity is thus overdetermined.

Jameson points out that special effects erase the division between our concern about content and our awareness of form (1991, 386). This returns me to the need to theorise the implications of form.

The texts of the new genre take on the form of traditional allegory, but suppress their figurality. The new genre texts foreground the tropes of a cardinal prior text which promises to guarantee their own authenticity (Collins, 1993, 259). By embodying the innocence which this older form signifies - in the case of *Dances with Wolves*, the western, and in the case of *The Cosby Show*, the sitcom - these texts attempt to literalise metaphor. This is precisely the opposite of the motivation of this dissertation: to materialise the metaphors of vision which underlie realism. Seeking to evade the ontological implications of mediation, the narration in these texts claims innocence of media culture.

Developments such as the rise of this new genre and the appearance of postmodernist television, have occurred in the context of a larger trend in American commercial television. The serial form and multiple plotlines have become standard in American television (Feuer, 1994, 551). Since I accept Bennett's argument that genre changes articulate cultural consciousness, I examine television's binarity between the serial and the series. Though the two are not absolutely distinct, series tend to have self-contained narratives, whereas serials tend to have open-ended narratives. Sitcoms have played a crucial role in stabilising television formats, as I will show in greater detail in the chapter on *The Simpsons*. As I have shown earlier, the reason for the impulse toward serialisation may be traced to the current dominance of the MTM paradigm of character development in sitcoms. This paradigm itself emerged in the context of successful daytime serial drama, and has generated the expectation of increasing "credibility" in series characters (Teachout, 66).

An examination of the texts shows a varied engagement with genre. *Moonlighting* is a detective series which sometimes leaves the genre altogether, for instance, in its "Atomic Shakespeare" episode. *Twin Peaks*, a soap opera with elements of the detective series, contains its own simulation of the daytime television soap opera. The series plays on television's fictionalisation of small-town life. Episodes of *The Simpsons* have unique opening sequences, but each opening ends with the family united before their television set. The point-of-view frame which shows their view of the television is simultaneously our view of the credits for the creators of the series: Matt Groening, Sam Simons and James L. Brooks.

Analyses of postmodernist projects on television, such as *thirtysomething* and *Twin Peaks*, seem to indicate a limited tolerance for overtly non-naturalistic television. Postmodernist programmes themselves show an evolution toward a more classic, series format (Glassner, 68). This development supports Feuer's analysis of the cyclic trajectory in television genres. As I will demonstrate, postmodernist variants on form tend, paradoxically, to reinforce norms. Mark Frost, co-creator of *Twin Peaks*, concluded after its cancellation that the series had not changed television norms at all (Bianculli, 270).

Barry Glassner traces the increasing conventionalisation of formally innovative programmes like *USA Today Television* and even *MTV*, which "drifted closer and closer to classic rather than postmodernist television" (68). *Moonlighting* and *Twin Peaks* participate in two shifts in form. Both manifest an engrossing interplay of series and serial. They also display a distinct movement toward a more classical form in their later seasons. The movement toward a more conventional format is frequently motivated by the pressure of ratings. At the time when *Moonlighting's* popularity was suffering because of production problems, the series redeemed itself with a top ten

rating for a new episode (Handelman, 54). The episode, entitled "Blonde on Blonde", features a lover from Maddie Hayes' past who reappears just as David Addison is about to confess his love for her. This initiates a set of four episodes in which this plotline develops. Simultaneously with these serial features, the mythical "Anselmo case" starts on *Moonlighting*. This case becomes a self-reflexive investigation of the topos of the private detective on television. The Anselmo case signifies the pretext of detecting on television.

The detective series on television exemplifies the self-contained episodic format. However, this format is shadowed by the underlying theme of the developing relationship between its lead characters. This theme inevitably relies on serial elements. With the Anselmo case the detective element, which had always been treated ironically in *Moonlighting*, moves completely into the background as the minor characters are allowed to take the case. The relationship between the lead characters becomes the central concern of the series. After the consummation of this relationship at the climax of the four-episode plotline, *Moonlighting* struggled through a period in which it retained the serial form, embodied in the real-life and diegetic pregnancy of its lead actress, Cybill Shepherd. After the pregnancy, the programme abandons its focus on the relationship between the lead characters, and settles on an uneasy balance between the detecting pretext and the ongoing romance motif. These shifts replay the struggle between series and serial characteristics.

The new genericity and the impulse toward classic form in postmodernist television call for another theoretical approach towards visual texts. "Innocence", intertextuality, reflexivity and parody are persuasively addressed by cult theory. The latter rethinks narrative, perception and the audience in visual texts. In an article which explores cult

through the 1942 film *Casablanca* Umberto Eco posits that the cult text is an organic yet unstable anthology of quotations. Eco sets out a fruitful opposition between the cult text as a densely imagined whole, and alternatively, as inherently dislocated. In *Casablanca*, for instance, wholeness and excess are achieved simultaneously through the deployment of multiple clichés of narrative film (1988, 446-53).

The plenitude and representational coherence of conventional narrative is displaced, in cult texts, by disjunctive nodes marked by overly familiar characters and settings. These excessive topoi destabilise the structure of balance and stasis which render conventional narrative structures invisible. Instead, cult texts are fundamentally unbalanced (Eco, 1988, 447). Clichés signal points where the text is materialised. These "material scars" permit the audience to re-fashion the text (Corrigan, 86).

In Eco's original formulation, a text must be made cult at its inception; a non-cult object cannot be remade into a cult text. New theories by Anne Jerslev and Timothy Corrigan reconceptualise cult not as a property of a text, nor as a genre, but as a mode of reception for contemporary media. Thus the concept loses its avant-garde connotation. They assert that cult texts can be moulded from conventional material. Jerslev refers to this phenomenon as evidence of a "cult culture" (181). The use of archetypal topoi plays on recognition and gives fans material for endless revisiting and recycling. However, for cult texts, there is never a first-time viewing (Corrigan, 90). In a culture of extreme intertextuality, cult becomes the "normal" way to see visual texts (Eco, 1988, 454-55). Because of the dense intertextuality of contemporary culture, viewers may be:

conceptualised as an audience of *semiotics by instinct*. And cult culture may be understood as a deconstructive and repetitive discourse, put into action by the

possibility of activating intertextual codes. (Jerslev, 191)

Cult culture seeks excess even when the performance of clichés seems perfect. Its viewers have little reverence for the authority of the text. The use of familiar devices enables any work to manifest "textual disjunction" under a cult reading. Thus, films which quote familiar topoi offer themselves for infinite appropriation (Corrigan, 83-90). As such, many film and television texts, because they are structured by quotation, constitute cult culture (Jerslev, 194).

The connection between cult and postmodernism is evident firstly at the level of quotation. Whereas cult was conceived by Eco as a mode of film whose allusive structures address the postmodern "burden" of intertextuality (1988, 454), Jerslev finds that cult texts turn intertextuality into "a pattern of pleasurable repetition" (182). The new theory envisions the unconscious as a visual encyclopedia. Since intertextuality structures the cult object, the latter reverberates in the unconscious (183-92).

The cult event is a profoundly ambiguous experience, structured around both pleasure and self-consciousness. In earlier conceptions of spectator construction such as Mulvey's, self-consciousness destroys pleasure. To Corrigan, audiences simultaneously take possession of images and "relinquish themselves to those possessed images" (83). Cult pleasure thus comes specifically from recognition: both of the prior use of the images themselves, and of the role of images in the construction of a spectating subject.

By positioning audience pleasure around the "perpetual cognition" of an extremely intertextual consciousness Jerslev finds that cult *signifies* postmodern culture (182). Whereas the allegorical codes of narrative in the realist text invite

identification with the screen (Williams, 1981, 212), the excesses of the cult text reveal and dramatise the force of narrativity. A postmodern self-consciousness is achieved by creating a distance through the play of recognition. Distancing focuses attention on the audience's recognition of their construction as spectators (Jerslev, 183). Viewers' experience with multiple intertextualities is invoked through a performance of viewing (Jerslev, 184). Cult undercuts coherent narratives and subjectivities through a performance of narrativity and, like postmodernist parody, re-orientates audiences.

By contrast, newly innocent texts quote earlier representations to evoke the sense of authenticity which the latter signify, even as they reject the representational density of the present (Collins, 1993, 257). In a cult reading such clichéd narrative patterns, or archetypes, become signals of excess where the text offers itself to be dismantled. Instead of banishing complexity, they result in a distinctive and powerful intertextuality. Once a text is dismantled, one grasps only parts of it, shattering the relationship with the whole (Eco, 1988, 453). Cult texts do not simply resuscitate familiar topoi, but constantly reappropriate them. With its tactics of disrespectful appropriation and remaking, the cult experience is ultimately about the staging of spectatorship (Corrigan, 91).

Because cult films do not repress the mechanism of textual construction, the presence of the camera is not denied. Through a cult relationship with texts, audiences create a relationship with technology itself (82-83). Therefore, cult subverts the seamless link between technology and consumption. Cult discourse constantly revisits and extends the meaning of audiencehood (Jerslev, 183-95). Since viewership is implicated in all the discourses which govern contemporary society, a cult culture allows no claims of innocence.

Instead, it teaches viewers to make all of television an instrument of cult culture. It is an example of "living textuality" (Eco, 1988, 447).

Are the texts studied in this dissertation, cult texts? I regard *Moonlighting* as the most fruitful of the series we have considered and perhaps the most radical for its time. In 1984 *Moonlighting* introduced a definitively different mode of address to television. It brought popular postmodernism and cult to television. Sophisticated and irreverent, *Moonlighting* extended the possibilities of television and redefined the dimensions of audiencehood for mainstream television. The series articulated the "split consciousness" which characterises the postmodern viewing experience (Pollan, 76). In its canny stylisation of the detective series, inside jokes and camp distancing, *Moonlighting* changed television spectatorship even as it revealed the most typical operations of the medium (76). The series' cult viewers formed an interpretive community attuned to a mediated culture. Their expertise was deployed by succeeding texts.

Among these are the works of David Lynch. Commentators have noted Lynch's gift for cult, manifested in *Blue Velvet*, *Wild at Heart*, and *Twin Peaks*. Typical of postmodern cult texts, *Twin Peaks* deploys narrative frames in a deliberately excessive manner (Jerslev, 190-92); its composition is overtly allusive. While a few archetypes may be banal, *Twin Peaks'* concentrated use of detective story topoi is extraordinarily effective. In addition, it fluctuates between genres like the soap opera, the detective series, the horror film and the teen-age drama. Like all cult texts, *Twin Peaks'* excesses are finally about viewership.

If animation is by definition the simulation of motion by moving frames, radical animation emphasises the gaps between frames (Cholodenko, 1991a, 18). It is thus constituted of

disjuncture. As such, it is the exemplary cult text. The cult cartoon is irreverent, revisionist, and intricated in the world which provides its subject. *The Simpsons* is the exemplary radical cartoon text. Because subversive animation emphasises its textuality and its materiality, cult animation threatens to subvert the occultation of vision and the transparency of meaning promulgated by realism. The linearity of cartoons performs the shape of narrative. Cult cartoons therefore address the importance of form in a world of "heterogeneous intertextuality" (Wollen, 65).

This introduction ends where it started: with relations of television and postmodernism, and hence, with relations of meaning and form. Postmodernist theory attends to the importance of popular forms and the redefinition of the visual. The resilience of classic television forms suggest that the best hope for critical television viewership lies with the progressive impulse of postmodernist parody. However, I have also spoken of texts which resist semiotic excess, and mimic innocence. The complex formal strategies of these texts, which suppress mediation in a search for authenticity, give added importance to parody but suggest, in addition, the need for disruptive approaches to visuality.

Since postmodernist parody works in the milieu of the "already-made" (Hutcheon, 1989, 93), there is a progressive value in the copies and parodies that are common in postmodernist works. In these quotations, postmodernist texts subvert myths of originality and authenticity, and art is revealed instead as repetition (Featherstone, 7). The technique of bricolage which challenges these myths, plays on surfaces. Its texts are absorbed with mirrors and signs (Hebdige, 192). Jameson finds this sense of superficiality - literally flatness - the unique formal feature of postmodernism (1991, 9-18). I would contend that the significance of form is precisely what is confronted by such

"flat" works. In contrast to the impression of sincerity sought by avoiding irony, self-conscious postmodernist texts highlight their own constructedness (Collins, 1993, 257). Artificiality, copying and unstable allusions produce forms of knowledge commensurate with the mediated nature of the present. Endorsing the progressive reading of the term, I agree with Arac that postmodernism expresses the "struggle against received forms of reading, writing, and public discourse" (ix).

This struggle is bolstered by postmodernist television's popular appeal and self-conscious references to its own mechanisms (Jerslev, 191). Quotations from popular culture demonstrate how cultural knowledge is permeated by previous representations. The overt juxtaposition of quotations turn the series studied here, into pretexts. In the terminology of visual texts, they are "McGuffins", or "nothing at all" (Zizek, 1992a, 8). Their forms are a "pure semblance" (8), which signifies the postmodernist interrogation of television. Eco says that his exemplary cult text, *Casablanca*, "is not one movie. It is 'movies'" (1988, 453). I conclude that *Moonlighting* is "detective series", *Twin Peaks* is "soap opera" and "detective series", and *The Simpsons* is "sitcoms". More than this, all three are "television". The cult appeal of postmodernist television produces a widening community of critical viewers equal to the mediated complexity of postmodernism.

MARGE SIMPSON: *Then the prince and princess lived happily ever after.*

BART SIMPSON: *Then what happened?*

CHAPTER TWO: MOONLIGHTING

"Sly Repartee, Double Entendre, and Bawdy Innuendo"

- The Case of the Talking Detectives

"I don't care what it is as long as it's a detective show" (Lewis H. Erlicht, head of ABC [American Broadcasting Corporation] Circle Films, to Glenn Gordon Caron, creator and executive producer of *Moonlighting*, quoted in Horowitz, 69).

Having spoken of the importance of parody and cult, I will argue that critical debates within television studies intersect in a text marked by both parodic and cult features - *Moonlighting*, the first of the three postmodernist television texts to be analysed here.

Moonlighting was a mid-season replacement series broadcast in America on the ABC network from March 1984 to May 1989 (Pollan, 74). It was commissioned from the writer Glenn Gordon Caron with only one directive: "Basically, the network told me I could do any kind of show I wanted so long as it was a detective show with a star in the lead" (quoted in Christensen, 30). The result was a brave, complex programme marked by "manic whimsy" (Schruers, 134) and erudite scope, which delighted audiences and transformed the way they respond to television. Using one of the medium's archetypal genres, the series experimented with the relation of representation to reality, television to genre, and television to film history. By occupying the most familiar forms of television, *Moonlighting* in effect became "all about television" (Leonard, 84). It is the exemplary postmodernist television text.

The status of the series within television theory is varied. *Moonlighting* has generated significant writing about postmodernist television (see Olson, 1987; Radner; Vande Berg; and Williams, 1988). On the other hand, it has been judged to be a "popular" variant of postmodernism, which embellishes rather than subverts classic narrative (Bjondeberg, 162). Lynne Joyrich goes further, suggesting that the innovative

techniques of the series foster regressive ideological positions (191). Where the radical engagement of later series like *Twin Peaks* and *The Simpsons* is readily acknowledged, *Moonlighting* needs to be located in the spectrum of popular revisions of the forms of television. My approach will be to look at the series in relation to genre, intertextuality and self-reflexivity. I consider these largely through *Moonlighting's* use of montage in the episodes "It's a Wonderful Job", "The Straight Poop", "To Heiress Human", "A Womb with a View" and "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik", the final episode.

While the series attracts varied academic response, popular reception was elatory. In the tradition of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* in the 1970s, *The Beverly Hillbillies* in the 1960s and *I Love Lucy* in the 1950s, the programme was hailed "the series masterpiece of the decade" in the 1980s (McWilliams quoted in Williams, 91). The television industry was equally laudatory; in 1985 *Moonlighting* was nominated for a record number of Emmy Awards (Johnson, 50). In 1985 and 1986 the Director's Guild of America nominated the series for both "Best Comedy" and "Best Drama", in unprecedented recognition of its generic hybridity (Vande Berg, 13).

The range of these responses points to the need to locate the enquiry within contemporary conditions of production. As I have indicated in the introduction, the tendency to limit attention to resistant possibilities within the text obscures the recognition that texts are the result of a process of production. Mick Eaton reminds television theorists that:

any reading of an instance of television in its production of meaning should be consistent with analysis of the actual conditions of production ... within the television companies themselves. (Eaton, 1981, 27)

Moonlighting, particularly, repays such attention. Its conditions of production place it at the core of debates about the broadcast industry in the 1980s. These debates - the role

of genre, the relation of postmodernism and television, the changing relationship of film to television, amendments to laws which govern broadcasting in America, developments in the network and studio systems - are pertinent to the 1990s.

By attending to production I intend to trace two major developments in American broadcasting through *Moonlighting*. Topically, the first of these is the tendency toward vertical integration in the media industry. This issue evokes the studio era of Hollywood, nebulously labelled its "Golden Age" (Anderson, 1991, 80). As later discussion will show, the tropes of classical Hollywood have been linked to *Moonlighting* at the levels of style, criticism and plot.

From the late 1920s to the 1950s, the American film industry was governed by a system of vertically integrated structures called studios. These were huge, centralised organisations which controlled every aspect of the Hollywood product, from commissioning writers and directors, contracting actors and actresses, to providing advertising and publicity. Finally, they owned the cinemas in which the films were shown (Schatz, 1990, 31). The studios provided both the infrastructure and the content of film and, later, much of the content of television in America. This level of concentration had specific implications for the kind of material which was produced and the themes that were accommodated (Schatz, 1993, 8-11). Nineteen-forty-eight signalled the dismantling of the studio era. A judicial order compelled the organisations to divest themselves of their movie theatres (Anderson, 1991, 83). As I will show, a kind of reversion to this older system of concentration of ownership has been noted in the 1990s (Schatz, 1990, 31).

In the case of *Moonlighting's* production history the paradigm of the studio is transposed onto the Network. The series appeared amid specific conditions in the American television industry. As I have explained in the introduction, American

television is organised into national networks with thousands of affiliated local stations. By definition, the networks benefit by their ability to draw nation-wide audiences (Hofmeister, et al., 5). In the 1980s the three established networks, ABC, NBC, CBS, faced an unprecedented threat to their audience shares from cable television and the Fox network (Allen, 1992b, 21). In contrast to broadly aimed network fare, cable television caters to niche tastes. The new Fox network, started by Twentieth Century Fox in 1984, posed further challenges with innovative programmes like *Married ... with Children* and *The Simpsons* (Corliss, 1995, 58). Caron, the executive producer of *Moonlighting*, sketches the viewing environment of the 1980s:

at any time my \$1,4 million episode may be competing with a \$30 million film of Spielberg [on cable] or a \$400,000, five-minute rock-video [on MTV]. (quoted in Handelman, 144)

When the drift away from network television became a serious drain on revenues, the networks were impelled into radical innovation. The response of ABC was to sponsor *Moonlighting*, and other experimental television.

Moonlighting is a metafictional departure from the staid network programming of the 1980s. More unusually, the series is also an in-house ABC production (William, 1988, 92). Anti-trust legislation dating from the 1950s prevents networks from broadcasting more than 3,5 hours per week of programmes they have produced themselves. Therefore, most programmes shown during premium time on American networks are produced by independent companies like MTM (analyzed in influential works by Jane Feuer). Only four years after ABC had reached a settlement with the United States Department of Justice about the amount of self-produced material it could broadcast under 1980 anti-trust laws, the decision to produce *Moonlighting* focused attention on this question once more (Horowitz, 26). The series was owned jointly by ABC and Caron's production company, Picturemaker (Handelman, 53). One of only three such

programmes on network television in 1986, *Moonlighting* held the promise of large profits for ABC from syndication (Horowitz, 26).

The production context of *Moonlighting* therefore raises the question of vertical structuring in the television industry. This seems prescient in the light of the developments which have reshaped the international media environment of the 1990s. The endeavour to control both content and distribution has caused significant realignments in the media industry. In July 1995 Capital Cities/ABC and the Disney Corporation announced the merging of their companies to form a media company with annual earnings of \$18 billion (Hofmeister et al., 5). The contemporary media landscape is dominated by similar conglomerates. These developments return the media industry to a level of centralised control it has not seen since the 1940s. This control also results in the centralisation of what Collins calls the sources of "cultural literacy", or the relatively stable areas of shared information (1993, 250). Cultural theory must readjust to the concentration of ownership of libraries of visual texts in media conglomerates, and to laws which threaten to limit the scope of parody (Allen, 1992a, 186). For this analysis, the merger revisits the connection between Disney and television narratives sketched in the introduction. It also links the figures of the studio and the network.

I. GENRE

Having situated *Moonlighting* amidst the shifts within media, I can undertake an analysis of the text itself. The analysis will be shaped by the concept of genre and the programme's characteristic use of intertextuality and self-reflexivity. The impact of the latter two factors is compounded by technology, which poses a challenge to the function of genre through access to texts from any age (Collins, 1993, 247-50). In the 1980s series television, especially the detective

genre, matured under the influence of other visual texts. *Moonlighting* deploys a pastiche of film and television genres to produce a sophisticated revisiting of the orthodox detective series (Pollan, 74). The series was greeted as a radical innovation of its genre. It was called "the most original and provocative detective show since *The Rockford Files*" (Christensen, 30).

The complexity of *Moonlighting's* relation to genre is reflected in the varied terminology used to describe the programme. It has been termed a "generic hybrid" (Vande Berg, 13), a "postmodern screwball comedy" (Pollan, 74), a "stylish sitcom" (Teachout, 65) and a new genre altogether (Waters, 51). The consensus is that *Moonlighting* signals a significant shift in genre on television.

It is important to examine *Moonlighting's* generic shifts in the light of the theory discussed in the introductory chapter. Vande Berg provides a fruitful precedent by applying the insights of Horace Newcomb to *Moonlighting*. Like Bennett, Newcomb believes that patterns of action in fiction are intricately related to patterns of thought outside of fiction. Thus for Newcomb, "major stylistic shifts ... are also shifts in meaning" (quoted in Vande Berg, 14). This formulation indicates the significance of genre in the relationship of television to culture. Changes in genre signify "crucial moments when whole sets of meaning change"; they mark moments when the meanings of television and culture are reorganised (Newcomb quoted in Vande Berg, 13). Vande Berg locates such a moment in the foregrounding of convention represented by television texts such as *Moonlighting* in the 1980s. She believes that the disruption of generic conventions is an empowering device which allows viewers to redefine their conception of the text, the genre and television itself (Vande Berg, 13).

It is therefore significant to note that there are shifts even in *Moonlighting's* disruptions of conventions. These shifts will be traced through a series of extra-diegetic inserts, most prominently, the five critical montage sequences. These mark the development of a classic, rather than postmodernist form in *Moonlighting*. I will therefore examine their use in some detail.

Though it occupied the space of the television detective series from 1984 until its cancellation in 1989, the premise of *Moonlighting* is to reappropriate the archetypal topoi of the genre. The programme's female protagonist, "Maddie Hayes", played by Cybill Shepherd, is a former model for "Blue Moon" shampoo who has been swindled by her accountant and left with only her house, her BMW and one other asset. The last is a failing detective agency called the "City of Angels", acquired as a tax shelter. Bruce Willis plays "David Addison", the putative detective who runs the business. With little choice and even less inclination, the two become partners in the Blue Moon Detective Agency. By placing its unorthodox characters in an orthodox setting, the series parodically distils the genre into emblematic details (Olson, 1987, 289). Ron Osborn, a writer for the series, asserts that *Moonlighting* is "a placebo detective show" (quoted in Handelman, 52).

Steve Neale defines "genre" as a system of expectations and conventions circulating between the television industry, the text, and the viewer (6). Whereas most programmes constantly affirm their genre and tone, *Moonlighting* derives much of its dynamism from mixing its signals (Pollan, 76). The series emphasises indeterminacy, deliberately evading stable generic boundaries. By embracing different codes, it self-consciously sheds and reassumes generic identities. Caron explains that:

our goal is to reinvent ourselves every week. ... One week we're a comedy, the next week we're fairly serious, the next week we're a musical. (Williams, 1988, 95)

This disruption of expectations results in a defamiliarising experience which invites viewers to recognise the power of codes to structure expectations (Vande Berg, 13).

As a nominal detective series, *Moonlighting* self-consciously removes the security which issues from the codes and structures of genre television. Caron explains that "while we may be the fifty-thousandth TV detective show, we know we're the fifty-thousandth detective show" (quoted in Christensen, 30). Deviations from a strong norm form pleasurable experiences (Vande Berg, 13). The narration therefore shares a sly knowingness with its audience (Pollan, 76).

How does this disruption and reorientation occur? On the textual plane, narration consists of both a narrative system and a system of style. Simplicity at the level of narrative allows greater scope for style (Bordwell, 282).

Moonlighting's opportunistic deployment of generic conventions points toward parody. The parodic self-consciousness shown by the series is a characteristic of mature genres (Mamber, 33). However, as established in the introductory chapter, generic evolution in television is cyclic rather than teleological (Feuer, 156). Therefore, in its postmodernist recycling of the genre, *Moonlighting* reveals the most ordinary conventions of the private eye series.

As the earnest newcomer taught by an irreverent insider, Maddie is often the viewer's point of entry to the rituals of the television detective's world. Every stalwart cliché is performed, but edged in irony. When they follow a murder suspect the protagonists disguise their intentions by using a time-honoured method.

MADDIE: How long do we have to sit here?

DAVID: Till we spot her. Hey, if you don't want to do the paper in the lobby thing, you got no business being in this business.

("The Lady in the Iron Mask")

The car chase is a second defining trope of the television detective series (Kaminsky and Mahan, 65). In *Moonlighting* the chase is redundantly signified by the William Tell overture.

MADDIE: David, why are they following us? What are they doing? Why is that man bumping into us?
 DAVID: Why? Because you're letting them do it, that's why. It's a chase.
 MADDIE: Well, they've caught up with us. I guess the chase is over.
 ("Twas the Episode before Christmas")

Within the diegesis the car chase becomes a series of illegal turns and improbable accelerations in urban traffic.

DAVID: Get into the far left lane and make a right turn.
 MADDIE: You can't make a right turn from the far left lane.
 DAVID: We can.
 ("Twas the Episode before Christmas")

Maddie's perspective allows us to perceive the arbitrariness of generic convention.

In her investigation of the detective agency, Maddie discovers that her tax ruse is only one of a number operating in the "private eye" business:

Maddie: There's been a terrible mistake.
 David: What do you mean, there's been a mistake?
 Maddie: Have you ever solved a case?
 David: You mean at this particular location? (Pilot episode).

The series locates the television detective series within a succession of pretexts. Just as the detective agency is a ruse exploiting the structures of tax law in the diegesis of the series, so the detective series is "a pure pretext" which operates within the structures of television (Zizek, 1992a, 6). The use of pretexts is explored throughout *Moonlighting*, since clients bring their own secrets. The search for truth is redirected into an investigation of semblances. The importance of image is emphasised as the company takes its name from Maddie's past in modelling. The name also parodically indicates the scarcity of cases, which come "once in a blue moon". The detective business thus becomes a figure

for *Moonlighting's* investigation of its own relation with genre.

II. NARRATIVE SEDUCTION

The conception of *Moonlighting* is a pretext, as the opening quotation shows. Similarly, just as the series has a complex association with genre, so it both observes and undermines the workings of narrative. People learn to read visual texts through schemata, or narrative guidelines, which take the form of types and structures (Bordwell, 165). In a detective story, the disarranged events of the syuzhet must be re-arranged into the ideal form of the fabula, which is governed according to a single pattern of logic and causality (Bordwell, 49). The norms of various modes are absorbed through experience of texts.

