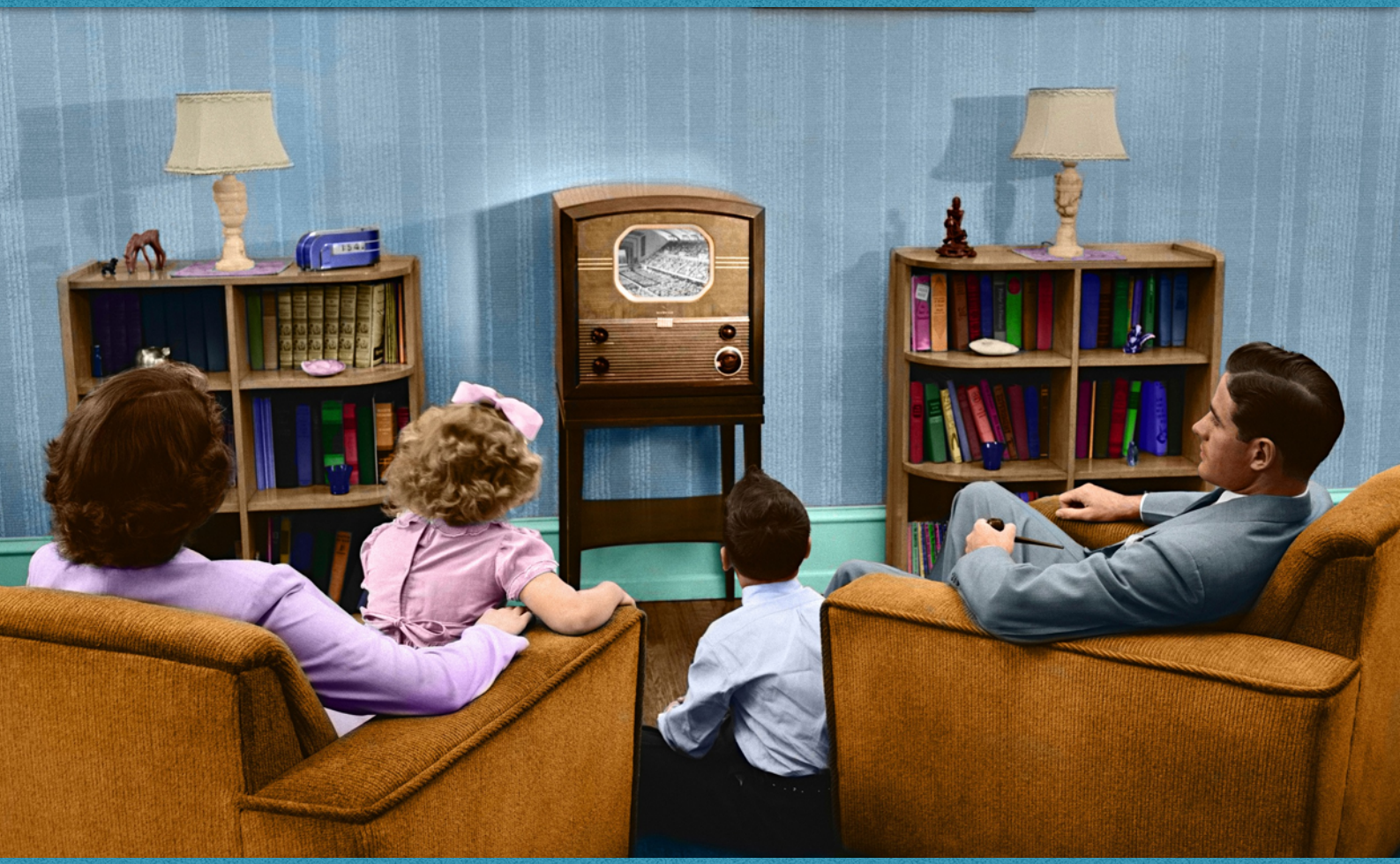
TELEVERSIONS



Narrative Structure in Television

John Alexander

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Contents

1 INTRODUCTION

'The Boredom Killing Business'

Satellite television, cable television, broadcast television, pay to view television; there are many kinds of television. Within broadcast television co-exist public service and independent commercial networks operating regionally and nationally. This study is not concerned with the types of television available on television receivers, nor with the political and ideological implications of these different types. The purpose here is to examine television as a narrative form. Just as theatre, cinema and literature comply to certain conventions of dramatic structure, creating their own versions of narratives, so, it could be argued, does television create its own versions adapted to the needs and pressures of broadcast television's form. Versions of the same story may be adapted for theatre, for film, for the novel or any other narrative form. This study is concerned with the way in which stories are told on television, and in the way television makes stories of the subject material it adopts.

Excluding specialist television areas of religion, education and childrens television, the BBC classifies programmes into Information; news, documentary and debate programmes; Entertainment; variety programmes (light entertainment), talk shows, game shows and comedy; Sport, and Drama. Drama encompasses serials, series, television plays and films made for television.

This study is confined to the categories of news, documentary, sport, quiz programmes, comedy and drama. For television producers the three broad areas of peak hour viewing consist of information, entertainment and fiction. For the viewer the dividing lines are diffuse; documentaries are docudramas, information is infotainment, and the narrative conventions of dramatised fiction are to be found at every level of broadcast television.

Specialist programmes account for about 30% of television transmission time. For example, in the period 1980 - 1989 a mean average of the time allocations of BBC Television UK consisted of:

Current Affairs/Documentary.....23%
Sport.....13%
Childrens.....7%
Light Entertainment.....6%
News.....4%
Drama.....4%
Education.....20%
Religion/music/other.....6%
Imported feature films and series.....17%

Fig. 1.1

From the above list of programme categories it would be difficult to discern any one category which is uniquely 'television'. These are classifications with which we are familiar from newspapers, radio, and public entertainment. Moving picture drama and serials have their precedents in the cinema. Like cinema, television is a visual medium; television and film merit comparison as they are both media where narrative is communicated by image and sound. Is there a 'televisual' form? Television has adapted pre-existing forms into versions of its own, but is there a narrative form specific to television? Is television merely in the 'boredom killing business', or, by virtue of defining television's narrative forms, is it possible to interpret some deeper meaning to the unending flow of ephemera that broadcasts into living rooms on an hitherto unprecedented global scale?

Telling Stories

In his study of world mythology, The Hero With a Thousand Faces (1949), Joseph Campbell describes what he terms a monomyth - a narrative form "presented with astonishing consistency in the sacred writings of all the continents." The monomyth describes three phases of the hero's quest: Separation - Initiation - Return. The 'call to

adventure' (separation) is followed by the trials of initiation, in turn followed by the return and reintegration into society.

According to Aristotle's narrative model (The Poetics, ca 330BC) "an action that is complete and whole... has a beginning, a middle and an end... a well constructed plot must conform to this pattern."

Variations on this basic description of a dramatic form persist to the present day, referred to as the 'dramatic triangle' of 'exposition, complication and resolution' by Gustav Freytag in the late nineteenth century, as the 'crisis - climax - resolution' by Lajos Egri and any number of alternatives as outlined in contemporary Hollywood screenwriting textbooks.

A fourth century grammarian, Evanthius, outlined a structural model for narrative comedy; a protasis (exposition), epitasis (complication) and catastrophe (which means literally to 'cast down'), the culminating point of the drama, the denouement, or resolution. In their book, Popular Film and Television Comedy, Neale and Krutnik maintain that a further complication - catastasis (confusion), to follow the epitasis, was described by a renaissance scholar, Scaliger.

A tragedy is defined by the peripeteia (reversal of fortune) within the catastrophe; specifically from better to worse. A reversal from bad to good is a precept for comedy. During this renaissance period a second component of the catastrophe was defined, described as anagnorisis - a transition from ignorance to knowledge - a reversal (conversio) through discovery (cognito). In The Technique of Screen and Television Writing, Eugene Vale formulates four stages of dramatic narrative: 1. The undisturbed stage. 2. The disturbance. 3. The struggle. 4. The adjustment.

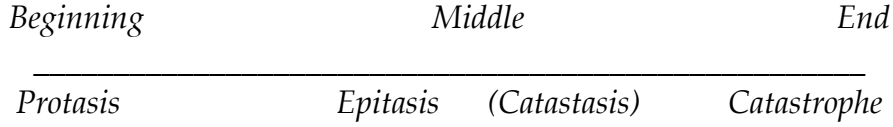

Fig 1.2 The Aristotlean narrative model

Finally, Tzvetan Todorov describes a minimal narrative as a move from equilibrium to disequilibrium and a return to equilibrium. "The second equilibrium is similar to the first, but the two are never identical." The two elements of a narrative are; 1. a state (equilibrium), and 2. an event (a passage from one state to another), which Todorov defines as the 'disruptive event.'

These models describe the arrangement of a story, or fiction (from the Latin *fictio,* to manufacture). They describe a protagonist, an antagonist, a state of equilibrium disturbed by a crisis, or problem, which the protagonist must resolve. The protagonist overcomes obstacles and hindrances devised by the antagonist. A catalyst (hero) helps the main character to resolve the conflict, and regain the initial state of harmony. During the course of the narrative the main character has transformed - from weak to strong, from loser to winner, from poor to rich, from single to married, from ignorance to knowledge.

Character identification is based on a single protagonist, and the plot follows the character's reversal from one state to another: at the outset the main character is dominated by the opposition character/ problem/ conflict - the opposition is in the superior position. The ending implies completion, a return to order, unity restored.

The paradigm applied to the narrative structure of the commercial, predominantly Hollywood feature film prescribes to the 'happy ending'; a narrative convention which aims to fulfil the expectations of the broadest potential audience.

Network (1976) is a critical, black humoured satire on the ratings system of US television. And although in the words of one critic "... its very existence in a commercial system is as remarkable as its box-office success," as a feature film it conforms to the dramatic model of virtually every other Hollywood feature film.

The film opens with four television screens showing news bulletins of three major US television networks, and the presentation of a fourth

(fictitious) network, UBS. An anonymous narrator's voice says that UBS ratings share are such that the board of directors decide to sack the newsreader (the 'anchorman' of US television news), Howard Beale (Peter Finch), in order to revitalise the evening news programme, the network's focal point. The director of the news division, Max Schumacher (William Holden), attempts to defend his colleague of 25 years, but to no avail.

Neither of these characters are the narrative's protagonist, nor is the young television executive, Diana Christensson (Faye Dunawaye), who sets out to revive the flagging network with radical programme re-scheduling. The protagonist is the UBS Network itself, and the plot development describes the transformation and reversal of the Network. At the beginning UBS has the lowest ratings and by the end it will be the network with the highest ratings. The 'state of equilibrium' at the beginning of the story describes four television networks, one of which has the lowest ratings; the 'state of equilibrium' at the conclusion (and like the opening, the image portrays four television news bulletins, each occupying a quarter of the screen) shows four television networks, one of which has the highest ratings - a "second state of equilibrium similar to the first, but not identical."

The 'disruptive event' occurs fifteen minutes into the story, half way through the presentation (the protasis; Act 1 in a narrative film's three act structure) when Howard Beale, having been dismissed by the Network, goes on air for the last time, a live transmission, and at the end of reading the news declares: "Ladies and gentlemen, I would like at this moment to announce that I will be retiring from this programme in two weeks time because of poor ratings. Since this show was the only thing I had going for me in my life, I have decided to kill myself. I'm going to blow my brains out right on this programme a week from today."

A week later Beale goes on air to apologise for threatening to kill himself, throws away the news bulletin script and improvises his dismay at the state of the world. "I ran out of bullshit," he says. The ratings increase and Beale stays, the turning point of Act 1.

Complications (epitasis) develop as rival factions within the Network vie for Beale's dismissal or exploitation. Rising executive Diana Christensson, adopts Beale for her entertainment division and he is given free reign to improvise his dismay on live television: "I don't know what to do about the depression and the inflation and the Russians and the crime in the streets. All I know is that first you've got to get mad. You've got to say - 'I'm a human being, goddammit, my life has some value!' So I want you to get up now. I want all of you to get up out of your chairs. I want you to get up right now and go to the window, open it and stick your head out and yell - 'I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take this any more!'"

At the film's midpoint Howard Beale becomes the 'mad prophet of the airwaves' and the UBS Network is saved from ruin. "We're in the boredom killing business," declares an embittered Max Schumacher as the evening news bulletin is remodelled into 'The Howard Beale Show' complete with psychics, fortune tellers and peak hour viewing entertainment. Confusion (catastasis) ensues with conflicting interests over Network profitability and Network respect-ability; confusion specifically for Max Schumacher who leaves his wife to embark on an affair with Diana only to conclude: "You're television incarnate, Diana, indifferent to suffering, insensitive to joy. All of life is reduced to the common rubble of banality. War, murder, death - all the same to you as bottles of beer, and the daily business of life is a corrupt comedy. You even shatter the sensations of time and space into split seconds and instant replays. You're madness Diana."

Howard, convinced he is 'the voice of God', goes on live television to expose the Network's takeover by a multi-national corporation, financed by Saudi Arabian oil money, which, according to Beale, will lead to the end of 'America' and free expression. This is the second act climax; Howard Beale has gone too far.

Act 3, the resolution: (catastrophe) Howard meets the head of the corporation, the real 'voice of God', Arthur Jensen. According to Jensen's 'corporate cosmology' there is no longer a world of nations, but a world

of dollars. "It's the individual that's finished," says Jensen, and "Is dehumanisation such a bad word?" Howard Beale repents on air, his show becomes predictable and his ratings decline. Max leaves Diana. Diana arranges with Network executives to have Howard Beale assassinated 'live' on television, as his programme is the only obstacle to top ratings figures. The reversal (anagnorisis); he is gunned down by terrorists during peak hour viewing and UBS ratings reach an all time high. As the four television network screens relate the assassination of Beale, the narrator's off-screen voice concludes: "This was the story of Howard Beale, the first known case of a man who was killed because he had lousy ratings."

A happy ending? Certainly. UBS is the protagonist of the story, not Howard Beale. Thanks to Howard Beale UBS has excellent ratings.

Film and Television

Television and cinema are both mediums by which stories are told through moving pictures. They are narrative forms which share the components of recorded image, recorded sound and story. In this regard television and cinema differ from literature, theatre, radio, art and photography, yet they incorporate elements of all these forms.

At the turn of the century the side-show entertainment of moving pictures found a permanent home in the biograph. By the 1920's the wireless had become the focal point of many homes, just as the cinema had become the focal point of many towns and cities. In the late 1920's two more inventions transformed these forms of social entertainment; the synchronised sound film and the televisor. In September 1928, the Scotsman, John Logi Baird, demonstrated his invention, the televisor, to curious onlookers at Selfridges Department Store in London's Oxford Street. At the same time, the British film director, Alfred Hitchcock, was re-shooting scenes for the film Blackmail, to make it Britain's first sound picture, released the following year. (The Jazz Singer - with its ca 6.5 minutes of synchronised sound had been released in the US in 1927. By

1928 the major Hollywood studios had adapted to sound recording). Sound cinema was an immediate success, heralding the end of the so-called 'silent' era, whereas the development of television floundered with the testing of different systems and the intervention of World War Two. The BBC's regular transmissions, which began in 1936, ceased in 1939 to be resumed in 1946 - co-incidently the year when cinema audiences reached a peak in Great Britain - a third of the population went to the cinema once a week.

By the 1950's television had succeeded the wireless in becoming the focal point of home entertainment. The sounds, speech and music of the radio were now illustrated with moving pictures. The early televisors even resembled wireless sets, with small six inch screens placed discreetly at the side of the apparatus. The 'talkies' on the other hand, represented the development of a visual narrative form, which by the 1930's was now accompanied with sound:

Silent Cinema.....Sound Cinema
(PICTURES) (PICTURES + Sound)

Radio.....Television
(SOUND) (SOUND + Pictures)

Fig 1.3 Sound and Image

In its early days, television borrowed the radio personalities, and radio's programme formats. News and current affairs, quiz programmes and comedy shows, drama and documentary, sport and light entertainment, even the soap-opera, began as radio formats, programmes intended for the spoken word which have since been adapted by television. Whereas cinema tells stories with pictures, accompanied by sound, television, it could be claimed, tells stories with words, accompanied by pictures.

Cinema technology has changed little since the advent of sound, in contrast to television technology where digital stereo sound and High Definition resolution picture rivals the aural and visual qualities of film. Furthermore, decreased cinema attendances have resulted in smaller

cinemas and the advent of the cinema complex with continually diminishing cinema screens.

The technical developments of cinema and television continue to influence their narrative forms, consequently the distinction between film for television and film for cinema is becoming increasingly vague. Nowadays all films are made with television or video in mind, with a percentage released for cinema distribution. In Europe, the major film producers are television companies, and the European cinema relies on television co-production for financing films. 'Cinema' films for the mainstream commercial circuit are increasingly left to the Hollywood business concerns, and an exodus of directors in the 1980's and 1990's from the rest of the world thence, is on a scale reminiscent of the 1930's when European filmmakers fled the political and economic uncertainties of their native countries, wooed by Hollywood's large budgets and technical proliferation.

The television viewer makes no demand for the uninterrupted continuity of a feature film at the cinema; viewing may be as fragmented as the programming itself - a few minutes of drama or light entertainment, a pause of enforced disruption during a commercial break, an attentive eye on news items of interest and the weather report; otherwise the television set may well be just a background distraction arousing interest at certain moments during its daily transmissions.

Stories for Television

Television embodies a multitude of forms, from news programmes to game shows, from music videos to melodrama. Is it plausible to postulate that a narrative structure typical to television can encompass these different forms of programmes?

Television is typified by its continuity; television programmes are manufactured around a structure which is continuous rather than self-contained. If film structure is about beginnings, middles and ends, then

television structure emphasises the middle; where film structure concentrates on a single character and a single crisis within its narrative form, then the television narrative features many characters and many crises, and unlike film, the emphasis is not on resolving an issue, but protracting issues.

Television narrative continually strives for completion and a return to natural order, but never actually achieves it. The viewer watches, anticipating an ending that never comes. An 'ending' of a series implies the start of a new one. Same time, same station, next week.

The way in which a film is watched - the cinematic gaze as opposed to the television glance - raises the expectations in which television is viewed. Television comes to the viewer, the viewer doesn't go to television. But the viewer may go to the cinema, and by virtue of the effort entailed, expectations are that much diminished. The effort of going to a location away from the home, having paid to be entertained, amused, or moved - together with the undistracted intensity of the darkened room, and an experience to be shared with a group of strangers - are all factors encouraging the viewer to extract as much pleasure from the experience as possible. Television may be an intrusion into family affairs, discussion or meal time. Consequently, the viewer is that much more demanding of the television programme, the drama competes with the distractions that surround it.

John Ellis argues that television consists, not of programmes, but segments, lasting between 2 - 3 minutes; an advertisement, a news item, a single scene in a soap opera. Movement from one segment to the next is a matter of succession rather than consequence; that television narrative is serial rather than linear.

One might also define five minute segments - a commercial break, a news reportage, a round of questions on a game show, a weather bulletin, a rock video; segments of around 20 - 25 minutes - a quiz show, a situation comedy, a news bulletin, an episode of a television serial, a sketch comedy programme, etc. In addition 15 - 20 minutes is the break-

in period for advertisements on commercial television for films and television drama. Commercial television drama is structured around 'plot-points' or peaks, to the commercial break every 20 minutes or so. In the 1960's and 1970's a style emerged of consciously breaking up 50 minute programmes into four acts and an epilogue as a means of validating the intrusion into the narrative. (The Man from UNCLE, The Streets of San Francisco, etc).

Furthermore, television programming is subject to what Raymond Williams defines as 'programme flow' where programming follows a sequence designed to lead the viewing audience from one programme to another with minimal 'interruption'. An evening's viewing might include a children's programme followed by the early evening news, followed by a current affairs programme, followed by a quiz show, followed by a domestic comedy, followed by the late evening news, followed by a drama series, with the evening rounded off by a current affairs panel discussion programme. Williams describes first, "the flow within a particular evening's programmes... second, the more evident flow of the actual succession of items within and between the published sequence of units... and third, the really detailed flow within this general movement: the actual succession of words and images."

The structural form most representative of television, and television's most favoured format, is the television serial; the 'soap opera', which is cheap to produce, has high ratings, and ensures a faithful and regular viewing public. The high ratings are disproportionate to television budgeting and time-slot allocations; about 20% of British television viewing consists of watching 'soap opera'.

At the height of their popularity in the late 1970s' and 1980's, the glamour serials, Dallas, Dynasty and Falcon Crest and others, dominated ratings figures throughout the world. The popularity of the television serial has made its presence felt elsewhere in television programming. A hybrid drama series has emerged, with overlapping story lines instead of weekly story closure (Hill Street Blues, LA Law, Casualty); intrigues unresolved, regular characters regularly facing new crises. The situation

comedy, like the serials, demand the viewer's fidelity in order to comprehend the weekly offering. Game shows which end on a 'cliff-hanger', sports structured into series and 'casted with top personalities', and the light entertainment programmes which end with proclamations for the following week's 'even greater' attractions.

As television cameras delve more into the privacy of those exhibiting their private lives, either willingly (e.g. game shows), or not (e.g. sport), the parallel to 'soap opera' drama becomes more apparent. We use television in order to peel away the fabric of social convention, peering further into realms of human intimacy. The prying voyeurism divides us into watchers and 'the watched'.

This is most evident in the evening news bulletins where the issues of the day become 'stories' and the news makers and world leaders, figures both public and private, become characters showcased in their roles by television dramatists, writing world events into one long prime-time television serial.

What affect does the 'soap-operisation' of the world have on the viewer? Does television trivialise important issues while making trivia into issues of importance? Do "television programmes subjugate whole populations and turn children into murderers... or is it too trivial a cultural event to be considered", as television critic, Clive James, inquires?

However, the 'serial' form is just one dramatic structure which defines television's manufactured fictions. In order to dramatise the everyday narratives we encounter in the evening news bulletin, or the subject matter of documentary programmes or sporting events, television imposes a 'classical' (Aristotlean) structure to specific programmes or programme segments.

Television narratives encompass both the 'serial' form, and 'classical' form, but the story doesn't end there. Both forms have a specifically commercial purpose, yet as television technology develops so does television's own specific mode of purveying narrative. The visual and

aural memorabilia of the past, rearranged into the advertisements and music videos of the present, is already influencing the traditional narratives of the domestic comedy, the drama, the documentary, the news bulletin and the narrative 'supertext' of television as a whole, which in turn must influence the way in which we regard ourselves.

2 NEWS

The Story

In the vernacular of journalism, the news item is referred to as 'the story'. Reporters, editors and sub-editors evaluate items on the basis of what makes the best 'stories'. Television news, born of radio news, with 'instant' transmission, immediacy, and the added advantage of moving pictures, emphasises 'stories' rather than 'information'. The criteria of television news is: 1. To be first; 2. To be best (i.e most dramatic, best 'told'); 3. To be accurate. Accuracy comes last. Newspapers are for information and the detailed coverage that radio and television, through its limitations of time and space, do not provide. Has television news ever been the dispassionate disperser of information, or is it integral to the nature of the television medium to make a story of any event?

In Deciding What's News, Herbert Gans, writes: "The most basic format consideration, which is shared by all news media, is that news becomes suitable only when it is transformed into a story... Every story must always include a lead, a narrative and a closer." Thus the news story, like classical narrative structure, has a beginning, a middle and an end, which, according to Gans, likens the news story to the morality play. News which cannot be made into a story, items which don't make a point, or have an ending, ('closure'); are ignored.

The story also emphasises an identifiable protagonist, an antagonist and conflict. The story format; "favours resolution over doubt, the concrete over the abstract, the narrative recounting of recent, finite events over the analytical account of continuing conditions." John Fiske employs Todorov's narrative model to conclude that: "Newsworthy events are those that disrupt or restore equilibrium. The state of equilibrium is not itself newsworthy..."

Further, the selection of stories which make up the news bulletin, are structured into a format as to accentuate particular stories in a scale of priority based on which story represents the greatest 'disruption of the

equilibrium'. The scale can be compared to a pyramid, with the 'strongest' story occupying most space, scaling downwards with less 'disruptive' stories.

In his study, News and Power, Rodney Tiffen outlines the characteristics of news, which he sees as influencing its content: 1. News is presented against rigid deadlines; 2. News requires fresh material in each news cycle; 3. Stories 'compete' with each other for coverage and prominence; 4. News is presented in brief formats, which 'lead' with the hardest news; 5. Stories with drama and colour gain more prominence.

Integral to television news, must be added that the story is 'on-going'. Television does not lead with compelling narratives, end them, and disperse with them. The best stories are the stories that ensure the viewer's return the following evening. Television news is not just drama, but serialised drama.

In order to function dramatically over a prolonged period the serial story requires continual revitalising. Irak's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 initiated a story which dominated news bulletins continuously from that date until the 15th January, 1991 'deadline', the ensuing war, the ensuing peace, and Kurd refugee crisis, aided by a number of dramatic devices. These included the characterisation of 'big' against 'small' (the 'David and Goliath' analogy is referred to later); Irak against Kuwait; then 'good' against 'bad' (the United Nations against Irak); and the characterisation of personalities; US President George Bush, representing the 'civilised' world (according to George Bush), against 'evil tyrant' Saddam Hussein (also according to George Bush). Irak television news has its own versions of 'good' and 'bad'. Other narrative devices include: the 'deadline'; a global countdown to January 15th, 1991, the United Nations deadline for Irak's withdrawal from Kuwait; dialogue - Hussein's non-conciliatory vocabulary against the non-conciliatory vocabulary of self-appointed spokesperson for the 'civilised' (sic) world, George Bush ("Americans will drown in their own blood," "Irak will be levelled to the ground," etc), combined with the fluctuation of crisis - resolution; war

avoidable - war unavoidable claims, leading up to the pre-established point of denouement.

The popularity of satellite television news service CNN's The Crisis in the Gulf series was quickly superseded by CNN's The War in the Gulf series which began on January 17th, 1991 and continued until the cessation of hostilities in February. The vignette which introduced The War in the Gulf featured the black silhouettes of jet fighters, soldiers, or tanks against a red orange background, to the accompanied soundtrack of a musical theme enhancing a tone of threat and danger. The War in the Gulf logo consisted of red and yellow lettering pulsating to the rhythm of the vignette's signature tune. As an opening to a programme it is comparable to action drama series such as A-Team, Miami Vice, MacGyver, and others. The CNN newsteam are introduced as "the most concentrated investigative unit ever assembled." And: "They tell it like it is."

The dramatic conflict, having been established in the preceding 'Crisis' series could now be developed along the pre-established dramatic structure of the Hollywood feature film, with its inherent risk of over-simplifying a complex issue. The 'War' series described a narrative with the US forces and their allies (US rather than UN) as the protagonists against Irak, the antagonist, with the role of 'hero' fulfilled by the CNN news service who "tell it like it is."

The role of Kuwait in this conflict could best be described by a term coined by film director, Alfred Hitchcock, which he used to define whatever it was that both sides were after, and served to set the narrative in motion, namely, the MacGuffin. According to Hitchcock it doesn't matter what the MacGuffin is - it's a dramatic device that brings two sides in conflict with each other.

The 'War' series, versions of which were televised by news services around the globe, was succeeded by versions of The Gulf Peace. Sky News, a London based satellite television news service, presented The

Gulf Peace with a vignette consisting of white lettering against a blue background as if purposely countering CNN's The War in the Gulf logo.

A British ITV programme on television news began with the statement: "Television news has the power to transmit the experience itself, rather than information about the experience." In the Gulf conflict television journalists with portable video camcorders and portable satellite transmitters could relay events instantly to television receivers anywhere in the world, yet television news, by the virtue of its form, remains the purveyor of stories, not information, and in transmitting "the experience itself", transforms events into narratives.

Television News As Narrative

The most elementary form of narrative is the contest; a competition between two opponents or two opposing sides, in order to determine one's superiority over the other. Television news formulates issues into contests, dividing the world into good and bad, right and wrong, protagonists and antagonists. As a narrative form, television news presupposes a resolution. The continual programming of protagonist - antagonist leads some critics to foresee the most climactic conclusion of all; "logic compellingly dictates how this mammoth narrative must climax. With such a vast stockpile of weapons poised to do the job, gravity itself is likely to depress the button if no-one beats it to the punch."

However, the de-escalation of the cold war, the unification of East and West, and the new crises of the 1980's and 1990's; the ecological crisis, the Aids crisis, the Middle East crisis, amongst others, emphasises another aspect of television news. Rather than contest demanding its victor, or crisis necessitating resolution, television presents us with nightly installments of its most favoured programme format, the television drama serial.

Television has its presenter, an 'anchorman', television drama has its 'anchor people'. A law firm senior in LA Law, the duty sergeant in Hill Street Blues, a hospital casualty ward supervisor in Casualty, whose narrative function is to provide us with an encapsulation of the days events (and the events leading up to them), by means of introduction to the main actors and the main issues contained within the episode.

Episodes of Hill Street Blues begins with the time - a white digital clock on a black background; the evening news bulletin begins with the clock ticking down the seconds to the news vignette. In the opening of a typical episode of LA Law, the law firm members sit around a conference table and discuss cases coming up in court. The issues are outlined by the firm's patriarchal senior partner who provides commentary where necessary, to keep the viewer up to date with the story line. The junior members, who deal with the cases in court, like television journalists reporting on events in the field, summarise the cases, and provide a showcase for the debate of topics of burning interest.

An episode from the 1988 season included:

A medical ethics case: family vs hospital. The parents of a brain damaged teenage girl, insist that the hospital turn off a life support system and allow their daughter to die. Medical experts testify there is virtually no hope of the girl recovering. The parents are unable to face the anguish of seeing their seemingly lifeless daughter, nor can they afford the medical expenses. The court decides in favour of the hospital - sanctity of life wins over the expediency of euthanasia.

A young man is charged with murder after killing his lover who is dying of Aids. Murder, manslaughter, or act of compassion? Issues concerning rights for blacks, for women, for mentally handicapped, for child adoption, are debated in court and out, according to which characters are emphasised in a given episode.

Hill Street Blues opens each week with the duty sergeant addressing his colleagues before they venture out into the streets, just as the news

presenter introduces the Nine O'Clock News with; "And here are the main points for this evening..."

The main points in a given Hill Street Blues episode may include; serial murderer still at large, drug ring operation crackdown - ties to government officials - corruption? Bribery? A street gang terrorises an ethnic minority community. And finally a dog who rescued an old man in a hotel fire, is awarded a police medal. In the terminology of the television news bulletin, the human interest story. Like television news, the programme is occasionally rounded off with a light touch; a reassurance to the viewer that in spite of the day's excesses of violence and politics, television has events under control.

The BBC series, Casualty, a hospital drama series centred around a casualty ward, portrays events and incidents within a 24 hour period within each 50 minute episode. An episode entitled 'Union'presented the following items:

1. Female Circumcision. A ten year old African girl is admitted by her parents, ill with fever. It transpires she is suffering the affects of a back street circumcision, insisted on by the girl's mother and grandmother, while the well-to-do businessman father was kept in the dark. After emergency treatment the girl's condition stabilises. "This is barbarism", exclaims the husband. "How could you do this to our daughter?" "Do you want her to have a husband? If she is to have any future in Africa she must have the operation!" Mother and grandmother are adamant. Female circumcision, illegal in the UK, but still accepted practice in parts of Africa, has been the subject of television news items and documentaries. This segment provides an opportunity to air a number of views on the subject, with the exception of the ten year old girl. During the heated debate between mother, father, grandmother, and medical staff, the girl suffers a relapse and dies.

2. Teenage Prostitution. An under-age prostitute is admitted with a broken foot and gashed forehead, after having been thrown out of a car by an irate client. A young orderly attempts the role of social welfare

officer, but she is abusive and provocative, to him and to other patients. Welfare authorities are called in, but she has already limped her way to freedom, and a potential customer in a nearby car.

3. Alternative Medicine. A middle-aged man with palpitations and delusions of cardiac arrest is admitted; the head nurse who has treated him before, and convinced the problem is psychosomatic, practices a form of relaxation therapy with the patient, which has a positive affect. The hospital administrator, however, is displeased, and proclaims the virtues of traditional medicine. "Traditional medicine has failed with this patient," she explains. "The relaxation therapy worked."

4. Nursing stress. A young nurse who witness the death of the African girl, breaks down, and offers her resignation to the head nurse. "I can't go on," she says. "It's so unfair." After some words of consolation, she returns to her patients. (Coincidentally, British nurses were threatening to strike during the period this episode was transmitted).

5. Sexual discrimination. The female administrator, a strongly portrayed character who takes responsibilities seriously, and takes the initiative when required, becomes involved in a dispute with the hospital board chairman. "Keep in line, or you'll be replaced," he threatens, in a display of misogynist pique.

6. Aids. An upper-middle class couple (i.e. so-called low risk group), face a crisis. The woman loses her eyesight in the latter stages of the anti immunity deficiency syndrome. The husband calls an ambulance. "She is suffering dementia, fever and now loss of sight", explains the man. "Why didn't you tell us she had Aids?" asks the on-duty nurse at Casualty reception. "I was afraid you wouldn't come," he says.

7. Aids again. As the woman is admitted, a young male orderly excuses himself, and withdraws. "I can't handle this," he says to the head nurse. "I don't want to get involved." Prejudice won't be tolerated. She demands an explanation. "My male partner is HIV positive," he says.

The dramatic issues, like news events, are not resolved, but continue on into further episodes. When one story line is worked through (or 'milked dry' as they say both in the drama department and the news department), another one quickly takes it's place. LA Law, Hill Street Blues, Casualty, and other 'investigative' drama programmes, take up the issues of the day, the news bulletin items that form the fabric of viewer's conversations the following morning, items of public interest and public concern, and transform them into episodes of acted out dramatic scenarios.