The creation of the two protagonists, and even the casting of the two actors, is aimed at installing and then undermining norms. Both Shepherd and Willis were cast because they embody norms. Shepherd incarnates a "beautiful ice queen" (Horowitz, 66). Martin Scorsese coined the term a "Cybill Shepherd-type actress" which describes "an amalgam, a type" (quoted in Johnson, 52). As Maddie, Shepherd is typed as perfection, inaccessibility and fixation with the past. By contrast, Willis as David represents immediacy and changeability. Like the series itself, he is characterised by a "manic whimsy" (Schruers, 134). Juxtaposed, the two create an interplay of oppositions typical of the 1980s genre of mismatched couples (Pollan, 74).

However, the classic narrative pattern of the detective genre is merely the basis for a further pretext. Dorothy L. Sayers describes the genre's narration as a "love story with detective interruptions" (quoted in Teachout, 65). The consummation of heterosexual desire is "a fundamental model of

DAVID: What was what?
MADDIE: That. That. What you did here. What we just did? What was that?
DAVID: I don't know. I didn't do it. You tell me. What was that?
MADDIE: What do you mean, you tell me? It wasn't me. It was you.
DAVID: I didn't do it. You did.
MADDIE: I did not do it.
DAVID: I did not do it.
MADDIE: Well, if you did not do it. And I did not do it. I guess ...

MADDIE AND DAVID
SIMULTANEOUSLY: It didn't happen.
("Witness for the Execution")

Invoking the screwball and battle-of-the-sexes comedies of the 1930s and 1940s, the underlying sexual tension is sublimated into the series' dialogue. The paradigm of the odd couple requires delicate negotiation: the consummation of the relationship between Sam and Diane depleted the "sexual electricity" of *Cheers* (Waters, 52). *Moonlighting* incorporates these concerns into its scripts. Instead, the underpinning of seduction in the detective story is served by *Moonlighting's* heated exchanges, which are "thick with romantic subtext" (Horowitz, 26). Michael Pollan remarks that "[a]nticipation, foreplay, words are all" (74).

III. INTERTEXTUALITY

However, the series goes beyond the narrative imperative of heterosexual attraction to explore and explode the space of genre on television through dense allusiveness. The crime narratives which Maddie and David are hired to investigate correspond with the course of their relationship. Consequently, some critics call the mysteries weak pretexts driven by David and Maddie's arguments. Richard Zoglin complains that the series's plots consisted of "101 Ways to Remake *Vertigo*" (quoted in Williams, 1988, 95). Others misconstrue the derivative nature of the mysteries as the result of unimaginative writing. Yet, mismatched protagonists

and their numerous reversals are standard concerns of series television (Teachout, 65-66). Moreover, in *Moonlighting*, every plot reflects the programme's interest in the intersecting pretexts of television itself. When television critics complained about the lack of substance in the series, the narration replies:

David: Did you hear that, Maddie? "Quite dead." And they say we don't have good plots! ("To Heiress Human")

Instead of being redundant or predictable, the project of *Moonlighting* was a deconstructive one. For instance, in an episode called "My Fair David" (also cited by Williams, 1988) the opening scenes show that Maddie is furious at David's lack of responsibility. In the course of the episode the agency is hired to find a kidnapped concert pianist. The pianist's step-mother hires David and Maddie to deliver the ransom, but offers them a bonus if they can negotiate a better price. When Maddie and David deliver the money, they catch the kidnapper - who is the pianist himself. It emerges that the pianist had staged his own kidnapping in order to extort money from his step-mother. He asks Maddie and David to share the reduced ransom with him, in addition to collecting their bonus. Because the Blue Moon detectives are amateurs, they fail to realise that clients have their own pretexts. The son is killed after a second kidnapping. The murderer is the step-mother herself, wishing to be rid of the burden of her irresponsible son. Here, the schematic simplicity of the plot plays a double function. The step-mother's well-made plot forms part of the mystery. The theme of responsibility and the performance of duty are echoed at different levels of the episode. The series's engagement with the demands of the well-made television plot opens a space in which to explore the demands of television.

In an episode called "Maddie, I am Curious", toward the end of the second series, the romantic narrative which underpins the detective story finally reaches its climax. The sex scene is long, rhapsodic and deliriously excessive, appropriately in

the tradition of grand passions of the movies. *Moonlighting* quotes the legendary screen partnerships of the film noir and the screwball comedies of the 1930s and 1940s. Shepherd and Willis were cast in critical vocabulary as Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall (Sherman, 34), Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn (Pollan, 74; Waters, 50), and Carole Lombard and Cary Grant (Christensen, 29). However, Maddie and David find their new relationship difficult to negotiate and, at Maddie's insistence, they make a pact to return to their earlier friendship. Later in the episode they are retained by a young heiress whose father suspects her poverty-stricken lover's intentions. She hires them to prove the latter's love for her. Maddie and David's intervention ensures that the two are reconciled. Assessing the case, David quotes the basic formula of romantic narrative: "Boy meets girl. Boy won't take no for an answer. Boy gets girl". It is also, of course, the narrative formula modified in *Moonlighting*. Encompassing love, sex, and television, the conversation becomes a self-reflexive contemplation of "narrative seduction" (Bruner, 9):

DAVID: Yessireebob. When you're right, you're right.
MADDIE: Me? Right? About what?
DAVID: Love. Sex. The Pact. Us.
MADDIE: I was? I am? I are?
DAVID: You is. And you know when I got it? Back there in that police station, watching those two kids. You know, I think it's really okay that those two kids ride off into the sunset together, spend the rest of their lives warm and cosy in some little breakfast nook. It's better than okay, it's right. But you and me, we're different.
MADDIE: Yeah? How's that?
DAVID: Well, we're two sides of the same coin. We eat sexual tension for breakfast.
MADDIE: Thrive on sly repartee? Double entendre?
DAVID: Bawdy innuendo. You take away all that and you know what happens?
MADDIE: They move us to Sunday night.
DAVID: Seven-thirty! Yeah, we let animal magnetism get the best of us, who knows what's gonna happen.
MADDIE: It would be terrible. It would be wrong.
DAVID: It would be worse than wrong. It'd be telecide!
("To Heiress Human")

The series finds a contrary appeal in the seductiveness of the narrative structure which it parodies. It is precisely seduction which allows the series to occupy the traditional place of the prime time detective series. By exploring narrative trajectories *Moonlighting* turns attention to television itself.

The plots are *intended* to serve as counterpoints to the relationship between the protagonists (Williams, 1988, 95). The paucity of mystery in the plots refracts attention onto the style of the series. Far from being fatuous, the clichés deployed in *Moonlighting* aid its cult value. Eco believes that the banality of clichés serve cult well (1988, 454). In addition to this, however, the writing in the series is excellent. "The real star of the show ... is the written word" (Horowitz, 66). Its writers, among them the best in Hollywood, enjoyed unprecedented status and creative freedom on the series (Christensen, 30). The series' wordiness nearly doubled the length of its scripts, and hence, of its shooting schedule (Waters, 52).

The quality of the writing in *Moonlighting* directs attention toward the arresting density of dialogue in the text. Its dialogue drew attention to dialogue *per se* (Pollan, 76). The sharply-honed exchanges between the two main characters, and the rhyming lines of the main supporting characters, testifies to the complex range of dialogue in *Moonlighting*. The protagonists' exchanges are rapid and electric. The rhythms caused by repetition and symmetrical turn-taking create a palpably non-naturalistic, almost poetic style of talking, as is demonstrated in the discussion on "Atomic Shakespeare".

The pace of speech in the series accelerates the normal patterns of dialogue in mainstream programmes. The subtle textures of *Moonlighting's* verbal exchanges are equivalent to the distinctive visual style of *Miami Vice* (Fiske, 147). Yet, *Moonlighting's* approach to dialogue is by no means solemn.

Just as it employs the physical comedy of farce (Stabiner, 138), so the series delights in nonsense rhymes, and other indecorous language. The series' rapid-cut dialogue redefined the "action" of the television detective series. Dialogue displaced the car chase and other action scenes; *Moonlighting* seemed to be a detective series "that would live by the word rather than the squeal of tyres" (Waters, 50). Its dialogue gives *Moonlighting* the pace of an action series despite its numerous interior scenes (Pollan, 76).

At times the detective premise is relegated to a frame narrative and the subtext is accentuated instead. Beyond its redefinition of plot, lies the realisation that deferred consummation constitutes "the real plot" (Waters, 51).

This doubling and accentuation is an effect of the narrative frames used in *Moonlighting*. The interplay of diegesis and extra-diegetic scenes in the series ranges from David's command to the off-screen production crew: "Start the chase music, boys" in "Funeral for a Doornail", to the multiple frames of "Atomic Shakespeare". In the latter episode viewing is relayed through three frames.

The opening credits of the episode play conventionally, only to be repeated on a television screen within the screen which viewers are watching. The quality of the picture and sound of the interpolated screen is markedly less than the quality of *Moonlighting* (Vande Berg, 100). A woman walks in front of the screen and initiates a frame plot, in which a boy is sent to do his homework instead of watching *Moonlighting*. The frame plot is shot from the waist down only. The mother parodically summarises the premise of the series as "the show with the man and the woman. They really want to sleep with each other but all they really do is fight all the time? ... Sounds like crap to me." The boy is sent to do his homework - reading Shakespeare's "The Taming of the Shrew", which the episode

revises into "Atomic Shakespeare". As the title suggests, this is a deconstruction of the paradigmatic text. The paradigm of "the battle of the sexes" has persisted from Shakespeare to the screwball comedies of the 1930s and 1940s to postmodernist television (Pollan, 76). Caron says that "the show is *The Taming of the Shrew*" (Johnson, 123).

The second frame opens simultaneously with the book. The *mise-en-scène* is a bricolage of all the props which signify high culture visual texts. However, when quoted together to form a compound of all the signifiers of "antiqueness", the result is to turn the text into a deconstructive cult text. Instead of cohering, the intertextual references of the text reverberate in the unconscious (Jerslev, 189). The clichés create layers of significance in the narrative, and cause semiotic nodes in the text (Bondebjerg, 169). Their garish banality destabilises the effect of antiquity. In harnessing this excessive technique *Moonlighting* explores the edges of television (Williams, 1988, 95). Typically of a postmodernist text, "Atomic Shakespeare" reflects on its own textuality (Olson, 1987, 297). Its title indicates its deconstructive effect. It reveals its quotations overtly, never allowing its allusions to cohere.

Juxtaposed with the Shakespeare text, the dramatic rhythms of *Moonlighting* become evident. The revised ending of "The Taming of the Shrew", in which Petruchio admits that he is wrong and Kate is right, closes the inner frame. When the boy runs back to the television, he finds that the closing credits of the *Moonlighting* episode which he "missed" are just ending. His mother switches off the television, and tells him that the evening's episode had not been very good. This is when the three frames join again, and the real credits end this episode of *Moonlighting*.

As the discussion above shows, the series plays close attention to *mise en scène*. While *Moonlighting* employed the

devices of the screwball comedies of the 1930s to accentuate dialogue in contemporary television, this focus on words should not deflect attention from the visual innovations of the series. Contemporary comment on the production values of the series frequently centres on its special camera-work, perhaps most evident in the soft-focus shots used to frame Shepherd (Johnson, 52). Beyond this, the series has "a distinct style" (Williams, 1988, 92). While it evoked earlier traditions, *Moonlighting's* lushly filmic style was also edged with awareness (Horowitz, 26; 69). The series confronted the multiple remaking of identity and history by revisiting the constitutive myth of Hollywood - the "Golden Age" of the studios. "The Dream Sequence Always Rings Twice" is characterised by stylised camera angles and an expressive *mise-en-scène* which match the sophistication of the dialogue (Teachout, 65).

The keen edge of dialogue, and the stylised appearance of the programme, was equalled by a self-conscious density throughout the script. An example of this is the careful aptness of music in the series. In the episode "Funeral for a Doornail" the chase scene is cued by David's command: "Start the chase music, boys." A farcical chase scene in "The Lady in the Iron Mask" is accompanied by the "William Tell Overture". In "My Fair David" the "kidnapped" concert pianist punctuates his argument convincingly with music. The use of a homodiegetic soundtrack subverts our expectation of heterodiegetic sound. This auditory quotation reaches back to the stylised piano accompaniment to silent films. Since in the classical Hollywood narrative, the soundtrack is subordinated to the image (Ellis, 129), the pianist's demonstration of the power of sound to direct attention and persuade is revealing, and potentially subversive. John Ellis points out that sound operates very differently in television than in film. Since the gaze directed at television is a distracted one compared to the fixed gaze in the cinema (Altman, 569), Ellis argues

that sound on television determines a certain kind of attention. On television, sound is used to secure one meaning (Ellis, 128-29). For instance, an upbeat note adds an exclamation to the pianist's plea for the money.

The episode includes a rendition of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata", which segues into a recording of the "Limbo-rock". At the start of both these sequences, the music seems to be heterodiegetic, that is, not part of the reality of the story (Rimmon-Kenan, 95). Both pieces of music are used to the point of cliché in soundtracks. The narration reveals instead that the music is homodiegetic, or part of the story. In the episode the "Moonlight Sonata" - aptly for a series called *Moonlighting* - is being performed by the concert pianist; the limbo is the accompaniment to a breach of office decorum in the Blue Moon Detective Agency. Underlining the narration's self-consciousness, the concert pianist later demonstrates the power of soundtrack in the narrative. The wider project is to foreground the seductive power of appropriate and logical narrative developments. When the pianist disappears again, Maddie and David assume that he has tried the tired routine again. Instead, his step-mother, weary of his persistent gambling debts, has staged a kidnapping and kills the pianist. The complexly executed script points to the seduction of narrative, whether the source is a driven mother, or a dissipated son. In this case the truth is told by an extortionist; a liar and murderer appeared more believable. Like these postmodern detectives we must be wary of perfectly staged stories.

One of *Moonlighting's* most obvious evasions of the need for convincing plots, occurs in the episode "The Straight Poop". Taking its deconstructive approach to an extreme, this episode is about the absence of a new episode. When gossip ascribed delays in production to feuding between the main actors, *Moonlighting* crafted an episode around these rumours. The series not only exploits the massive publicity given to

television actors in the 1980s but also subverts and satirises it. Hyperbolically eliding the division between real life and acting, "The Straight Poop" collates sequences from past episodes of *Moonlighting* as well as items unrelated to the series, into a parody of an investigative newsreport into the issue of "no new episode" of *Moonlighting*. "The Straight Poop" is constructed as a series of interviews by the renowned celebrity interviewer, Rona Barrett, with the people on the set of *Moonlighting*. The conventions of television journalism (use of hand-held cameras, and direct address by interviewers and anchors, for example) allow for a certain amount of self-reflexivity. Yet, in this episode, these conventions are "stylised" or deliberately exaggerated (Simon, 25). Speaking directly to the camera, Barrett gives a hyperbolic running commentary, moving from "the Blue Moon elevator", along the "Blue Moon corridor", and finally arriving at the "Blue Moon door". Then Barrett (in character) fluffs her reading of the cue cards.

BARRETT: Tonight, it sits silent. Still. Waiting to get
banged. (Looks off camera.) Is that right?
Waiting to get banged?
("The Straight Poop")

Later in the episode Barrett actually interviews her subjects: "the players themselves, Maddie Hayes, David Addison, their friends, their colleagues, their lovers". The clips include actors in character, like Pierce Brosnan of *Remington Steele*, a detective series which also cites filmic antecedents; real people, like Peter Bogdanovich, a former director and lover of Cybill Shepherd. The episode satirises the inability to differentiate between fiction and reality, actor and character by exaggeratedly erasing the division itself. Out of essentially banal items of gossip, the programme parodies the fabrication of fanciful star personae. At the same time, since parody includes that which it criticises, the programme exploits the very effects it criticises. Lynne Joyrich points out that:

by drawing the production process of the media into the fictional world of the program itself, *Moonlighting* manage[d] to turn its extra-textual problems (including bad publicity and ratings) into the textual trouble that it sets out to resolve. (Joyrich, 184)

Moonlighting's revelation of the banal but usually hidden operations of television paradoxically creates a "mystique" of innovation and originality around the programme (Williams, 1988, 92). The radical disruption of generic norms in the series secured it a sought-after audience profile of sophisticated, "quality"-seeking viewers (Pollan, 74).

IV. SELF-REFLEXIVITY

These techniques of revelation combined with mystique are familiar from pre-war movies starring Bing Crosby and Bob Hope, and in television from the days of live shows in the 1950s like *The Burns and Allen Show* (Horowitz, 26). The chapter on *The Simpsons* deals in some detail with the latter programme and its use of self-reflexivity. Not coincidentally, Jay Daniels, a co-executive producer of the series, called *Moonlighting* "just about as close as you can get to being live without being live" (61). As I show in chapter four, self-reflexive dialogue emerged within a context of generic stabilisation (Eaton, 34). Accompanying the trend toward stability were self-reflexive possibilities which emerged from the medium itself. In *Moonlighting*, 30 years after the pioneering sitcoms of the 1950s, the revelation of process was accompanied by a renewed veil of mystique and glamour.

Moonlighting is layered with multiple discourses and an intricate play of quotation and self-consciousness. The techniques of self-reflexivity and intertextuality revealed above have changed the nature of the audience response to popular television. The media-consciousness of contemporary audiences is incorporated into texts through an ironic awareness of television itself (Dienst, 90-91). *Moonlighting*

approaches the formulas which govern its genre self-consciously, and it infuses them with an electrifying "camp sensibility" (Pollan, 76). Bordwell defines self-consciousness as the narration's "acknowledgement that a tale is being presented for a perceiver" (58). In its extreme form in postmodernist television when characters address the audience, this is known as "self-reflexivity". Self-reflexive characters accentuate their provisionality, and encourage the audience's recognition of its role in the processes of television (Olson, 1987, 286). In *Moonlighting*, the device simultaneously breaks the naturalistic illusion and constructs a new model reader. It exploits the concept of an inside and outside: the impression of inside information reinforces the connection of the audience and the programme (Pollan, 76). "'Twas the Episode before Christmas" marks the first overtly self-reflexive dialogue in the diegesis:

DAVID: We've got to wrap this up in the next 12 minutes.
 There's another show coming on the air.
 ("'Twas the episode before Christmas")

Moonlighting moves onto a different level of postmodernist television when it declines to "wrap this up" at all. This dimension of postmodernism occurs when "text-reflexive narrative deconstructs narrative style" (Olson, 1987, 289). This level of self-reflexivity introduces a new relationship to form altogether. The series enters surreal comedy when it refuses to meet the formal conventions of the detective genre and complete its diegesis. "Camille", an episode in the second series, deals with the power of media codes to craft instant impressions. In the episode a fleeing criminal played by Whoopi Goldberg unintentionally foils an assassination attempt on a politician. The subsequent media idolisation afforded her for "*keeping safe the western world*", as she ironically terms it, constitutes the plot. Through multiple levels of parody, the narration shows an awareness of the production and reception of fiction within its ideological and aesthetic context (Hutcheon, 1988, 127).

In this kind of programme the formal organisation of the text is foregrounded. Using surrealistic comedy, the text deliberately frustrates expectations. This echoes Glassner's concept of a level of postmodernist transgression which breaks the feeling of "naturalness" in a television programme (68). In "Camille" the narrative never reaches its pre-ordained end. If in "'Twas the Episode before Christmas", the characters remind each other that resolution must be reached before the next show starts, in "Camille" the production crew reveal themselves at the moment of greatest suspense, when the protagonists are threatened by the villain. The crew appear to avert the threat of violence in the diegesis but they also disrupt the impending climax and denouement. All conventions are contravened. For those who are interested, the remaining scenes are briefly described. The gun belonging to villain, played by Judd Nelson, is taken back to the prop room, and Ms. Goldberg is whisked away in her limousine. The narrative is radically and permanently disrupted. The audience, which had found pleasure in the process of narrative, had to learn a completely new regime of gratification (Neale, 1981, 13)

V. INTERTEXTUALITY AND AUDIENCE

Moonlighting also reveals its position as a television series in a world of proliferating media. *Time*, *Star*, *Vogue*, *Glamour*, *Fashion*, *Elle*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Playboy* and *USA Today* are among texts cited. The shifting border between fiction and reality which results from pervasive idioms of the media is parodically suggested in an episode entitled "The Man Who Cried Wife". In it a client of the Blue Moon Detective Agency describes himself as fortyish, successful, attractive: "I'm the kind of man who reads *Playboy*." *Moonlighting* also subverts the hierarchy between high and popular culture, encoding a cultural encyclopedia ranging from Gauguin to *Glamour*, from Hemingway to *Hart to Hart*, and from Freud to Dr. Suess. Paradoxically, its references to scandalous and undervalued discourses secured it a label of quality.

By referring to texts with which viewers are familiar, the series creates the impression that the diegesis of the series is the same as the world of the viewer (Williams, 1988, 92). A "diegetic join" occurs when television shows refer to one another as though they exist on the same plane (Olson, 1988, 287). *Moonlighting* cites other detective series, such as *Remington Steele*, for which Caron wrote and was supervising producer (Horowitz, 69). In "The Straight Poop" *Remington Steele* claims that he once considered going into business with a "remarkable woman", Maddie Hayes. In an equally ingenious episode called "It's a Wonderful Job", Maddie runs into Max (played by Lionel Stander), the major domo from *Hart to Hart*.

MADDIE and MAX,
simultaneously: Don't I know you from somewhere?
MADDIE: Excuse me.
MAX: Yeah?
MADDIE: What is this place?
MAX: This is the Hart Detective Agency. Are
you lost? My employers, Mr and Mrs H.,
they're the greatest at this sort of
thing.... Look, if you need a detective,
Mr and Mrs H are the greatest. And boy
can they wear clothes!
MADDIE: No thanks.
("It's a Wonderful Job")

Like the device of self-reflexivity, this creates an intimate link with the audience. Vande Berg believes that it is an empowering device because it allows the audience access to the way that meaning is made (13). By contrast, Joyrich sees them as regressive. In her analysis of the episode "A Womb with a View", in which Maddie loses her baby, Joyrich concludes that the series' techniques of intertextuality and self-reflexivity help to contain femininity by constructing a "fathered-family", and further that the ideological basis of the series is patriarchal and anti-feminist (179). She claims that, instead of creating critical gaps which aid deconstruction, intertextual references create "an imaginary coherency" which binds viewers into perceiving television as an all-encompassing realm (191). In numerous extradiegetic interludes *Moonlighting* lays claim to a self-serving openness

by comparing itself to "television's usual artificiality" (192). Furthermore, she argues that these references simply stimulate the consumption of television.

Joyrich's concerns about *Moonlighting* presume a coherent, conspiring subjectivity behind the series. She detects a conspiracy of patriarchal subjection of women combined with a validation of consumption. This aggressive excision of women is disguised behind lighthearted and apparently progressive techniques.

I feel that Joyrich overestimates intentionality in order to make her argument; in fact, she constructs a relatively crude version of the televisual apparatus and its relation to "reality". In addition, her reading of comic scenes neglects farce and parody. The viewing experience of *Moonlighting* constructs a split subjectivity. Thirdly, in contesting the excision of women from texts about the family, Joyrich validates the role of women only as mothers. By contrast, other critics find that, in its contemporary approach to the "battle of the sexes", *Moonlighting* accentuates feminist themes (Johnson, 123). The original screwball comedies frequently played on class tensions between upper class women and working class men. In the 1980s these tensions were displaced almost entirely onto gender. Changing gender roles and shifting balances of power became the material for comedies like *Moonlighting* (Pollan, 74). The new television genres of the 1980s revisited both masculinity and femininity on television. The image of masculinity was also revised in series such as *Miami Vice* (Waters, 48-49). Lastly, by looking at only one episode in five years of programming, Joyrich neglects the crucial diachronic dimension. The use of both intertextuality and self-reflexivity in *Moonlighting* evolves from an early non-naturalistic function to a later more conventional deployment of the devices.

This significant argument deserves elaboration. What is absent from Joyrich's evaluation is the acknowledgement of irony which *Moonlighting* brings to its appropriation of old patterns. It is an irony in which it is joined by its media-immersed audience (Pollan, 74). Since all of television refers to other texts, *Moonlighting's* overt quotations replace production with postmodernist reproduction (Glassner, 59). Joyrich's contention that parodic texts knit viewers into a "narcissistic" fixation with the text is a misreading of the eclectic reach of parody (Hutcheon, 1988, 129). The primary element of parody is style or tone (Rush, 6). The prior text is necessarily present in the parodic resistance (Fiske, 1989b, 4). However, instead of intensifying naturalism, parody disrupts the illusion of reality by turning the prior text into an image (Simon, 23-24). Contrary to Joyrich's belief, such parody is not socially disengaged. In fact, parody simultaneously cites, and points beyond, the text to demonstrate how the subject is inscribed in discourse (Hutcheon, 126). Instead of conspiring to dupe viewers into an oblivious consumption of even more images, parody creates consciousness of discourse by objectifying it. Excitingly, parodic texts encourage innovative forms of discourse (Simon, 24).

While Joyrich claims that *Moonlighting* uses media clichés to exploit nostalgia (192), Hutcheon points out that nostalgia is a feature of contemporary culture. The difference between the two is the distancing effect of "double-voiced ironic parody" (1988, 128). Joyrich interprets the montage sequence in "A Womb with A View" as a regressive exploitation of media clichés. However, the hyperbolic tone of the scene instead parodically suggests the ubiquity of metaphors of the media. Joyrich's analysis is also flawed by the limited scope of its texts. In an early episode titled "The Lady in the Iron Mask" success is pictured in familiar terms.

DAVID: What's going on in that blonde brain of yours?

MADDIE: A magazine cover.
 DAVID: Once more, for those of us who are new to this country ...
 MADDIE: If you shoot enough magazine covers you start to think of life that way. That's all. Life is like a magazine cover.
 DAVID: Yeah? What magazine?
 MADDIE: It doesn't have a name, the magazine.
 DAVID: *Life*?
 MADDIE: David!
 DAVID: *Look*?
 MADDIE: Please!
 DAVID: *We? W-E. W-E. Like Us.* One of those pronoun names.
 MADDIE: It doesn't have to have a name. All it needs to have is a headline and a picture. MADELEINE HAYES. MORE THAN A PRETTY FACE. SOLVES CASE. HAS A NICE DINNER.
 DAVID: Yeah! I heard of that magazine. Can't get a copy. Sold out.

("The Lady in the Iron Mask")

The scene is carefully ironic, but it allows viewers to perceive the way that metaphors of media allow us to speak of reality. Contrary to Joyrich, I contend that this parodic approach foregrounds the effacement of boundaries between representation and reality to progressive effect by referring to the way familiar texts shape perspective. The cult property of the episode is evident as the familiarity of texts allows viewers simultaneously to claim the text as their own "property", and as a way to find a common, secret terrain (Corrigan, 81-82).

A similar point is made in an extract from the Christmas episode in the second series, called "It's a Wonderful Job". A parody of the Frank Capra film, *It's a Wonderful Life*, the episode is an exploration of an alternative universe in which Maddie has sold the detective agency. The episode suggests that an alternative reality can be created by another script. In her parallel life, instead of being relieved of the burden of the failing detective agency, Maddie's fortunes collapse. Her guardian angel, Albert, conducts the real Maddie on a tour of the alternative world.

ALBERT: This is your destiny. You take your own life. You die alone. There's nothing that I can do about it. The die is cast.

MADDIE: Well, uncast it!