The news bulletin re-enforces precepts of right and wrong, good and bad, labelling the driving forces of our social structure and the world beyond it, into readily identifiable divisions placing ourselves firmly within the confines of the 'right' side. Why do we persist with this constant over-simplification of reality?

"Dividing everything up into neat little sections of 'good' and 'bad' helps us know ourselves better in several ways," maintains psychoanalyst, Robin Skinner. "Firstly, it helps us feel that we are part of the 'good' group - which is gratifying. Secondly, we can let go of our normal demands of acting decently - avoid those difficult grey areas of moral decisions, which we normally have to struggle with. And thirdly, we can ease the pressure, that is, get rid of our own 'bad' feeling by putting them on the 'bad guys'... that's why most people like some form of competition."

A summit meeting between the Soviet leader, Gorbachev, and US president Bush, in Washington, June 1990, raised issues which included an arms restrictions agreement, Soviet trade concessions, the possibility of a united Germany's NATO membership, or its neutrality. In addition, Bush was urging the Soviet Union to concede to the Baltic states call for independence.

"Matters concerning the Baltic states will be dealt with the Soviet Union in our own time", said Gorbachev, at the televised conference session. "I

know that in America you'd like to move in and give them their own constitution within 24 hours. (Smile). But this is not our way."

A close-up of Bush shows him awaiting the translation to come through his ear-phones. He smiles with embarrassment, and makes no attempt to reply. The news presenter describes this incident, and the summit talks in general, as a 'victory' for Gorbachev. Gorbachev was described as being in a weak negotiating position prior to the summit meeting, against the strong negotiating position of President Bush and the US government. The encounter was described as a battle between David and Goliath.

In terms of news and information, the value of the item is ambivalent. It's not news, it's not information.

James Carey writes that "news is not information but drama. It does not describe the world but portrays an arena of dramatic forces and action; it exists solely in historical time; and invites our participation on the basis of our assuming, often vicariously, social roles within it."

The characters in the news, like the characters in television serials, are endowed with sufficient ambiguity for the protagonist - antagonist roles to be adopted and discarded as the situation demands. A viewer may condemn the villainy of a character like J R Ewing one week, and support his actions the next. Similarly, the roles of principle characters in the nightly news bulletins, oscillate from support to condemnation from week to week, day to day, even within a single 'episode' of news.

Sharon Lynn Sperry writes: "Like soap operas, news stories often involve a set of major characters whose activities continue for months and even years. You may miss several passages of the story and still remain familiar with the major characters and their problems."

If we compare a television serial with news transmissions over a certain period, we see that both forms draw on a reservoir of story sources. Over the past decade the sub-plots to the news have included: Beirut, Northern Ireland, East - West relations, *glasnost* and *perestroyka* in the

Soviet Union, the Irak - Iran war, civil war in Sri Lanka, Aids, the Chernobyl disaster, who shot Swedish prime minister, Olof Palme, and now at the beginning of 1991, the Kuwait - Irak crisis.

Just as many world events were shaped by the oil crisis of the mid 1970's, so too was one of the most influential television serials. Dallas sub-plots over the same period include: oil fraud deals, conflicts in the Persian Gulf and Latin America financed and instigated by US oil companies, JR's infidelity, Sue-Ellen's alcoholism, child custody contests, Barnes - Ewing family rivalry, who shot JR, who killed Bobby, and finally in 1990, end of story.

In the news, principle characters have included: Reagan, Bush, Gorbachev, Khadaffi, Hussein, Palme, Margaret Thatcher, Indira Gandhi and Nancy Reagan. In Dallas we have: JR, Bobby, Cliff Barnes, Jock, Ray, Sue-Ellen, Pam and Miss Ellie. Sub-plots and characters in television serials are rotated on the basis of dramatic value, just as they are in television news.

In the television news bulletin the dramatic value of world events are assessed on the basis of viewer saturation tolerance and television camera availability. Sri Lanka one week, Nicuaragua another, Ethiopia the next and perhaps independence demonstrations in Soviet republics depending on the availability of film footage and camera equipped newsteams, rather than the significance of the event. Famines, civil war, guerilla war and political upheavals may be long and protracted affairs; for the television news bulletin they are 'soap opera' plot points to be introduced and referred back to and intensified in accordance with the demands of the on-going 'plot'.

In The Known World of Broadcast News, Roger Wallis and Stanley Baran map out the distorted world view portrayed by television news, places of disproportionate interest and neglect. It is a fictitious world created by camera availability and the dramatic value of newsworthy events.

The saturation point of a dramatic event was made evident in a television documentary by Frenchman, Patrice Barrat, Famine Fatigue ou le Pouvoir de l'Image (1990) which compared television news coverage of the Ethiopian famine of 1984 to the coverage four years later of the famine in which 250,000 thousand people died of hunger. The 1984 coverage, which began with a British television reportage, later broadcast throughout the world, captured public opinion and resulted in Live Aid, charity galas and fund raising campaigns on a global scale. The 1988 famine was virtually ignored by television on the grounds that it was no longer news. The pictures of famine, having been televised four years previously, no longer had the required dramatic impact, and television producers decided on the public's behalf that this particular story had reached 'saturation point'.

Journalism assumes to discern fact - information - from fiction - stories. What is the function of the television news bulletin? Fiction provides us with stories that make meaning of the chaos around us. Television news imposes a moral structure and an order that may elude us in everyday reality.

Like the news story, the news interview is a contest between protagonist and antagonist, and an artificial situation, created primarily for the imparting of information, becomes a situation of conflict, a dramatised confrontation, with the emphasis, not on what is said, but on who 'wins'. It may be the televised debate between two US presidential candidates, or a television journalist interviewing a political party leader, trade unionist or military 'expert', the drama of the confrontation is maximised to its fullest potential.

The priority of news is not the imparting of information, nor the relating of events and actualities, but the telling of a good story. Political debate is concerned less with issues than who wins and who loses; who looks best, who sounds best, who dresses best - like Blind Date candidates competing with a manufactured personality to seduce voters, viewers and advertising sponsors. As J B Priestly noted, we who live in a world of advertising are subject to constant disappointment.

"We have come to expect political interviews to be nothing more than weak PR jobs with politicians refusing to answer questions and pundits too scared to ask them. 'I'll answer you by all means, but let me just correct you on one point...' 'By all means you can put your question, but let me just say...'" The television critic, Sean Langan, summarises a television interview between Panorama presenter David Dimbleby and the leader of the British Labour Party, Neil Kinnock, and asks: "Isn't it about time our television interviewers relearned the art of the interview? And isn't it about time politicians were once again prepared to really be interviewed? Or will they, like some politicians, just refuse to be interviewed unless they have it their own way."

What Do The Newsreaders Say When The Lights Go Down?

The actions and manners of the news presenter are ritualised so as to convey authority, control and credibility. Dress, desk and A4 sheets of paper held between two hands (while the news items are read from monitor screens next to the camera), to minor details like the replacing of a pen top, readjusting the paper sheets and exchanging a few words with a colleague as the lights fade, are the coded components of reassurance. It is the reassurance of a dominant masculine power elite, about which most news item are concerned: politics, finance, economy and legal issues.

For the viewer the newsreader represents an authority figure, yet the role is a servile one - comparable to a steward or stewardess on a 'businessman's flight' - representing the established power structure with a voice, appearance and manner chosen to represent that power structure. (If one was to continue the 'flight' analogy, the crew could be said to represent the news production team, with the pilot as the editor - however, just as the pilot and crew are subservient to the airline company, so is the editor, journalists and production team answerable to the television network, in turn answerable to the business and political interests which finance the enterprise).

On one level the newsreader represents the television network, but it is worth considering the process of television news production in which the newsreader also represents the final stage from the gathering of news to its presentation to the viewing public. If news bulletins consist of 'stories', who is the 'story-teller'?

In Investigating the Media, Paul Trowler outlines three models which describe the news gathering process. The 'manipulative model' maintains that media content is controlled by those who own and run the various media systems, and thereby a media bias is consciously imposed upon those who gather and present the news. The 'hegemonic model' maintains that journalists, editors and those directly responsible for the gathering and presentation of news determine what events are covered and how they are presented, whereby an unconscious bias is introduced into the media depending on the views and attitudes of the people working within it. The 'pluralist model' accepts media bias because that bias is determined by audience choice; the 'pluralist model' is based on the principle of supply and demand.

The news presenter's role is traditionally an impartial one, but increasingly the personality of the newsreader is a factor in the way the television viewer perceives the issues of the day. Following the model of US television's 'anchorman', the news presenter conducts 'live' studio interviews with key public figures to clarify or embellish issues introduced by the television journalist 'on location'.

The discourse may transfer from the newsreader to a reporter or overseas news item, but always returns to the neutral zone of the television studio and the newsreader. Patricia Holland writes: "We are allowed only a brief glance into the troubled and chaotic world before we are returned to the security of the studio and handed over to the reassuring presence of the newsreaders."

She continues: "A double thread runs through the news and its imagery, a search for excitement and a concern with the seriousness of status and power. Both themes depend on values that are recognised as masculine

and both deal with areas from which women are excluded... When we watch the serious face of the newsreader we are reminded that women's faces on television normally display emotion (in soaps, feature films, dramas), that women's bodies are part of the spectacle of television (in the ads, in game shows, as entertainers), that women are characteristically placed in a domestic setting (in sitcoms, family dramas) and that their sexuality is never forgotten. Standing in sharp opposition to the rest of this output the news is presented in a space where emotion is inappropriate, where domestic issues are defined as private and as subordinate to public conflict and the world of hard politics, and where women's sexuality is trivialising and a distraction."

She concludes: "Women are about sexuality, the news is not." Patricia Holland's essay examines the concern of the British popular press over the appearance of female newsreaders, which culminated with BBC newsreader, Angela Rippon, dancing a can-can on a light entertainment programme as a result of her legs having become a 'public issue'.

The newsreader, as the term 'anchorman' suggests, represents authority, control and a fixed point amid chaos - an icon of stability, and a voice of reason unperturbed by the crises beyond the television studio. Just as the 'anchormen' of drama series, or situation comedy, are fed by the supporting cast, the newsreader is sustained by the journalists in the field.

Peter Conrad writes: "The television newsman embodies the hubris of his medium at its most alarming. His professional arrogance entitles him to assume control of the event he's supposed to be watching."

What the newsreaders say when the lights go down, during their silent and recorded exchange of pleasantries, is that, in spite of the disruptions represented by the events depicted in the items that make up the evening news, balance has been restored, equilibrium regained. With the authority of the television medium and the enormity of its production costs, the formality of its presentation, and the availability of the newsreader's voice in every home, the words and images are not only

credible but provide the cornerstone of our understanding of affairs both international and domestic. Whatever the actual words may be, the sub-text of the final exchange as the studio lights dim and the musical coda enforces the news bulletin's closure, together with the affirmative nods, now in silhouette, and the shuffling of unread sheets of A4, is suggesting, within the summation of the day's events; 'Trust me. I'm credible.'

Watching News

Watching the news, like watching television serials, demands of its audience a certain fidelity. Stories are presented on the assumption that the viewer is familiar with narrative background transmitted in previous episodes. Similarly it's aim is to ensure the viewer will be sufficiently engaged by events/stories to want to return the following evening for the next instalment. The recent tendency is, at the end of the evening news bulletin, to announce highlights of major stories to be broadcast on the following evening. According to Peter Conrad, "News on television is no longer a retrospective absorption of what happened during the day but a breathless report of what's happening at the moment. Television's ambition is to bring us the news before it happens."

He writes: "Reality is remade as televisual fiction. For, rather than reporting the news, television's presumption is to invent it. The news on television isn't hearsay, relayed to us by an impartial messenger. It happens at the media's instigation, for the cameras are no longer obsequious witnesses but agents of provocation."

Further, through television, reality is rapidly becoming an inferior version of the representational image. Richard Kearney writes: "History becomes a pale replica of its own reproduction; the western cowboy an inferior imitation of John Wayne or Robert Redford; the Vietnam battlefield or Belfast riot a mere representation of sensational television reports... The technological innovations in image reproduction have made the imaginary more persuasive than the real world."

The form as well as the content has a direct influence on the viewer; as television news represents the interests of a specific minority group, the form and the structure of the news bulletin, the manner in which the news is presented also serves the interests of that group. John Fiske writes: "Television news will often include radical voices, spokespeople from trade unions, from peace demonstrators, or from environmentalists, but these will be controlled doses whose extent and positioning in the news story will be chosen by the agents of the dominant ideology... the dominant ideology strengthens it resistance to anything radical by injecting itself with controlled doses of the 'disease'... all popular culture inevitably serves the interests of the dominant ideology... any radicalism of the content is necessarily defused by the conventionality of the form..."

Consequently, ecological issues prominence on television news has benefitted Europe's 'Green Parties', but their party structure, in not conforming to the structure of the political establishment, subject them to derision by exposure through the established news format. Television coverage of Green Party conventions emphasise absence of leadership in favour of Party 'spokespersons', party member's dress, behaviour and activities; factors without direct bearing on 'green' issues, but 'story' material within the context of the television news bulletin, by virtue of Green Party contrast to established political parties.

Television critic, Peter Lennon, argues that: "It is likely that the viewer progressively regulates his naivety about what he is seeing. He properly constructs a kind of proscenium arch around television and realises that what he is looking at is a kind of fictionalised fact, packaged and processed even when live."

Debatable News - Debatable Entertainment

The presenter of the debate programme can be likened to the principle actor in a television series, or a situation comedy, or a game show compare; like the situation comedy, the programmes are named after the principle 'actor'; the BBC's Kilroy, Australia's Hutch, Sweden's Aschberg,

like Cosby, Hancock, Mary Tyler Moore in situation comedy. If 'the people' feel undermined by the formality of a news service that allows only 'official' voices and 'expert' opinions, the debate programme claims to provide a voice for the man in the street.

The television news bulletin serves a white, male, middle-class which dominates the media, law, commerce, industry and politics. Its presentation and structure are grounded in formality and authority. Television news is 'official'. The debate programme is 'unofficial', its presentation based on informality. Whereas in the news bulletin 'expert opinion' is voiced unchallenged, on the debate programme it is not only challenged but often discredited - popular viewing pleasure is taken from seeing an 'official' voice defeated by a 'representative of the people', as the debate programme presenters claim to be.

The presenter is a personality with a name, with strongly voiced opinions, dressed casually, mobile, rather than stationary behind a desk, visible from head to foot, and not just head to shoulders; addresses both the camera, and a studio public and converses spontaneously with the studio public; and to emphasise the role as anti-authority, representative of the people and their interests, may well smoke, drink, laugh, shout, become emotional - in order to dispel 'officialness'.

The programme takes up a single theme (or a limited number - two or three at most) compared to the half hour news bulletin which covers between 12 - 20 separate items. The debate programme begins with a summary of the issue by the presenter, and at the end of the programme the discussion continues between guests and studio public. The sound is drawn down and the credits roll; a codified statement of incompletion and continuity: 'this issue is not yet resolved.'

The debate programme is an antithesis of the news bulletin presentation and structure, as befits the popular culture presentation of current issues as opposed to the dominant ideology. The 'incompletion' of the debate programme deviates from the formal closure of the 'official' view of the

news bulletin - it provides the 'unofficial' knowledge the news bulletin avoids.

The 'infotainment' hybrid of information and entertainment is an increasing source of 'popular' news. 'News' items are selected on the basis of 'entertainment value' and need not fear the critical derision of news bulletin analysts as entertainment value precede criteria of what is newsworthy. However, the uneasy combination extends a double message to the viewer, who is invited to 'read' a programme segment of an interview with a victim of terrorism (as an example), together with the latest song by a popular group, or a film clip from a current cinema release. The merging of fact and fiction within the same programme framework is television's on-going attempt to appeal to as broad a viewing spectrum as plausible within a single programme format.

The on-going seeking of entertainment through news items contributes to an increasing 'popularising' of news. Television news emphasise/ dramatise 'us' and 'them' conflicts; filmed inserts utilise camera angles to 'dramatise' interviews, and the devices and conventions of fiction film narrative help manufacture readily identifiable conflicts and instantly digestible stories for the television viewer.

3 DOCUMENTARY

Documentary as Dramatic Form

In contrast to the serial form of the television news bulletin, the narrative structure of the television documentary resembles more the classical structure of the feature film, with a beginning, middle and end. Documentary is rarely documentation. Subject matter is structured into a dramatic form and fictionalised.

Television documentaries are about people, places or events. 'Things' are personified in order to establish a character identification for the story. An issue is presented as a 'problem', a conflict between protagonist and antagonist emphasised, developed and finally resolved.

In the award winning television documentary of 1985, the problem was, how does Yorkie, an unknown contender on the competitive and over-crowded confectionary market, establish itself. The 'documentation' is a dramatic account of the contest between the seemingly chanceless Yorkie chocolate bar, and the resoundingly successful chocolate bars, long time established on the market. Like the Bush - Gorbachev drama in television news, the contest is presented as a battle between David and Goliath; small against big, the unknown, diminutive but brave contender pitted against a mighty and overwhelming opponent, facing insurmountable odds.

Main Character	*Opposition*	*Hero*
(Yorkie)	*(Market)*	*(Ad agency)*
-	+	+
.	.	.
.	.	.
.	.	.
.	.	.
+	-	+

Fig 3.1 The Yorkie Chocolate Bar Story

Yorkie, untried, unknown, unproven - new, innovative and youthful, challenges the established and ruthlessly competitive opposition. Can the new chunky chocolate bar take on the confectionary market and win?

The presentation establishes the protagonist, Yorkie, a new-shaped chocolate bar; the antagonist - the established confectionary market, and the chocolate bar products that have withstood the test of time. We see new confectionary products which have been launched at great expense and failed. We see the sales figures of the successful products and how close to impossible it is for a new product to succeed on the market. We are introduced to the 'hero' of the story, the advertising agency assigned to launch Yorkie onto the British chocolate purchasing public.

The story describes the selection of a name, the advertising campaign, the presentation of an image - the choice of lorry driver as an advertising figure by which to sell the product, the test launch of the product in England's north-east, and finally, the 'show-down'; Yorkie launched nationwide. Like the best westerns or thrillers, at this point in the story, the beginning of act three, the outcome is still open. Yorkie stands on the brink of triumph, or resounding defeat. It is the moment of truth, the point of no return, the denouement. Yorkie triumphs. It becomes the most popular selling chocolate product in the country, and goes on to be marketed throughout the world.

The BBC television documentary series, Arena, which began in October 1975, provides a showcase for the documentary film maker on wide range of material; the 1987 - 88 season included programmes on the Dandy and Beano comics, Broadway, the New York thoroughfare, a law suit between film director Ken Russell and producer/millionaire Bob Guccione, and an iconagraphical study of the female breast.

Your Honour, I Object documents the legal battle between Ken Russell and Bob Guccione, who claims that Russell failed to complete a contract when he walked off the set in mid-production. The 'documentation' however, is a thin guise for what the programme is really about; a court room drama. Guccione, owner of sex magazines throughout the world,

producer of the film, Caligula, and multi-millionaire, sues Russell over breach of contract.

"Ken Russell is really the big loser," says Guccione. "This case will cost Ken Russell an awful lot of business, a lot of heartbreak..."

"I'm the innocent party," says Russell. "I think film directors are the most hard done by people in the world."

The BBC advertised the programme as: "Arena presents its first court room drama. Ken Russell versus Bob Guccione, editor of Penthouse and one of the richest men in the world. The issue: breach of contract over a film that Guccione had lined Ken Russell to direct. After a bitter falling out Guccione sued Russell for 1.5 million dollars..."

The dramatic conflict consists of Ken Russell as the main character, who, in accordance with the rules of dramaturgy, begins in the worst possible situation; penniless, artistically compromised (he claims), without a legal leg to stand on (claims Guccione) and facing insurmountable odds, pitted against the all-powerful Guccione, his countless millions and the most ruthless legal assistance that can be bought. Ken Russell, like the Yorkie chocolate bar, needs help.

"Enter Russell's lawyer, Richard Golub, who wants to be a rock star. Instead of a fee he got Russell to direct a video for his latest song, 'Dancing for Justice.'"

"If you want justice," says Ken Russell, "You gotta dance for it man."

Many of the Arena programmes are straight biographies - the dramatic conflict may be the non-conforming individual, the artist, against the establishment, as with the programmes about folk singer, Woody Guthrie, Diego Rivera, the Mexican revolutionary artist, and the contemporary political cartoonist, Gerald Scarfe, who directed his own programme, beginning with four blank walls on which to sketch out his

life story, and ending with buckets of paint hurled vigorously, to obliterate (or embellish) the illustrations he had created.

Tip of the Iceberg was announced as a programme that "examines the iconography of the breast in our breast obsessed society... In art, the tabloids, fashion and health, the programme looks at the ways in which the breast is idealised (in classical art, for example), and trivialised (as in Sun newspaper Page Three pinups)."

Art historian, Marcia Pointon, states; "The thing that's very striking about the Page Three pinup is that she is safe. The breast is erotic but also maternal. You have a completely safe image in which a woman's sexuality doesn't impinge." The dramatic structure of the programme traces the idealised views of the breast in Hellenic and Renaissance art, to its context of fetishist scrutiny and exploitation for commerce in the 20th century.

The dramatic structure of the programme which chronicles 50 years of the British comics, Dandy and Beano, describes the transformation of the social status of these two periodicals. At the outset these comics are considered 'scrap culture', subverting the minds of youth, and socially unacceptable. In the comics themselves, the establishment - adults - are invariably oppressive and bitterly opposed to anything that may be construed as fun. The author, A.N. Wilson says, "The grown-ups were essentially disapproving hostile figures in this marvellous anarchic world."

At an occasion celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of what have now become the British institutions of the Beano and the Dandy, voices of a new cultural establishment proclaim the virtues of these once disdained literary items. A successful commercial artist, Steve Bell, says; "I always wanted to be a Beano artist. It was a career that appealed to me." Singer/songwriter, Joan Armatrading laments a time her mother discarded her Beano collection, and now she pays "£5 or more for Beano's that originally cost twopence!"

A thoroughfare is personified in order to manufacture a story. The Great White Way tells the story of Broadway, one of the longest streets in the world, stretching from Manhattan and far into upstate New York. "Broadway's history is the history of America, from the neon lights back to its ancient origins as an Indian trail."

"Broadway was a path that the Dutch and the Indians used to use and it went all the way up to Albany as a trade route", says a native American Indian. In contrast, Lena Horne, and other entertainers, describe the significance of Broadway to show business, to the theatres and nightclubs for which Broadway is now renowned.

According to the BBC; "Arena programmes can be about anything - as diverse as jukeboxes, the English thoroughbred, the English rose, Mardi Gras, food, animals, the face... it is the way that this subject is treated which is of interest to the series editors. They prefer a less straightforward approach to the subject, the more obscure, in some respects, the better."

Wildlife and 'Wildmen'

The American film critic, James Agee, describes a period of the early silent cinema when film companies hired so-called 'wildmen', who were paid to come with crazy ideas and wild stunts around which the short one-reeler films could be made. In some respects these Hollywood 'wildmen' represented the forerunner of the film (and later television) dramaturgist and screenwriter. How does this relate to the wildlife documentary?

The Australian documentary, Cane Toads: An Unnatural History (Mark Lewis, 1987), documents the introduction of the Cane Toad, from the Hawaiian Islands to the north Queensland coast at the turn of the century, and the imbalance to the ecological system of the region they have created. Instead of contending with the cane-beetle, the reason they were imported in the first place, cane toads have bred unhindered and

populate an area now covering most of Queensland, northern New South Wales, and spreading further south. Their bite is mildly poisonous, and their size and number constitute a road hazard. Lewis uses 'fictional' and 'filmic' elements to dramatise and deliberately over-dramatise the cane toad threat, with humour and suspense. A woman taking a shower at night is spied upon by a single cane toad in the window sill, joined by more cane toads, until the point when the woman discovers the intruders. By now the cane toads number dozens. The sequence is accompanied by Bernard Herrmann's music, so as to leave no mistaking the Hitchcock references he parodies. (The Birds and Psycho). By using horror film mise-en-scene and montage he creates moments of genuine suspense, followed by parodic sequences clearly designed to highlight the grotesque humour of the situation. The final result is a film that's entertaining yet without dismissing a grave ecological problem as just entertainment.

Cane Toads is not typical of the wildlife documentary. Lewis films 'scripted' sequences and directs supporting actors (i.e, people) in order to embellish the narrative. Yet even the 'documented' wildlife programme 'tells a story' which implicates a 'storyteller'. In most 'wildlife' film situations the photographer can only film what is before the camera. However, there are occasions when the cameraman can manipulate wildlife sequences into action drama.

In The Making of Trials of Life, the BBC programme about the making of the twelve part Trials of Life series (transmitted 1990) photographer, Paul Atkins explains to presenter David Attenborough, the filming of a sequence showing Orca, (killer whales) plundering a stretch of Patagonian coast line for sea-lion pups.

"There was no problem in getting shots from the safety of the beach... what we were trying to do was get a point-of-view shot of the killer whale." This was achieved by lying in the water with the camera facing the sea-lions during the time of day when the whales didn't attack. Additional shots from a small boat, and some underwater shots of the killer whales, were combined to give a predator - victim drama sequence

in a distinctively parodic Hollywood Spielberg style; Atkins refers to the five foot dorsal fins: "These huge fins - talk about hearing the Jaws theme music - these huge fins coming straight toward us." The music that accompanies the completed Trials of Life sequence begins with a sinister and threatening tone, building up to a crescendo as the Orca plunges onto the beach and wrests away a pup from the sea-lion colony. The editing, post-production sound affects, and music create an intensely dramatic sequence where audience identification is clearly with the defenceless sea-lion pup, comparable to a stalked defenceless victim in a horror film.

Wildlife documentary relies on a narrator or 'wildman' to convey the drama of a given situation, just as quiz shows need a presenter and sporting events depend on the descriptions of a commentator.

In an earlier Trials of Life episode, David Attenborough presents the viewer with a cave system in Florida which houses one million bats. The theme of the episode is the survival of off-spring and this particular sequence shows a million bats returning at sunset with food for their young. Shots concentrate on a single newly born bat awaiting the return of its mother. David Attenborough describes the near impossible task of the mother locating its off-spring amongst the cave walls covered black with bats. Often the mother is unable to locate her young, comments Attenborough's voice, and the cave floor is covered with the carcasses of off-spring that have perished with starvation. The camera shows the dead bats littering the cave floor. Again we see the young bat and hear its signalling to its searching mother. Now we see the mother bat searching for its young. Will she find it in time?

As a viewer we readily accept that we are indeed watching just that mother, searching for just that new-born bat. The camera is not so discerning. It may film any one of many different bats groping along the cave wall, one or many amongst a million. Yet for the television viewer it is the drama of a mother searching for its off-spring. The final shot of a mother bat feeding its young, is, according to the voice of the narrator,

the same mother and same new-born bat we viewed at the outset of the sequence. The young bat is saved - the story is resolved.

David Attenborough previously presented Zoo Quest, Eastwards with Attenborough, and with Life on Earth and The Living Planet, devised series which attempt to unfold a broad story theme. According to Attenborough; "Persuading the network Controllers to take on Life on Earth had been difficult because it was a new and unknown concept." Life on Earth chronicles the evolution of life from mollusc to mankind complying to a narrative structure based largely on the theories of Darwin. The Living Planet developed into a 12 part series thematically structured around the earth's various ecosystems.

"... at no time are we without a script," says David Attenborough. "We always have a plan to work to, and if we don't need to change it, we don't." According to the series producer, Andrew Neal, the strength of Attenborough's scripts is, "how he turns a big subject into a simple theme that any Joe Sap could follow when he watched it on the screen."

The 12 minute opening sequence of part one of The Living Planet, The Building of the Earth, shows David Attenborough climbing the Kali Gandaki Gorge in the Himalaya, observing the different forms of wildlife on the valley slopes. During the ascent the viewer is introduced to the flora and fauna that have adapted to the varying altitudes; red pandas, langur monkeys, vultures and bears, and in the higher altitudes, yak and snow-leopard. At the top of the gorge David Attenborough picks up a piece of ammonite and explains how a marine fossil can be found 26,000 feet up in the Himalaya.

The opening sequence establishes a narrative structure for the series, presenting the viewer with its ecological theme, the visual variety of exotic plant and animal life - a narrative 'hook' to secure the viewer's fidelity - and most important of all, it has established the role of the story-teller, David Attenborough's on-camera presence as dramaturgical guide, the wildlife documentary's 'wildman'.

The Drama Documentary

'Docudrama' pertains to US television vernacular, alongside 'infotainment', and the hybrid words contrived to define the hybrid programming created through the cross-fertilisation of programme categories. Documentary prescribes to 'fact' and drama to 'fiction'; the drama documentary walks a fine in between. As we have seen the documentary is 'fictionalised' by virtue of a dramatic structure, but it is not 'performed', and it is the role of actors, 'performers', that distinguish the drama-documentary. So, a film such as Cane Toads: An Unnatural History, despite the extremes by which it exploits the dramatising of a narrative, is still 'documentary', whereas Granada Television's Who Bombed Birmingham and Shoot to Kill, two programmes which prompted British parliament, in 1989, to consider legislation against such programmes because of their political controversy (the IRA was a central issue in both programmes), are essentially dramatisations.

The documentary is an assembly of 'actual' material; interviews, stock footage and film of events not necessarily articulated for the sake of the camera. The drama documentary, on the other hand, is produced like television drama, entailing a script and actors who perform as determined by the script. Which makes the author they key element to the drama documentary. The author is commissioned by a television production company to transform events into drama. Inevitably facts are distorted for the sake of a story. Inevitably the drama documentary is more drama than documentation.

Where drama documentary becomes controversial is with the dramatisation of current affairs; when it impinges on the territory of the evening news bulletin. History has become 'fictionalised' by pertaining to the past, the 'fictionalising, of the present may, and often does, incur the wrath of the news bulletin pundits and their political overseers. The former head of BBC television drama, Shaun Sutton, considers 'drama documentary' "a facile term wrongly applied to all sorts of television drama." Tony Garnett's Cathy Come Home, often referred to as drama documentary, has an author (Jeremy Sandford), a director (Ken Loach),

and parts played by actors - it was fiction filmed in a documentary style. Similarly, Peter Watkin's television film, The War Game, is fiction drama, where the documentary style of filming is so successful as to lead to its 'banning' by the BBC, on charges of being 'too realistic.'

The concern over what is 'fact' and what is 'fiction' is as artificial as the television medium itself, which, by its form 'fictionalises' the world around us. "Every camera angle," wrote French film director Jean-Luc Godard, "implies a moral premise." The drama documentary is always drama.

4 SPORT

Sport as Drama

A survey into male viewing patterns of pornographic video films reveals that after first viewing the typical viewer fast-forwards through the thin plot to the 'action' sequences; scenes depicting explicit sexual activity. In the case of repeated viewings the viewer fast-forwards to scene segments displaying the male climax.

The sex film is a film genre, like the western, the musical, the horror film, etc. Genre films adhere to conventions specific to that genre, and the viewer is lead through a thin story line which links up the sequences pertaining to that genre. The shoot-out in the western, the song and dance number in the musical, the transformation, or murder, in the horror film. Genre film aficionados accept the limitations of the story line deriving their viewing pleasure from the execution of sequences pertaining to that genre. With sex films, the thin plot serves as a contrivance for situations of couples having sex, and the display of the male sexual climax. Such sequences are frequently filmed in slow-motion, or prolonged through editing, in order to intensify the narrative's crucial plot points.

Sport is a television genre and the sporting contest consists of a thinly disguised 'plot' which serves as a vehicle for moments of sport 'action'. The television viewer watches a football match to see moments of skilful play and the scoring of goals. Video viewers fast-forward to goal scoring sequences, which are the active/event sequences within the narrative. During transmission such sequences are repeated, at normal speed from different angles, and then in slow motion - once again to intensify a significant dramatic point of action. In westerns, musicals and genre forms in general, genre sequences are highlighted by the camera, editing or the mise-en-scene.

Televised 'action' sport and pornographic cinema attract a predominantly male audience, (estimates vary between 75% and 95% in

both genres) significantly more than other genres. (Horror, science fiction, war, etc, also viewed mainly by males). In his study of the masculine myth in popular culture, Antony Easthope writes that "as represented in the dominant culture sport is deeply masculine, an arena to which women are admitted if they submit to its rules."

The word pornography means writings or pictures intended to arouse sexual desire, and a number of writers have drawn comparisons between sport and pornography. In her essay, On Boxing, Joyce Carol Oates relates boxing to pornography; in both cases the spectator is transformed to voyeur - is at a distance, but intimately involved nonetheless, in that "which shouldn't happen just when it happens."

"Every boxing match is a story - a unique and strongly concentrated wordless drama. When nothing sensational happens, then the drama is 'simply' psychological. To enter the ring almost naked and putting his life on the line means transforming his public to a kind of voyeur: boxing is that intimate."

"The obvious difference between boxing and pornography is that boxing, in contrast to pornography, is not theatrical. It isn't... rehearsed or simulated. It breaks our taboo regarding violence by being shown openly." Umberto Eco describes watching sport as "a sordid exercise of voyeurism, like watching others make love... spectators behave like hordes of sex maniacs regularly going to see couples making love, or pretending to..."

Woody Allen illustrates Eco's thesis in the concluding scene of his film Bananas (1971), where Fielding Mellish (Woody Allen) prepares to consummate his marriage in a honeymoon hotel bedroom, surrounded by on-lookers, a television camera and a sports commentator:

Announcer: Good evening. Wide world of sports is here at the Manhattan Hotel for an on-the-spot telecast of the Fielding Mellish honeymoon night... and here for a play by play description, Howard Cocell.
Cocell: You've joined us with the action just about to start.