ALBERT: I can't. There are plans. Preparations. Just before you die, your whole life flashes before you. It's a big show. You think that you can just pull something like that together? Hell, no. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. You can't just pull destiny off, rewind 20 minutes.

MADDIE: Try! Try!

FLASHBACK SEQUENCE OF SCENES FROM THE TWO SEASONS. ("It's a Wonderful Job")

Like the classic film from which it is derived, the episode delicately balances sentiment and irony (Pollan, 76). Transposing intangibilities like life and death onto concrete and familiar processes like film, the extract allows viewers to take possession of both processes (Corrigan, 82). For example, reversing destiny is equated with "rewind[ing] 20 minutes". The extract literalises the metaphor, "your whole life flashes before you", into a flashback sequence. The latter montage is infused with apocalyptic fear. It is silent apart from Maddie's scream at the thought of death. In the diegesis, the sequence actually marks the division between Maddie's parallel realities. The influence of proliferating metaphors of media which configure reality is again suggested through parody.

VI. SELF-REFLEXIVITY AND COMPLEXITY

In "Funeral for a Doornail" the levels of narration become even more complex. In the episode a man hires David and Maddie because he thinks that he has seen his dead wife. We as viewers know that the missing woman has simulated her own death. The narration continually intersperses the diegesis with self-reflexive moments. The theme of the episode is the power of codes. For instance, the missing woman achieved a simulation of death by appearing to drive over the edge of a

cliff. Many levels of appearance and betrayal are uncovered in the course of the investigation.

The bereaved man is unable to relinquish his gaze from hundreds of photographs of his wife. Suggestively, these are spread out on his bed much as the photographs from Maddie's modelling career are arranged in episodes of *Moonlighting*. The series' mise-en-scène actually includes real photographs from Shepherd's modelling career which represent Maddie's modelling career (Williams, 1988, 93). Yet the narration uses these moments to accentuate the artificiality of its settings rather than to simulate reality. It emerges that the woman had fabricated her own death in order to escape her husband's obsessive and objectifying gaze. In the episode *Moonlighting's* narration addresses both the seduction of narratives and the positioning of the viewer inscribed by the narrative.

A scene in the episode opens with Maddie staring pensively out of the window in her office. David enters and stops at the door on seeing her.

DAVID: Maddie?

MADDIE: She's out there, David.

DAVID: Uh-oh!

MADDIE: She is. She's out there.

DAVID: No, she's not.

MADDIE: Yes, she is.

DAVID: No, she's not.

MADDIE: Yes, she is.

DAVID: No, she's not.

MADDIE, turning around: Y-.

DAVID, covering her mouth with his hand and turning directly to the camera: Let's ask them. Do you think she's out there? ("Funeral for a Doornail")

In "reply", the camera shakes from left to right and back again in the characteristic signal for "no". Not only is the camera's hidden presence revealed, but the audience is drawn overtly into the story. The episode literalises a model of reading which conceives of narration operating through an empirical author, implied author, narrator, narratee, implied viewer and empirical viewer. In a visual text such as

Moonlighting the narrator, implied author and author must be understood as the organising agency derived from the narration, rather than an empirical person, or auteur (Kozloff, 77-78). While materialising the presence of the camera in the scene from "Funeral for a Doornail", the narration still positions the spectator. Though David receives the answer "no" from "them" (the implied viewers), we, the real viewers, know that the missing woman really is out there. The pleasurable simulation of "dialogue" with the empirical viewer *Moonlighting* does not translate into a privileged access to the "truth".

The evolution of *Moonlighting's* style is usefully examined through two theories of narration. Colin MacCabe defines the classic realist text as narrative that achieves transparent representation by repressing the machinery of the text (217). Using MacCabe's reading, *Moonlighting* materialises all the hidden machinery; it reveals what MacCabe calls the words outside the inverted commas - the metalanguage. In the scene described above the metalanguage of the camera is materialised.

In contrast to MacCabe, Bordwell conceives of filmic narration as the organisation of a set of cues into a story by means of a narrative and a stylistic system (62). Bordwell criticises MacCabe's model for its simplification of polyphonic discourses into a hierarchy of a "transparent" metalanguage over potentially "mistaken" object languages (MacCabe quoted in Bordwell, 18). This model conceives of the text as an inert, closed system which locks its discourses into fixed categories (18).

As I have mentioned above, the first self-reflexive moment in *Moonlighting* occurs in the first season in "'Twas the Episode before Christmas", when the characters remind each other that they must resolve the mystery because another show is due to

start soon. The episode ends with the characters responding to the "snow" which falls inexplicably inside their warm Los Angeles rooms, while the sound of singing wafts through the office door. The staff investigates, and finds a Christmas Carol being sung by the real production staff of *Moonlighting*. The actors, including the villains, join the crew in the carol in an illustration of divulgence and reconciliation. Maddie and David exchange seasonal greetings, and then everyone wishes the audience a Merry Christmas.

In an episode at the beginning of the second series the relationship of Maddie, David and the audience is once again self-reflexively addressed. "Every Daughter's Father is a Virgin" starts with the lead actors answering fanmail (Horowitz, 24). Most of the letters deal with the delayed consummation of the attraction between them. They are paradoxically both in and out of character, confessing that since they are just actors, they do not know when they will finally kiss. However, at the intensity of the letters they decide to try. After an awkward attempt, the two conclude that the moment has not yet arrived, but then exhort the audience:

DAVID: Keep those letters and postcards coming, people.
("Every Daughter's Father is a Virgin")

The extra-diegetic sequences become both more complex and more conventional in the course of the series' development. The end of the second series consists of a succession of four episodes in which *Moonlighting* shows a more conventional narrative structure. The sequence, which stars Mark Harmon as Maddie's boyfriend "Sam", is characterised by increasing serialisation. Sam appears just as David has decided to confess his love for Maddie. The familiar form of the love triangle finally ends with the attainment of the deferred closure of Maddie and David's relationship. This long narrative thread throws earlier episodes into relief. The extra-diegetic inserts in these episodes serve a different

purpose than earlier ones. In an episode from the latter group called "Maddie, I Am Curious", one such insert opens with interviews with "people on the street", who comment on previous episodes. Many people recount the plot with obvious interest in the Maddie-David-Sam triangle. The characters themselves retreat from self-reflexivity. All the intimacy of knowing exchanges recedes as the protagonists themselves seem to lose their intimate contact. Significantly, at one point in "Maddie's Turn to Cry", when a promising exchange transmutes simply into a discussion of a case, David turns to the audience and comments sadly: "I know, I thought that was leading somewhere too". This sequence of episodes seems to rely on the apparent estrangement of Maddie from the cosmology of the series, leaving David as the sole representative of the whimsical detective agency. The investigative motif and its telling coincidences are crucial to the relationship between the protagonists. Maddie's affair with Sam is indicated first when she takes the day off from the agency, and later when she declines to join David on a stake-out. The retreat from the detective story pretext is discussed again later with the "Anselmo Case". In the episode after the consummation of Maddie and David's relationship, called "To Heiress Human", the morning after is signalled by a satirical montage of documentary shots of nature, such as a flower opening. The four episodes of this story kept *Moonlighting* among the ten most popular programmes in America (Handelman, 54).

The increasingly conventional form introduced in this sequence reaches a climax in "Womb with a View" in the third season. The episode is a musical fantasy in which Maddie's unborn child, the result of her relationship with Sam, is told the story of his conception. The story gives narrative coherence to fragmented clips from previous episodes by constructing the fiction that David is the father of the child. Furthermore, the child is introduced to the history of the world through a montage of filmclips. History is constructed into a pastiche

of generic categories such as "Good", represented by images of children, animals, and the Sixties; and "Bad", signified by a picture of the atom bomb.

In her analysis of this episode Joyrich accuses *Moonlighting* of drawing on clichéd media representations and mixing fictional and non-fictional images in a coercive portrayal of history. To Joyrich, this lack of discrimination allows "A Womb with a View" to evade contradiction by remaining within the realm of television (192). In fact, the montage sequence in "A Womb with the View" is itself *deliberately* hyperbolic and "false" in terms of the "broader cosmology" of the series (Marc quoted in Kozloff, 76). Joyrich's reading ignores the satirical impulse behind the use of montage. The story of an ideal family recuperated from a montage of emblematic sequences from previous episodes is deliberately destabilised and finally disrupted altogether. As established in the introductory chapter, the recounting of history in postmodernism *is* complicated by the permeable boundary between reality and representation. However, our knowledge of history has always been gleaned from and conveyed through texts (Hutcheon, 1988, 129).

Joyrich misrepresents *Moonlighting* as simplifying these questions. The episode she focuses on is part of a trajectory in which the series' own approach to narrative became more conventional. As *Moonlighting* settled into a more conventional narrative structure, its system of polyphonic meanings narrowed to a simpler system resembling MacCabe's model of a metalanguage commenting on an object language. By comparison, earlier *Moonlighting* episodes seemed to reflect the belief that "everything is ironic, everything is in quotes" (Corliss, 1992, 55). Nonetheless, *Moonlighting's* approach to history is not as simple as Joyrich contends. The series confronts the multiple remaking of history by looking at its own constitutive myths through twinned images of the

Golden Age of Hollywood in "The Dream Sequence Always Rings Twice".

In its premise and its title *Moonlighting* emphasises irony and irreverence. The term "moonlighting" encompasses a range of rule-breaking activities (*Oxford English Dictionary*). At an etymological level, the project of the television series is connected to activities performed in addition to normal occupations, especially at night. Other code-breaking connotations include the concept of a "moonlight flit" in which occupants of a leased property abscond without paying their rent. These suggestions of illicit intrusions and stealthy irregularities suggest the approach of the series to narrativity. The present continuous tense of the title reflects both the "timeless nowness" of television's address (Eaton, 34), and the provisionality with which the series approaches the medium. *Moonlighting* addresses the power of representations to constitute the past. Its concern with the perception of time within the "series of perpetual presents" (Featherstone, 5) which constitutes television, is particularly evident in this episode in its pastiche of techniques from past films.

In "The Dream Sequence Always rings Twice" the syuzhet consists of two perspectives of an event from the past. The episode, introduced by guest star Orson Welles as a "giant leap backwards", reveals itself as a parody of the film noir and melodrama genres from the 1940s (Horowitz, 68). While walking through an abandoned club, Maddie and David are told that it is the site of the murder of a musician by his wife and her lover which occurred in the 1940s. Maddie and David have widely divergent interpretations of the murder: she believes that the wife was coerced into her lover's violent plans; he believes that the lover was drawn into the wife's conspiracy to kill her husband. After this argument both go

home and fall asleep. Their dreams constitute the rest of the syuzhet.

The episode is highly disjunctive because, in addition to the juxtaposition of Maddie's dream with David's, the inserts contrast starkly with the high production values of *Moonlighting's* usual diegesis. The dreams are shot in chiaroscuro with monochrome sound. In them, Maddie and David both envisage that they are the accused. Both dream through the topoi of films from the 1940s. Allusions are archetypal. In Maddie's dream sequence, for instance, the insolently attractive man who seduces the virtuous wife is called "Mr. McCoy", an idiom which connotes "the real thing". In David's dream sequence, the femme fatale confides that she was born in "Palookaville", a generic name for a small town. In these respective narratives about ruses and artifice, it is the codes through which the narratives are told which have the strongest influence. In other words, the inserts are highly conventional. The story of the wife's innocence can only be told via the conventions of the melodramas of the 1940s - in a typical plot of a woman tempted and then betrayed. The opposing tale of the man's innocence can be seen only through the chronicle of a man corrupted by a dangerous woman.

The power of nostalgia is contemplated through the use of evocative narrative conventions. Paradoxically, even as it recalls the era of the auteurs of film's Golden Age, the series' intertextuality plays against the concept of an original work of art. All television series quote topoi, but by its overt allusiveness, *Moonlighting* acknowledges its debt to other texts. The episode's instability also indicates its postmodernist status. The quotations do not cohere into a single narrative. They are fractured and antagonistic. Because it emphasises the importance of perspective, and revisits the same scene obsessively, the episode is a cult text. Postmodernist texts like *Moonlighting* therefore

juxtapose competing representations, exposing the influence of perspective and ideology on versions of truth.

In contemporary society television is the "'central' form of culture" (Hay, 356). Referentiality has been redefined so that in postmodernism, it often seems as though "TV is the world" (Featherstone, 5). Postmodernist visual texts weave together perspectives, facts and simulations of the past into delirious parodies of conventional history. Hutcheon finds this exposure of the constructedness of received truths to be evidence of the progressive project of postmodernism (1988, 48). She contests the view that history is used only as a referent to postmodernist representations by arguing that history cannot be known except from representations (1988, 24).

In the television age, the concept of history operates in a qualitatively different environment and must thus be understood differently. Television's characteristic mode of address is in the present tense, but its use of the category of the "historical" has created a new discourse of history that is fragmentary, multiple and variable (Schwoch et al., 2-3). Postmodernist parodies expose the mechanisms of creating history (Hutcheon, 1988, 24).

I contend that a greater sensitivity to the figurality of the allegories in *Moonlighting* is required. When David exhorts us to "think of the men that made America great: The Rockefellers, the Kennedy's, the Ewings" in "The Portrait of Maddie", we are meant to think of the Kennedys in Camelot, narrativised as much as the Ewings in Texas, and to consider the way our knowledge of the past is rendered through texts.

Moonlighting's references to familiar texts is clearly intended to provoke response. The biblical allegory in "'Twas the Episode before Christmas" (also discussed in Vande Berg,

25) exemplifies *Moonlighting's* approach to convention and, more generally, to intertextuality. In this episode Maddie and David become embroiled in the case of a baby left inexplicably in their receptionist's apartment. The baby's mother, Mary, eventually appears to reclaim her son. She tells them that she had been a witness to the murder of her husband, Joseph. She had been unable to find lodging since all the Inns are full at Christmas. Three FBI agents, all named King, have been assigned to investigate Joseph's murder. David, with his peculiar gift for puns and other linguistic turns, discerns a pattern in these clues. Uneasy, he has a *sotto voce* conversation with Maddie:

DAVID: You hear that? No room at the inns.

MADDIE: So?

DAVID: So? A woman named Mary, a baby, three kings. Confidentially, I'm worried.

MADDIE: About what?

DAVID: Maddie, I think we're trapped in an allegory. ("Twas the Episode before Christmas")

As this scene demonstrates with its comical concurrences, critics who complain about the implausible coincidences between cases and the detectives' relationship, miss the deliberateness of the technique. As this case of "hyperbolic coincidence" shows, such links are not accidental (Vande Berg, 14). Hyperbolic coincidences create disjunctures in the narrative which disrupt the seamless interpellation of the subject. In my consideration of montage and other emblematic sequences I have pointed out the shifts and tensions which shape *Moonlighting's* engagement with genre, intertextuality and self-reflexivity. At its most radical, *Moonlighting*, typically of cult texts, renders narrative secondary to individual scenes or sequences (Pollan, 76).

Moonlighting redefines both the content of mainstream genre television and the relation of audience to text. To define *Moonlighting* as a parody of detective series is inadequate, because some episodes, for example, "Atomic Shakespeare" and "Big Man on Mulberry Street" leave this format entirely. I propose instead that the series' subversiveness is directed at

television itself. *Moonlighting's* project is to demythologise popular culture even as it is implicated in it, by generating awareness of the workings of the media among its audience (Williams, 1988, 95). *Moonlighting* creates this awareness self-reflexively through plots punctuated by overt references to itself. By satirising the contingencies of production on television, the series presents the audience with the usually hidden operations of the television industry.

An interplay of transience and substance underlies television - the multiplicity of its images is inverted by the sense of reality they convey. *Moonlighting* exposes the codes which structure this reality. The foregrounding of techniques is accompanied by a more complex conception of audiencehood. The series demonstrates that self-reflexivity does not lead to alienation. By broadening the frames of television texts to acknowledge a sophisticated viewership, *Moonlighting* interpellates a new kind of reader.

Moonlighting is the most underrated of the series I consider. In 1984 the series introduced a definitively different mode of address to television; it brought popular postmodernism to screen (Olson, 1987, 284). Constantly aware of closure, never hiding its constructedness, inscribing contradiction into its themes, *Moonlighting* brought cult to television. The series conveyed a "split consciousness" (Pollan, 76). While it carefully observed the structures of pleasure which enabled its presence on television, the narration added its own ironic footnotes. The series used irony as a counterpoint for nostalgia in creating a new norm of watching television. For its viewers, *Moonlighting* created a sense of inside knowledge which rewarded their expertise about the machinery of television (*idem.*).

VII. CONCLUSION

Moonlighting changed television. The legacy of the series' postmodernist self-reflexivity and revision of generic boundaries permitted other complex and innovative series to appear on American television. Two of these series are discussed in the following chapters of this dissertation.

Is the postmodern project on television a short term one? Analyses of other postmodern projects on television, such as *MTV*, *USA Today TV*, and *Twin Peaks*, seem to indicate a limited tolerance for overtly meta-television (Glassner, 68). The evolution of these series demonstrates that viewers expect increasingly credible characterisation in series (Teachout, 66).

Moonlighting was cancelled because an aggregate of production problems eventually reached critical mass. In addition, its ratings had fallen, probably the major motivation behind its disappearance from the screens. Ratings suffered when its two main actors were not both available for its heavy shooting schedule. Unlike programmes with ensemble casts, it could not rely on the carrying power of its supporting characters to maintain audience interest. The series' style demanded a draining and ultimately unsustainable pace of production. Caron calls this frenetic style of writing, producing and editing "stream-of-consciousness television" (Horowitz, 61). "When it really cooks ... it's like a band doing riffs" (Caron quoted in Johnson, 123).

Moonlighting's last episode is a recapitulation of the postmodernist devices which the series had established as new topoi for mainstream television. By this time its serial and self-reflexive elements are simply in opposition. The scenes are joined in an inert rather than dynamic juxtaposition.

"Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" reiterates the varying levels of knowledge which *Moonlighting* had always utilised. The extent to which the romantic narrative had progressed is revealed by

the farcically complex romantic relations in the episode. In a typically self-reflexive manner *Moonlighting* hyperbolically enacts the narrative imperative of the "machine for the production of the couple" (Bellour quoted in Zizek, 1992b, 241). A parodic "gumshoe" detective is hired by Maddie's friend from New York to find out the identity of his wife's lover. The detective suspects Herbert Viola, an employee of the Blue Moon agency. Instead, Herbert is marrying Agnes DiPesto, the agency's receptionist. The unfaithful wife is Maddie's cousin, Annie, and the lover is actually David. All these secrets, pretences and misunderstandings converge at the wedding reception. In a farcical climax all the guests land in the pool. Yet in the denouement that results from the slapstick comedy Maddie's cousin returns to her husband, the gumshoe is reluctantly withdrawn from the case, Herbert and Agnes get married, and David and Maddie return to the office.

All the motifs of the series are rehearsed. David alights from the Blue Moon elevator, walks along the Blue Moon corridor, and arrives at the Blue Moon Door. There he finds the office being vacated, and an announcement by a man from "ABC Television". He announces to David: "You're cancelled." When Maddie arrives, the set is being dismantled, a scene the audience has encountered in "Camille". In explanation, she is told that the series will end in 6 minutes and 14 seconds - "the end of the world as we know it." Quoting *Moonlighting's* own past, David describes the scene as "a weird, unfunny dream sequence".

The characters leave the set and visit the emblematic settings of Hollywood to try to rescue the series: a private cinema where they are told by a producer: "You two were a great love story ... [but] Once it's over, it's over. And for you two, it's over"; and a church where they try to reinvigorate their romance by persuading a priest to marry them, but all their efforts fail. The music and camera work become more

expressionistic as the characters become more desperate. Finally, in the church the camera, like the priest, withdraws from them. Over-the-shoulder reverse shots are replaced by a high camera angle. Seen in a long shot the characters look forlorn in the empty church. The camera then returns to the level of the altar where the actors form a tableau and hold the last conversation of the series. This time, the camera lingers with long reaction shots. The shots are further lengthened by slow-motion close-ups. *Moonlighting's* protagonists contemplate the "end of the world".

MADDIE: I thought it would be different.

DAVID: I didn't think about it.

MADDIE: If only we had these five years to do over again. Maybe we could ...

You know, David, after all these years, all we've been through together, the ups, the downs, the ins, the outs, I just want you to know ... I can't imagine not seeing you tomorrow.

FLASHBACK SEQUENCE FROM THE PAST FIVE SEASONS. ("Eine Kleine Nachtmusik")

The series had always been conscious of its own place among visual texts, and this montage anticipates the way the series will be remembered: through its emblematic sequences. If, as David tells Maddie, they "will cease to exist as television characters", the sequence is the series' own epitaph.

The last of *Moonlighting's* five important montages ends the series on a gracious note. The sequence encompasses evocative images from its five years of whimsy and boldness. In its fond and elegiac tone the sequence is diametrically different to the other montages I have discussed. It includes many of the same images used in the earliest montage, in "The Straight Poop". In the latter episode the inserts were used with their original dialogue. In addition, the sequence even includes fluffed lines and discarded takes. In "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" the images are knitted into a nostalgic but reassuring review by the song "We'll be together". The sequence seems to cohere around the song. Images match the lyrics' motifs of kisses, smiles and togetherness. The montage seems to seal itself into an innocuous conclusion.

However, as the song ends on the chorus line, "We'll be together", the image which accompanies the words, show the characters separating and saying goodbye. Appropriately, the series ends with incongruity.

Moonlighting used genre as a McGuffin or "an empty place" which it self-consciously filled with the accoutrements of genre (Zizek, 1992a, 6). The last scene literally reveals the empty spaces behind the sets; outdoor vistas are revealed as large backscreens and wheeled away to reveal nothingness. What appears in the final two shots is the representation of all the pretexts of the series - the McGuffin itself - the Anselmo case. The words reprinted below fade slowly on stark, black backgrounds, leaving behind a mystery. The ellipse in these final words of the series, which take the form of an epitaph, continues the indeterminacy. The gap which it represents, ensures that *Moonlighting* remains a cult text, constituted of absences, irresolution and lingering questions.

Blue Moon Investigations ceased operations on May 14th, 1989.

The Anselmo case was never solved ... and remains a mystery to this day.

CHAPTER THREE: TWIN PEAKS

Happy Endings, The Story of *Twin Peaks*

"To me, it's a regular television show". David Lynch, quoted in Charney, 54.

Twin Peaks, the lyrical but controlled series broadcast in two seasons in America from April 1990 to June 1991, and concurrently in South Africa in 1991, occasioned debates about television which are as complex as its own interactions with the medium. The series was created jointly by David Lynch and Mark Frost, the former a film director and the latter a lauded television producer and writer. The videography gives details of the projects Lynch and Frost have concluded. The series consists of only two seasons - 29 episodes in all - but generated a peripheral industry of associated products (Bianculli, 268). A further product was a reconsideration of television narrative.

The series is a soap opera with a strong element of the detective series, which opens with the discovery of a murder in a small town. The discovery provokes the presence of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and importantly, it also provokes a response within the community of the town.

Twin Peaks revisits the staples of televisual story-telling; it investigates the power of narrative. This is suggested by its primary image of the woods. The history of narrative is marked with the trope of the forest; in fact, "[w]oods are a metaphor for the narrative text" (Eco, 1994, 6). For the contemporary world, the main source of narrative is television (Williams, 1990, 59). *Twin Peaks* seems fascinated with the power of narrative to conceal as much as to reveal. It deploys the medium's devices of crafting reality with studied intent, and simultaneously exploits the pleasure of looking at the workings of television's systems (Fiske, 237). Consequently, through *Twin Peaks* we can look closely at

seductive techniques of revelation. For *Twin Peaks* is itself a fictional narrative and, as Eco warns:

the attraction in every fiction ... [is that it] encloses us within the boundaries of its world and leads us, one way or another, to take it seriously. (Eco, 1994, 78)

This chapter will examine the self-conscious fictionality of *Twin Peaks*, following the narration's fascination with sites of normality and truthfulness. The series finds an obvious, and therefore enigmatic, analogue in small-town America. *Twin Peaks* therefore brings together the image of the woods and the small town, two staples of narrative. *Twin Peaks* is "the small town at the edge of nature" (Pollard, 296). Combining the familiar tropes in contemporary American narrative of a tamed yet threatening nature, and the frontier, the mysterious small town mediates the forest and the frontier (297). Other analogues of clarity undercut by enigma, or of surfaces "filled with secrets" (as a character in episode 2 describes Laura Palmer), such as industrial sound, are also examined. However, the series finds its primary site of narrativisation in television. By foregrounding television's conventions of transparency and naturalness, *Twin Peaks* invites its audience to reconsider the smooth surfaces of "normality".

Twin Peaks's engagement with each of these analogues is aware of successive layers of representation, of which its own is the latest manifestation. In this palimpsestic structure of meanings even a single image can have multi-layered significance (Bordwell, 20). *Twin Peaks* signals such hybridity overtly, for example, with a sheriff named "Harry S. Truman" after an American president remembered for his affinity for small-town and middle America (Carroll, 289). The series also does so more obliquely, for instance, by quoting Alfred Hitchcock's camera style in the opening episode. It is in this area of obliquely layered meanings and hybrid signifiers, which mix "semantic fields without signalling any boundary" (Bordwell, 20), that the true

interest of *Twin Peaks* lies. These subtle shades of meaning - often seeming to rely on subliminal awareness - are an indication of the audience's acute visual literacy. The accentuated allusiveness of the text demonstrates a qualitative shift in popular narrative: it has adapted to the simultaneous presence of vast resources of information in contemporary culture (Collins, 1993, 250).

Everything about *Twin Peaks* is acutely aware of television, yet the series is manifestly different from the surrounding televisual environment. The opening shot of the credits - of a robin quivering on the brink of flying off - is a delicate moment in which both the bird and the camera linger, confounding an expectation based on the quick pace of editing of conventional television. Both expectation and circumvention are registered. In creating a television soap opera and detective series, Lynch and Frost engage with the most banal of television's genres, and the most familiar of tropes. Yet, as Lynch's previous works testify, familiarity must never be the comforting herald of closure. The same robin which opens *Twin Peaks* is the robin which closed *Blue Velvet*, an earlier text in which the convergence of detection and small-town life is explored.

The authorship of the series poses a theoretical problem. The singular tone of the series, and its quotation of themes from earlier works directed by Lynch has caused critics to attribute this collaborative televisual text to the film director. This has been compounded by a critical attempt to constitute the series as an aberration in television - a work of art (see Bianculli and Kaleta). The "casual form" of a popular genre can be transformed into art if it manifests the influence of an author (Eco, 1994, 116). Consequently, the concept of auteurism has been persistently invoked in discussions of *Twin Peaks*. Lynch also figures in a general revival of the concept of auteurism (see Corrigan and Andrew).

If, today, auteurism "is far from dead" (Andrew, 80), the debates it raises have also been renewed. The rise of the "politique des auteurs" in the French journal *Cahiers du Cinema* in the 1950s defended the intellectual study of mass culture. The theory posited that the industrial product of film could manifest one principal influence. The weakness of the approach in collaborative media is the danger of a cult of personality (Bywater and Sobchack, 51-55). It is also limited by a taxonomical bias (Thompson, 112).

How then shall we imagine the authorship of *Twin Peaks*? The renewal of auteurism has occurred in the context of a destabilisation of the boundaries of texts. *Twin Peaks* embodies the problem of determining the boundaries of the televisual text. Amongst the texts which are assembled under the brand "Twin Peaks" are the 29 episodes, the separate movie version, the audiotapes recorded by Agent Cooper, the soundtrack album, and advertisements directed by Lynch starring actors from the series and flighted during its broadcast (Kaleta, 133). The continuous flow of images in the media has transformed authorship into a signature, one factor in the context of reception (Andrew, 78-82). Andrew believes that this dispersal of authority has generated a revival of belief. "This is a struggle of faith in an atheist world, for the author is surely an analogue of God" (85). Eco points out that the desire to find God as the empirical author, narrator or model author of the world is an attempt to find the stable truths of fiction amidst the complexity of reality (1994, 115). Thus, if the parameters of the cultural encyclopedia of a text indicate the strategy of its model author, some critics have decided that the parameters of *Twin Peaks* are its "Lynchian" traits.

Auteurism survives today as a strategy of brand-name recognition. It has become a commercial performance, part of the larger commerce of the image which attempts to shape audience perception (Corrigan, 102-36). If *Twin Peaks* appeals

to our expertise in reading television texts and gradually reveals the construction of seamless pleasures, its unsettling revelations are tempered by a comfortable number of consumer products. The unique brand-name of *Twin Peaks* may have been too stable for commercial television, which works both through transience and coherence (Dienst, 92).

Ironically, the origin of the auteur theory lay in a radical questioning of genre, and finding a "new relationship between fiction and reality" (Godard quoted in Monaco, 103). The theorists and filmmakers in the French New Wave - Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, Jacques Rivette and Eric Rohmer - regarded the form of the genre film, with its clichés, as an instrument in the constitutive process of film (51). To Truffaut, genre films show a "combination of abstract formalism, moral point and shared cultural experience" (68). In their unchanging narrative logic, familiar generic patterns produce "a certain sense of security" (54). Therefore, given the manipulative density of its cues, the disorienting effect of genre parody is marked.

Twin Peaks' engagement with the conventions of genre is the source of its impact. Viewers were electrified by the stylised manner in which the series assumed the habits of generic codes; and its presumption of a media-conscious audience (Collins, 1992, 346). On television, genre "entails a loss of freedom of desire and demand in order to achieve efficiency and properly labelled packaging" (Hartley quoted in Fiske, 114). In order to fulfil the compact of genre a text must ensure the pleasure of fore-ordained recognition, or *generic* pleasure. *Twin Peaks* affects obedience to this compact, and then subverts it. The most radical challenges to conventions of narration often display such superficial directness (Bordwell, 284). The seamless surfaces of texts are undone by overloading them. Codes are applied with calculated intent. Instead of the emphasis on an uncluttered

narrative and unobstructed lines of causality, "the suspicion dawns that every shot or line can be treated transtextually" (312). Neale and Krutnik speak of a comedy based on a similarly deadpan obedience of cues in their discussion of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. The format sketch, a comedic device based on the generic form:

take[s] the format of something recognisable like a television quiz programme or discussion - or indeed anything with a strong and recognisable style of presentation - and then empty the content out of it, replacing it with something ludicrous. The most suitable term for this would be a *format sketch*. (Wilmot quoted in Neale and Krutnik, 201)

Similarly, by retaining the format of generic cues, but treating them excessively, *Twin Peaks* foregrounds and subverts the security provided by old forms.

The series is simultaneously intricated in television, and different from it. Its difference is evident in the pace of the opening sequence of the credits. The segmented pace of commercials echoes that of the television texts which they intersperse (Brunsdon, 78). In a soap opera, for instance, advertisements occur in an environment of perpetual narrative deferral. Advertisements sustain this impulse by providing instances of provisional closure within the context of continued deferral (Kaplan, 1992, 266). Parodies such as *Monty Python's Flying Circus* accentuate such conventions by stylising the conventions of advertisements (Williams, 1990a, 76).

Twin Peaks establishes its difference with such conventions in the long opening credits. The luxuriant colour and slowness of the sequence are striking for their contravention of standard openings on television. Fluid dissolves between shots suggest that images disintegrate to reveal what lies beneath - further images. The pace of the sequence signifies the different pace of life of both the series and the town. The slowly haunting theme by Angelo Badalamenti is heard

before the first image fades from black. It is of a robin, so still that it might be a photograph. This tension between the animate and the inanimate will be picked up again. When the bird does move, it shifts its head, but does not fly off. Instead, its image dissolves into an industrial scene of billowing smokestacks. This contrast between the frozen image of nature, and the animated industrial image, is mediated by the dissolve into the next shot - of machinery in the sawmill. The camera retains this fluidity and languid pace throughout the credits. Shots of the action of machine on machine, with glistening sparks marking the moment when parts come together, produce an image not of inanimate tools but of metallic beauty. Unlike the prosaic image of the bird, these images are imbued with movement and electric energy: they are animated. The juxtaposition of natural and mechanical images continues; after the inside of the sawmill, the credits dissolve to a "natural" scene. Nature appears subdued - a huge tree trunk lies on its side, propped up by steel pins. Behind it, trees form the background. This composition is repeated in the shot of an off-centre sign welcoming visitors to Twin Peaks. This image segues into a pan of rushing water thundering into a pool. The camera pans and swoops fluidly, simulating the flow of water. As the shot cuts to the calm waters of a lake, a close-up of the pool fills the screen. The water reflects the surroundings, however, and slow eddies remind of the huge waterfall from which it comes.

Themes in the opening credits prefigure the oppositions which structure much of the rest of the series. The electric vitality of the sawmill machines is contrasted with the slow pace of nature. The convergence of organic and inorganic surfaces is a theme which has interested Lynch since *Eraserhead* in 1977. Industrial sound is perfectly absorbed into the representation of urban life. Since conventions of making sense of the world have the effect of erasing parts of it, industrial sound is the perfect analogue for the process

of revealing convention. Industrial images such as the glinting machinery of the sawmill follow seamlessly from images of a bucolic countryside and segue into a panning shot of water falling into a pond. This sequence marks "the interface between industrial and organic textures" (Olson, 1991, 80).

There is no diegetic sound in the credits, but the music predicts the images. Even before the first shots of machines, the soundtrack in *Twin Peaks*, composed by Angelo Badalamenti and David Lynch, "incorporates the subliminal scream of a buzzsaw" (Olson, 1991, 79). The exterior scenes of nature are so studiously contrasted with images of people and machines, that their expressionistic sepia, green, and red tones are made to carry a weight of "naturalness". The appearance later of a parody of a daytime soap opera, with typical high-key lighting, accentuates the use of high contrast lighting in *Twin Peaks* (Charney, 57).

The opening credits are a presentiment of the relationship of surfaces and depth, of signs and referents, of machine and flesh. By concentrating on the already fetishised image, and consciously doubling the fetishising process, the series is able to generate a critical distance. Using the expanse of television to focus on the materiality of images and sound, *Twin Peaks* brings a subversive sensuousness to the medium:

If you were told that early one morning the body of the local homecoming queen, shrouded in plastic, washed up onto the lakeshore, it mightn't entirely surprise you. (Jameson, 1990, 73)

It is precisely the lack of surprise, the fitting revelation of the disjunction between sign and referent, the absence of a distance between our disbelief and its suspension, between the conventionalised "reality" of the town and our awareness of it, that is *Twin Peaks's* field of interest. The crashing, thundering waterfall below the Great Northern Hotel flows smoothly into the pristine surface of a pond. The sign

"Welcome to Twin Peaks" states overtly the significance of opening credits, and partakes of the disjunction between openness and what is hidden.

The first diegetic image is of the mirror-like lake with two ducks swimming bucolically to shore. In the house behind the lake, the camera pans past a Japanese sculpture of two dogs to alight on Josie Packard, the widow who has inherited the sawmill. She is looking at herself in the mirror, painting her lips a lush red. Her actions continue the mesmeric fluidity of the machines in the credits; she is entirely engrossed in her image. It is the sound of someone leaving the house which draws her attention away from her mirror image. Once again sound has a guiding and distracting and prescient role for sight. The image in the mirror, of the lake, of the sculpture, which opens *Twin Peaks*, is also the one which closes the series. Thus, the motif of doubling circumscribes the series (Dienst, 97). At the end, it is Agent Cooper who looks into the mirror, and the moment of perceiving the split image reveals that the agent of good has been possessed by the forces of evil.

The sound which draws Josie's attention is caused by Pete Martell, played by Jack Nance, the man who discovers Laura Palmer's body. As he leaves the house, he informs his silent and resolutely unresponsive wife that he is "Gone fishing". Once he is outside he hears the sound of a ship in the distance, and intones: "Lonesome foghorn blows". These are not words; they are quotations. They are appropriate lines for a character who knows his place. Characters in Godard films show a similar instability of status: they move from caricature to rounded individual and back again. Characters thus become "an uneasy construct out of cues appropriate to various narrational modes" (Bordwell, 316). This instability enacts the constitutive nature of narrative; what seems natural and self-evident is revealed as highly constructed and

arbitrary. The most obvious of these characters which are also character-ciphers, is BOB (Dienst, 97). In the midst of scenes filmed on location in situ, in Snoqualmie, Washington State, and not on set (Kaleta, 140), the signs of the text refer only to other scripts. Once more, it is sound which indicates this added level of meaning, which is not immediately evident to the gaze. Where sight reveals a "natural" setting, sound suggests mechanical responses. They are deliberately double-coded. These scenes lead to the opening of the mystery plot, and so are important for the position which they craft for the spectator.

As Pete Martell turns in response to the sound of the foghorn, a large plastic object catches his eye. A cutaway shot shows the object in much closer proximity than Pete is able to see. The narration allows the viewer a slightly privileged position, but as Pete edges closer to the object, and finally identifies it as a woman's body, the viewer sees through Pete's point-of-view. This unification of the gaze through the male protagonist looking at the woman, which Mulvey describes in her enormously influential paper, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", is here disturbed by the inadequacies of the male protagonists. Pete reverts to his overt, and distancing, allusive tone when he telephones the police: "She's dead. Wrapped in plastic." When the police arrive, the point-of-view shot is used once again to show the body in close-up. This time it is the view through the eyes of Deputy Sheriff Andy Brennan. Just when the mystery of the woman is about to be revealed to the male gaze and its extension, the camera, Andy starts to cry, radically disrupting the stability of subject identification.

The relative positions of the male and female are interrogated throughout *Twin Peaks*, starting with the opposition of the opening and closing shots, and echoed thematically through the doubling of characters and experiences. Though critics have

read this interrogation as a reordering of the masculine and the feminine within the detective genre (Nochimson, 23-24), it seems more a destabilising of the masculine subject position. The final scene is one in which the male protagonist is drawn into the fascination of the image of the self. This position is first held by a woman, and the irreducible tension between these positions is retained, despite the series' radical disruption of stable masculine identification.

In the classical model of the detective story, the investigator is "the traditionally expected center of signification" (Carrion, 242). The theme and structure of the classic Hollywood detective film reproduces the Cartesian split between a powerful subject and a blank object of knowledge. This positivist division - exemplified by the detached expertise of the scientist - is manifested in a hierarchy of mind over body, and male over female (Waugh, 1992, 2). Martha Nochimson describes its occurrence in the filmic Hollywood Mystery Tradition, which revolves around an unsettling encounter between the male protagonist and his unconscious "when desire meets the body of a deadly (or dead) woman" (23). Such division has been undercut by an emphasis on the body and the aesthetic in postmodernist works (Waugh, 1992, 2). Furthermore, the television detective has modified the formula. In the Television Mystery Tradition the protagonist:

is not the erotically stunned investigator but ever-ready Sherlock Holmes. Like Holmes, the standard television detective is not seduced into his narratives; he enters them with a passion to dispel any illegibility represented by any body of crime - which is not a disruption in his life but rather its *raison d'être*. For the Holmesian television detective, lack of clarity is the desirable aspect of mystery, an intellectually aphrodisiac opportunity for orgasmic restoration of clarity. (Nochimson, 23)

Television aids the process of materiality of the body; its shifts and slippages in the processes of identification unsettle the paradigmatic detective gaze (Nochimson, 23-25).

On television, viewing becomes deceptive specifically through the disordering of narrative. *Twin Peaks* is a radical intervention in both the television and the postmodernist versions of the detective story because it makes overt the systemic disordering of narrative and vision in commercial television (Dienst, 95).

The detective story rehearses the division of male and female and mind and body, by investing the woman's body as the sign of excess and disruption to the male unconscious. The male protagonist is the figure around which the narration must cohere, and thus he must remain aloof from the disruptive event which causes his presence. Involvement is figured as contamination, and he is defined purely by a disembodied intelligence. His probing gaze is abstracted from the mutability of the body; all of his anxieties are projected onto the woman or the landscape (Nochimson, 23). The woman's body is made to bear what the male protagonist disavows - the fear of castration. In order to neutralise this fear the woman's body must be made into a spectacle, and cleansed of the mystery which always threatens masculine denial. The masculine protagonist enacts the power of looking, and controlling through seeing (Mulvey, 1989d, 19-21). He seeks resolution in both its sense as solution, and as clear vision.

The figure of the detective thus has a formal as well as a thematic role. In addition to reconstructing the true story of the crime (Bordwell, 69), he forms the centre of the narrative structure. Viewers are made to disavow their knowledge of the codes of the narration and "share the restricted knowledge possessed by the investigator" (65). Thus the detective story trains viewers to regard every image as functional, and every shot a clue. *Twin Peaks* plays with this conditioning, teasing its spectators for expecting every image to mean something, as though they are detectives. The series deploys the codes of the genre, but then performs its

own "stylized visual disavowal" (Deutsch, 141). Instead of being made to share the detective's coherent, but limited, perspective the viewer is allowed a split position of "ironically assumed innocence" (*idem.*). The viewer can exercise both choices at once: "to know and not to know" (*idem.*). Thus the series modifies the detective paradigm. *Twin Peaks* acknowledges the televisual expertise of its viewers, and plays an exhilarating game of "knowing and not knowing" (142). The series mediates the cinematic and televisual gazes; it:

offers the TV viewer an illusion of knowing distance, a distance necessary for active masculine spectatorship, from a medium branded excessively feminine, a medium all too familiar, a medium that comes too close to home. "Twin Peaks" seduces by offering the promise of a position of control over and projection of the system of representation implied by the cinematic gaze. (Deutsch, 142)

As the protagonist in a postmodernist television detective story, agent Dale Cooper is at once the "most literal hero" (Kaleta, 137), and something more. His battles are fought not only against crime, but also on a metaphysical plane. As the archetype of good, he fights the archetypes of evil. Withdrawn from the corporeality of the body, he rejects Audrey Horne's sexual advances. This asexuality is integral to his moral authority. He has the traditional skills of the detective hero, which are also the skills of the hunter (Carroll, 290-92).

Yet Cooper is not a straight rendition of the detective; neither is he a parody of one (Carrion, 242). He is an "ambivalent" hero (Carroll, 288). This ambivalence dislodges the spectator's identification with figures of authority in the detective story (Carrion, 241). The masculine, knowing gaze is disavowed, and the detective is implicated in the vagaries and subtleties of the body. In the cliff-hanger which ended the first series he is shot and lies helplessly

bleeding while he waits for help. Simultaneously, the detective's function on the metaphysical plane is also disrupted. If Cooper must restore the boundary between good and bad, his investigations reveal ultimately that the two are separated only by a mirror.

The source of destabilisation of the unified masculine authority is twofold: on the one hand, the detective himself challenges the clear divisions between men and women which define his place; on the other, authority is reordered around a *group* of men. Cooper is invited to join the Bookhouse Boys - Sheriff Truman, Deputy Sheriffs Hawk and Brennan, and Big Ed Hurley - the secret order which actually maintains the law in Twin Peaks (Huskey, 252). This development accentuates, rather than disturbs, the excision of women. While the detective manifests stilted relationships with the women in the town, his interactions with the men in the Bookhouse club are warm. He enacts a withdrawal both from the civilisation of the big city, and from women (Carroll, 290).

The body of woman is the mystery which draws the gaze of the detective (Nochimson, 23). Her death is the pretext for his presence. The drained, blue corpse of Laura Palmer forms a stark contrast to the rich browns and greens of the rest of *Twin Peaks*. As her living body represents the threat of castration to the male unconscious, her plastic-shrouded corpse is the tamed and sealed body from which any threat has been excised. The portrait of Laura displayed in the school cabinet amongst the other trophies is also packaged for consumption, "blazoning forth a smile like those of the fifties advertisements" (144). The twin images of Laura, wrapped in plastic and kept under glass, are "the show's totem" (Deutsch, 144). In both images she is packaged for consumption by a fearful but devouring gaze.

Twin Peaks disrupts the classic divisions which structure the detective story. The most insidious of these disruptions occurs at the end of the second episode of the first series. This is the dream sequence which occurs in the red room. Ironically, in the European film version this scene is the closing and most baffling scene, indicating its climactic quality. The scene's irreducible fascination with the textures of sound and image are all the more subversive for being presented as clues in a detective story. In the dream Cooper sees himself 25 years in the future, seated in a room draped with red curtains. On the black and white checkered floor stands a marble statue of a woman. In the room with Cooper are a diminutive man and a woman in a black dress - she appears to be Laura Palmer. "Laura" kisses Cooper and then whispers something in his ear. The man tells Cooper that the gum he used to like will come back into fashion. He dances. Both Cooper's companions speak in a mesmerisingly distorted manner and subtitles are provided. The effects in this scene were achieved by shooting the scene with the camera running backwards; the actors also memorised their lines backwards. The scene was then played forwards, providing the arresting distortion of words and movement.

The red room scene is a radical disruption of the conventions of the television detective story. *Twin Peaks* disturbs the compact which excises women, rendering them silent and excessive, the bearers of projected male anxiety. In the red room the woman is not a silent figure which captures the gaze and calls a halt to the action of the plot (Mulvey, 1989d, 19-20). Instead, she imparts knowledge to the detective, and it is only his own inadequacy which renders the message unintelligible (Nochimson, 28).

Finally, as a revision of the television detective drama, the red room scene is most radical in its tolerance of lingering mystery. In the classic Sherlock Holmes stories, the mission

of the detective is to "dispel magic and mystery, to make everything explicit, accountable, subject to scientific analysis" (Belsey, 279). In *Twin Peaks* the detective's resolution will not obliterate every trace of mystery, and cauterise its wound. Instead, by:

[u]niting precision of mind with flow of body in his pursuit of mystery, Cooper emerges as the first detective truly appropriate to the medium of television.
(Nochimson, 24)

Yet, considering its status as the climactic mystery of the series, the red room scene also suggests a contradiction. The revelation of Laura as the holder of the secret in the dream sequence, paradoxically repeats the formula of the classic detective format. It is indeed the woman who knows, who must be decoded and understood. Only, here the detective is immobile, and the progress of the tale is held hostage to the changeability of his body.

I return in this section to a consideration of the films of Jean-Luc Godard and their investigation of genre. In the 150 years of its existence, the detective story has shifted from a celebration of positivist concreteness and clarity, to exemplifying the postmodern questioning of resolution (Spanos, 80). The postmodernist detective story poses the very problem of referentiality which its positivist origins would deny (Dienst, 96). The evolution of the detective story can be traced in the shift from a primarily syntagmatic impetus to increasing emphasis on the paradigmatic dimension. This emphasis on the paradigmatic array leads eventually to the endless chain of signifiers which characterise postmodernist signification (Collins, 1993, 262). The narrative of the postmodernist detective story thus enacts the problem of referentiality, and of narrative and vision, as I hope to show in the discussion which follows. This will lead to the consideration of ending, and an evaluation of the televisual project of *Twin Peaks*.

Bordwell found Godard's films to be special instances of narration. *Alphaville* (1965), Godard's parody of the detective film, is marked by a peculiar use of generic codes. Conventional detective stories are teleological and provide the means to secure the resolution of the mystery (Fiske, 130). The use of archetypes or familiar tropes (Eco, 1988, 453) invites classic patterns of understanding, in order to unify the events of the syuzhet (Bordwell, 45-49). In *Alphaville*, on the one hand, the narration invites the normal application of narrative schemata (49). On the other, it provides either too few or too many cues to assure coherence. Frequently the requisite cues clash with those from irreconcilable codes. The effect of combining cues is to render all cues stylised and parodic rather than reassuring (315-16).

Stylised invocations of convention invite paradigmatic depth. The unsettling profusion of cues which drive the syntagm, causes an accentuation of the paradigmatic category instead, and in the detective tale, linearity is undermined. Echoing the petrifying action of the figure of the woman on the progression of the syntagm in the classic narrative described by Mulvey, the temporal impetus of the fabula is arrested by the accretion of paradigmatic detail (Bordwell, 317). If the syntagmatic axis is motivated by a reconstruction of temporal events, the Godardian narrative is progressively "spatialized" by the suggestion of alternative temporalities (*idem.*). The use of stylised tropes triggers "a sense of the entire range of paradigmatic choice available at any point" (318). This conceptualisation of visual texts reorders the nature of narration, and of audience. The text, no matter how simple its surface, becomes a palimpsest, and each sign shows traces of earlier uses. Palimpsestic traces record the process of construction (325). Precisely those texts which show the greatest simplicity, even banality, promise insight into profound questions of narration (Eco, 1988, 454). The

simplest and most stereotypical plots refract attention to the meaning of the image (Zizek, 1992b, 58-59).

The detective genre produces such deceptively simple texts. Though a detective story, *Twin Peaks* too defers resolution by inviting schemata in profusion, and abdicating its affirmatory role. Instead of paring down diversions in the syuzhet in order to lead to the clarification of the fabula, *Twin Peaks* accentuates them through parody (Jameson, 1990, 75). The disjunctive switching between schemata, and the accentuation of narrational strategy, deny the possibility of a coherent position from which to unify the narration. Contiguous schemata therefore reveal their conventional character. By figuring the viewer's position as a clash of schemata, both *Alphaville* and *Twin Peaks* inscribe spectatorship into the text (Bordwell, 316). For instance, characters in such aberrant texts abruptly change register. Viewers took delight in monitoring the shifting tone of the characters of *Twin Peaks*. At one moment they may be plausible individuals, at another, they veer into mimicry (320). Such vertiginous changes in tone shatter any sense of coherence. *Twin Peaks* is filled with similar moments. The original clue of the series, the body of a dead woman, is plastic-wrapped. It is the parody of a pretext - a generic clue. In its presentation of a beloved convention of police story - the doughnut - Dale Cooper is led to a table arrayed with a cornucopia of doughnuts. Cooper's obsessive note-taking (his dictaphone takes the place of the conventional spiral notebook) becomes a paradoxical index of the viewer's activity. When convention dictates that a flickering lighting in the morgue signifies a sinister mood, a character reveals that the effect is simply due to "a broken transformer". The application of the conventions of one mode to another in *Twin Peaks* is incongruous and hilarious.

This paradigmatic density moves *Twin Peaks* out of the detective genre towards the "elaborate paradigmatic structure"

of soap opera (Allen, 1983, 103). The series becomes an unstable combination of the two (Deutsch, 142), whose tension reveals underlying similarities. Soap operas defer resolution and produce pleasure by infinite diversions, yet are driven by the promise of closure (Kaplan, 1992, 266). Similarly, while the detective story is structured to ensure syntagmatic progression, its tropes are haunted by paradigmatic alternatives (Bordwell, 317). Using the paradigmatic complexity of soap opera, *Twin Peaks's* narration frustrates the resolution of the murder mystery by revealing ever more elaborate networks of connections.

Edgar Allan Poe's founding stories of the detective genre engaged with the challenge of the city, which in the 19th century loomed threateningly in the physical and psychological landscapes (Brand, 221). In *Twin Peaks* the setting of the story is a small town in the northwest of America. The constitutive legend of *Twin Peaks* is that Mark Frost and David Lynch generated the first plots for the series from an outline of the town rather than of the story (Dienst, 95). The multiple significance of place is suggested in the first scenes of the series. The "Twin Peaks Theme" and the accompanying visuals of flowing water which start every episode, initiate a flow of representations which embody received ideas of the small town. With its placid surface hiding subterranean agitation, the setting of the small town has a long tradition in American narrative (Carroll, 288). It is also a place of contemporary fascination. Many of the most lauded works in the new generation of American television series, such as *Northern Exposure* and *Picket Fences*, are set in small towns, and sometimes overtly acknowledge a debt to *Twin Peaks*.

ii.

The setting is an unstable amalgam of substance and intangibility. A small town is commonly mythologised as a haven of reality, compared to a citified image of living. It

becomes a trope of stability, yet, like all tropes, it too is revealed as a construction (Pollard, 303). Like the suburbs of big cities, the blankness of the small town is filled with comforting rituals like watching television. The combination of placidity and ritual has generated a similar fear of disjunction between surface and what lies beneath.

Inevitably, this disjunction has also been rendered through film and television, adding to the bank of images (Chaudhuri, 38).

Paradoxically, the small town gains its materiality precisely through the weight of image. It is therefore not a place as much as a precipitate of countless fictions in which a setting of normality has been constructed (Pollard, 301). As a site compulsively revisited by fictions, the small town is a metonymy for America (297). The overstated freshness and openness of representations of small towns is a specifically American vision (Kaleta, 136). It is one which has also been repeatedly reinvented on television:

The town of *Twin Peaks* had the feeling of a full-fledged community - the home we've dreamed of since we were old enough to turn on the TV. (Hampton, 48)

In the light of the constitutive nature of the fictions which have represented it, the small town has recently been represented as the locus of "all the terrors and simulated realities [of postmodernism]" (Denzin, 67).

In *Twin Peaks* these simulated realities are radically destabilised. The series refuses to respect the careful distinction between the various modes of fictionalisation of the setting. By combining every image of normality into a pose of studied plenitude, normality is fundamentally undermined. In *Twin Peaks*:

[s]oap operas, Father Knows Best-style sitcoms, perverse old thriller movies ... and bucolic commercials all converged, imploded; the seamless assurance and authority of TV's uninterrupted discourse became saturated with dread. (Hampton, 48)

The consequence was an uneasy but compulsive watchability. Each of the disparate modes of narration, deployed simultaneously by the series, solicits schemata which could unify the narrative; but, as in Godard's films, the narration in *Twin Peaks* did not cohere around any single mode (Bordwell, 314). The small town reflects the contradictions of these fictions; it is a place "in which things keep going on abnormally despite the most ordinary catastrophes befalling the most familiar of victims" (Deutsch, 145).

This unstable balance of constructs means that the setting is recreated every time it encounters one of its constitutive functions. The unravelling of the crisp facades of small town American life and what goes on beneath them, is integrally connected with the remaking of the town. This means that the deconstruction of the fictions is paralleled by a new construction. So if *Twin Peaks* is a precarious construct that is fundamentally undermined by the action of Agent Cooper, the town must also be recreated by him. A new surface devoid of subterranean evil must be fabricated (Pollard, 298). As the bearer of the codes of goodness and clarity in a setting composed of the residue of codes, Cooper actually creates the small town. Within the menacing corporeality of the town he is "a detached, virtually fleshless site of cleansing" (Nochimson, 24). Agent Cooper's project is thus both subversive and profoundly recuperative. "*Twin Peaks* needs to

be remade, stabilised: its moral boundaries redrawn, and homespun surface restored" (*idem.*).

The notion of boundaries generates insiders and outsiders. In the meeting of the big city and the small town, borders become central. Unforgiving stereotypes emerge from both sides in a battle of stereotypes, and are thinly deflected by humour in *Twin Peaks*. The big-city outsider is characterised by the "patently unclean relish for forensic pathology" (Jameson, 1990, 75) of the FBI pathologist, Albert Rosenfeld. Small-town insiders are similarly cast as a closed, incestuous order. *Twin Peaks* does not ignore their force. Stereotypes develop from codes and conventions and repress their constructedness by promoting an "intuitive belief" (O'Sullivan, 300, original emphasis). Thus they fall within the ambit of *Twin Peaks's* exploration of sites of obviousness.