(Mellish and wife enter the bedroom in robes, like boxers entering a ring. They get under the bedcovers and move about to Cocell's commentary, interspersed with shots of the responding crowd).
Cocell: It is swift, rhythmic, co-ordinated... a cut over Mellish's right eye. A doctor comes in... no, it will not be stopped, it continues. And although you can see for yourselves, I have never seen action like this. That's it. It's over. The marriage has been consummated. I'm going to break through these fans to talk to these two... Nancy, I know this is very personal; was it everything you expected?
Nancy: Well Howard, it went so fast. I just had no idea it would be so quick. I was expecting a longer bout.
Mellish: I was in good form. I've been training hard for this and I gave 100%.
Cocell: When do you anticipate your next bout?
Mellish: We'll probably do this again in the late spring.
Cocell (to camera): They may live happy ever after, they may not. Be assured of this though; wherever the action is, we will be there with ABC's live world of TV sport coverage. Now on behalf of the happy couple, this is Howard Cocell; I thank you for joining us and I wish you a most pleasant evening.

The scene illustrates two integral aspects of sports coverage:

1. The role of the commentator
2. The necessity of 'live' coverage

Sport relies on a commentator to emphasise drama that may not be readily apparent to the television viewer; he (it is always 'he') instills dramatic tension into the proceedings in the manner of a dramatist improvising a given situation. Acted drama (interpreted drama?) is shown, sports drama is commentated.

The style of the sports commentator varies according to the sport; a high tempo and agitated commentary is favoured for horse racing and boxing, a medium to high tempo for football, team sports, athletics; a more relaxed and less frequently used voice for tennis, cricket and golf, with an infrequent raise of pitch at moments of unexpected 'excitement'. The sports commentators voice is comparable to the use of music in

drama which serves to provide tension, humour, the emphasis of action, or whatever a particular scene or genre requires.

The 'live-action' aspect of sports coverage is as much a commercial issue as an aesthetic one; television networks bid vast sums for direct transmission, and key sporting events may be covered by a second network, broadcast 15 minutes later, or an hour later, or a duration specified by contractual arrangement.

The dramatic tension of sports coverage depends on the fact that, as far as the three components of the narrative are concerned, the resolution - the final result - is an unknown factor, beyond the control of a writer (story teller) or the viewer (listener); who witnesses a tale telling itself - the story is incomplete and begins an unravelling, the dramatic content of which can only be assessed after the event. The sports viewer watches in the hope of witnessing the telling of a good story, prepared for the risk of a narrative that 'fails to deliver'. The techniques of television can embellish the narrative, with close-ups, tracking shots, slow motion, 'action replays', exaggerated and driving commentary, but it cannot affect the outcome.

Television may be considered a poor second best to 'being there'. Joyce Carol Oates described a "bloody boxing match transmitted on TV", which became "consequently disinfected. It's hardly possible to imagine the affect of a blow hitting another person's body and head watching it on television; the screen makes everything curiously flat..."

Sport as Television Serial

During the summer months when regular television serials go on holiday with the rest of the nation, they are quickly replaced by other forms of television serial, notably, a cricket test series, Wimbledon tennis, and in the summer of 1990, the World Cup, described by one Swedish journalist as "unbeatable soap opera".

"Even a football illiterate snob such as I, am captivated by the drama.. with its heroes and villains, the intrigues, the passion, the excitement... But more than anything football is about feelings. Why shouldn't Maradona show his feelings? Isn't it admirable that he dares be emotional before 30 thousand million unknown viewers around the world?"

Sports that television transform into serial dramas include football, tennis, snooker - sports where sides or personalities dominate; sides represent nations, or cities - identifiable protagonists with which the viewer can identify. But television is selective in regard to which sports can be dramatised, and they are rarely sports that represent actual participation in terms of population percentages. The most popular participant sport in Great Britain is fly-fishing which is never televised because of its dramatic limitations. In Scandinavia, orienteering is one of the most popular participant sports, but television, despite efforts, has failed to make it dramatic. The sport consists of competitors racing on foot over a course through rough terrain, with the aid of a map and compass. Television attempted to imbue the proceedings with drama by displaying a running time counter on the screen next to the time required for a win; a technique used for ski slalom racing. However, single contestants thrashing about in forests, a map around their neck and a compass in hand, alternating between extremes of stationary bewilderment and mobile enlightenment, failed to engage the television viewer and regular televising was abandoned.

Television sport is not necessarily just the traditional spectator sports. Television has provided opportunities for popularising and creating sports for which, before television, spectators were either limited or non-existent. Snooker, for example, has become a spectator sport solely through television. Furthermore, television has succeeded in dramatising the sport. The ingredients that make it good television are colour (snooker was never televised on black and white television and would probably not have succeeded if it had been), movement, and the dexterity of the players; "magic tricks with coloured balls". What makes it good drama is the contest (in common with all television sport), and

personalities, important in much television sport, and the ingredient television can highlight, lacking in attending a 'live' sporting event.

The voyeuristic nature of television sport is defined by the category of sport televised; one can distinguish between 'personality' sports on the one hand, whose attraction lies in a 'performer' or 'key performers'; characters which are named and identified. Obvious examples include boxing, tennis, golf, snooker, etc. On the other hand are 'impersonal' sports whereby the principle attraction lies in the activity itself and the 'action'. Here one could include most team sports, horse racing, athletics - for the television viewer the chief attraction is the event itself rather than the 'personality' involved. (A third category might include 'non-dramatic' sports such as fly-fishing, orienteering, which explains their lack of transmission time on television; 'personal' and 'impersonal' sport types are both dramatic). In between these extremes lie a number of variations - football and cricket are team sports, watched both for 'action' and 'personalities'; table tennis is primarily activity rather than characters.

In team sports the individual is highlighted on the basis of performance rather than character or personality (exceptional characters emerge; British football player, Paul Gascoigne, Yorkshire cricketer, Geoff Boycott); the emphasis is on achievement; goals scored or goals saved, runs scored or players bowled, etc. In the 'splatter' film the potency of the anti-hero is measured by the number of victims slain, and in sex films, by the number of sexual conquests. The dramatic structure of a football match provides a thin plot: two opposing sides, one wins, one loses; where dramatic tension is provided by action/event sequences. The viewer's detachment, and the measure of standard by 'action sequences' and 'result' may be a criteria for assessing a sport as 'impersonal'.

A sport such as tennis on the other hand, invites close study of the individual contestants, and the psychological contest between psychological types. The dispassionate disposition of Björn Borg in contrast with the volatile John MacEnroe; the embittered resolve of Ivan

Lendl against a phlegmatic Boris Becker, etc. The televising of personality sports may relate directly to the popularity of the personalities involved. Never has televised chess been as popular as the contests between Bobbie Fischer and Boris Spassky in the early 1970's, where the television viewer's watching pleasure, was not so much on the chess matches, but the contest between one personality; affable, disciplined, sociable and well-liked by a crowd regardless of nationality (Spassky) pitted against a the volatile, capricious, anti-social personality, invoking public disdain (Fischer). In addition the drama benefitted from the political drama; USA vs USSR, at a point when ideological differences were most apparent; the 'Space Race' was ongoing, and a world-wide wave of anti-American feeling had been invoked by virtue of US aggression in Vietnam. When the two chess masters met again in 1992, with the Soviet - US drama resolved, the conflict lacked the dramatic impetus to gain the media attention of twenty years earlier.

Nationalism is often a contributing factor to sport drama: often the most dramatic sports are those in which the attraction is not only the contest of the game, but the contest of nations as with international competitions like the World Cup, the Olympic Games, the Ashes (Test Series cricket between Australia and England).

A British journalist trying to 'sell' soccer to the Americans at the time of the 1990 World Cup, claimed that "watching a country's soccer team is the quickest way to get an affix on what makes a society tick. Holland's great teams of the 1970's looked as if they'd stumbled out of a dope ridden dive in Amsterdam. Keen observers knew that perestroika was on the way when they saw the exciting Russian team of the 1980's. Brazil's determination to be another dreary world power has been marked by a calamitous decline in the quality of its side. The Brazilians used to practice by doing an hours samba; now they look as if they read stock broker's circulars."

Role Identification and the Television Sports Viewer

Watching sport on television, the most exclusive of male televisual domains, provides a choice of role identification: an identification with the 'live' public, witnessing the event first hand, identification with one's country in the case of Olympic sports, or international sports events, identification with a 'performer' - a player who achieves by scoring a goal, winning a race, jumping higher, swimming faster, etc.; then there opportunities to identify with the loser, with a referee, and with the contest itself. In On Boxing, Joyce Carol Oates writes that men identify with the winner, women with the injured and beaten 'loser', but there comes a point when the spectator identifies with the match as a concept in the platonic sense.

She continues: "As spectators to team sports, teams with grown men, it's quite apparent that men are just children in the most favourable interpretation of the word... for a sports public the enjoyment lies mainly in experiencing the comradeship of childhood, whereas a boxing public experiences mankind's murderous primitivism."

"Boxing has become America's tragic theatre," she writes. According to former heavyweight champion, Rocky Graziano, "It's a terrible sport, but it is a sport... it's about the struggle to survive."

As a television genre sport incites viewer's extremes of pleasure and displeasure. The sport enthusiast experiences deprivation at the lack of coverage of any sporting event, whereas the non-sporting enthusiast regards television sport as a kind of tyranny empowered to dissect programmes at whim, interrupt feature films, and cancel a scheduled series for a telecasting of latin American table tennis quarter finals. Would that a 50 minute episode of The Singing Detective held such sway.

"There's nothing more self-generating than sport," wrote one Swedish journalist during the World Cup telecasts, 1990: "It is imperialistic. It's probably just as well that there are those who are prepared to resist rather than simply tolerate. 'Much' becomes 'more', and always 'more'...

The problem with sport is not that television treats it so thoroughly. The problem with sport is that it is the only thing television treats thoroughly. Everything else is just skipped over. Later they claim that such are the demands of the medium."

The 'sordid voyeurism' which Umberto Eco attributes to watching sport, may be attributed to television in general, and to the television serial in particular. Television sport is one more version of television's serialised drama.

5 BLIND DATE

Tales of Love and Greed - Game Shows and Televisual Folklore

Television game shows are about winning prizes and watching the extremes people will go in order to secure them. In some instances the game show demands of its contestants skill and knowledge (Mastermind), in other extremes a willingness on the part of the participant to undergo extremes of self-degradation for the honour of television's customary five minutes celebrity status. (Japanese television's Endurance, or ITV's Game for a Laugh).

In Television Culture John Fiske distinguishes between game shows requiring factual knowledge and human knowledge. Factual knowledge contests involve either 'academic' or 'everyday' knowledge, whereas the 'human knowledge' contests are either concerned with people in general, or the knowledge of a specific individual. A sketch from Monty Python's Flying Circus called Blackmail, parodies this latter kind of contest where 'victims' (participants) were invited to send money to the game show host in order that particular knowledge NOT be made known to the general public, the concept of the bona fide game show in reverse. In Blackmail the prize money is to the participant's loss, rather than gain, but the principles of public exposure and the fabrication of television characters and television narratives are not dissimilar.

The television game show can also be seen, like so much television, as the purveyor of popular folk tales; 'stories made and handed down orally among the common people.' (Collins English Dictionary). The game show, like Joseph Campbell's monomyth, consists of separation - initiation - return: the Blind Date contender enters the arena of 'adventure' - selects a member of the opposite sex through a prescribed initiation rite, are sent out on a 'quest' (an unknown destination) and impart their learning to the awaiting public on their return. The prescribed aim of this particular television folktale is union - the folktale's 'happy ever after.'

Television game show stories have an added attraction of being 'written' as we watch; an unknown author wavering indecisively as to whom shall reap the rewards of wealth and good fortune, as in the case of programmes such as The Price is Right, Sale of the Century, Wheel of Fortune, Play Your Cards Right, Jeopardy, etc. There are folk tales about poor and common people rewarded with abundant wealth, by virtue of their kindly nature or good fortune, just as there are folk tales about magic deeds and 'true love'. Blind Date is concerned with the quest for 'true love', yet in the game show format 'true love' is a commodity to be won or lost, like the new car, or the round-the-world trip, or the $64,000 on other shows. This makes for entertaining stories.

Game show narratives, like folk tales, begin with a dilemma and end with a resolution, and like most television formats, are serialised in order to encourage the fidelity of the viewer. In the case of 'money' shows: "Will you come back next week and try for the jackpot?" In the case of Blind Date: "Will you come back next week and tell us what happened?" Like television soap opera the emphasis is on romance (predominantly ill-fated), gossip and weekly cliff-hanger endings.

Television narrative, in the case of drama, is manufactured by a script, and in the case of unscripted events - sport, news and game shows - by the form itself. Television in general, and the game show in particular, also emphasises the manufacture of personalities; a theme Claude Chabrol dissected in the film Masks (1986). Television game show compare, Christian Legagneur (Phillipe Noiret) is adored by the viewing public for his charm and charitable works. The programme he compares matches up old-age pensioners and has a large following. When his nefarious dealings are finally exposed and his 'mask' torn away before television's viewing millions, he addresses the camera requesting television viewers 'to go and screw themselves'. But as the plural of Chabrol's film title suggests, the manufacture of television personalities is equally important amongst game show participants, and 'winners', regardless of prizes, are those who manufacture the most convincing personality. The fabricated television personality is integral to the function of Blind Date narratives.

Game shows are contests, and contests are staged in order to determine winners and losers, successes and failures. However, winning the free trip in Blind Date is simply an invitation to participate in another kind of contest altogether - will the contender 'win' or 'lose' when it comes to relating with a member of the opposite sex? For television's ritualising of romance extends beyond the parameters of the screen, to outside contender's hotel doors, ensuring that couples stay within their separate rooms.

Graeme Turner describes Australia's Perfect Match as "a romantic game show which it them subverts and parodies... an invocation of romance and young love competing with spectacles of failure and embarrassment for the viewer's interest... (the programme) violently oscillates between sentimentality and cynicism."

The disdain with which the Blind Date type of programme is critically regarded is summarised by Peter Conrad: "Increasingly the game shows ask questions not to obtain information or assess knowledge but to pillory people into self-exposure. Hence the lecherous probing of sexual habits on The Dating Game... three aspirant bachelors are secreted behind a partition from where they're quizzed by a nubile bachelorette... the men must sell themselves by perky, pushful or huskily salacious responses, and are caught by the camera struggling, as all television's subjects must, to confect a personality for themselves. The girl meanwhile proceeds with her humiliating inquisition... 'What's the most degrading thing you ever made a girl do on a date?' 'What's the strangest thing you've ever taken to bed?' 'Which of your relatives corrupted you most as a child and what was it they made you do?' and 'Where in public would you most like to undress?' Television's glory is the belittlement of people and the trivialisation of data... their treatment of the people who volunteer to play the games is an exact and nasty parody of television's recruitment and brusque dismissal of those on whom it confers celebrity."

However, the sustained popularity of these programmes suggests they fulfil a social function beyond the dichotomy between voyeur and

exhibitionist. Although it may be argued that a serious subject like human relationships is trivialised or parodied, it is nonetheless, the television medium attempting to negotiate the complex area of human relations. But within the framework of a game show, it enforces a particular view of human relations which comply with a society which emphasises profitable transactions. The ideology behind Blind Date can be described in the words of Erich Fromm written 45 years ago:

"Our culture is based on the appetite for buying, on the idea of a mutually favourable exchange. Modern man's happiness consists in the thrill of looking at the shop windows, and in buying all that he can afford to buy... He (or she) looks at people in a similar way. For the man an attractive girl - and for the woman an attractive man - are the prizes they are after. 'Attractive' means a package of qualities which are popular and sought after on the personality market... Two persons thus fall in love when they feel they have found the best object available on the market, considering the limitations of their own exchange values."

Raymond Williams cites a short-lived San Francisco version of the programme featuring blind dates arranged by telephone call-ins, which he describes as tantamount to using television for prostitution, as a consequence of television game shows "presentation of people as isolated and negotiable features and quantities, characteristic of many commercial television forms". He describes the US Dating Game as "conventionalised speculative mimings" of personal relationships. "...processes of human understanding, judgement and choice are turned into projected games for the entertainment of others... the relationship is made into the material of deliberate embarrassment of prospective acquisition."

The first assessment of what makes a person 'attractive' in the eyes of the opposite sex, is a visual assessment. The game/chance element of Blind Date is based on assessing a personality behind a partition, with only the voice, and answers to questions, and the manner of self-expression, on which to assess a person's appearance. The initial reactions of contestants as the partition is drawn away, and they stand face to face, is a reaction

of 'winning' or 'losing' based on whether the chosen meets the contestant's criterion of 'attractive'.

On one edition of the Swedish Who Takes Who, a female contestant selected a male without hesitation, and exclaimed: "I know exactly which one. I'm absolutely sure. I've never been so sure in my life. Number one!" On their return from a trip to New York, the couple confessed to 'falling in love within 30 seconds of meeting.' According to an article in the popular press their relationship continued after the programme's transmission, endorsing the fairy tale promise that out there, somewhere, is 'true love.'