This problem of signification can be examined through the question of genre and narrative. Is *Twin Peaks* engagement with genre a liberating moment? Nochimson concludes that it is. Her finely argued paper makes necessary distinctions between film and television apparatuses, and between detective and soap opera conventions. However, in redefining the detective genre to leave space for mystery, and a speaking female subject, the narration of *Twin Peaks* does not simultaneously critique the repression which patriarchy is able to exercise through fixations rendered in genre.

The narrative focus on the family is a necessary antidote to the cliché of "glowing nuclear families and abiding values" (Hampton, 38). In its insistent investigations of those things best left alone - the sacred secrecies of our culture - *Twin Peaks* touches those things in which television, families, and cultures collude. "The worst secrets of all, *Twin Peaks* suggests, are the secret connections between culture and self that allow men to brutalize women" (Davenport, 258).

However, the introduction of the supernatural in *Twin Peaks* allows an avoidance of a truly rigorous critique of patriarchal genres. The series' *deus ex machina* of spirit worlds allows Dale Cooper to ask: "Is it easier to believe that a man would kill and rape his own daughter?" after he has solved the mystery of Laura's murder. The demonic imagery through which an abuse survivor sees her abuser (Davenport, 237) is also an escape clause for a discomfited patriarchy. If it is easier to believe in malevolent incubi rather than murderously incestuous fathers perhaps it is because our visions of fathers and daughters are conditioned by the memory that "Father Knows Best".

When *Twin Peaks* exposes "the affinity between the protection of innocence and its violation" (Hampton, 39), it is at its most radical. The series poses a fundamental challenge to the formal parameters of televisual narrative, and reveals the ideological connection of form to subjectivity (Carroll, 294). In its interrogation of the forms of television, incest is the metaphysically coherent answer to the mystery of Laura Palmer's death (Birns, 280). By retreating from this radical insight, *Twin Peaks* retreats into the very paradigm which it seems to subvert.

It is in the figure of the woman that the questions of genre, borders, paradigmatic depth, and the role of the detective converge. The fixating power of the woman's body on the syntagm in the classic narrative, is repeated by the accumulation of paradigmatic depth. This paradigmatic density suggests a larger structure which also works at the level of the signifier, in the narration's acknowledgement of heteroglossia, or parallel inflections (Bordwell, 20). The transmutation of *Twin Peaks* from detective story into soap opera can thus be retold as the invasion of "the masculine linear detective story [by] the feminine cyclical soap opera" (Deutsch, 142). Agent Cooper starts out by challenging the

artificial separation of mind and body which underscores the subjectivity of the detective. He is drawn to the town, wishing to buy a house, and by becoming drawn into its subterranean networks, is absorbed by the feminised medium of the soap opera. However, his drive toward recuperation and wholeness inure him to the dispersed subjectivity - the multiple identification - offered by the genre of soap. Instead, Cooper's experience of women and the feminised medium remains the one which informs the classic narrative, and which opens the series - the terrifying plenitude of the woman's image. The series ends precisely as it began, with a mirror image, this time with Cooper occupying the place of the woman (Deutsch, 141). When we see Cooper looking into the mirror and we recognise the image of the incubus BOB, the narration presents the patriarchal nightmare of the penetrated male (149). Once again, this nightmare is also transposed onto a problem of referentiality. The true profanity is not the incubus, BOB, but the fact that good and evil look the same (Pollard, 303). Not only has the detective's logical eye been betrayed by the doubled and deceitful women (Dienst, 97), but he himself becomes profanely doubled.

The radically suspended ending is simultaneously unique and exemplary of the narrative and economic organisation of television (Dienst, 99). It is unique for a detective story to leave unresolved issues. It is exemplary of soap opera to have deferred closure. This formulation suggests that the detective's subjectivity has been invaded by the feminised soap opera. The reordering of fictional positions through the destabilising of the determining male gaze results in a terrifying dislocation of masculine identity. The final shot of the series is of Cooper contemplating himself in the mirror (97). He is caught in the terrifying immediacy of the image. "How's Annie? How's Annie? How's Annie? How's Annie?" he asks, speaking to himself in a frightening parody of the language of the soap opera. Unlike the language of the

detective paradigm, it is not aimed at clarification, but signifies the "elaborate paradigmatic structure of character relationships" (Allen, 1983, 103). In this scene the narration of *Twin Peaks* steps back, aghast, and appears to disavow its earlier disavowal of certainty.

Uncertainty can be traced to the problem of reference. A fundamental insecurity is caused by signs, which are nebulous and equivocal (Pollard, 303). The mystery of *Twin Peaks* is set in a town built of signifiers. The sense of a radical disjuncture between the weight of the image and the indeterminacy of the place is repressed by the ubiquity of the image. The numerous images infuse the place with an unnameable unease.

The detective must give materiality to the image (Dienst, 96). This is the original dilemma which constitutes the pretext of the series. Roland Barthes speaks of being:

liberated by codes because they generate security. Societies like ours, a prey to alienation and anxiety, need the clarity and permanence of signs to reassure themselves. (Barthes, 1985, 158)

Even as *Twin Peaks* banalises signs that are meant to be a barrier against uncertainty, Cooper must give substance to these signs in the town of *Twin Peaks*. The owls are not what they seem, but Cooper must establish clear lines of causality and give referentiality to the setting (Deutsch, 143). The fundamental contradiction of these roles in the narration is indicated by the increasingly strained binarity of the last episodes (Dienst, 97).

The postmodernist detective story and soap opera, performed in *Twin Peaks* through stylised dialogue and actions, are satirical engagements with the certainties of cliché (Carroll, 290). Yet the unease in the series emerges from an uncanny uncertainty (Birns, 294). The opulent *mise-en-scène* of *Twin Peaks* suggests a:

generic dreamworld intermixing clothing, cars, hairstyles, interiors, value systems, and ways of speaking from the last four American decades. (Olson, 79)

All of the cues alluded to here connote a definite sense of time and place. *Twin Peaks* is a variant of the nostalgia text, and exploits the constitutive power of stereotyped images of the past (Zizek, 59). The effect of combining them is not simply a compounding of familiar tropes, however. Such is their concentration that a qualitative level of meaning is added by the sheer density of allusion. This meaning is an unsettling realisation of the fictionality of the constructs of normality. The narrative force of *Twin Peaks* lies in the cumulative effect of its self-conscious eclecticism. Like all parodies, *Twin Peaks* simultaneously installs and destabilises the forms which it quotes (Hutcheon, 81). However, there is an imbalance in the way that parody is used in the series. The series sustains the affect of the genres that it quotes (Birns, 278-84). The town of Twin Peaks is presented as the precipitate of shared cultural codes.

Because it oscillates between two primary generic poles - the soap opera and the detective story - "*Twin Peaks* begins and ends without the comfort of beginnings and endings" (Dienst, 92). In both genres the ending is of definitive importance. The ending defines the narrative structure of the soap opera, since closure is always deferred (Allen, 1983, 98). In the detective story the ending is the solution to the mystery; but it is also the proof of the detective's logical process, and "the revelation of the truth" (Bordwell, 159).

Despite its lack of generic boundaries, the series *did* participate in a continuing drama around its own demise. The television series ends with the possession of Dale Cooper by the incubus BOB. Demonstrating the intrication of economics with textual economics, it was, in fact, ABC's decision to cancel the series which provided the true ending of *Twin Peaks* (Carrion, 240). Two episodes which had been recorded for

normal broadcast were labelled the conclusion of *Twin Peaks*. The series thus ends on a note of radical suspension (Dienst, 99). The termination accentuates the indeterminate character of the series (Carrion, 240). Lynch and Frost later collaborated on an epilogue which masquerades as a preceding instalment: *Fire Walk with Me* (1992). The film, which tells of the 7 days prior to the events of the television series, ends:

as if the clock had been turned back to the unsullied black and white of a wonderful life: order restored, minds scrubbed of unease, a new morning in America dawning. (Hampton, 49)

The desire to make explicable, to demonstrate the cause of the mystery, lends this film a prosaic air. The film makes overt what is implied by the television series. Despite its radical questioning, the narration hesitates at the conclusions which its questions solicit. Posing a necessary challenge to clichés of the family and televisual narrative, *Twin Peaks* retreats from this position and seeks, finally, "the happy ending which clears the screen and our consciences" (Huskey, 254). The film has a compulsive, overdetermined, happy ending.

Narrative closure marks the imprint of ideology in a text. The ideology of the narrative can be deduced from what is circumscribed by its bounds. The ideological force of closure lies in its pretence of openness, which represses the overdetermining logic of preceding events. Narrative closure is therefore the means by which the spectator can assume the position from which the syuzhet attains coherence. Through closure, the subject "recognizes his/her place in the texture of the symbolic narrative" (Zizek, 243). The ideology of closure lies in the repression of the structural force of narrative which renders it "natural" (241-43).¹ Because the ending is simultaneously the point of greatest ideological force and fragility, banality serves as a necessary condition of closure (Huskey, 253).

The ending also has a formal significance: it is conventional. The ending is the climax of the structure of the Hollywood classical narrative, of which the detective story is the exemplar. The structure of linearity, causality, and the eradication of mystery drives the narrative toward a happy ending. Since the classical narrative draws lines of causality in "smooth, careful linearity" (158), the need to attain complete knowledge by the end of the syuzhet is sometimes overdetermined. In this case a disjuncture between the events which constitute the syuzhet, and the ending registers as an ideological crisis (159). The post-denouement epilogue reinforces the assuring effect of closure.

I will speak extensively in the chapter on animation of the implication of the literality of metaphors of vision for the ability to see. By crafting a performance of its televisual textuality, *Twin Peaks* offers the television viewer of the detective series a position of ironic distance from the feminised medium in which it is embedded (Deutsch, 142). As the male protagonist, Cooper achieves a certain liberation of masculinity. But because the liberating impetus is predicated on the difference between the feminised soap opera and the masculine detective series, it is Cooper who must eventually recover the sacred ground, abolish complexity, cauterise the wound of the mystery of the woman. Thus it is Cooper who articulates the question: "Is it easier to believe that a man would rape and kill his own daughter?" This knowledge, disavowed by the detective as representative of a discomfited patriarchy, is already known to the feminised regime of television. "[T]he secret of incest and child-abuse which *Twin Peaks* reveals is not hidden so much as excessively familiar to television" (Deutsch, 150). The liberation of masculinity is thus ultimately a recuperative stance, easily assimilated to conventional structures of patriarchy.

The source of this retreat from radical confrontation with the "best-kept secret" of the family is Cooper's turn to the literal (Deutsch, 151). In its desire to excise the complexity of the sign, which is also the mystery of the woman, the narration generates "monster[s] of the literal" (*idem.*). Just as Cooper is the "most literal hero", with his blank face animated equally by Douglas fir trees and clues, BOB - whose name is capitalised to show that he is the archetype of evil, changes disorientingly from being a projection to being a physical entity (Dienst, 98). As a mutating double Bob cannot be seen by those he possesses, only by those whom he subsequently abuses, and by the viewer (Dienst, 98). The difference is crucial, but is ultimately suppressed by Agent Cooper. When Sheriff Truman points out that "people saw BOB", Major Briggs replies "There's more things in heaven and earth than is dreamed in our philosophy". This deflection into dramatic language exemplifies the uncomfortable dissembling which occurs in this scene when the murder has been solved - when everything should be clear. The sheriff is disturbed by the logical disjuncture in the explanation, but Cooper counters his scepticism with a question which cannot be answered: "Is it easier to believe that a man would rape and murder his own daughter?" The physical status of BOB becomes a critical point of instability for the plot, at which the narration has to retreat to a cliché of good fatherhood. BOB is the literalisation of the figurative demon of patriarchy, and he becomes a device to avoid the implications of incest.

The narration found its primary source in the television narrative. The overloading of convention by the deployment of different modes simultaneously, enacts the larger tonal oscillation of television itself (Collins, 1992, 348). In addition, by foregrounding conventions of transparency and naturalness, the *Twin Peaks* audience is led to reconsider the constitutive surfaces of "normality". Texts which investigate

the conditions of their own textuality are evidence of a culture of postmodernism (Olson, 287). Postmodernist texts redefine narrative into the manipulation of the multiplicity of subject positions. The operation of meaning in *Twin Peaks* may thus echo a model of information in which fictional tropes signify an infinite resource of simultaneous meanings (Collins, 1993, 250).

The detective's mission to retell the story of the crime becomes recreating the crime, and finally, re-committing the crime. Secrets, which work in the detective mode as crimes to be revealed and resolved, perform a contrary function in *Twin Peaks* (Dienst, 98). They reveal only the arbitrariness of knowledge and claims to truth, and signify the lack of a communal knowledge (99). Cooper's mission to restore an honourable public space in the town is incessantly undermined by the alternative network of secrets. This is proven by the final image, when the superlative gaze of the detective, our surrogate, is also possessed. But at the end, the character cipher has broken its boundaries, and the narration presents the prospect of the penetrated male (Deutsch, 149). The male protagonist unifies the gaze of the spectator, the camera and the characters. However, the series ends, as it begins, with a mirror image, this time the male protagonist is in the position occupied by a deceitful woman (Deutsch, 141). The narration of *Twin Peaks* thus returns literally and metaphysically to the problem of referentiality.

Cooper is the male protagonist who occupies the position which should unify the gazes of the camera and the spectator. However, the modification of the detective story to fit the format of the serial already poses problems for the classical model. The television series, with its shifting structures of identification and partial closures, is in itself a challenge to the mode (Nochimson, 24-25). The narration of the series gained some of its fascination by presenting the systemic

disjointedness of television. Because of television's ubiquity the uniquely televisual ways of seeing and telling are not immediately evident (Dienst, 92-94).

If Cooper represents both the detective, who must establish the regime of logic and explicability over the landscape and the mystery, and the government, which seeks a restoration of the hegemony of boundaries, he himself exemplifies the breaching of boundaries (Nochimson, 25). Yet, the redefinition of the male subject in *Twin Peaks* is along the lines prefigured by the opening sequence of the series: the woman caught in the fascination of her own image. Though the series will unsettle the position of the male detective, it will ultimately place him in the same position as the female holder of the mystery. His body is literally invaded by the incubus, BOB. His intelligence and his probing gaze are abolished. He becomes exclusively the vulnerable, mutable body. Frozen in contemplation of himself, his only words are a parody of interaction, repeating a question which he has asked. "How's Annie? How's Annie? How's Annie? How's Annie? How's Annie!" Thus the unification of the looks in the gaze of this protagonist is profoundly jarring. Unlike the classical formula, the male protagonist is made to look at himself, and it is he who freezes the story. It is in this state of suspension that *Twin Peaks* ends. Cooper occupies the position of the woman, in thrall to a terrifying plenitude of image (Dienst, 97). In that position, the narration makes of *him* the monster which must be excised. The penetrated male reflected in the scene signifies the overfamiliar knowledge of television, when the difference between objective and personal perspective is threateningly undercut.

When Cooper looks into the mirror and we find that the archetype of good has become his opposite, when we see the perspective of both, the effect is violently unsettling. The camera reveals the separation between signifier and signified

(Pollard, 302). The use of free indirect discourse allows the projection of an individual consciousness onto the world by recasting personal discourse as "objective" discourse (McHale, 45). The narration uses a free indirect camera style to show BOB in the mirror (Dienst, 98). The scene is made more disturbing because a corrupted personal discourse has infiltrated the "objective" narrative.

Finally, the trope of the small town signifies the process of language. Like the woods, the small town on the edge of the forest speaks of narrative. For Twin Peaks, the threat "dwells in the forest, beyond the village" (Carroll, 291), yet the interconnecting, hidden maze of paths in the forest echoes the secret networks in the town (Horne, 20). Doubled characters and interchanging identities generate a network of associations (Carrion, 242). Cooper seeks to restore the concrete relations of signs to their referents. This return to reality and normality is the figure for the restoration of a secure version of language (Pollard, 299-302).

The clear boundaries between good and evil which Cooper must restore, also govern a nostalgic model of language. The true source of evil is not BOB, but the absence of limits (Pollard, 303). Disturbingly, the presence of evil is not detectable even to the bearer of the logical eye, and the guarantor of good. The incubus changes its shape, and like the woman's body, signifies terrifying changeability. Doubling and transfiguration signify the evil that threatens the community and finally, also the audience - the absence of definitive meaning (299-300). The act of spectating is implicated because the narration impresses on viewers that the insidious mutability of signs threatens all meaning (Carrion, 242). Hence, Cooper, acting for the universal good, seeks to restore "an immediate and indissoluble bond between meaning and object, signified and signifier" (Pollard, 297). The parallel attempt to fix the meaning of the woman's body - through her

death - suggests that the project of law and the project of disorder are not too different from each other.

Twin Peaks is thus the site of an ideological struggle between opposites which may be mirror images. The allegorical battle is for "the nature of the narrative driving force itself" (Carrion, 241).

The camera exposes ... the distance between signifier and signified - and we are made aware of the allegorical nature of Evil ... so that we break the figural link ... and reinstate the illusion that there is *only* a single, perfectly comprehensible surface. (Pollard, 302)

The sacred ground that is contested is also allegorical. It is a mythical town so familiar that it feels like home to strangers; even Cooper, the wandering lawman, responds by planning to buy a house there (Pollard, 296). The war will be fought between allegories: the insidiously contaminating allegory, and Cooper's allegory of law. The first position flourishes under uncertainty and mutability; the other is motivated by a vision of clarity and wholeness. The latter perspective disguises *itself* as clarity; it seeks interpretive hegemony (296-300), and:

[w]e are not meant to see the mechanisms by which universal meaning is constructed: the allegory, the hermeneutic, the incipient distance between signifier and signified and the bond that links them. Instead, the details themselves ... speak a naturalized, universal truth. (Pollard, 299)

Ultimately, Cooper must seek to restore the integrity of surfaces - to excise their uncanniness, and return them to unproblematic meaning (Pollard, 299-302). The narrative quest demands the restoration of truth, and not simply meaning (Carrion, 243). Paradoxically, BOB's invasion of a range of human bodies in order to feed on their fear, echoes this project of reducing the complexity of signs into functional signposts.

Cooper represents a regime of concrete meaning. BOB represents inconstancy. The incipient similarity between the

two positions is suggested by the battle for hegemony between equivalent alternatives. However, Cooper's position must be cast as the "original" and BOB as the lesser, invading system. The latter's metaphorical relationships have displaced "appropriate" ways of signifying in *Twin Peaks*. Cooper becomes the guide of the town just as he is guided by supernatural forces to the truth (Pollard, 299-303). Whereas others are trapped in a binary paradigm of depth and surface, and are disoriented by too many meanings, Cooper detects the connections between them and crafts "a master narrative" (300).

This narrative is composed of the surfaces now stripped of the uncanniness which pervaded them at the start. Ultimately the narrative redeems the signs of middle-class life. Cooper stands at the centre of middle-class normality and accrues all of the features which have been in the town from the beginning, renewed by redemption (301). Noting its inception in the formative years of the American postwar boom, Scott Pollard identifies the recreated town as a "community that capitalism created" (298). Cooper has not only returned home; he has created home. *Twin Peaks* becomes the simulacrum or a performance of a town. The people who populate the town are real only to the extent that they are formed by media. Their reality is a function of their likeness to images of the 1950s.

The apparent solidity of the town is based on the very conventions which *Twin Peaks* is undermining. The play of solidity and transience is a theme which is introduced into *Twin Peaks* in the opening sequence. Paying attention to the meeting of machines and human beings, *Twin Peaks* reveals that the boundary of the animate and inanimate has become permeable. Mulvey posits that fetishisation is a mechanism to deal with an incipient threat to the masculine subject of classical narrative. The unconscious meets this threat either

by substituting the threatening object with a fetish object, or by turning the threat itself into a fetish object (1989d, 21). Political discourse manufactures a "magical transformation" as people are fetishised into the embodiment of clichés (Hampton, 39). When ideology insists on realising the materiality of tropes such as "family values", the consequence is "the gradual erosion of the line between the organic and the inorganic [as people become] molded into fetish objects" (*idem.*).

Solidity or repressed figurality thus connotes an irreducibly regressive device. To Norman Denzin, this is where the danger of texts such as *Twin Peaks*, which he calls an example of a "postmodern nostalgia text", lies (79). The critique of such texts is irreducibly implicated "in the figural images (and sounds) which are erased by its happy ending" (80). In fact, they recreate what they wish to critique. While they criticise repressive fictions of normality, they are ultimately driven to recreate new fictions in the image of the old. Their project of destabilising comforting middle-class fictions is ultimately defeated by a retreat into an ideologically barren concreteness. Theirs is, finally, a middle-class vision of the postmodern scene (Denzin, 79-80). By leaving the centre for a town on the boundaries of nature and television, they revisit a centralising vision on the margins. In confronting challenges of doubles, dispersal of subjectivity, and multiple subject positions, they recover a regime of the concrete. In the course of its narration, *Twin Peaks* demonstrates that "nature and culture and the representation of both are increasingly experienced homogeneously" (Andrew, 81). Infused initially with the multiplicity of signs in which its clichés seemed to be further acknowledgement of flux, the narration appears by the resolution of the mystery to have recanted its earlier disavowal of certainty. Though itself located in the

interplay of fiction and reality, *Twin Peaks* finally decrees the need for concreteness based on absolute distinctions.

CHAPTER FOUR: *THE SIMPSONS*

The Thin Line of Television

In this chapter I locate a discussion of *The Simpsons* within a wider examination of animation, a category which includes cartoons in print and animated cartoons in film and television. By examining the diachronic context of animation as well as engaging in textual analysis, I hope to demonstrate the significance of animation for genre, narrative and postmodernist theories. I posit that cartoons represent a particular relation to the visual. Integral to this conception is their relation to narrative and to closure. By examining the interplay of the literal and the metaphoric, as well as the fictional and the real in animation, I propose to use the linearity of cartoons or animation as a figure for a paradigm of vision in the television age. Extending this analysis, I intend to present animation as the space of resistance to a regressive construction of vision.

The range of moving animation stretches across the history of film and television, from the earliest moving images achieved using the classic frame-after-frame technique, to the seamless combination of live action and computer-animated effects used in texts of the 1990s, such as *Jurassic Park* (1993). Between these points lies the history of video, and a complex debate. Debate has recently been spurred by the neglect of the role of animation in theories of visual texts. This neglect is conspicuous because cartoons are integrally linked to the solidifying of newspapers' mass appeal at the turn of the century (Waugh¹⁴⁴¹, 2); animation on television helped to determine the format of American television and consolidate the Disney empire (Anderson, 71); and mainstream film has seen a successful revival of animation (Corliss, 1992, 63). It is thus fitting that the "invisible art" (as Scott McCloud has entitled a recent book on comics, which also took the form of a comic) has begun to attract the critical attention which matches its visibility and import (Witek, 1992, 71).

Just as television is the visible medium, animation is the exemplary visible text. The resistance to the study of visible cultural objects to which I refer in the introductory chapter - traced to the belief that the sources of value are invisible to all but a select few (Naremore and Brantlinger, 3) - is therefore most evident in the neglect of animation in film theory. Its neglect has had specific sources and implications for visual theory. Though, like realist cinema, animation is also "a sight-based medium", it does not claim an immediate access to reality (McCloud, 202). Instead, animation encompasses a complex relationship of the visible and the invisible, focusing attention on vision itself (205). As it gains increasing prominence within a "visually oriented culture" (Davidson, 7), animation promises to redefine relations to the visual. After tracing the intertwined histories of animation and vision in the twentieth century, I propose to examine animation in the light of cult theory, seeking a new role for animation in visual theory.

Because of the nebulousness of terms in the field of animation, a brief but rigorous terminology must be outlined. With Ralph Stephenson, I define animation as "film that is created frame-after-frame" (15). Recognising technological advances, the definition expands to include stop-motion photography, time-lapse camera work, pixillation, the use of multiple exposures, in-camera editing and seamless computer "morphing" techniques (Brophy, 69).

The term "cartoon" conflates both animated film and printed graphics. In this study the difference will be indicated. The confluence of these terms can be traced to the appearance of cartoon characters in early animated films (Geipel, 150). Consequently, abstract as opposed to figural styles of animation are not usually encompassed by the term "cartoon" (158). Print cartoons have generated a multitude of labels. The first is "graphic fiction", which denotes a radical

hybridity of words and images, characterised by almost filmic techniques (Suttner, 2). Alternatively, Will Eisner has created the term "sequential art" which indicates the narrative mode of graphic art (Witek, 1989, 5).

The last text considered in this study, *The Simpsons*, is a satirical animated cartoon created by Matt Groening in 1985, in response to an invitation from the producer James L. Brooks of Gracie Films (and previously of MTM Productions). After seeing Groening's comic strip called "Life in Hell", Brooks invited Groening to develop the brief clips which appeared on *The Tracy Ullman Show* from April 1987 on the new Fox Network. In December 1989 *The Simpsons* moved to a half-hour slot in an episode entitled "The Simpsons Roasting over an Open Fire." The season which follows the "Who Shot Mr. Burns?" cliffhanger will be the seventh in this format.

The essence of the idea Groening developed for Brooks was a parody of the myths of family. In the five Simpsons characters - Homer, the father, Marge, the mother, Bart the son, Lisa, the elder daughter, and Maggie, the younger - Groening created a tableau parodically close to the ideal bourgeois model of the family (Teer-Tomaselli, 53); yet, it is never entirely perfect. Part of the fracture between the characters and the ideal toward which they gesture, is due to their immersion in television. Bart Simpson's insistent question, printed at the end of the introductory chapter, symbolises the insistent questioning of *The Simpsons*, which refuses the comforting representations offered by traditional narratives. The Simpsons are a nuclear family constructed by the myths of the nuclear family on television. If the characters of *Father Knows Best* embody the myths of family of the 1950s (Frazer and Frazer, 163), then the figures in *The Simpsons* personify the representations of family constructed by the rituals of watching television. Watching television is one of the favourite activities of the Simpson family. The

customised opening sequence, varied in other ways, always ends with the family watching the screen. The final frame in the opening sequence is the family's, and our, point of view of the credits proclaiming Matt Groening, the creator of the series, and Sam Simons and James L. Brooks, as executive producers. This family viewing situation is mirrored in the domestic setting of the sitcom (Teer-Tomaselli, 53). The difference of the programme lies in the conscious deployment of the familiar. The series is marked by successive layers of mimicry. Each opening sequence is unique, marked by dazzling imitations of dolly shots and tracking shots that reveal the constraints of real cameras (Herron, 18).

The family is intensely aware of the commercialisation of its favourite pastime; at one point Homer asks whether the family does not know any songs which are not commercials. However, the expectation of having to remain pure in the face of commercial temptation is itself parodied, when Bart Simpson remarks of the decision to end *The Cosby Show* while it was still popular: "If I had a successful show, I'd ride that baby into the ground." Many cartoons on television function as extended advertisements for merchandise associated with the programme. In television the carefully calculated repetition of advertisements and endorsements creates an aura around images which can then be consumed by purchasing products. *The Simpsons* parodies the merchandising endorsements of television cartoons, by creating a "How to Buy Action Figure Episode."

The Simpsons are also a family for television; the series is lauded as the best-written on television (Corliss, 1992, 63). Their deliberately crude form paradoxically reveals television as a complex structure of intersecting meanings. The unfinished-looking figures of this programme call on a venerable tradition in satire and cartoons - Groening claims disingenuously that the "primitive" look of *The Simpsons* is due to his inability to draw (Herron, 16). Cartoonists

frequently cultivate a makeshift look to feign an impression of simplicity (Geipel, 33). The technique is used to mask the serious and sometimes dangerous intent of the cartoon (Olszewski, 327). From their marginalised position, cartoons broach subjects which may not be covered by other programmes on mainstream television. McCloud, for instance, believes that *The Simpsons* has an unimaginable range, about which it is continually "dangerous" (quoted in Rose, 38). *The Simpsons* has opened a space for subverting the harmless, ineffectual image of cartoons, "the customary comic-book reference" (Hughes, 76). I intend to look at *The Simpsons* in the light of a discussion on animation, vision, narrative and the sitcom. Finally, I propose to examine the series in the light of cult theory.

The Simpsons is simultaneously a marker of the renewed importance of animation as content to mainstream Hollywood, and it is a marker of developments within the structure of Hollywood. *The Simpsons* is the offering of the fourth and youngest of the networks which provide most of the viewing content of American television.

I start this chapter by revisiting Eco's call for due attention to the "complex relationships between reader and story, fiction and life" in order to guard against the threat of reason (1994, 139). I propose to apply Eco's call by situating animation in the history of vision in order to reveal the extent of the interplay of the literal and the figurative embodied in the genre.

The Simpsons itself is intently aware both of its relation with the history of animation and, I argue, of the relation of fiction to reality. For instance, the Simpson family's yellow tint suggests a connection to the very first newspaper cartoon character, "The Yellow Kid", created by Richard F. Outcault in 1896 (Waugh, 1947, 2). The vivid colour of the character was

an experiment to "fix" the colour yellow, but it instantly established the tradition of the brilliantly coloured comic strip (1). The massive success of the Kid started a circulation war between the Pulitzer and Hearst newspaper groups. Furious bidding for the services of bestselling cartoonists gave to reporting the term "yellow journalism" (Geipel, 140). This pioneering comic strip gave to cartoons a graphic style evolved from caricature, that of simplified drawing and deliberate "distortion, simplification and gracelessness" (Geipel, 41).

Caricature in turn provides a useful platform from which to examine the history of animation. The first appearance of caricature in the print medium can be traced to the 18th century. The technique evolved from the Italian *caricatura* - combining its humorous exaggeration of the body with visual metaphor, personification, and allegory. Applied to politics, these techniques deployed "appearance to attack appearances" (Wechsler, 317).

Ernst Gombrich describes the study of caricature as the study of symbols, recognising an intricate interaction of the metaphoric and the literal in these texts. The use of metaphor in caricature enables complex relationships to be condensed into singular images (130). However, these metaphors acquire a certain weight of reality because viewers tend "to treat abstractions as if they were tangible realities" (128). Emerging from this tendency are "natural metaphors", or metaphors whose use is so universal that in terms of our response, they attain the immediacy of the features of the natural world (138). Because of the universality of their use, we tend to forget "their metaphorical or symbolic character" (138-39). The very aptness of their form circumvents critical reflection.

Prior to the twentieth century, caricature was regarded as wholly distinct from realistic representations. After the invention of technologies which seemed to represent the real transparently, paradoxically, wilful breaches of naturalism became standard (Arnheim, 320). In the 20th century the very non-naturalism of caricature became a key to the rules of human perception (Wechsler, 317). The value of caricature for this project is that it is "a working representational code that comments on the way representational codes work" (Gopnik, 373).

Before moving from caricature to animation, here I examine briefly the relation of photography, one of the technologies to which I refer above, to caricature. Technologies such as photography and cinema appear to reflect reality, but actually structure vision. Anne McCauley shows that the relationship between caricature and photography is a complex one. Photography seems to reproduce information that is identical and equal to reality, whereas caricature works through distortion and contraction. Far from declining after the rise of photography, the survival of caricature was ensured *because* the former provided a norm of ideal representation against which caricature could be measured. What caricature reveals and exploits is that the photographic rendition of reality is not innocent (355). In his seminal essay on the link between human perception and technology, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" Walter Benjamin asserts that the photograph presents precisely "the thoroughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment, [in] an aspect of reality which is free of all equipment" (236). The photograph does not simply render a more exact reality; it reveals and constructs "entirely new structural formations of the subject" (238). Therefore, instead of photography rendering caricature redundant, the relationship between the two is "peculiarly incestuous" (McCauley, 355).

Besides its allusions to its precursors in print, *The Simpsons* also cites other animated cartoons overtly. For instance, the series has featured "Steamboat Scratchy", a reference to *Steamboat Willie* (1928), the first sound era Disney film (Geipel, 159). Further allusions to the history of cartoons is its quotation, as in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, of the method of flipping through a book to create the illusion of movement (Geipel, 153; Cholodenko, 1991b, 214). Fascinatingly, *The Simpsons* does not ignore the racism in cartoon history, pointing out the "Itchy and Sambo cartoons of the late 1930s".

Having moved from print to moving texts, it is necessary to consider the specificity of the technologies of vision in film and, later, television. In order to theorise the relationship of animation to perceptions of fiction and reality, I examine the essay by Benjamin referred to above. This analysis postulates that the perception of physical reality is affected by technological factors. In his investigation of the effects of generic standardisation through mechanical reproduction, Benjamin ascribes a crucial significance to film. He is unique among the Frankfurt School to interpret the unsettling mechanism of film positively. More profoundly, Benjamin posits a relation of the unconscious with technology (Wollen, 49-53). His essay allows a theory of animation to articulate with crucial developments at the turn of the 20th century.

Peter Wollen writes that at the turn of the century the technological glamour of Americanisation exemplified modernity. The fundamental meaning of "Americanism" was supplied by Fordism (42). Though the latter was a new model of industrialism, it also had wider cultural implications. This lay in its promulgation of standardisation. Fordism was the catalyst, and the Model T the exemplar, of a project of standardisation at the beginning of the 20th century (43-49).

Henry Ford invented the standardised manufacturing process. Its massively successful product, the Model T, was a "generic" object, composed exclusively of utilitarian necessities. This standardisation and universalisation - the outcome of the twin ideologies of technological determinism and consumption (Giroux and McLaren, xx) - would resonate widely. Contemporaneous with the Fordist phase of industrial manufacture, was an increasing standardisation in other aspects of human practice. Eventually, the paradigm of the machine was introduced into work, sexuality and family relations (Wollen, 46). Ford himself spoke of the Model T in terms of explicability:

I thought that it was up to me as the designer to make the car so completely simple that no one could fail to understand it. (Ford quoted in Wollen, 49)

The Model T set a standard, and became a metaphor for constancy and reproduction. The validation of "the copy" or the "standardized product" also became the validation of a new epistemology (53). By the 1920s this new "logic of standardization" had been exported to the world through Americanisation (Eisenstein quoted in Broadfoot and Butler, 272). The significance of Fordism lay in its introduction into the world of an industrial system composed exclusively of signifiers (Wollen, 57).

In other words, the industrial process, which included a retreat from the whole product in the manufacturing process, and the careful division of labour and parts, facilitated a withdrawal from referentiality. Besides the standardisation of physical movement which sought to render the worker "as predictable, regulated, and effective as the machine itself" (Wollen, 43), the new Fordist labourers had to learn to focus on parts which were meaningless by themselves (57). A parallel process occurred in language, where standardised symbols, terms and procedures became epistemological tools used to retain the functional and remove the wasteful (46-57). In vision too the paradigm of the machine resonated in the

example of Tiller Girls, who "reduced the erotic to a set of formal operations" (59). In the excessively precise routines performed by these women, the body became subject to a procedure of "abstract symbolization" (59). The body itself became a signifier abstracted from any erotic significance.

From the above examples there is a pervasive sense that what constitutes vision in an age of extreme visibility is highly conventional. The "human apparatus" of perception had to adapt to the demands of the new, mechanised world (Wollen, 56). Benjamin argued that film equipped human vision with the "new modes of apperception" it required to perform the commands of the new system of production:

During long periods of history, the mode of human sense perception changes with humanity's entire mode of existence. The manner in which human sense perception is organized, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstance as well. (Benjamin, 224)

With this conception of vision as an apparatus shaped by technological and ideological factors, Benjamin establishes a modernist aesthetics of film (Wollen, 49). Reversing the traditional opposition, Benjamin endorses the copy as real and the original as false. "The equipment-free aspect of reality ... has become the height of artifice" (Benjamin quoted in Wollen, 54). For Benjamin the artificial operation of film production paradoxically produces a "closer" rendition of reality. Benjamin's analysis situates the vision of the age of mass media within a learned and constantly affirmed set of conventions.

The relation of this analysis of film to animation is not hard to prove. In the first place, the play of metaphoricity and literality can be detected in the new practice of vision constructed by the age of mechanical reproduction. In Benjamin's "fordist" aesthetics images are transposed onto the real and lose their metaphoricity, as in the example of the Tiller Girls (Wollen, 49).

In the second place, Keith Broadfoot and Rex Butler report that in an early draft of Benjamin's essay, the title of the thirteenth section was "Mickey Mouse" (276). As in the final draft, this section deals with the development of an "unconscious optics" (Benjamin, 239). With this concept, Benjamin posits that the operation of the eye has been reconfigured by the invention of the camera. Consequently, the sight which meets the eye is "an unconsciously penetrated space ... substituted for a space consciously explored by man" (Benjamin quoted in Broadfoot and Butler, 276). The concept of an "unconscious optics" locates in the animation of Disney the figure for a penetrated unconscious. The embodiment of the penetrated unconscious in Mickey Mouse also signifies its commodified nature. This displacement implies that "realistic" photographs are actually closer to illustrations, or cartoons.

Seeming to address this elision is an analysis of a different apparatus of vision. Parallel with the appearance of the cinematic apparatus analysed by Benjamin, was a system in which deviation became the norm. The newspaper comic strip soon generated a new genre, the comic book, which drew a readership of millions. Simultaneously, the animated film drew enormous audiences (Davidson, 8-9). These competing discourses arose alongside realist film, and were signified by animation or the animatic apparatus.

Film and animation are intimately linked in defining the structures of vision at the turn of the century. However, animation has been almost totally neglected in histories and theories of visual texts. By contrast, new theorists of animation such as Alan Cholodenko (whose argument is considered below) posit a radical reconsideration of the relationship between the two systems. This is based on the similarities between the cinematic and animatic apparatuses, extrapolated to an epistemological level.

What differentiates animated images from those of live-action cinema is the degree of verisimilitude, yet the two are similar at a more fundamental level. This fundamental reconsideration of animation must be carefully outlined. Its founding assertion is to challenge the silence in film histories about animation. It argues the existence of a:

historical marginalization--scapegoating--of animation by the institutions and discourse of film ... caught up in a metaphysics of presence, which took the moral high ground with the "photographed live action film" against, especially, the animated cartoon but against animation in general, either excluding it by defining animation as a form of graphic art unrelated to film or marginalizing it as an inferior, frivolous, merely mechanical form or appendage of film for children. (Cholodenko, 1991b, 213)

Cholodenko goes beyond reclaiming animation as a equal branch of cinema. Instead, using a deconstructionist approach, he argues that the animatic process enables and engenders live-action cinema (1991a, 10).

The "animatic apparatus" was first demonstrated by Emile Reynaud in 1892. It is the process of creating an illusion of movement by projecting sequential images at a speed which exploits the eye's "persistence of vision" (Geipel, 153). This is the property of the human retina to retain a visual image for one tenth to one twentieth of a second. The cartoon protagonist of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* alludes to this apparatus by flipping through a book to create the illusion of movement (Cholodenko, 1991b, 214).

At the crucial threshold of 24 frames projected per second, the eye's persistence of vision creates an illusion of lifelike movement (Geipel, 156). For the century of cinema's existence, this quality has been used to elide the division between the cinematic and the "real", and cinematic principles have come to condition our perception of the real. The cinematic apparatus distracts attention from its own processes by investing attention in the "formal sequencing or structural organization of fragments" (Brophy, 68).

New animation theory points out that the illusion of movement in cinema was first created by the animation of still photographs by the motion picture camera or projector (Cholodenko, 1991b, 213). Consequently, the animatic apparatus animation may be said to have given birth to cinema (1991a, 9). Animation theory suggests that:

animation arguably comprehends all of film, all of cinema, was (and is) the very condition of their possibility: the animatic apparatus. In this sense, animation would no longer be a form of film or cinema. Film and cinema would be forms of animation. (Cholodenko, 1991b, 213)

Furthermore, it is precisely *because* of animation that live-action could claim that it renders a copy of reality. If animation is superficially different to live-action, the latter converts this difference into a constitutive distinction. Where animation was more clearly associated with graphic art, early film had no associations with art. The earliest use of film was for purely observational and scientific purposes (Stephenson, 7). Thus its images had recourse to a genealogy of scientific verifiability, of representing "reality" objectively. By presenting animation as its opposite, or its other, instead of another point on the spectrum of verisimilitude, live-action could present its own lesser image as "real". The hierarchy of film over animation which results from this silence is overturned by the reconceptualisation of animation.

New animation theory reveals the difference between the two as a self-serving fiction and argues that "cinema cannot be thought without thinking (its relation to) animation" (Cholodenko, 1991a, 9-10). Intriguingly, since realist cinema deflects its repression of process onto animation, Cholodenko argues that animation carries with it the traces of mediation repressed in realist cinema.

Animation is what is traced in film, including film's institutions and discourses, what film has effaced and sought to efface the effacement of, but what allows film to be. (Cholodenko, 1991b, 213)

By its insistent quality as a "method of caricature rather than an apparition of lifelikeness" animation may help us to restore the disjuncture between cinema and the real (Brophy, 67-68).

By slowing down the process of projection to below the threshold of 24 frames per second, it is possible to view the single frames which have been arranged into a linear sequence in a film strip. Then, instead of being distracted from process, it is possible to attend to the "fractures" between the images (Brophy, 69-71). It is in this disjuncture that the process of the apparatus becomes evident: the "arrangement" rather than the visual content constitutes the illusions of movement (71). The animatic apparatus attends more to "frames, images, cuts and parts" in its own construction (68). Thus, instead of the "suturing" apparatus of the classical live cinema, a dissident animation holds the promise of a far "looser attachment" to visual codes (69). Animation, by definition, attests to the "in between" (Cholodenko, 1991a, 14). I will test this hypothesis with *The Simpsons*.

The Simpsons represents one order of response to realism. The ideology of vision which equates the cinematic image with a perfect copy of reality needs to be constantly reaffirmed. Within animation there have been two broad responses to this need for affirmation: reaffirming the "reality" of cinematic images or rejecting the model of realism.

Disney represents the former avenue, adopting a style of "pseudo-realism" (Geipel, 165). Disney's customary graphic style was invested in the effort "to sustain the illusion of verisimilitude" (*idem.*). A hyper-realism was ensured by copious detail, for instance, in recreating the effects of movement (171). The self-consciously fluid Disney style persistently reaffirms the prior verisimilitude of film

(Geipel, 151; Brophy, 68). Such fluidity, peculiar to Disney, diverges markedly from the "vibration [and] oscillation" inherent in the animatic process (Cholodenko, 1991a, 18).

Walt Disney's personal definition of animation is "bringing images to life" (Brophy, 74), a definition which elides the separate definitions of "illusion of movement" and "illusion of life" (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*). The fascination of the early cinema lay precisely in "watching the inanimate still photographic image become animate" (Cholodenko, 1991a, 19). The illusion of movement affirmed that the figures in the image were alive and real. It was standard for Disney artists to base their animation on film of both humans and animals (Geipel, 165). Revealed in this practice is the conceit behind the Disney style: live-action film equals life-like reality, and thus to simulate film, means to give life. Disney's elision of the principles of cinema as the principles of reality encapsulates the ideology which has governed reality since the invention of the cinema (Brophy, 67).

Paradoxically, this definition ensures, and instantly represses, a relationship with disappearance, the double, and even death - "all those improper things" - which rest uneasily with the decorum and sentimentality of the studio identity (Cholodenko, 1991a, 14). Behind Disney's intentness on realism lies the realisation that "animation is never only a benign activity. It troubles, and its troubling includes troubling thought" (10). Animation has an emblematic quality that is allied to magic. Cartoons draw on the relation between caricature and black magic (Geipel, 24). Each distilled stroke manifests a refined graphic technique. Animation uses abstraction, figurality, symbolism and metaphor (22-30). Though its lines are frequently childishly simple, typically of cult texts, each line can become "a magic spell" (Eco, 1994, 128). Despite the brevity of the cartoon, like the caricature it is concerned with "the blemishes, the

shortcomings and the inconsistencies" (Geipel, 18). The massive success of Disney can be seen as an obsessive repression of the uncanniness inscribed in animation, a repression which is constantly haunted by the return of its double. This double is the recognition of the irrecoverability of the "reality" which Disney tries to capture with its resolutely literal style (Cholodenko, 1991a, 10).

Though Disney's early work attracted praise for its deft use of the medium, eventually the Disney style became synonymous with "slickness, pretentiousness and maudlin sentimentality" (Geipel, 163). Disney exploited a niche for its products. Transposed onto an apparatus of vision which was inherently consumerist, Disney was able to direct the flow of anxiety into the consumption of products which would provide the referent which their films affirmed was constantly accessible (Anderson, 99).

Having discussed the specificity of Disney animation it is possible to make a more overt connection between Benjamin's essay and animation. Adam Gopnik's theory of the relation of caricature to the unconscious is helpful in elaborating Benjamin's thesis of an "unconscious optics" signalled by "Mickey Mouse". Gopnik posits that caricatures have a palpable effect on us because:

their external forms in some way mirror the internal structure of our mental representations, the idealized and schematized internal imagery that our minds use to "presort" and structure perception. The "mind's eye," ... sees caricatures, not portraits. (Gopnik, 373).

The fact that we do not mistake a cartoon for an authentic rendition is evidence of a meta-awareness in the operation of perception. We find cartoons funny because they mimic the operation of our perceptual system. Caricature is therefore, by definition, characterised by doubleness or meta-awareness (373).

Gopnik contends that the "cartoons" or schemas that provide our perceptual and conceptual framework are resident in the unconscious. This model is similar to Bordwell's schematas; I make an overt connection between the two models in the conclusion. I posit that Disney animation simulates the operation of these original schemas. Since Gopnik contends that these have an affective charge when consciously or "doubly" recognised, I suggest that the Disney cartoons may have displaced the older frameworks. Disney animation also displaces the affective charge caused by doubled recognition. Because Disney cartoons simulate the action of reality (Geipel, 165), there is no distance to prompt the recognition of difference.

An example may be found in contemporary fashion photography. The photographic image masquerades as a realistic representation, and our conceptual apparatus does not perceive a disjuncture between the two. At the turn of the century, fashion was advertised primarily through the use of sketches. This convention declined between 1900 and 1970, when fashion photography gained the ascendancy. From 1980 the fashion magazine industry has used computer animation to treat its photographs (Shulman, 54), a technology which would later be used in *Jurassic Park* (Corliss, 1993, 54). In this process the photograph is treated by:

a piece of equipment which shoots white light from a large area, removing every detail except the luminous mouth and dazzled eyes and reduces the nose to delicate apostrophes. This ... in effect reproduces the old "beauty" illustrations, where the artist would, with a few strokes, paint in the red mouth, the brows and black bamboo lashes, [and] enclose them all in a brief almond-shaped outline. (Shulman, 54)

This technology thus turns the human face into a drawing; "the model has eclipsed the illustration only in so much as she is able to look like one" (Shulman, 54). Benjamin says the image in magazine photographs differs from the image perceived by the eye alone since "[u]niqueness and permanence are as

closely linked to the latter, as are transitoriness and reproducibility in the former" (225). However, the magazine photograph analyzed above has exchanged qualities with the untreated image rendered by the eye. The model is both less and more material, and has started to attain the quality of the inanimate. Authenticity seems to accrue, not to the "natural" or the original, but to the natural which has itself become "designed for reproducibility" (226). Because of these shifting categories, Broadfoot and Butler argue that cartoons have invaded the unconscious.

By contrast, Sergei Eisenstein reads in the plasticity of Disney characters the possibility for resistance to the standardising impulse of capital. He thinks that their freedom of form - the elastic figure in animation - is a corrective to capital's "formal logic of standardization" (quoted in Broadfoot and Butler, 272). Broadfoot and Butler contest this optimistic reading, declaring that cartoon characters embody the multiplicity of the media, and that their proliferation of forms is in fact "the form of capital itself" (272-273):

There can be no critique of the representation of capital in animation for the simple reason that animation itself is the presentation of capital. (Broadfoot and Butler, 272)

Benjamin's suggestion that the unconscious has been colonised by Disney images is therefore persuasive. This penetration has been so pervasive because of the underlying veneration of realism in Disney cartoons (Geipel, 165). Their "anxious" desire to replicate reality erases the gap between the schemata which structure perception (to which Gopnik refers), and realism. While caricature inevitably evokes a self-consciousness, a "doubleness" of perception (Gopnik, 373), Disney animation replaces those schemata with placid vehicles of "pseudo-realism" (Geipel, 165). To recast Gopnik's maxim once again, the mind's eye sees, not caricatures, but Disney cartoons. Broadfoot and Butler's reading is, however, flawed

by its elision of "animation" and "Disney animation." There is much animation which is not Disney, though the figure of the studio looms over the genre as a whole.

The successful Disney style of obsessive realism has come to symbolise animation as a whole (Broadfoot and Butler, 275). The success of Disney tends to overshadow parallel traditions of American and European animation. It is easier to recognise the different traditions of Japanese "anime" and Central European "multiplication film" (Geipel, 158). Yet there is also a radically non-naturalistic and surreal strain of animation in America, represented by George Herriman, the creator of *Krazy Kat* (Sattler, 133). The anti-Disney strain in American animation uses a much simpler, even abstract graphic style. "Figures were reduced to bold geometric shapes, backgrounds formalised to the point of non-existence" (Geipel, 168). In a significant cultivation of diversity, cartoonists from Disney studios left to found the United Productions of America (UPA) in 1941. As a loose gathering of artists with a contempt for naturalism, UPA produced works of increasing abstraction. "Stark linearity, bold shapes, skeletal backgrounds and jangling juxtapositions of tone and colour" announced their departure from Disney's veneration of realism (167-69).

In contrast to the Disney style (which became a figure for simplification, hence the term "disneyfied"), radical animation exploits its difference from live-action film. The unconventional, non-representational figures of *The Simpsons* deliberately subvert the compulsively smoothed and anthropomorphic characters of Disney. The fluidity of Disney images also contrasts markedly with the process of abstraction and shock noted in the discussion of Fordism. Non-Disney animation embodies the jarring abstraction in their form.

The series draws on the history of striking disparities in animation. On the one hand, the animated films of Walt Disney avoided satire and controversy. On the other hand, comic books were inhabited by superheroes and detectives in worlds of florid evil and violence. The power fantasies to which these comics catered represented a clear defiance of the bourgeois ideal (Witek, 1989, 7). When comics were denounced as violent and malevolent in Professor Frederic Wertheim's report, "The Seduction of the Innocent" (1954), severe censorship resulted. This took the form of the Comics Code of 1954 (Davidson, 18).

Roy Lichtenstein spurred the rehabilitation of comic art. His use of comic images subverted accepted definitions of art, making it "indistinguishable from vulgar commercial culture" (Hughes, 76). Like caricature, comics are an "antimimetic representational strategy" (Gopnik, 371). Both are characterised by abstraction, linear shorthand, and complex graphic relationships (Wechsler, 317). Through the techniques of comics, perspective itself is put in view. This awareness situates both Lichtenstein and comic images at the genesis of "an age of irony" (Hughes, 76).

From the constraints of the Comics Code grew the satirical comic *Mad*, which once again attracted an enormous adult audience. *Mad* redefined the subject of comics to include political issues. However, it also changed the format of comics, placing greater emphasis on verbal as well as visual text ^{Davidson} (20). Humour was used subversively; and the new style and content inspired the underground comics of the 1960s (20).

The varied impulses and constraints of animation history direct attention toward the importance of technique. Cartoonists and caricaturists have always used "untutored-looking drawing" in search of the effect of "blunt immediacy" (Geipel, 31-32). This concentrated form, which is one of the

unique strengths of sequential art, frequently becomes the theme of its texts. Closure often became both the determining structure and the subject of self-reflexive cartoons like Herriman's *Krazy Kat*. When movement toward conclusion becomes the basis of the diegesis, it may subvert the expectation of closure by providing "an illusory teleology" (Witek, 1989, 9). These self-reflexive techniques are deployed extensively in *The Simpsons'* deceptively simple narration.

Today there are two developments which challenge the division between live-action and animation. Once again animation and cinema have merged, as Cholodenko argued they did at the beginning of visual culture. Today technology allows animated images to equal and even surpass the verisimilitude of live action. The most advanced computer animation simulates the "truth-telling" ability of live-action video perfectly. By seamlessly merging computer-animated images with live action scenes, contemporary animation calls into question the constitutive division between animation and live-action, and moreover, challenges the veracity of all images. This development signals a turning point in the history of animation just as the interactivity of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* did in 1988 (Cholodenko, 1991b, 214). In *Jurassic Park*, the technology of animation breaches the distance between animation and live-action cinema. Significantly, because the film closes this distance, it becomes a text about the way narrative works (Corliss, 64).

A second, more fundamental, challenge to the traditional hierarchy, has also emerged. This is the advent of mainstream animation which confronts its status as a radically different order of representation. Such animation holds the potential for the deconstruction of video generally, revealing that live-action video operates a sleight of hand by convincing viewers that its images show the truth. *The Simpsons* is one of these dramatically "anti-Disney" cartoons.

The radical potential of *The Simpsons* resides in the fact that it is "a television cartoon that itself portrayed the cultural impact of mass media upon ideas of family and smalltown life" (Parisi, 125). One of the many discourses which intersect in the programme is its engagement with genre. Having spoken of the influence of the commodified Disney narrative on television formats in the introductory chapter, it is necessary to refer to other important developments which affect the conception of genre in this chapter. Ruth Teer-Tomaselli labels *The Simpsons* an animated situation comedy (52). Hence the sitcom must be examined in detail. Evidence from the history of the sitcom supports this hypothesis.

In their discussion of comedy on television, Neale and Krutnik find a genealogical connection between cartoons and situation comedies. They cite the hypothesis of Jack Gladden who finds evidence of the evolution of radio and television sitcoms from the fictional depictions of domestic life in mass-circulation American newspapers before the turn of the century. The evolution of the sitcom from an amalgam of elements from previous genres to a stable generic structure of its own, demonstrates how neatly the sitcom meets the requirements of radio and television (227-28).

Though the sitcom is a relatively stable genre today, it demonstrated interesting variations during a period of flux in the 1950's (Neale and Krutnik, 230). *The Burns and Allen Show* was among a group of sitcoms which retained elements of vaudeville and frequently violated the "naturalistic" illusion (230). Ultimately, though, Neale and Krutnik find that the structure of the sitcom is a stabilising and even recuperative one.

Unlike Neale and Krutnik, Mick Eaton does not believe that the sitcom evolved from the variety sketch. Eaton agrees that the stabilising tendencies of the sitcom meet the imperatives of

television's conditions of production (27). However, to Eaton, the constitutive feature of the genre is its "repositioning of the spectator" (29). He bases his hypothesis on the same example used by Neale and Krutnik, *The Burns and Allen Show*. Since self-reflexivity and the role of the audience are important to my analysis, I will look at Eaton's argument in some detail.

In the early years of its run the programme retained an element of vaudeville, though most of the action occurred in a domestic setting. The last third of the show commenced with the announcement that "George and Gracie will be back to do one of their vaudeville routines" (29). This routine was performed on a stage in front of drawn curtains and filmed by a single camera using a fixed long-shot.