Erich Fromm describes a 'sentimental love' which "is experienced only in phantasy and not in the here-and-now relationship to another person who is real. The most widespread form of this type of love is that to be found in the vicarious love satisfaction experienced by the consumer of screen pictures... For many couples, seeing these stories on the screen is the only occasion on which they experience love - not for each other, but together, as spectators of other people's 'love'. As long as love is a day-dream, they can participate; as soon as it comes down to the reality of a relationship between two real people - they are frozen." He concludes that: "The principle underlying capitalistic society and the principle of love are incompatible."

The International Structure of Blind Date

In England it's called Blind Date, in the US it's The Dating Game, Perfect Match in Australia, Who Takes Who (Vem Tar Vem) in Sweden, Contact Page (Hertzblatt) in Germany, Bullseye (Napakymppi) in Finland, and variations of the programme exist elsewhere.

The programme's structure is consistent wherever it's broadcast, with minor variations from place to place; for example, Australia's Perfect Match, compares the contestants' selections with that of a computer. The standard format of the programme consists of a presenter, in most cases

a well-known entertainer, who invites a male contestant to select one of three female contestants concealed behind a partition, based on answers to questions of his own devising, which he considers will reveal the attributes most desirable in a partner. Then a female contestant is invited to select a one of three male contestants on the same basis.

At the end of each round, the contestant is first presented with the two participants he or she has rejected ("what they missed"), then stands on one side of a partition which is drawn away to reveal the selected 'date' for the first time. The couple's prize is a week-end away at a holiday resort or foreign city. The couple; hand in hand, walk up a staircase, turn, face both the studio audience and home audience (via the studio camera), wave, and disappear behind studio scenography.

The following section of the programme is devoted to the 'winning' contestants of the previous week, and 'what happened' on their weekend away. One of two possible responses is emphasised, in order to, one might say, strengthen the narrative. Either the weekend went 'well', and the couple liked each other, or the week-end went 'badly' and the couple didn't like each other at all. We see activities and places of interest visited by the couple; they are then interviewed by an anonymous interviewer, independently, as to how they responded to their 'date.' The interviews are interspersed with shots of the couple sitting in the studio, and how they react to their answers as they sit next to each other, together with the presenter and the studio audience. The presenter then interviews them together, an interview which inevitably concludes with 'will you see each other again?' The responses range from 'never in a million years' to 'we got married last Saturday', and a multitude of variations in between.

The programme format is internationally consistent, yet the programme's timbre varies from country to country. The cynicism, humour and overt sexuality of the Australian edition contrasts with the restraint and politeness of, say, the Swedish version. For the German viewing public, the appeal of Hertzblatt, is the way presenter, Rudi Carrell, lampoons and ridicules contestants.

Blind Date style programmes have featured on television in the US and Australia since the 1950's. However, the format has experienced a 'post-Aids' surge of popularity since the mid 1980's, in Britain, Australia and Sweden (transmission began 1990) - as televisual forms of safe-sex, sublimation and wish-fulfilment. (The commercial breaks of the UK Blind Date include Aids warning public service announcements - an example of television 'flow').

The contender, he or she vying for one of three 'dates', has three questions supposedly framed in order to glean as much information of the opposite number. Yet the answers are always, under the programme's production team supervision, false contrivances revealing little or anything of the person uttering them, intended first and foremost to amuse and entertain the home viewer. Answers inevitably allude to the pleasure and delight the chosen number can bestow upon their opposite, should they be chosen. Answers are rehearsed, occasionally aided by studio script writers, and many's the time contenders wince in embarrassment or mock shame at the shallow nonsense they utter in reply. There are some national discrepancies, though surprisingly mild; participants on the Australian programme tend to be the least inhibited, a good deal of self irony is played out on the British Blind Date, and the Swedish Who Takes Who contenders resist their traditional national reserve with a somewhat zealous exhibitionism.

We, as viewers, are witness to drama, and players wearing the masks of their roles; there is no place for sincerity in the confines of the television studio where the actions and deeds of this particular form of improvised 'soap opera' is relayed to a viewing public numbering millions.

A Finnish television play, Three Nights (Kölme Yötä by Matti Ijäs, 1988) based on the Blind Date programme format, begins with a timid male contender selecting a companion with the final question: "Give a brief description of yourself, in English!"

"Yes", says the male presenter, "That sounds like a silly enough question. Let's start with Number One."

"Well I'm a very nice girl", says an even more timid Number One, in a heavy Finnish accent, "And honest and like people... and so..."

"I'm a very charming lady, pretty and nice..." says the rather more bold Number Two, who is selected to join the young man on a trip, not to Rome or Honolulu, which they miss, but to an off-season weekend in Hangö, a Finnish coastal resort.

Despite the reserve of the programme's participants, a sexual relationship is presupposed, as the winning couple are checked into one large room, with a double bed. This is not the norm and British ITV production assistants go to lengths to ensure that such a situation does not eventuate.

In the case of the British Blind Date, standard euphemisms avoid any sexual blatancy, as in the case of a couple returning from a trip to Ireland. He: "Vicky and I didn't really kiss and cuddle very much..." She: "Robin and I did kiss a couple of times, but I'll be honest - I'd rather kiss the Blarney stone." And a couple on another programme: He: "We didn't touch much. We both kept away from that... I wouldn't rush to get her address." Presenter, Cilla Black, bade the couple farewell with; "I think you're both terrific sports, even if you didn't get on romantically."

Although the object of the exercise is to select a potential partner without the benefit of actually seeing them, the emphasis is on physical appearance, and the attributes of dress and appearance that constitute 'sexy'. A male contender summarised his date with: "I'm sure a lot of blokes would fancy her, but give me a big busty blonde any day." Nor is the objectifying of the 'date' a male prerogative; the Blind Date format is impartial to gender, and participants are treated equally as sexual objects.

Blind Date (UK), produced by Independent Television, attracts around 15 million viewers - a rating figure usually associated with the most popular peak hour television serials. When the Swedish Who Takes Who, produced by an independent company for the state run Swedish

Television, began transmission in May 1990, it immediately became the country's top rating programme with 4.2 million viewers, almost 50% of the country's population.

That these programmes have such high ratings, and share the viewing patterns of the popular 'soap opera' television serials, could be seen in a context of the elements of 'soap opera' adapted into the programme.

The ingredients are 'boy meets girl', their joint quest for 'true love', obstacles and situations that may hinder or enhance the possibility of 'true love' during the course of a journey to an unfamiliar place, based on a premise that success in relationships is in itself a lottery.

There are also elements of situation comedy; that the couples first meeting takes place before a 'live-studio audience', and the audience reaction - usually laughter - and the recorded actualization of their relationship, is also presented for the entertainment of a live audience. Like situation comedy the programme relies on audience laughter and reactions, which are often exaggerated at the encouragement of the presenter, particularly to the question and answer sessions, where reactions include laughter, and responses familiar to situation comedies in the style of Cosby or the domestic comedies that provoke exaggeratedly wild responses to sexual innuendo.

The following extract, from Perfect Match (Channel 7 Network, Sydney, Australia - broadcast 1990), emphasises the significance of sexual allusion on which the programme relies:

Male contestant: "I'm looking for a fun lady who's energetic and just wants to go out and have a great time."
Presenter (Greg Evans): "Beauty Tod. Take a seat."
Tod (first question to female contestant): What's the best part about growing up today?"
Female Contestant 1: "That we've all got the opportunity to paint the town red."

Female Contestant 2: "Well, I'm really lively and vivacious and I just like to party all night, non-stop."
Female Contestant 3: "Being able to come on Perfect Match and pick up a date at the same time."
Tod (next question): "What was your most embarrassing moment on a first date?"
No 3: "I split my jeans and when I turned around to take a look, I had no undies on."
No 1: "I was dating a twin and they did a swap."
Presenter: "When did you find out? After the date or during?"
No 1: "When it came to the crunch."
(Audience laughter)
No 2: "I went on a dinner date, the guy put his arm around me to kiss me and it wasn't till I went up to go to the toilet that I realised he'd undone my zip."
Presenter: "On your dress?"
No 2: "Oh yeah!"
Tod: "I like split jeans, but I like no knickers even more."

The male contestant is given a minute to make up his mind, during which a female chorus sings softly in the background, and the camera pans across the female contestants, dressed in party attire, and seated before large inflated red hearts.

Presenter: "Now Tod, I'd like to know exactly what's going on in your mind."
Tod: "No knickers. Number three."

Tod meets Desley and they are presented with a weekend to Tangaluma Island resort off the Queensland coast.

The follow-up section of the programme, where a couple returns to discuss their weekend together, is the section of the narrative designed to gratify the expectations of the viewer, one way or another, and the 'success' or 'failure' of the encounter is heightened in order to extract its full dramatic potential.

A couple return to talk about their weekend in Brussells on the Swedish Who Takes Who and are asked to describe each other.

She: "He thinks a lot. We're very different. How he'd describe me? Hm. Difficult."
(Audience laughter)
He: "How she'd describe me? A Northerner who doesn't talk too much - it takes a while for me to open up. I'm not so amusing. We don't have the same sense of humour."
(Audience laughter)
Presenter (Lill-Babs): "Will you meet again?"
She (uncertainly): "Maybe we'll meet again. Who knows?"
(Audience laughter)

The Blind Date narrative, like situation comedy, begins with the 'dilemma': which one will he/she choose? (the beginning), proceeds to the 'complication': how will those two get on?(middle), and concludes with the 'resolution': they 'relate' - i.e. win / they don't 'relate' - i.e. lose, (the ending). The conflict asks; can a chance encounter between two strangers develop into romance?

A dramatic conflict is in itself a contest - two opposing sides compete in order to determine a loser and a winner. The contest is both game and ritual; once the 'game' of selecting a candidate is completed, the 'ritual' of romantic discipline begins, the outcome of which leads to the next 'game' generated by the conventionality of the game show format; was the 'date' a win or a loss?

The game show is by definition a contest - in the case of Blind Date the 'winner' is the participant to be selected for a free trip with a potentially compatible partner. But this is only a preclude to the narrative, just as in the fairy tale, a suitable contender for the hand of the prince or princess is determined by a quest.

Blind Date is concerned with the ritualising of romance using the narrative ingredients of folk tales and fairy stories. Just as the folk tale

ritualises romance with the intent of gratifying the listener with an idealised romantic encounter, Blind Date functions to fulfil the expectations of the viewer; the closure rests with either 'success' or 'failure', always with the implication that next week's contenders will find true love and everlasting happiness at Tangaluma Island.

From Napakymppi to Swinging Couples

Napakymmpi is Finnish television's version of the Blind Date programme, transmitted on Saturday evenings at 8pm. Napakymmpi means 'bullseye' or 'on target', and is perhaps the programme that comes closest to the Blind Date ideology of providing an opportunity for single people to meet a potential partner. Whereas most Blind Date programmes emphasise glamour and spectacle, Napakymmpi is a low-key and modest television production, with a singularly straight-forward approach.

A relatively small studio public is scrutinised frequently by the television cameras, a studio pianist, also under regular camera surveillance, provides the programme's musical accompaniment, and occasionally engages in light banter with the programme's presenter, a well-known male television personality, in his early 40's. Contestants vary in age from mid 20's to mid 40's, dress casual, and bear little mark of the fabricated television personality to which one is accustomed on game show programmes. Instead of three 'scripted' questions, the single contestant addresses the three interviewees with up to ten or twelve questions, with more emphasis on extracting replies that provide insight into the person answering rather than humour or sexual innuendo. The 'interviewer' is seated in a chair behind the mandatory partition, with notebook and pencil, and takes notes of the various replies. The selection of the winning candidate is a de-dramatised affair whereby the contestant steps from behind the partition, is presented with all three contenders and requested by the programme host to identify the chosen contender. In most cases identification is correct - an error illicits a subdued but measurable audience response. Male and female are presented to each

other, smile cautiously and shake hands. The three contenders carry a scroll and unroll them to reveal the weekend away destination, so that the contestant and audience see what was missed and what was won. At this point the programme ends.

How was the weekend? How did they get on? Will they see each other again? The register of standard Blind Date questions are never asked, the winning couple do not come back to 'tell all.'

In advertising jargon, the 'hook' or 'sales pitch' of the Blind Date format is 'sex' (as opposed to say 'money' in The Price is Right and Sale of the Century), and its employment as a dramatic device is subject to the cultural background, language, 'narrator' gender role and audience targeting of the various Blind Date versions. If Napakymmpi exploits this device the least, then its polarity must be a New York cable television station programme entitled The Swinging Couples Game, which began transmission in 1990.

In a programme described by its host, Howard Stern, as; "breaking new television ground and giving me ratings!", three couples vie for selection by a young woman concealed behind the partition. The couples are introduced to the studio public and television audience as 'swingers', and the presenter's questioning establishes the programme's dubious ideology as he asks each couple in turn: "You enjoy sex with other couples, do you not?"

Each couple relate their experiences of 'swinging', and the presenter addresses the young woman contestant who will win a 'date' with one of the three couples.

Presenter: Goldie, will you absolutely guarantee that there will be a sexual liaison between all of you?
Goldie: Yes... it depends.
Presenter: What will prevent you from having sex with any of these people?
Goldie: If they're boring.

As in Blind Date, the woman contestant addresses the couples, or men and women of each couple, with three questions in order to assess compatibility.

Goldie: Swinging guy number two; which nickname best describes your masculine anatomy (sic); King Kong, Killer or Pee Wee?

The contestant chooses a couple and they win, "a night out at the couples Swing Club at Nassau County." The programme host suggests the television cameras follow the trio after their night out, a suggestion to which they are readily amenable.

"What a show next week!" says the host, addressing the television audience. "Ratings!"

Given that "ratings" are the principle consideration for the existence of such a programme, based on television executives adhering to the adage of not under-estimating the public's demand for bad taste, the chances of such a programme's wide acceptance are limited. The appeal of Blind Date, as with any popular narrative, is based on the television viewer's identification with whomever they interpret as protagonist. The viewer response of 'who is most suitable for me' is hard pressed in The Swinging Couples Game scenario, as the majority of viewers can only experience revulsion toward the drama's cast of characters.

Blind Date as Serialised Drama

Like the 'soap opera' serials Blind Date provides continuous variations on the theme of boy meets girl, girl meets boy - the narrative ingredients of the television serial are brought together within a given situation, but rather than co-ordinated to a written script, are improvised within that given situation. Script writers are on hand when improvisation fails. For example, contestant's questions are supervised by a production assistant, and are either modified or re-written in order conform to the pre-requisites of the narrative. The programme is rehearsed, allowing

contestants to prepare answers to questions, although the male and female participants don't meet until the programme is recorded. Following their weekend away, each contestant is interviewed for 45 minutes which is edited down to two minutes. Less scrupulous interviewers are adamant in extracting the most extreme scenario. The most successful programmes are those where couples declare undying love for each other on camera, or dislike each other sufficiently to exchange insults before a viewing audience numbering in the millions.

Like 'soap opera' the programme uses the 'cliff-hanger' device to ensure the viewer's fidelity. The questions leading up to the encounter, the encounter itself by the drawing away of the partition, the chance selection of the journey's destination (emphasis on winning and losing once more; a trip to New York = winning; a weekend in a nearby bed and breakfast = losing), are all devices which beg the question; how will it go? And like the 'soap opera', the only way to find out is by tuning in the following week. Like 'soap opera' stereotypes, couples are classified into winners and losers on the basis of success or failure in relationships.

'Soap opera' narrative is based on a formula of crisis - solution; the worst thing that can happen to a character is followed by the best thing that can happen. Also 'soap opera' is not a story based on the identification of a single character, but many characters in the same location, or in a similar situation. In Blind Date, the narrator is the only constant element; the characters come and go - some characters function better dramatically than others, and some may be more memorable, but none of them are permanent.

In Television Culture, John Fiske writes that in game shows "the narrative appears unwritten, the resolution is as much a mystery to the characters as to the viewer, so the text has less authority to impose itself. In the unwritten narrative... the viewer, like that of soap opera, is positioned actively towards the text by its unwrittenness..." In other words, one of the programmes pleasure's is 'that anything can happen' - the narrative is not working toward a pre-determined climax as with the traditional dramatic form, the possibilities are open ended.

Also, the 'soap opera' format features many characters as opposed to the traditional dramatic form where identification is steered through a single protagonist. The Blind Date format, like 'soap opera', offers a multitude of characters, but within the same identifiable situation.

Narrative and Language

Blind Date (UK) is transmitted at peak viewing seasons during the year, and, when screened, peak viewing time, 8pm, Saturday evening. The programme is produced for family viewing, attracts viewers in all age-groups, and recent programmes feature middle-age and pensioner contenders.

By contrast, Australia's Perfect Match is targeted specifically at a youth market as well as the sponsors who advertise commodities for that market. It's transmitted at 5.30pm, on a week day, immediately before the main evening news. Participants are encouraged to use sexual innuendo, to shock, but to remain within unspecified limitations of 'good taste', determined on the one hand by the Australian broadcasting authorities, and on the other, by unspoken rules not to cause 'public offence'.