Paradoxically, the evolution in the use of self-reflexivity for which the programme is famous, was part of the affirmation of a naturalistic sitcom tradition. Self-reflexivity was introduced simultaneously with the demise of the vaudeville section of the programme. The customary catchphrase at the end of each show, "Say Goodnight, Gracie", was now delivered from the balcony of their apartment rather than the stage. It was the only remnant of vaudeville. At the same time as the vaudeville section disappeared, a new comic device appeared. The comic diegesis, which now stretched across the whole programme, was punctuated at moments of greatest complication by moments of self-reflexivity. George Burns would turn directly to the camera (or the audience, as Eaton claims), and say: "I think I'll watch this with you" (30). He would then turn on his television set and watch the next scene usually set in the neighbours' house (29-30).

Eaton rejects the theory that this technique subverts the audience's relationship with television, and finds it instead a successful comedy device. Instead of causing alienation,

the use of self-reflexivity assures "the immediacy of the television image"; the latter becomes a constantly available source of "reference and plenitude" (31). The device of self-reflexivity did not distance the viewer, nor disrupt the narrative. By representing the viewing situation as part of the diegesis, the characters are installed as the "index" of the audience's identification (31). The effect was both pragmatic, inculcating the necessity of watching, and profound, establishing "the television viewing situation as guarantor both of the truth of the narrative and of the necessity of watching" (31). Furthermore, the personal address used in vaudeville was retained.

Eaton postulates that the self-conscious inscription and validation of the viewing situation in *The Burns and Allen Show* served to familiarise the audience with the use of the television appliance, "by allowing us to look at ourselves looking" (32). Looking at postmodernist television, Jerry Herron's hypothesis supports this position. He contends that the medium theorises its own operation; presenting "the precise economy of desire within which it operates" (15). Herron concludes that the result of the overt revelation of this economy is not alienation, but a new kind of interpellation (15). To Slavoj Žižek, the indexing of a text's method of enunciation and reception within the diegesis is proof of the postmodernism of a text (1992a, 5). It is thus possible to argue that in addition to radical animation, *The Simpsons* can call on the inherently postmodernist traditions of the sitcom.

The sitcom works par excellence by an accrual of events around an unchanging situation. This process works along the dimensions both of time and place. The convention of a repeated return to an unchanging situation was the perfect instrument for ensuring loyal audiences for the networks at the beginning of the 1950s. By the repeated revisiting of a

familiar situation, television creates a past for itself, but also establishes the way the past will be known through television. The sitcom becomes a way of constructing the audience through a particular understanding of the past; its mechanism of unchanging familiarity necessarily results in:

the re-affirmation and re-positioning of the individual in relation not only to the past in television, but also to the past of television, and ... as "television viewer". (Eaton, 35)

The meaning of the past has thus changed. Genre texts are currently experienced through simultaneous access to texts from all eras (Collins, 1993, 246). Under such conditions the past is revisited through "signs of pastness" (Herron, 14). For Americans, the decade within which television and sitcoms were established is the "privileged lost object of desire" (Jameson, 1991, 19). Sitcoms, particularly, allow a revisiting both of the 1950s and of the sense of a past.

Setting too achieves significance through repetition. Though progression is allowed, the underlying structure of a division between inside and outside is maintained. Thus, even though characters grow up or move away, the situation from which they move, such as the home, or the workplace, or the school, remains unaltered. *The Simpsons* stretches this convention; all the settings of commercial television are deployed at once. *The Simpsons* parodically invokes other sitcom conventions, for instance, underlining its deployment of the trope of the nuclear family by making the father an employee in a nuclear plant. The topoi of both the sitcom and the cartoon are treated ironically.

It is appropriate, therefore, that the sitcom has been subject to analysis of its construction of gender. Gender is embedded in the presentation of the family in the sitcom. Patricia Mellencamp describes the operation of the sitcom as the "comic containment of women" (quoted in Frazer and Frazer, 167). This is particularly evident in the sitcoms which emerged

after the experimental stage represented by *The Burns and Allen Show*. The exemplary sitcom of the more stable era of television formats from 1954 is *Father Knows Best*. Its characters are a marked shift from the interplay of couples in *The Burns and Allen Show* and *I Love Lucy* and instead embody the myths of family of the 1950s (163).

The Simpsons alludes directly to this text by its setting in the town of Springfield. Springfield is both an empirical representation of a small American town - it is the most common town-name in America (Frazer and Frazer, 163) - and the setting of *Father Knows Best*. The Simpsons seem to symbolise the "typical" family as a construction of the myths which have circulated on American television since the 1950s. Besides *The Simpsons*, *The Cosby Show* too examined the myth of the family. The latter seemed to recreate *Father Knows Best* unironically (Frazer^{and Frazer}, 172). Herron finds that *The Simpsons* invokes the "family values" typical of *The Cosby Show*, but distorted with supreme irony.

As Teer-Tomaselli finds with the sitcom, Herron finds that *The Simpsons* throws the codes of the cartoon genre into relief (16-19). The contingencies of American television itself allowed this strategy to be exposed. The Christian Broadcast Network rebroadcast *Father Knows Best* twice a day concurrently with *The Cosby Show* (Frazer and Frazer, 171). In August 1990 the Fox network moved *The Simpsons* to a timeslot that competed with *The Cosby Show*. This synchronous access created a revealing convergence of competing representations of the television family (Herron, 18).

The Fox Network's greatest success before *The Simpsons*, *Married ... with Children*, radically reversed stereotypes which govern the representation of the family on television (Herron, 16). Each of these sitcoms is "thoroughly immersed" in the medium (Frazer and Frazer, 172), and each is defined by

its relationship to the family in television: *The Cosby Show* because it embodied a "nostalgia for the family as it once was" (171); and *The Simpsons* because, like *Moonlighting* in relation to its genre, it was totally unlike the norms of network television (Herron, 16). Programmes like *The Simpsons* and *Married ... with Children* self-reflexively implicate the status of representation on television (Herron, 16).

Amongst the myths *The Simpsons* parodies is the myth of the selfless wife and mother. Marge, the mother in *The Simpsons*, represents like her daughter Lisa a site of competing discourses. Though her position in the nuclear family of Springfield places her in the house, in one episode she was inscribed by the discourse of popular feminist liberation represented by *Thelma and Louise*; in another she was tempted to have an affair (Herron, 18). Thus, the most stable figure, a comforting but blank mother-figure in the original Springfield sit-com, is here revealed to be inscribed by different discourses. If Marge is selfless, then these other discourses offer to construct female selves which threaten the family by revealing that it too is a discourse.

The settings of the sitcom are the locus of characters inscribed by numerous structures of authority. The early satires of Matt Groening such as the comic strip "School is Hell" feature characters which are clear antecedents of the Simpson family. One of these is "Bongo", a precursor of Bart, who keeps a diary revealing the actions of authority figures like teachers, principals and school bullies, united in a chronicle of unswerving tyranny (Teer-Tomaselli, 52). *The Simpsons* represents an engagement with the discourses of bourgeois patriarchy, and its regime of "everyday repression" (52). Lauren Berlant goes further than Teer-Tomaselli in locating *The Simpsons'* critique not only in the cant of middle-class suburbia, but in the bourgeois public sphere as a whole (404).

Bart, the most popular cartoon figure on television (Herron, 15), and the character who symbolises the series, is a floating signifier of disruption. His elaborate resistance to respectability, decorum and obedience satirically foregrounds the power relations inscribed by neat suburban appearances. As the signifier of pure opposition, Bart provides a locus where opposition is staged (Herron, 19). As he tweaks the nose of patriarchy by committing symbolic patricide or faking father-love ("Higher, dad, higher"), Bart bears a subversive philosophy for an age of patriarchal certainties.

As a child and a cartoon character, Bart is intersected by many forms of authority. His disruptions resonate because he is conversant in the specialised languages of authority. Because he understands the language, the mechanisms of authority are visible to him and therefore he is not cowed by them. He is an "underachiever and proud of it" because achievement is not a neutral measure. He "comprehend[s] the schoolmaster's jargon", and all other languages of authority (Parisi, 136). By definition, *The Simpsons* orientates viewers to covert ways of understanding in the excessively visible age of television. It is therefore ironic that cartoons such as *The Simpsons* are perceived by some to be "a culturally-subversive channel of communication among young people that adults cannot understand or access" (Karon, 34).

The historical link between the standardised narrative form of the sitcom genre and the cartoon points to a new conception of audience. In the sitcom the end of an episode always depicts a *return* to an original equilibrium. The genre turns around a "refamiliarizing" of the repeated situation (Neale and Krutnik, 234). Philip Drummond posits the importance for television series generally of "synchronizing motifs", or regularly occurring scenes and catchphrases in the elaboration of a coherent internal "mythology" (quoted in Neale and Krutnik, 235). Repeated appearances increase the level of

visibility, and the degree of consumption. The "constant repetition and familiarity" of sitcoms are therefore decisive in constructing and positioning the viewer (Eaton, 34-35).

If, through the sitcom, television constructs an audience and simultaneously constructs itself as a source of truth, the sitcom is also where "television continually reinstates the terms of its own past, its own memory and our memory of it" (Eaton, 35). It is unsurprising, then, that *The Simpsons* confronts many of television's founding mechanisms in the genre it parodies. So radical was the insertion of *The Simpsons* into *The Tracey Ullman Show* that the cartoon quickly outgrew its host programme. Consequently, critics posit that the former "is not a show at all" (Herron, 18).

Jameson describes modernism by its rigorous observation of the division between high and popular culture: modernism sought to secure "a realm of authentic experience over against the surrounding environment of philistinism, of schlock and kitsch, of commodification and of *Reader's Digest* culture" (1988, 63). This image of defining and guarding a circumscribed area against the threat of encroachment, finds an ironic echo in the images purveyed by *Reader's Digest*. Jonathan Yardley finds in *Reader's Digest* a "decidedly conservative" and "nostalgic longing for the American never-never land" (43). Pursuing a doctrine of personal improvement and popular intellectualism, *Reader's Digest* condenses books into more easily absorbed versions.

Parodying precisely these questions, *The Simpsons* episode "Mr Lisa Goes to Washington" cites a popular text called *Reading Digest*. It also cites the Frank Capra film, *Mr Smith Goes to Washington*. "Mr Lisa Goes to Washington" has been intensively analysed by Berlant in relation to the discourse of nationality and citizenship. I propose to look at the operation of narrative in the episode. Taking up a theme I

have noted in connection with Bart, the episode deals with the power of language. Moreover, the particular language used in narrative is the source of special power.

Homer is a foil for Bart. Bart is the mercurial "brat", for which his name is an anagram, while Homer is the befuddled, unchanging father. Homer is a father without being a father figure; he is a parodic patriarch. If Bart understands the language of authority, Homer is bemused by the subtleties of discourse. At one point Homer says, "Who would have thought that reading and writing would pay off?" After misreading a cheque for one million dollars, and being humiliated at the bank when he tries to redeem it, Homer is comforted by Marge with a free copy of *Reading Digest*. Homer becomes entranced by the magazine and follows its many self-improvement guides, such as, "How to improve your vocabulary." Because change is impossible for him, these guides encounter a test case in Homer. When he meets the editor of *Reading Digest*, Homer tells her that the vocabulary section is "very, very ... very good."

Suggesting the conceits of self-improvement, the magazine offers young children lessons in "How to improve your citizenship" in the form of a contest for a patriotic essay competition, as guilelessly as it offers "How to improve your Vocabulary" lessons. With this discovery, Homer loses his enchantment with the magazine. Instead, the narrative is taken up by Lisa.

With Lisa the crucial force of narrative becomes evident. When she first attempts to write a patriotic essay, Lisa starts with a pastiche of quotations from the founders of American democracy (Berlant, 402), but this does not provide the sense of wholeness which she seeks. She turns to the "whole" of America: "America. Inspire me", she calls. Because Springfield encompasses all of America which has ever been on

television, the town magically generates a forest in which a symbolic exchange occurs and wholeness is granted to Lisa. An American bald eagle rises before Lisa, in response to her call. It is the symbolic made concrete, signifying the whole of the nation, and telescoping the nation's mythic relation to nature. Whereas Homer is unable to make connections and discern the importance of context, Lisa employs the coherence of narrative to create her essay.

A town named Springfield occurs in more than 20 states in America (Frazer and Frazer, 163), so empirically it can claim almost "all" of America. Within the borders of the town have been all the suburbs and neighbourhoods of America - it even has a typically New York scene of a Lower East Side when the plot requires it - an amalgam of television settings created by the contingency of parody and pastiche. The Simpsons seem to live in a determinedly "middle" state, emphasising their embodiment of the average family. Yet their averageness is evidently a combination of discrete settings and meanings.

For Lisa, the concreteness of the eagle symbol provides the only sense in which she can grasp all of America. This reassuring condensation of complexity into a single image is also the mode of operation of the real *Reader's Digest*. In its construction of an ideal American reader, it provides the shared rituals which define Americanness and give a sense of wholeness, and nationality. Significantly, since the settings of Springfield represent the emblematic settings of television, a similar condensation must describe the way television itself works. The diegesis suggests that the Simpson family represents the concrete condensation of the representations of family.

The national project extends beyond a patriotic essay competition, yet the process generated for Lisa by the competition interpellates her into the construction of

nationhood. The symbol comes in response to her need and provides the necessary wholeness to her essay. Since the attribution of patterns of cause and effect is one of the mechanisms of narrative (Bordwell, 39), Lisa is inscribed into the narrative of nationhood. The narrative, then, counters the multiplicity of *The Simpsons'* pastiche with a patriotic narrative of wholeness.

The content of Lisa's essay, "The Roots of Democracy", is also a narrative. In her story of the birth of the nation, Lisa transforms the symbol of the Springfield forest into an allegory of democracy (Berlant, 403). Lisa wins the regional competition, and is invited to Washington for its final round. In Washington, the complexities behind the condensing mechanisms of narrative are revealed. Lisa herself is transformed into a symbol of America, demonstrating the effects of induction into the narrative of nationhood. She becomes an opportunity for publicity for her local representative who poses for photographs with her, providing other condensed images which will generate the narrative for other patriots. Here Gombrich's analysis of the use of universal metaphors becomes useful. He regards this condensation as a very powerful tool, whose perfect form prevents critical reflection. Because of the universality of their use, we tend to forget "their metaphorical or symbolic character" (138-39).

Lisa's encounter with the complexity behind the narrative of wholeness and purity, in the form of the corruption of the Springfield representative, is profoundly disillusioning. Striking at the heart of the metaphor - the representative accepts a bribe to grant logging rights to Springfield forest - the politician reveals how easily the political discourse exploits amnesia about metaphoricality.

The role of radical animation is to address metaphoricality and literality in discourse. The appeal of cartoons such as *The Simpsons* and *Beavis and Butt-head* is often explained in terms of their specialised and exclusivist discourse. Ironically, this discourse has emerged from television, which appears to be an entirely transparent medium. These cartoons reveal and then "decode, lampoon and challenge [television's] visual strategies" (Karon, 34).

The term "visual strategies" aptly describes the discourses of television. All languages, including those of television, are inherently dialogic, or multi-voiced (Fiske, 90). However, a text is not only a free play of competing voices. Discourses are structured by a hierarchy, and the dominant discourse of a society operates ideologically to make itself seem intuitive or natural (14). The dominant discourse attempts to create a monologic, or single-voiced, text by suppressing other voices in the text.

The discourse of realism operates in this way. The realist text hides its founding metaphor - that the model of reality stands for reality - so that the text appears natural and unmediated. Such dominant discourse is able to mask the figurality of its constructions and depict them as literal and impartial (Cornwell, 6). The dominant language appears to be both innocent and rational. The aim of discourse analysis is to restore the "radical metaphoricality" of discourse (Cornwell, 3). One of the ways in which to make monologic discourses reveal themselves is by using "doubly-oriented speech" such as stylisation and parody (Lodge, 33). Through stylisation the narratorial voice appears to inhabit a discourse. A simulated diegesis is created through the demonstration of a character's discourse rather than speech. Stylisation conveys a consciousness shaped by discourse (35-36). Moreover, stylisation offers "to identify the metaphoric element"

(Cornwell, 6). "Mr Lisa Goes to Washington" is an exercise in the "stylisation" of discourse.

Animation is a particularly effective medium in which to use stylisation because animation is precisely the performance of the metaphoric. In fact, animation is the "literalization of metaphor" (Broadfoot and Butler, 277). It is through awareness of the discourses of television that postmodernist cartoons are able to apply sophisticated analyses. "Mr Lisa Goes to Washington" presents two literalisations - animation and political discourse - and stylises both.

Rendered as a stylisation of graphic style, the two beast fables within the larger allegory of "Mr Lisa Goes to Washington" reflect on each other and create critical awareness. The portrayal of Lisa's disillusionment takes the form of a fantasy, as she sits on the Capitol steps, of government workers transmogrified into pigs feeding at a trough of money. This device of editorial cartooning (Berlant, 405) reveals that caricature uses the same mechanism of condensation as political discourse, the former as a means of debunking, and the latter as a means of idealisation. A contrasting use of an animal symbol in the episode is the bald eagle. The discourse of editorial cartooning reveals, in retrospect, that the apparently natural figure of the eagle represents a political discourse. Yet in the diegesis the eagle seemed to be a bird from the forest, a message from the essence of the "real" America. Instead, the eagle came "straight from the national seal" (402), a bearer of discourse.

The cartoon seems to be an analogy of language. The naturalistic drawing of the eagle could be understood as part of the "normal" style of *The Simpsons*, but the hyperbolic style in which the pigs are drawn signifies its difference from normal discourse. Therefore, discourse is shown to be

complex precisely because some discourses masquerade as "natural" through the suppression of metaphoricity (Gombrich, 138-39). The lesson is that language is not transparent nor innocent; discourse inscribes positions of power. By forgetting the metaphoricity of the symbols of nation, Lisa failed to perceive the power play of the discourse. As Berlant phrases it, "overidentification with national icons evacuates peoples's wisdom" (405). Lisa's disenchantment is profound: the naturalness of language is exposed as a myth, the sense of wholeness provided by symbol is destroyed.

The usually invisible power of narrative to infiltrate "reality" is here made overt. In a complex performance, the episode enacts the flattening of the cultural landscape, and a compulsive simplification and two-dimensionality, while it is itself flat, simplified and two-dimensional. The radical potential of animation examines the interplay of narrative and advertising, metaphor and literality, and fiction and reality.

In her disillusionment, Lisa throws away her "Roots of Democracy" essay and writes one called "Cesspool on the Potomac" instead. She reads her bitter new speech at the contest, where it is seen by an aide to a senator. The aide's response is a satirical reference to the force of narrative in political discourse. He is driven into action:

at the moment [he] beholds Lisa's crisis of faith in democracy. He telephones a senator; the FBI entraps the corrupt congressman, on videotape; the Senate meets and expels him; George Bush signs the bill; a newspaper almost instantly reports the congressman's imprisonment and conversion to a born-again consciousness. (Berlant, 406)

The sequence starts when the aide tells the senator, "A little girl is losing her faith in democracy." A fast montage of punishment and redemption is propelled by media clichés. The instrument both of capture and of absolution is the media; videotape is used to record an act of corruption, and a newspaper tells of the representative's religious conversion.

Lisa's conclusion, "The system works!" is a satirical use of the refrain of politicians. She mouths their customary words, because the narrative progression seems to demand it.

Superficially, the conclusion restores the force of symbol, Berlant concludes:

The performance of mass media-dominated national political culture reveals a system of meaning in which *allegory is the aesthetic of political realism* at every moment of successful national discourse, one in which the narrative of that discourse itself, at a certain point of metarepresentation, becomes a conceit that erases aggregate memory as it produces knowledge of the nation as a thing in itself. (Berlant, 406)

Berlant here raises the interesting question of the relation of allegory to postmodernism. An allegory:

is a narrative fiction in which the agents and actions, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived to make coherent sense on the "literal," or primary, level of signification, and at the same time to signify a second, correlated order of agents, concepts, and events. (Abrams, 4)

Jameson finds that allegory "fatally stages its historic appearance in the postmodern era" (1992, 4). Žižek similarly asserts that postmodernism is exemplified by the accentuation in narrative of the allegorical axis. Poststructuralist theory demonstrates that allegory has an impact on all forms of representation (Lilford, 83). All the terms available for thinking are "already figural", but appear to deny the intricacy of figuration (Jameson, 1992, 2). Whereas the danger of allegory is literalisation (Lilford, 95), today the value of analysis of allegory, as Berlant points out, is that symbols have already been literalised to inform a new kind of "realism." Since allegory presents an apparently coherent set of literal meanings, yet "constantly displaces meaning", allegory itself allegorises the struggle between the concreteness of the metaphor, and the displacement of meaning (Lilford, 83).

In "Mr Lisa Goes to Washington" the satirical charge of the sequence lingers after the neat recuperation of Lisa's faith.

The stylised speed of the montage and its satirical imitation of newscasts and documentaries common to American non-fiction discourse, are what remain. Lisa's response is itself a clichéd climax to a gathering increment of clichés. The disjuncture between Lisa's disillusionment, and her return to belief, is explicit. Moreover, the actions of the senator and his aide are themselves motivated by closure. Thus, since it is so strained, the ending is an example of "closure effect" rather than closure *per se* (Bordwell, 159).

The two settings of the episode signal the importance of myths, because Washington is a place which holds all the neighbourhoods of America in "selfless" service. Its mechanism is narrative (or allegory or myth), instead of the pastiche of Springfield. Politics is dependent on narrative for its effectivity, in fact, allegorical narrative has come to define realism in the political discourse (Berlant, 404-5). Herron argues that *The Simpsons* poses an active challenge to classic narrative, and to codes of animation in thrall to narrative (18).

The structure of the programme itself aids the disruption of narrative. *The Simpsons* has a complex structure of shows-within-the-show. Enclosed in it is *The Krusty the Clown Show*, which has its own insert called *The Itchy and Scratchy Show*. The palimpsest has included even more texts, for example, when the *Krusty Show* contained an advertisement for *The Itchy and Scratchy Movie*, and the local *Eye on Springfield* news program made a documentary on the making of the film, which included clips from the history of animation. This documentary featured a character called "Steamboat Scratchy", a reference to the Disney film, *Steamboat Willie*, which starred Mortimer Mouse, the precursor to Mickey (Geipel, 159). The film established the reputation of Disney, but is quoted in this episode of *The Simpsons* with an affectedly primitive style.

The series alludes to the particularity of American cartoons by featuring "Eastern Europe's favourite cat and mouse, "Worker and Parasite" with sub-titles. While satirising Western stereotypes, *The Simpsons* reference also points to the rich history of animation in Eastern Europe. The overtly anti-Disney appearance of the Simpsons is echoed by a radically non-naturalistic and surreal strain of animation for which Central European artists are famous. They are characterised by a severe, satirical style of drawing, spare settings and formalised characters. These "multiplication films" have some affinity with early American "primitive" animation (Geipel, 158-71).

The anthropomorphic portrayal of animals has a venerable history in cartoon art (Witek, 1989, 4). The cat and mouse pairing has had an insistent appeal throughout the history of animation. Besides Herriman's transcendent creation, *Krazy Kat*, drawn from 1913 to his death in 1944, another example is *Maus*, the award-winning graphic novel about Nazism, by Art Spiegelman. In *The Simpsons* Itchy and Scratchy literalise the role of radical animation. If the latter reveals the fractures, gaps and grafts between frames, then Itchy and Scratchy's cat-and-mouse violence literally fractures bones, creates holes and grafts skin, with discomfoting excess.

Cult is a category of perception defined by disjuncture. It recovers the possibility of the difference between unconscious schemata and perception. Positing a distinctive relation to the unconscious, cult theory reconceptualises audiencehood, narrative and perception in visual texts. Through cult theory, a new role for the simplified style of animation can be envisaged, based on a conception of meaning as definitively intertextual. According to Eco, cult status is dependent on a "disjointedness" in the work (1994, 127). Animation is constituted of disjointedness. The animatic apparatus is engaged more with the pace and rhythm of disintegration than

the formal coherence of segments (Brophy, 68). Animation thus "violently yet magically sever[s] the visual from the phenomenological totality of life" (67). *The Simpsons* embodies this radical fragmentation:

frequently creating unstable outlines that seem to vibrate on screen, as if to emphasize the fact that everything here ... is being drawn, moment by moment" (Herron, 18).

It emphasises provisionality and materiality, radically removed from the fluidity and simulated naturalism of Disneyfied animation. Like parody and cult, subversive animation is characterised by a doubleness, or self-consciousness (Gopnik, 373). Contemporary cult animation repositions the audience, as television sitcom did in the 1950s, and as film did in 1903. The history of technology has caused the convergence of film and animation once again after nearly 100 years. Animation is the superlative cult text.

The cult cartoon is experimental, heretic and yet immersed in the world which provides its material - television. Since cult is a means of engaging the multiple intertextualities of current life, it indexes a widening community of critical television viewers. Animated cartoons are simultaneously the site of the most banal and simplified of visual presentations, and of complex insights of vision. While Disneyfied cartoons reassure viewers with the collusion of their simplified versions of reality with the codes of realism (Geipel, 165), the non-Disneyfied cartoon removes that reassurance. This is because the latter presents firstly, the form of heterogeneous palimpsests; and secondly, the literalisation of the metaphors of perception. They embody, in other words, the central points about the relation of fiction and reality today.

This dislocation provides the connection of cult to a non-Disney animation. Subversive animation seems by definition to be cult. Through stylisation and parody, it also teaches cult. These disruptive pedagogical strategies may be

necessary because some texts show a strategy of recuperating difference into an simulation of innocence. The cult experience seeks excess even when the performance of clichés seems perfect (Corrigan, 83). Because subversive animation emphasises its textuality and its materiality, animation can be the cult text which removes the occultation of vision, and the transparency of meaning. This is a theory attentive to form in a world of "heterogeneous intertextuality" (Wollen, 65).

The mystique which emerges from shared exposure to mass-produced art is an interesting corollary of Benjamin's analysis of art in the age of mechanical reproduction. Jim Collins analyses a scene in which Bart and his father watch the Macy's Thanksgiving parade, itself a venerable tradition sponsored by a New York department store. The sequence reveals how popularity and multiple appearances create a sense of tradition and depth in works of art in the age of television:

As they watch the Thanksgiving Day parade, Bart keeps asking Homer to identify the balloon float characters, complaining that they could use some characters that "were made in the last fifty years." His father tells him that the parade is a tradition, that if "you start building a balloon for every flash-in-the-pan cartoon character you'll turn the parade into a farce." At this point the television- within-the-television depicts a Bart Simpson balloon floating by while the "real" Bart Simpson looks on. *The Simpsons* television program thereby acknowledges its own characters' status as popular icons whose circulation and reception are worked back into the "text" itself. (Collins, 236)

The Simpsons here confronts the commercial circulation of images, and points to the way that advertising, with its method of repetition of images, creates a new kind of "tradition". The carnivalesque parade is exemplary of advertising, which works by drawing on a "'history' or 'mass archival memory' of social tableaux, parables, and visual clichés" (Schwoch et al., 22). The episode parodies the mystical transformation of a "flash-in-the-pan cartoon" into a

character worthy of exhibition at the Macy's parade. But Collins notes that this scene goes "beyond parody" (1992, 336). Like *Moonlighting* and *Twin Peaks*, *The Simpsons* wanders outside of the boundaries of its genre, to comment on television itself.

There is a careful awareness of the interplay of technology and illusion, but *The Simpsons* does not claim that it is innocent of the process. Appearing in the parade given by a department store validates the circulation of images; readiness to be consumed confers the honour of appearance. Repeated appearance increases the level of visibility and the degree of consumption. The repetition of image confers an aura and a tradition once the possession only of the "original" (Benjamin, 222). *The Simpsons* uses repetition to undercut charges that its humour is puerile and scurrilous. Classroom humour and its attendant punishment - an endless repetition of the transgressive sentence - paradoxically partakes of the same mystical effect. This repetition attempts to destroy the talismanic originality of the original transgression, but then the endlessly repeated blackboard statements take on an aura which draws on reproduction.

Since cult depends on disjointedness, and animation is disjunctive at the levels of both content and apparatus, animated texts may be cult texts by definition. For Eco, a cult text "stages the power of narrativity in its natural state" (1988, 453). And the very banality of the content of cartoons aids this process (454). Animated texts meet a further criterion of cult since the "extratextual and intratextual life of characters" such as Batman and Superman is matched only by Eco's example of the detective figure Sherlock Holmes. Characters in animation have a particular facility to "live autonomously" (Cholodenko, 1991a, 17).

Non-Disney animation holds the promise of something other than implication in capital by its overt manifestation as both figure and commodity. Animation embodies the literalisation of metaphor (Broadfoot and Butler, 277). Cartoons perform the shape of narrative in their linearity and their formalisation; they embody the ethereality of the media; and, as cult texts, they perform the audience role. The urgent disjointedness of *The Simpsons*, for instance, with its parodic narrative and visual style undercut the suturing operation of narrative film. It disrupts the effect which secures the spectator within an illusion of a perfect reality. Animation foregrounds constructedness in both theme and production, and thus reverses the repression of the production process. As text, radical animation aids Allen's call to television theories to include the process of production, avoiding the trap of overconcentration in the polysemic possibilities of texts (1992b, 186). The aesthetic of the cartoon may therefore be critical to the postmodernist age, creating "a more relevant economy of watching" (Herron, 18). Cult texts articulate "a culture of instinctive semioticism" (Eco, 1988, 454), the "normal" means of appreciating visual texts under postmodernism.

Union-bashing, pornography, cigarette adverts aimed at children, censorship, cartoon violence, tabloid journalism, Vietnam, Alfred Hitchcock, political violence, unplanned pregnancies, Robert Frost, movie violence, adultery - all these are the material of *The Simpsons*. In its determinedly iconoclastic stance *The Simpsons* reveals that popular culture is the most political of all. Using the innocuous space granted to cartoons, it raises "dangerous" issues untouched by other programmes. Playing trickster with the boundaries of a carefully divided world, *The Simpsons* reminds its viewers of connections and consequences. Simultaneously, the programme disrupts the packaged narratives emitted by advertisements, politics, news - the signs of an institutionalised world. *The*

Simpsons' self-reflexive life as cartoon characters echo the postmodernist immersion in image. The Simpsons teach their viewers to be exemplary citizens of a postmodern world.

The Simpsons holds radical potential. It represents a new frontier for mainstream television and for cartoons, even in the buoyant world of animation today. Reversing the denigration with which cartoons are usually greeted, the series has been called "the medium's best-written series" (Corliss, 63). Its daring and the complexity of its comic associations are impressive. McCloud argues that "The dance of the visible and the invisible is at the very heart of comics" (205). Simpson characters vibrate, they are never still. They refuse to be captured, or to give assurance and affirmation. They contain the "turbulence" inherent in all animation (Cholodenko, 1991a, 10). They breach the line of televisual decorum, just as their agitated lines offend a disneyfied sense of proportion. In this cultural moment, *The Simpsons* vibrates beyond the genre of cartoon, and beyond comedy, to comment on the movement of images and meaning in "reality."

Conclusion:

"Circles, Squares, and Triangles"

The challenge of form in the context of a global circulation of images may be described as the defining problem of theory in postmodernism. This problem may be recast in the light of discussions of postmodernism, genre, narrative and cult as one about meaning in the context of palimpsestic signs. The recycling of texts in this saturated media environment has redefined the relation of fiction to reality. Eco posits that, by its simplifications, "fiction makes us feel more metaphysically comfortable than reality" (1994, 116). Yet the relation between the two has been complicated by the allusive strategies of media technologies. We have moved beyond the age of "mechanical reproduction" into one of "electronic intertextuality" (Wollen, 62). Bearing only a superficial simplicity, signs have become part of:

new systems of imagery [which are] *heterogeneous palimpsests*. They ... combine a number of different types of image ... and they ... refer not only, or even primarily, to the "real world" (the extra-textual) but also to the existing archive of images and texts from which they borrow (the inter-textual). (Wollen, 64-65)

In order to posit a theory of meaning commensurate with the formal density of postmodernism, I will recapitulate the dimensions of the problem of form by looking at narrative and genre. I review realist narrative, then examine the influence of Disney on television narrative and, finally, look at a new variant of genre altogether.

The appeal of narrative resides in its reassuring imposition of shape or form on an arbitrary reality. Narrative consequently tempts its audience to echo the operation of fiction in *their* relation to reality (Eco, 1994, 87-99). While Eco states that "a fictional world has a more modest format than the actual world" (87), I have argued that the

representational strategies of technologies which structure vision have profoundly altered the nature of reality (Benjamin, 224-26).

In visual texts realist narrative manifests an ideology of the visible by repressing its mechanisms and drawing the spectator into the narrative (Ulmer, 8). The new technologies of communication which accompanied the cinema at the turn of the century inculcated "a new kind of literacy" (Ohman, 34). This was characterized by a melting away of detail, integrally related to a new pedagogy of consumerism. By participating in the shared rituals provided by these new media, audiences:

were also learning to collaborate in a kind of tacit ignorance -- of the social relations being effaced by advertising: relations of labour and making, of corporation and consumer, of ad agency and cultural production. (Ohman, 39).

Thus a new understanding of the world was constituted in reduction and the effacement of the traces of production.

In the 1950s Disney studios redefined many of the parameters of television, most crucially, the nature of narrative (Anderson, 94). Through its commercial strategy of merging of narrative and advertising Disney promulgated a kind of "total textuality" in which the teleological movement of narrative toward closure is refracted into the comprehensive seduction of consumption (Anderson, 91-99). It:

provided a narrative framework for the experience of Disneyland [theme park]. Television made the entire Disney operation more enticing by fashioning it as a narrative experience which the family TV audience could enhance - and actually *perform* - by visiting the park. (Anderson, 97-98, my emphasis)

Starkly redrawing relations between fiction and reality, the Disneyland program effectively created "an inhabitable text" (Anderson, 98). The physical text of Disneyland theme park was a narrative fiction through which viewers could find closure in "reality." It promised a plenitude which is always absent, by definition, in the television text. If traditional

texts are complete, coherent, and autonomous, Disney television texts were simultaneously splintered and expansive. The programmes were segmented, but enveloped a world of products. They disseminated an ideology of consumption founded in the home and the family. The Disney paradigm was adopted as the standard for television. "Total narrative" thus moulded all texts produced for television.

Commenting on the significance of technology for narrative and genre, Collins describes a different genericity in both film and television. This new genericity poses a particular challenge to theories of narrative and genre. Visual texts belonging to this genre manifest simultaneously an intense awareness of mediation with a simulation of innocence. The texts create an impression of simplicity by recreating earlier genres unironically. They inscribe an "idealized imaginary" which relies on faith, magic and abstraction (1993, 259). Since this "new generic imaginary" is the the only site where intractable problems can be solved (*idem.*), these texts offer to resolve questions of form as well as content.

Such texts sublimate their immersion in media by fetishising form into belief. Such belief is inherently commodified and patriarchal, consisting of narcissistic fantasies projected onto expedient sites. They take on the form of traditional allegory, but suppress their figurality. By occupying an older form in search of the purity which it signifies, these texts echo the literalization of metaphor found in Disney cartoons (Broadfoot and Butler, 277). Paradoxically, by evading the implications of mediation and simulating innocence, the texts become the equivalent of cartoons. They flatten themselves into two-dimensional renditions of earlier representations (Herron, 18).

Fredric Jameson has similarly referred to the appearance in postmodernist, "post-generic" texts of a peculiar use of

allegory (1992, 5). While postmodernist allegory reveals the world as a structure of signs, post-generic texts allegorise earlier genres. The fracture between old forms and the palimpsestic weight of meaning produces a new form of allegory: the conspiratorial allegory. Although all the terms available for formulating the world are already figural and "soaked in ideology", this variant of allegory offers to resolve problems of form in a recourse to figurality while repressing figurality (1992, 2-5).

These theories of genericity reveal again the importance of form in a world saturated by images (Anderson, 81). I have proposed that certain texts meet this challenge of form and representation on television - texts which I have labelled "postmodernist". Television provides both the conditions for postmodernism, and the locus for the engagement with problems of form and meaning in postmodernism. The heterogeneous matrix of television is itself the site of resistance to the discourses presented in the medium. Postmodernist television provides strategies for dealing with ready-made texts which resist semiotic excess, and mimic innocence. Instead of repressing metaphoricity, postmodernist television programmes inscribe a play of figurality and literality.

Postmodernist television programmes also address the question of spectatorship. In an age of pervasive visibility and intertextuality they restore the metaphoricity of realist visual models. Cult theory reconceptualises the relationship of audience to text. Its texts are a means of engaging with the multiple intertextualities of postmodernism (Jerslev, 182). Cult materialises the operations of the text through the use of cliché. The cult experience seeks excess even when the performance of clichés seems perfect (Corrigan, 83). To Eco, the banality of cliché therefore serves the ends of cult (1988, 454). The plenitude of visual presence and the representational coherence of conventional narrative are

displaced by disjunctive nodes where the text is materialized. Such "material scars" of excess and instability permit the audience to re-fashion the text (Corrigan, 86). These excesses invert the structure of balance and stasis which govern conventional texts. Thus, whereas a narrative text operates the allegorical codes of narrativity to invite identification with the screen (Williams, 212), the excesses of a cult text reveal and dramatize the force of narrativity (Eco, 1988, 453). While the traditional address of film invites the subject to occupy an assigned position, the dislocation of the text which results from cult makes positioning the *subject* of film. Spectators are made conscious of their construction of spectators as the cult discourse constantly revisits and challenges the meaning of audiencehood (Jerslev, 193-95). Since it is constituted of disjuncture, radical animation generates the superlative cult text. The cult cartoon is provisional, revisionist and intricately in the world which provides its subject - television.

In a demonstration of the resistant possibilities of postmodernist television the broadcast history of *The Simpsons* attests to the dissident potential of postmodernist television. The juxtaposition of three generations of discourses on the family represented by *The Simpsons*, *The Cosby Show* and *Father Knows Best* forms a test case of the subversive possibilities of television. In contrast with *The Cosby Show's* disingenuous recreation of an earlier representation of family, *The Simpsons* consists of an unstable bricolage of "already-made" discourses (Hutcheon, 1989, 93). Through the juxtaposition of the two textual strategies, the repressed knowledge of discourse inscribed in *The Cosby Show* staged a return. In theme as well as visual strategy, *The Cosby Show* was revealed as reductionist and complicit in patriarchy. This is a demonstration of both the intrication of postmodernist texts in television and their seditious role

within the medium. By attending to the importance of popular forms, postmodernist theory and texts promise to redefine the visual, and create "a poetics of the *ready-made*" (Eco, 1994, 116).

Simplicity and complexity interact in intricate patterns in the three texts examined in earlier chapters. Through the appraisal of the three texts studied here, both complexity and an intriguing repetition of patterns in the relations of meaning to form, and television to postmodernism, emerge.

In a fruitful analogy Bordwell conceives of the work of art as incomplete, attaining coherence only through the active participation of the viewer (32). The narrative schemas used by viewers to complete the work of the text are "like those circles, squares, and triangles which artists revise and adorn to permit the portrayal of any object" (35). My argument here is that parodies of genre and pre-eminently, a subversive kind of animation, embody both the schematism, and the palimpsestic structures of meaning.

The series play out the tension between longevity and closure, enacting in the dimensions of the texts the production demands of television. *Moonlighting* mediates the ongoing struggle between serialisation and its implied development of characters, and the classic episodic structure of series television over the course of its five-year existence. *Twin Peaks* seems to draw these tensions into its textual preoccupations as well, performing an epic encounter between genres as much as between characters.

The other fruitful similarity between the series is their use of opposites and foils in their range of personae. In *Moonlighting* the binarity occurred between David and Maddie. Maddie was the blankly perfect figure who represented stasis

and the past. David was the mercurial and whimsical figure who embodied the series itself.

In *Twin Peaks* the binarity lay between the stillness represented by Agent Cooper, and the frightening, shape-changing villain, BOB. The difference between the narrative strategies of the two series can be judged by the affect invested in stillness and constancy. I argued in the chapter on *Twin Peaks* that generic change was figured in the narration as a threat. Agent Cooper's blank, planed angles were occasionally softened in whimsical contrast with *Twin Peak's* other stylised characters. However, Cooper's rigid obedience to codes encounters a more serious opposition in the volatile genericity of the narration. BOB is therefore the closest analogue to the generic changeability of the narration. The inherent threat of change is represented by eddying surfaces of the water images in *Twin Peaks*. In their mirrored calm these images represent both stillness, and the turbulence of currents and eddies beneath the surface.

In *The Simpsons* Bart and Homer are the binary figures. Their opposition is contained within a larger economy of stylisation, however. Bart is a frenetically changeable character. As a child he is subject to multiple matrices of authority, but is instead a figure of general insurgency. As David encapsulates *Moonlighting*, Bart accentuates the oscillation of *The Simpsons*. Homer, by contrast, is the literalisation of the "figure" of authority. He is ineffectual and unsuited to his position, and represents the static patriarchy against which Bart's mercuriality always triumphs.

This interplay of stasis and changeability marks all three series. I have argued that postmodernist cult narrative foregrounds and disrupts the mechanism of identification through which realist narrative inscribes its subjects.

Postmodernist narratives accentuate "normal" narrative devices to the extent that they become "unnatural" (Glassner, 68). Realist narrative can be represented spatially in the form of a parabola. Underlying this structure is an opposition of inside and outside. Through their overly familiar narrative topoi, the postmodernist series I have analysed foreground this opposition, eventually forming a succession of pointed rehearsals of the binary structure which underlies narrative. This underpinning can be represented in the form of a geometric imperative:

Outside and inside form a dialectic of division, the obvious symmetry of which blinds us as soon as we bring it into play in metaphorical domains. ... Unless one is careful, it is made the basis of all images that govern all thoughts of positive and negative. (Bachelard quoted in Mulvey, 1989d, 163)

The numerous binarities and their subtle explication in these series reiterates the importance of form. In my analyses I have pointed out the play of metaphor and literality in *Moonlighting*, *Twin Peaks* and *The Simpsons*. A binarity also occurs between the flow of narrative and the paradigmatic weight of the sequence. In all three series spectacular individual sequences frequently threaten the progression of plot. Since postmodernist texts are simultaneously popular and self-reflexive, by emphasising the pastiche of sequences above plot, they foreground their own structuration (Jerslev, 191). The planar form of pastiche which results from bricolage embodies the very spatiality of classic narrative. Therefore, the flatness which Jameson found to be the definitive formal feature of postmodernism (1991, 18), I argue, addresses both the problem of intertextuality and the new genre texts. Like the simplicity of caricature, this flatness is part of an "antimimetic representational strategy" (Gopnik, 371).

Eco explains that cult can be detected in the extratextual and intratextual existence of characters. A certain kind of intertextuality is attained when fictional characters are

treated like real people; they liberate themselves from the narration (1994, 126-27). In the three series David Addison, Bart and Agent Cooper attained a significant extratextual resonance. Embodying a particular intertextuality, cartoon characters inspire great loyalty, usually independent of their creators. *The Simpsons*, for instance, though created by Matt Groening, is written by Gracie Films employees and drawn in Korea (Parisi, 140). The loyalty inspired by these particular characters deserves attention. In both *Moonlighting* and *The Simpsons* the characters who attain the most response from the audience are those who represent flux and disobedience. In *Twin Peaks* Agent Cooper is an intensification or literalisation of constancy and decorum. When Cooper *does* change, the narration signifies the difference as invasion, tragedy and loss of self. These disparate approaches to flux and constancy indicate the different narrative strategies of the series. Though *Twin Peaks* deploys generic topoi and tropes as agilely as the other two series, it does not undercut the opposition between outside and inside which underpins classic narrative. Instead, *Twin Peaks'* postmodernist strategies intensify this basic geometric structure.

Is the postmodern project on television a short term one? The success of each of these projects ensured that postmodernist self-reflexivity entered mainstream television, and encouraged further experiment. The legacy of these series is a complex engagement with genre. They brought cult and popular postmodernism to television. Conscious of closure, making their constructedness overt, inscribing production into their themes, they extended the boundaries not only of their genres, but of television generally. The "camp sensibility" which characterizes the postmodern viewing experience undercuts the exclusivity of inside and outside; the "split consciousness" constructed by irony allows shifting, simultaneous relations

of inside and outside between characters and audience, diegesis and self-reflexive commentary (Pollan, 76).

In recovering the metaphoricity of models of perception, cult and postmodernist texts confront the retreat from referentiality. This culture of "pure signifiers" can be traced to the mechanisation of vision under Fordism (Wollen, 59). The body arranged in precise routines became subject to formalisation and abstract symbolization (59). This process is remarkably similar to the one which Gombrich says happens in the creation of caricatures. The example of the body conveys a sense that what constitutes vision in an age of extreme visibility is highly conventional. Benjamin extended the Fordist analysis to film. For the age of "electronic intertextuality, cult and postmodernist parodies provide the disjuncture which can reverse this process. Replaying the interaction of representation and reality, the camera represents the claim of technology to provide access to an unmediated reality, by repressing its operations (Ulmer, 1). The parallel medium of caricature holds the threat of the return of the repressed: the metaphoricity of vision.

Thus the debate about the relation of fiction to reality converges in animation. Animated cartoons are simultaneously the site of the most banal and simplified of visual presentations, and of complex insights into vision. While Disneyfied cartoons reassure viewers with the collusion of their simplified versions of reality with the codes of realism (Geipel, 165), non-Disneyfied cartoons take away that reassurance. This is because the latter embody the technique of heterogeneous palimpsests; and secondly, they literalise the metaphors of perception. They confront, in other words, the central points about the relation of fiction and reality today. Because subversive animation emphasises its textuality and its materiality, animation can be the cult text which removes the occultation of vision, and the transparency of

meaning in realism. Through disruptive pedagogical strategies of stylization and parody, it also propagates this dislocation.

In its awareness of dislocation and multiple perspectives the conspiracy allegory promises to be a rich new area of study. Like the palimpsestic signs discussed earlier, conspiracy plots are weighted with meaning beyond the capacity of their simple forms. At the same time the form of the conspiracy is eminently adaptable. Their disarticulated segments resolve the specific textual problem of the plot, while a peculiar blankness allows them to resonate with larger trends in the culture. The exemplary television text which demonstrates these twin strategies is *The X-files*. Conspiracy allegories invest cliché with epistemological significance; anxiety is projected onto the most familiar tropes. Fears of what is already known are confirmed (Jameson, 1992, 4-19).

A different approach to cliché deploys them in a utopian imaginary in which the narrative obsessively resolves problems by denying complexity. Like the conspiracy, these texts literalise tropes, denying their figurality. While the conspiracy allegory disseminates doubt and paranoia, these texts are deliberately optimistic. Both narratives are steeped in media awareness; in one it is accentuated while in the other, mediation is repressed (Collins, 1993, 257-62).

With the rise of a new genre of deliberate sincerity, and the return in postmodernism of the form of the allegory, the devices of postmodernist parody assume ever greater importance. Stylised genre texts perform the form of narrative in their linearity and their formalisation; they embody the ethereality of the media and accentuate the audience's role. Like animation, they enact the literalisation of metaphor excessively, but refuse resolution and create an oscillation between figurality and realism

(Broadfoot and Butler, 277). Because these subversive texts interrogate simplistic or regressive textual strategies by the *cult* texts which remove the *occultation* of vision and the transparency of meaning in an age marked by a complex relation of representation and reality.

Jameson has described the age as one unable to think historically (1991, ix). The postmodernist television texts studied here confront their implication in "signs of pastness" (Herron, 14). Intricated in the textualisation of reality, they are examples of "living textuality" (Eco, 1988, 447). The three texts, each with specific visual and narrative strategies, demonstrate that postmodernist television is neither simply conservative nor simply progressive. They manifest the interplay of control and flux at the epistemological as well as the textual levels. Revisiting viewership, they activate categories of inside and outside, and knowingness and exclusivity, yet do not resolve them. Instead, implicated in the continuous flux of television itself, *Moonlighting*, *Twin Peaks* and *The Simpsons* embody dissidence and fluctuation. They address the question of form by occupying the interstices between abstraction and literality, and between control and freedom in viewing. Speaking of humour, Eco says that it operates in the interstitial spaces between narrative and discursive structures, and thereby creates metasemiotic commentary on cultural structures. Humour "does not pretend ... to lead us beyond our own limits. It gives us the feeling, or better, the picture of the structure of our own limits" (1984, 8). The postmodernist texts discussed here operate *humorously* within intersecting textual and cultural matrices. Fitting the vertiginous shifts of the age, they are, appropriately, "101 ways to remake *Vertigo*" (Zoglin quoted in Williams, 1988, 95).

Notes

1 South Africa's broadcast history has been shaped by the British Equity boycott and a limited conception of public broadcasting of the Nationalist government. Although the Equity boycott has been reversed, American programmes dominate the schedules and popularity ratings of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). South Africa has a commercial subscription television service, M-Net, and is introducing satellite television in 1995 (Bierbaum, 5). Both *Cable News Network* and *Sky* television are available on the SABC. Since the change in the governing Board of the SABC there is increased emphasis on local drama and content, which has started to appear on ratings. Broadcasting in South Africa is being redefined by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA). According to the latter's report, released on 29 August 1995, the SABC will become the National Public Broadcasting Service (Seale, 4). The SABC will add a new independent commercial television channel which will probably favour popular American texts (Streek, 1).

2 "Mass culture" is one of the terms usefully elaborated in Naremore and Brantlinger's detailed introduction to the history of cultural studies in *Modernity and Mass Culture* (1991). The term carries implications of classic Marxist concepts of base and superstructure; a "culture industry" which manufactures goods such as films, newspapers and advertisements which are aimed ultimately at producing "the pseudo-individuals who consume these commodities" (4). A major criticism of this model of culture, which leaves no room for contestation or opposition, is the uniformity or standardisation which it attributes to cultural products. It is a more radically pessimistic vision than that of Marx and Engels. The model understands "mass" as "devoid of internal cracks and contradictions" (5). In Marxist usage the term "mass" refers to the proletariat, and associated with work or production. However, Naremore and Brantlinger point out that:

the masses of modern consumer society were large numbers of people on holiday or after work, crowding the stadiums, the music halls, the tourist resorts. Increased leisure and rising expectations about living standards, the proliferation of consumer goods, large-scale advertising campaigns, widespread dependence on credit, and the appearance of the first departmental stores were the mass cultural reflexes or symptoms of the "second Industrial Revolution" (5).

A conception of culture as varied and contradictory motivates both the articles in the above collection, and this dissertation. The distinction is particularly relevant in the discussion of Fordism in the chapter on *The Simpsons*.

Videography

"Video" here refers to both film and television productions. Before the main list of citations, I catalogue here the projects of four main figures involved in the production of the three series, without attempting to circumvent the complex debate about auteurism. My intention is not to reinvigorate notions of an originary author, since questions of agency and enunciation in visual texts and particularly in the televisual medium, make simplistic notions of authorship untenable (Kozloff, 78; Bordwell, 20). The subtleties of auteurism on television include whom to credit with authorship. I therefore list figures who are directors, creators, writers and producers.

Glenn Gordon Caron has a varied history as a writer, producer and director. Among his projects are *Remington Steele*, ABC, 1982-87, and the creation of *Moonlighting* for television. In 1993 he directed the film, *An Affair to Remember*.

David Lynch is a painter, cartoonist (he has crafted the famous "The Angriest Dog in the World" from 1982 to the present), a composer (*Industrial Symphony No. 1* and *Floating into the Night*), actor and director. His videography includes:

The Alphabet, H. Barton Wasserman Production, 1967

The Grandmother, American Film Institute, 1970

Eraserhead, Columbia, 1977

The Elephant Man, Paramount, 1980

Dune, Universal, 1984

Blue Velvet, De Lauretis Entertainment Group, 1986

Zelly and Me, Columbia, 1988

Twin Peaks, Lynch/Frost Productions, 1990-91 (television)

Wild at Heart, Samuel Goldwyn, 1990

Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me, 1992

On the Air, Lynch/Frost Productions, 1992 (television)

Mark Frost wrote for *The Six-Million Dollar Man* and *Lucas Tanner* in the 1970s, and then became a producer and writer for *Hill Street Blues* in the 1980s. With David Lynch, he is the co-creator of *Twin Peaks* in 1990. They also collaborated on *On the Air*.

Matt Groening is the co-creator and Creative Consultant of *The Simpsons*. *The Simpsons* is actually written and drawn by Gracie Films. Groening has also written the comic strips *Life is Hell* and *School is Hell* since before the advent of his television career. He is involved with a group called Bongo Comics that has published comic versions of *The Simpsons*, called *Simpsons Illustrated*. Other comics include "Radioactive Man", and "Itchy and Scratchy Comics". "Bartman", "Krusty Comics" and "Lisa Comics" are in the planning.

James L. Brooks, the producer of *The Simpsons* and founder of Gracie Films, has an extensive record of projects in both television and film, too long to list here. A good reference may be found in Feuer et al.'s work on MTM (1984).

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Cheers, NBC, 1982-93
Dallas, Lorimar, 1978-87
Disneyland, Disney, ABC, 1954-61, then on NBC
Dynasty, Spelling, 1980-89
Father Knows Best, CBS, 1954-64
Hart to Hart, NBC, 1979-83
I Love Lucy, Desilu, 1951-55
Laugh In (Williams, 1990b, 76).
Married ... with Children, Fox, 1987-present
Miami Vice, CBS, 1985-89
Monty Python's Flying Circus, BBC, 1969-77
Northern Exposure, CBS, 1991-present
Picket Fences, NBC, 1992-present
Remington Steele, NBC, 1982-88
The Beverly Hillbillies, CBS, 1962-70
The Burns and Allen Show, CBS, 1950-58
The Cosby Show, NBC, 1984-91
The Mary Tyler Moore Show, CBS, 1970-77
The Rockford Files, 1974-80
The Tracey Ullman Show, Fox, 1987-90
The X-files, Fox, 1994-present
USA Today Television, ABC, 1988-90

Films Cited

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- Casablanca*, dir. Michael Curtiz, 1942
- Dances with Wolves*, dir. Kevin Costner, Tig/Majestic, 1990
- House of Games*, dir. David Mamet, Filmhaus/Orion, 1987
- It's a Wonderful Life*, dir. Frank Capra, Liberty, 1946
- Jurassic Park*, dir. Steven Spielberg, Universal/Amblin, 1993
- Mr Smith Goes to Washington*, dir. Frank Capra, Columbia, 1939
- Pulp Fiction*, dir. Quentin Tarantino, A Band Apart/Jersey, 1994
- Steamboat Willie*, dir. Walt Disney, Disney, 1928
- The Great Train Robbery*, dir. Edwin S. Porter, unknown, 1903
- Thelma and Louise*, dir. Ridley Scott, Pathé/Main, 1991
- The Player*, dir. Robert Altman, Avenue, 1992
- True Romance*, dir. Tony Scott, Morgan Creek/Warner, 1993
- Vertigo*, dir. Alfred Hitchcock, Paramount, 1958
- Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, dir. Robert Zemeckis, Touchstone/Amblin/Silver Screen Partners III, 1988

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