Sweden's Who Takes Who, produced by an independent television company on license to Swedish Television, requires no sponsorship, yet attracts more viewers than any other programme. The programme is youth-orientated, though the presentation is more in line with the British model, than say, the Australian model. Before the programme's transmission, Swedish newspaper columnists expressed little confidence in such a programme, as it's the kind of programme that relies on 'participants exhibitionism... that sort of thing might work in England and the USA, but not in Sweden...' The Swedish version is a curious blend of earnestness, sentimentality and high kitsch, and sufficient number of exhibitionist types have appealed to large numbers of voyeur types, even if the programme is more restrained than its Anglo-saxon counterparts.

The 'live-audience' is both spectator, representing the unseen and unheard spectators at home, and integrated into the text of the narrative. The studio audience becomes an appendage to the 'story-teller'; their responses invite viewer's responses, their laughter invites viewer's laughter. They are there to assist the teller tell the tale.

Australia's Perfect Match features a male presenter, Greg Evans (he's about 40), as does the German Hertzblatt, which is compared by a middle-aged Dutch singer and entertainer, Rudi Carrell. Britain's Blind Date is hosted by Cilla Black, a major recording artist in the 1960's, and popular as singer and entertainer. She speaks English in an emphasised Liverpool accent, which, within the regionalist and class structured British population, alienates a minimum number of viewers. Sweden's Who Takes Who is presented by Lill-Babs Svensson, Sweden's equivalent to Cilla Black. Lill-Babs was a teenager singer and recording artist in the 1960's, and has been a popular singer and entertainer in Sweden ever since, which together with her romantic escapades, make her a regular subject of interest in the gossip magazines.

None of the presenters are under the age of 40, which puts them roughly a generation apart from most of the participants who are in their early 20's. The presenter adopts more an 'uncle/aunt' role, rather than that of 'parent', as their function is that of catalyst to male-female union, possibly sexual, traditionally an area parents attempt to hinder rather than aid.

The cynicism and sexual innuendo of the programme is explicit in the male-compared programmes, and for German audiences the appeal of Hertzblatt is based on the lampooning and barbed jibes meted out to participants by presenter, Rudi Carrell. Australia's Perfect Match, under the robust guidance of Greg Evans, treads a fine line between pastiche and parody, at times setting itself up for intentional ridicule, from the overblown scenography and contenders attire contrasting with the distinctly unromantic and unpretentious approach to the 'date'.

Graeme Turner, in his article Transgressive TV, claims that Perfect Match actually subverts the television game show - that there are no winners and "to assume that people watch Perfect Match purely for romantic reasons is to misread the parodic opening titles and to misunderstand how violently it oscillates between formality and cynicism... The program's apparent object of uniting couples is so rarely achieved, and so embarrassing when it is, that it clearly has little to do with the reason for the high ratings." He says the format is a frame for transgressive television, which he describes as "the transgression of conventions, the break with the normal and the predictable, a kind of performance - a spectacle of pure TV."

The aim of subverting a narrative, for the purpose of parody or pastiche, is to get a laugh at the expense of the original form, just as folktales and genre narratives are parodied for the sake of humour. However, humour, national humour particularly may emphasise fears and prejudices within a specific social group, and that a united couple should give cause for embarrassment may be particularly symptomatic of Australian humour.

John Fiske maintains that the couples who return to the programme and describe their failure to match for the amusement of the studio and television public are "refusing the discipline of sexuality." We laugh at experiences that are normally private and painful, experiences usually associated with guilt and self-criticism. He continues that "for a typical Australian, discipline offers a challenge, not a guideline for behaviour."

In Sweden, it may be argued, discipline and social regulations provide a welcome means to conformity and social acceptance. The same may be said of the disciplinary aspect of romance in Britain, within a prescribed class structure, less apparent in Sweden and Australia.

The rare achievement of uniting couples in the Swedish and British models, serve to emphasise a dramatic climax to a prescribed narrative form. Here, once more, a parallel can be drawn with television serials, where at suitable intervals (about twice a season), a major reversal, or dramatic culmination is inserted into the story. Dallas producers claim

that ratings rise considerably for a Southfork wedding, for example. Also, as with other game shows, a 'jackpot' winner once a week would soon diminish the credibility of the jackpot, eroding the viewing pleasure of witnessing an unexpected event, intensified by its rarity. Similarly, in Blind Date, a successful pairing each week would soon dispense with one of the strongest reasons for watching the programme in the first place.

A tale is told in words and words make up languages; a language for men and a language for women; a language for Australians, for northern English, for southern English, for Swedes and for Germans.

Clichés abound as to the differences in the way men and woman express themselves; that women discuss feelings, and men discuss action; men refer to sexual acts and women refer to sexual relationships. The implications of gender and language are examined by Ruth Herschberger, in her book Adam's Rib, and by Dale Spender in Man Made Language. Ruth Herschberger says that "an act implies something done, the exercise of power, the accomplishment of a deed. Thus the sex act for a man implies a goal or climax... A relationship on the other hand is a condition or state of being. It does not necessitate a goal or climax." Dale Spender writes that: "Males, as the dominant sex, have only a partial view of the world and yet they are in a position to insist that their views and values are the 'real' and only values; and they are in a position to impose their version on other human beings (sic) who do not share their experience."

The male-narrated Perfect Match and Hertzblatt, for example, invites participants to 'play the game' according to masculine rules and masculine language. The male presenters, it may be argued, are unwitting (or not, as the case may be) catalysts in a male conspiracy, implying to the male contenders, the possibility of providing female companionship, further implying sex on traditionally masculine terms, as opposed to a relationship in accordance with traditionally feminine values.

The female-narrated Blind Date and Who Takes Who invite contestants to 'play' according to feminine rules and feminine language, within the limits of a patriarchal dominant ideology. "The feminine can try to speak to itself through a new language but cannot describe itself from outside or in formal terms, except by identifying itself with the masculine." Television's patriarchal structure extends to its programmes; a structure based on commerce, encouraging transactions for the sake of profit and gain.

National languages, too, inject their own meaning into a given narrative. Compared to the Romance languages, the Germanic languages have less words for expressing sentiment, and in the case of Swedish, such words are 'borrowed' and adapted from Romance languages. The varieties of English spoken within the United Kingdom determine class as well as geography. A presenter speaking a Northern dialect imbues the narrative with a particular tone determined by the viewer's response to that dialect. (i.e, Northern English = common, or honest, or direct, or parochial, or rustic, unpretentious, etc; British television seems to favour regional dialect - Irish is popular - or the neutral tones of a BBC English). John Fiske describes Australian as "a colourful, often obscene, always changing vernacular language... a series of enunciative appropriations of the English mother tongue and is used with a pleasurable defiance of accepted linguistic norms. It is scandalous, tactical, everyday language." The exuberant and extrovert behaviour on U.S. The Dating Game, can in part be attributed to the hyperbole with which Americans tend to express themselves.

The Blind Date programme structures are similar but the programmes are different. The most apparent differences are between programmes with male presenters and female presenters; they represent 'tales of romance' narrated in masculine language and feminine language. In addition, each national language represents its own indigenous social cultural attributes. Regardless of how restrained a programme may be within a prescribed structure, that structure will not necessarily accommodate the variations of language.

The Blind Date 'tales' adhere to specific scenarios determined by the gender of the narrator and of the contestants. The 'Cinderella' scenario; three half sisters vie for the attention of the handsome prince. The youngest, fairest and most pleasing of disposition, is unfairly neglected until the fairy Godmother appears to ensure that she is united with the prince. The 'Beauty and the Beast' scenario, also concerns three sisters, but here the catalyst to the union is the father, who having plucked a rose from the garden of the Beast, must sacrifice his youngest daughter. When Beauty is able to love the Beast for who he is rather than how he looks, the Beast is transformed into the Prince. The 'father' role of Blind Date's male presenter can be seen as an ominous figure initiating the 'daughter' into a sexual relationship; whereas the 'godmother' role of the female presenter, initiates a union based on empathy.

Tales concerning young men, often the youngest of the king's three sons, embarking on a quest for a princess or maiden, are many, and, like the stories above, are ritualised through the narrative of a television game show. The German tale, 'The Queen Bee' and the Norwegian 'Princess on a Glass Hill' both tell how the youngest of three sons, through resolve and good deeds, is rewarded with the hand of the princess and half the kingdom. In this role, the king - the father figure - represented by the male presenter, is a benevolent figure, rewarding the virtue of the son. In the 'Sleeping Beauty' scenario, the fair princess lies unconscious behind the walls of a stone castle, surrounded by briars. Many young princes attempt to rich the sleeping princess, to awaken her with a kiss, but perish in the attempt. After one hundred years, the fairest prince hacks through the briars to claim his bride. In this scenario, the 'godmother' figure is distinctly evil - she was the uninvited thirteenth fairy godmother who cast a spell of death on Beauty, and all who dwelt in the castle -modified to a hundred years of sleep by the twelfth fairy godmother -and in so doing lay down the challenge for a prince with the required resolve to claim his 'prize'.

The above tales end with 'happily ever after', an essential prerequisite for the Blind Date model, on the proviso that it doesn't occur too often. In a twelve week season of Blind Date, 24 'dates' are arranged, of which two,

perhaps three are 'successful'; that is, that a relationship between two participants continues beyond the parameters of the programme.

Success is bestowed upon a select minority - this is conditional both to fairy tales and to television game shows. The television equivalent to 'happily ever after' is to 'hit the jackpot' around which the television game show is structured. The serial format of television narrative does not necessitate the culmination of the 'tale', or a climax, within each episode. On the contrary, the appeal of the quiz show is that many may try but few shall succeed - whether the big prize, the 'jackpot', is $64,000, or the new car, or the round the world trip, or the 'Mastermind of the Year' title; prizes to be claimed by a tiny percentage of contenders, which is why the high failure rate of Blind Date 'dates' is necessary for the programme's continuation. The rewards of 'true love and happiness' on Tangaluma Island are reserved for a chosen few.

6 SITUATION COMEDY

Subversive Tales - Moral Tales

The similarities and differences that distinguish the television news bulletin and the television debate programme bear comparison to the form of sketch comedy and situation comedy. Both the half hour news bulletin and the half hour sketch comedy show present a variety of items covering a range of unrelated topics, consisting of between one and five minutes, each with an opening and provisional formal closure. Sketch comedy material is often based on the daily events that make up an evening news bulletin, and the comedy programme format may even parody the presentation of a news bulletin (Not the Nine O'Clock News, The Frost Report, Monty Python's Flying Circus, etc). Sketches alternate between 'dramatisations' and 'talking heads' (often face to camera) just as the news bulletin vacillates between news reader and film inserts. The debate programme 'personality' alternates between discourse with live public and guests, and 'on-camera' discourses with the television public like the situation comedy 'personality' addresses the television public, e.g. The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show, The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis, The Gary Shandling Show, The Young Ones, etc.

In addition, as David Marc indicates in Comic Visions, sketch comedy contains a subversive element absent from the situation comedy, which, like the television serial, is concerned with family unity and moral reassurance. Sketch comedy, he claims, has its roots in vaudeville and stand-up comedy routines, which are instantly accepted or rejected. In contrast, "the sitcom is the technology of the assembly line brought to art. Even when live audiences are used their reactions are 'sweetened' with carefully calculated titters, chortles and guffaws. Large sums of investment capital must be assembled to produce a sitcom; all factors must be controlled by recognised experts. The sitcom has no tank towns to tour, but is always a nationally marketed product whose 'effects' are tested on 'sample' consumers and refined accordingly. A complex system of checks and balances among advertisers, networks and production companies continually negotiates problems of textual dissent while the

audience is kept at arms length. A sitcom cannot suffer the massive sting of active rejection; its audience cannot boo or throw tomatoes. It is cancelled only by indifference and a perceived or projected indifference (the ratings) at that."

The situation comedy, like the soap opera, is concerned with re-assurances; firstly, by virtue of the subject material - the unity of the family in the domestic comedy, unity within 'work', or unity within whatever 'situation' the programme describes (prison in Porridge, 'school' in Fame, the medical team in M*A*S*H, etc, representing 'symbolic' families); and secondly, by the drama's narrative structure. The situation comedy begins with a dilemma, or outside threat to 'family' unity, obstacles occur in the process of dispelling the threat or dilemma, but the crisis is always resolved and the 'family' unit remains intact. In other words, within the 25 - 30 minutes duration of the situation comedy, a story is told within the classical structure of beginning, middle and end; in the vernacular of neo-classical narrative theory: protasis, epitasis, catastasis, catastrophe - "establishment, complication, confrontation and resolution."

David Grote argues that the conservatism of situation comedy resists not only change of traditional comic plot, but change of any kind, a view to be tested in examining the evolution of the genre. "The sitcom carries its repetition compulsion to such an extreme that it has all but rejected the concept of plot as a process of change from an old equilibrium to a new... the process by which narrative development is avoided supports the view that television series narrative is essentially circular. The sitcom never reaches a new equilibrium but only returns to that point of stasis from which the episode began."

However, the situation comedy may bear another narrative line, a serial discourse which marks a narrative progression week by week, season by season, familiar to the viewer of soap opera. In some instances the distinction rests with an indispensable personality around which the 'situation' is structured.

The 1990 season of The Cosby Show began with Dr Huxtable and wife, having willingly accepted the departure of their elder children, suddenly confronted with the return of Denise, their oldest daughter - after two years absence 'at college' (the subject of a Cosby Show spin-off) - together with her newly acquired husband and husband's three year old daughter. In the second episode, when Denise and husband find they have no housing and must impose upon Denise's parents a further six months, of the programme's six scenes, only two could be described as 'comic' - both unrelated to the plot.

A break-down of the episode shows:

1a. (ESTABLISHMENT) Living Room. Denise and husband prepare for journey to Rhode Island naval base to prepare moving into their new house. Dr Huxtable enters. Conversation establishes Huxtable's relief that daughter and son-and-law will soon move into a lace of their own. Enter Mrs Huxtable. Exit Huxtable and son-in-law.
(2 min.)
1b. (DILEMMA) Denise and mother alone. The problem: "Do you always tell dad when you make a mistake?" asks Denise. She confides to mother that she neglected to confirm housing arrangements, and hasn't yet told her husband. Most likely there is no house waiting for them when they get to Rhode Island. "Tell him before you leave," insists mother. Denise doesn't. They leave baby girl, Olivia behind, and depart.
(2 min.)
2. (COMEDY SKETCH) Living Room. Dr Huxtable returns from work, tired. His two daughters are about to go out shopping, with Olivia. Olivia insists on staying behind so that Dr Huxtable won't be 'lonely.' Olivia and Dr Huxtable play games, at her insistence. He loses.
(4 min.)
3. (COMPLICATION) Office at Naval Base. Denise and husband at Rhode Island naval base. Denise's mistake exposed during interview with captain. "There's no housing because you didn't confirm it," he says.
(3 min.)
4. (COMEDY SKETCH) Dr Huxtable's home office. Dr Huxtable and Olivia discuss the issue; 'Where do babies come from?'

(3 min.)
5. (CONFRONTATION) Car interior. Denise and husband sit in the car and discuss Denise's negligence. "Our first fight," says Denise.
(2 min.)
6a. (RESOLUTION) Living Room. Late evening. Denise and husband return. A discussion with mother and father follows. Son-in-law takes the blame; because of his negligence they must impose upon their hospitality another six months. Father and son-in-law retire. Mother and daughter go to kitchen.
(2 min.)
6b. (MORAL) Kitchen. Return to story dilemma as presented in scene 1. Discussion between mother and daughter. Denise confides her fear of moving far away from family and friends. "There's a time when a mother and daughter must part," says mother. "But if you call, I'll be there." Message delivered. Story ends.
(2 min.)

Four of the six scenes adhere to the story 'conflict' and are more 'dramatic' (in the television serial sense) than 'comic'. Two scenes, which feature a Cosby routine together with new child star (the youngest Huxtable daughter is about seven and 'over the hill' as far as little girl comic cuteness is concerned), are the only scenes which are 'comic' and have no bearing on the plot. The routines have more in common with Cosby's stand-up comic sketches than situation comedy drama - comedy reliant on Cosby as performer, and his comic delivery, and the four year old girl whose 'comic' affect relates to her ability to deliver lines, both in manner and content, in the mode of an adult.

The Cosby Show adheres to a regular formula of about six scenes between 2 - 4 minutes, beginning with the dilemma, ending with the resolution, and an 'epilogue' exchange of 2 - 4 lines, either between husband and wife, or between parent and child, embracing a moral platitude, most frequently related to child rearing. Like the I Love Lucy programmes broadcast 40 years earlier (transmissions began in 1951), The Cosby Show accentuates the eccentricity of the central character while reflecting an identifiable 'middle' America, and delivering a readily

assimilated moral point. The dilemma of the situation comedy is always resolved with a happy ending.

Bill Cosby, stand-up comic and social satiric of the 1960's, a purveyor of subversive tales, had made the graceful transition to the purveyor of moral tales and parenthood with Cosby's situation comedy which began transmission in 1984, and by 1990 had become a number one rating programme in a number of countries, including South Africa. According to David Marc it offers "a vision of a well-to-do inner-city black family living a life utterly compatible with the values and goals of the suburban middle classes... giving the lie to the idea that such transcendental domesticity is the province of any one racial group."

Like soap opera the situation comedy relies on simple narratives delivering simple messages of moral reassurance (see Television Drama), yet, like sketch comedy, the successful situation comedy often relies on the comic skills of a central character.

The Evolution of a Domestic Comedy Form

The 'situation' of the domestic comedy is the home. Its roots are firmly entrenched in radio entertainment though some analysts see domestic comedy's origins in music hall and variety theatre. Others claim it to be one of the few forms created by television.

When Tony Hancock's comedy extended to the BBC radio public in 1954, his music hall style altered to adapt to the medium. "Hancock was a breakthrough in situation comedy (in the UK) because Galton and Simpson were following leads laid down by some of the American comedy shows which they had listened to on American Forces Network. Whereas other British comedy shows were clinging to the old 'variety' approach, with a five or ten minute break for a musical interlude, they, with Hancock's approval and encouragement, were writing the first British situation comedy show to run the full half hour without interruption."

Hancock's transition to television two years later incorporated the 'realistic' style he and his writers had developed with the radio programme. Scripts related to a single theme rather than a series of sketches, supporting roles were played by actors rather than comedians, and the Hancock 'character', rather than a comic stereotype developed into a specifically British 'archetype', pitted against a social structure to which he was both 'outsider' yet also its representative. The character inspired the Norwegian/Swedish Fleksnes, and probably Japan's Tora-san, the protagonist of the cinema's longest running 'series'.

In 1958 journalist, Peter Dickinson attributed the success of Hancock to the fact that "Hancock manages to avoid the well-worn pitfalls of situation comedy; he is a reasonable man, expecting reason in his relations with the rest of the world and not getting it..."

Hancock's transference from radio to television meant that a number of radio scripts were adapted for television, and even the scripts written specifically for television reveal the radio format of the programme. The following outline of the story and structure of 'Blood Donor' (written by Ray Simpson and Alan Galton), is from the television version transmitted in 1961 adapted from the radio script broadcast in 1957.

1. Hospital reception. Hancock waits his turn with two other prospective blood donors. He is a first time donor and nervous. He talks first to the other donors, and then the reception nurse. His banter includes commentary on the National Health Service, the Common Market, and Labour - Conservative politics. Left to his own devices he makes a song of milk poster; Drink-a pinta milk-a day, to which accompanies a peculiar walk, only to discover his antics witnessed by the rather off-handish reception nurse. He is invited to enter the doctor's room.
2. Doctor's room. The blood giving procedure. Hancock assumes the sample thumb prick completes the process and is horrified to discover that donorship implies approximately a pint. ("A pint? Why that's very nearly an armful!") A discussion of blood types reveals that Hancock's blood is of a rare group which appeals to Hancock's vanity and he is persuaded to donate, on condition that the blood should only be given to the right sort of person. His blood he claims, is:

"Pure anglo-saxon, with just a dash of Viking!" On the couch he faints at the sight of his own blood.
3. Rest room. A discussion with fellow donor (Hugh Lloyd) over his long awaited tea and biscuits. An exchange of cliches and platitudes.
4. Hancock's Living Room. Hancock on the telephone ringing the hospital enquiring as to whether his blood has been used, and if so, to whom. The hospital responds with irritation.
5. Hancock's Kitchen. Hancock is preparing dinner. He is sharpening a large carving knife.
Insert: Ext. Road. Night. An ambulance proceeds down the road with wailing siren.
6. Hospital. The only supply of 'rare blood type' is given to Hancock, who's lost blood having cut himself with a carving knife. "What's the point of giving blood, if you just come back to collect the next day?" exclaims the doctor in exasperation. "It's just like a real bank", declares Hancock. "You make a deposit when you've got a bit over, and then a withdrawal when you're skint." Then he faints. End.

The programme is recorded with two static cameras, either medium shot or medium close-up, with takes up to half a minute long. Apart from the first scene portraying Hancock's antics during his brief period alone, the television camera's function is to record a radio-play with pictures. The narrative is independent of previous episodes, nor is there a story-line to follow up in successive programmes. There were variations from season to season; early episodes of Hancock featured Sid James, a lodger at his East Cheam residence, in later episodes he lived alone which provided scope for some of Hancock's celebrated 'one man shows'.

Domestic comedy twelve years on, had transformed considerably, and although The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin is not typical, it contains dramatic and stylistic features representative of the genre's evolution.

Episode One of The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin (BBC; written by David Nobbs, broadcast 1973):

1. Ext. Semi-detached house, middle class London suburbs.

2. Breakfast table, husband and wife, pre-work ritual; tea, newspaper, doorstep pleasantries and farewell. Cotton thread on suit. Wife removes it.
3. Ext. Reggie walks to station. Montage of street names: Tennyson Ave, Wordsworth Cres, Byron Court, etc. Reggie's v/o.
4. Ext. Office/factory facade. 'Sunshine Deserts'.
5. Office. Explains lateness to secretary, Joan; "Delays on British Rail."
6. CJ's office. Meeting with CJ (company MD) and colleagues, Chris and Tony. Reggie daydreams.
INSERT. Reggie fantasises making love with secretary Joan in the middle of a park.
CJ returns him to reality.
(Presentation of Dilemma): "Are you losing your drive?" he asks Reggie. Doubt's on RP's capabilities. "Middle age can be a difficult time," says CJ. "Not that we're one of those firms that squeeze a man's drive and then dispense with him."
7. Int. Home. Evening. Dinner with wife. Possibility of visit by mother-in-law.
INSERT. Reggie's fantasy. A trundling hippopotamus.
8. 'Wednesday.' Breakfast table scene and pre-work ritual. Same as 1. RP's fly undone. Wife indicates.
INSERT. Reggie's fantasy. "Zip flashing horror in London suburb." Elderly woman neighbour faints.
9. Office. Same as 2.
INSERT. Reggie's fantasy. Making love with secretary Joan on top of desk.
10. Reggie visits company doctor, Doc Morrissey. Dilemma established; RP's mid-life crisis.
11. 'Sunshine Desserts' dessert tasting session. Reggie makes presentation. Overcome with illness. CJ critical.
12. Int. Bedroom. Night. Discussion with wife. She persuades RP to insist on two weeks holiday.
13. CJ's office, following morning. RP requests holiday. Gets afternoon off.
14. Int. Living Room. Day. Visit by sponging brother-in-law, Jimmy. Visit by married daughter and ineffectual son-in-law. Arrangements made for weekend trip to Safari Park.
15. Saturday. Safari Park. RP and wife. Daughter and son-in-law, and baby. Reggie loses control. Leaps out of car in the middle of the lion park. "I'm a failure," he says. "Everything I do is a failure."

The story continues. In the following episode he attempts a weekend affair with secretary, Joan, and fails. Several other attempts to overcome the mid-life crisis also result in failure; finally he feigns his own death, and returns to family life in a variety of guises, insisting Reggie Perrin is no more. The end of the first season of six episodes, culminates with the return of 'Reggie Perrin', his transparent alter-egos are revealed as the shams they are.

The plot structure is spread over the six episodes which make up the first season, then a new 'dilemma' leading to resolution in the following season's six episodes. Whilst adhering to domestic comedy conventions; a central male character undergoing mid-life crisis, with subordinate wife, subordinate secretary; i.e stereotype male and female characters, the programme also parodies domestic comedy stereotypes by defining characters with catchphrases and mannerisms. (Tony = Super!, Chris = Golly! CJ = I didn't get where I got today by..., etc) At the same time there is an underlying pathos and drama to the series/serial, as a study of the male mid-life crisis.

Television comedy employed a serial format as early as the Amos 'n Andy shows of the late 1940's, and more recent situation comedies reveal plot continuity, even if they're not explicitly serial (Whatever Happened to the Likely Lads? The Dick Van Dyke Show, The Phil Silvers Show, M*A*S*H, etc).

The series also illustrates the progressive use of television as a visual medium; visual inserts, visual gags, and a marked development in both editing and mise-en-scene. Shots are briefer (10 seconds or less on average, compared to Hancock's 20 seconds or more) scenes are shorter (15 scenes in 30 minutes, compared to Hancock's six).

Twelve years later the subversive element of The Young Ones, within the conventions and structure of situation comedy affords scope for analysis in the development of the genre. Though bearing many of the traits of the absurdist comedy of the Marx brothers, of more than half a century earlier (not least with the characterisation of three comic types and a

straight man; cf. Groucho, Harpo, Chico and Zeppo - Vyv, Rick, Neil and Mike), The Young Ones emerged as a marked departure from the norms of domestic comedy, while retaining the form.

A summary of The Young Ones episode; 'No Money' (BBC; written by Ben Elton, Lise Mayer and Rik Mayall, broadcast 1985):

1. Kitchen. Neil discovers there is no food.
2. Rick's Bedroom. Furnishings and record player removed by Vyv and Mike.
3. Living Room. Vyv and Mike burning everything on an open fire.
(Presentation of Dilemma:) "We're all broke."
INSERT. Two ghosts carrying their own heads walk through the living room, through
the wall and into the house next door, where a woman is watching television.
4. Living room of house next door - a woman is watching television.
INSERT. On-camera presentation - road safety announcement. (Tomato and sledge hammer compared to car and pedestrian).
5. Vyv goes to woman next door and borrows a cup of sugar.
6. Living room. Vyv throws cup onto fire. The group compose a letter to bank manager requesting an overdraft, which begins; 'Dear fascist bastard...'
Rick speaks to camera.
INSERT. Radio presenter Alan Freeman makes brief on-camera presentation.
7. House meeting to discuss dilemma. ('No money.') Decision: Neil has to get a job. Rick addresses camera: "I hope you're satisfied Thatcher!" Ghosts wander through living room, arguing.
INSERT. Psychopathic killer.
8. Outside bedroom
9. Bedroom. Neil gets a haircut. Pet gerbil: "Don't tell 'em you're a pacifist."
10. Ext. Labour Exchange. No jobs.... Police Station; 'Recruits Wanted.'
11. Int. Alexei Sayle as Mussolini interviews Neil. If he can imitate a walkie-talkie radio static, he gets the job.
12. Ext. Neil in police uniform. A talking tree refers to itself as 'Special Branch.'
13. Int. Alexei Sayle performs on-camera Mussolini routine.
14. Alexei Sayle introduces improvised Eurovision song contest.
15. Neighbours television... kitchen

16. Ext. Street. Night. Neil as policeman. Assigned to raid house where illegal activities are taking place.
17. Ext. House. Night. Neil knocks on door and introduces himself; "Hello. It's the pigs..." A drug influenced friend of Neils opens the door and invites him in.
18. Int. House. Neil apologises to the party of people but insists on carrying out the 'bust.'
19. The rest of the group play cards in the bedroom.
20. A lorry drives through the front of the house.
21. Ext. Street. Night. Two dogs converse with each other, see Neil, and give chase.
22. (Resolution of Dilemma): Neil hastily returns to the house, to find it furnished in extravagant detail and abundant with supplies of food. He assumes he has come to the wrong house. "Fell off the back of a lorry", explain the others.
23. A bomb explodes. The house blows up.

"We used the basic format of a sitcom," says co-writer Lise Mayer, "The cutaways enabled us to do sketches if we wanted, build them into the thrust of the narrative."

"We were much more angry, much more arrogant when we made the pilot of The Young Ones. It co-incided with the fourth series of Not The Nine O'Clock News. Although we were all Python fans there was so much comedy being dominated by the ex-Footlights people and the Oxbridge mafia, and it had all been revue. Stand-up and sitcom seemed quite a different thing to do."

US Sitcom and the Sanctity of the Family

In his article, Television Situation Comedy, Mick Eaton defines three types: the home and family paradigm (most typically represented by Till Death Us Do Part and All in the Family), work (a prototype being The Dick Van Dyke Show), and a "third model" with "elements of both which "usually concerns a group of diverse people somehow connected in a situation outside that of their work-place."

Arthur Hough, in his comprehensive survey of US situation comedy, claims that of the 398 US sitcoms produced between 1948 and 1978, over half belong to the domestic comedy category, which he sub-divides into four major sub-genres: the traditional family (1948 - 1955), which includes I Love Lucy, The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet, The Life of Riley, The Honeymooners, etc; nuclear families (1955 - 1965) represented by Leave It To Beaver, The Donna Reed Show, The Ann Sothern Show, and a number of 'single parent family' variations with Bachelor Father, My Three Sons, The Andy Griffith Show, etc; eccentric families (1965 - 1970) - The Addams Family, The Munsters, The Beverley Hillbillies, Bewitched, etc; and social and ethnic families (1970 - 1978) - The Partridge Family, All in the Family, Soap, etc.

The classifications may seem arbitrary in retrospect, but the evolution of the domestic comedy exemplifies the way in which a dominant ideology modifies popular culture, "defusing any radicalism by the conventionality of the form." (See News)

The 'family' is also central to the non-domestic situation comedies; programmes like M*A*S*H and Fame create surrogate families, with characters representing family stereotypes. In Fame the various teachers represent identifiable family role models; the dance teacher as 'big sister', the music teacher as 'uncle', the english teacher as the severe but good hearted matriarch, and so on. The 'family' is consciously artificial - cross class, inter-racial and representative of various minority groups and conflicting personality types. The 'moral' of each episode is outlined in the programme's opening during the english class 'word for the day'. Like the domestic comedy, family unity is often the central theme for the 'surrogate family' situation comedies; in an episode of Fame, Coco is all set to get the part of Desdemona in a production of Othello, but loses out at the last minute, her loss being the 'family's' gain - the family unit is restored.

The dilemma of a typical episode of M*A*S*H is the threat of a central character being posted elsewhere, or sent home, or going home "MASH unit 4077 is to be split up!"; namely the threat of disruption to 'family'

unity that is always thwarted at the last minute. 283 episodes between 1972 and 1983 followed Robert Altman's film, released in 1970. The sitcom however modified the principal characters, BJ and Hawkeye, from subversives to regressives; wayward adolescent 'sons' cunningly manipulating the benign patriarch, Colonel Potter, and the unruly 'step-mother', 'Hotlips' O'Houlihan. Altman's film was re-edited and re-released (with the sitcom signature tune) in 1973, and exploiting the success of the television series, attracted the large audiences it had failed to do three years earlier.

"Sitcom cannot function without stereotypes. In a space as brief as a thirty minute sitcom immediacy is imperative, and to find a character immediately funny, that a character is a recognisable type, a representative embodiment of a set of ideas or a manifestation of a cliche."

According to producer, Norman Lear, "sitcom would be reduced to mindless escapism without a perspective on reality." He claimed the American comedies of the 50's and 60's was "fifteen to twenty hours a week... of programming... shouting the loudest message in their world. It was saying to the country: you have no race problems; there is no economic concern in the country; we are not in trouble in Vietnam; everyone does have an equal crack at medical attention; there are no problems with the poor and elderly or the uneducated - and all mothers and fathers and children live in absolute harmony - the loudest noise in the house being the popping and crackling of the breakfast cereal in the morning."

The regressive tendencies of US situation comedy of the 1980's and 90's are highlighted by The Cosby Show, a return to the 1950's traditional family, The Gary Shandling Show - self-parodic eccentricity and a textual deconstruction reminiscent of Burns and Allen, and The Jack Benny Show (also 1950's), while US television programming is undergoing a cross-fertilizing process resulting in a number of hybrids; soap-opera sitcoms and serialised drama series. Cheers, though classified as comedy, has elements of soap opera and drama serial. Will Sam Malone get

married? His two long-running relationships, subject to the scrutiny of the fictitious bar public (i.e the regular customers, themselves characters in the series), the mandatory 'live' studio audience, and finally, the television viewer. ALF is a return to the normal family with eccentric guest fantasy situation comedy that gained popularity in the 1960's, such as My Favourite Martian, Mr Ed, Bewitched and their inevitable spin-offs.

At the other extreme, a series such as The Simpsons demonstrate a hitherto neglected subversive element in portraying blue-collar America, a far cry from the first animated domestic comedies, The Flinstones and The Jetsons, two series of the 1960's undergoing revival by courtesy of the Hollywood film studios during the 1990's. Yet like All in the Family (based on Britain's Till Death Us Do Part) in the 1960's, and Married With Children in the 1980's, in spite of the antagonism between family members, the dominant theme remains family unity. For even when shoe-salesman, Al Bundy reflects: ”There’s nothing better than an evening together with family and good friends...” then breaks down and laments, ”Oh God! What a charade!”, looks at his wife Peggy and weeps, family unity is not diminished, despite the ongoing internal critique. On the contrary, the Bundy’s ’conservatism’ (upholding the status quo) accentutates US television’s resolve to perpetuate the myth of the nuclear family, while championing the causes of lower middle class America.

”We are strong,” says Al, in praise of the junk food that has killed Peggy’s fitness trainer. The Bundy’s acquisition of a home computer culminates with Al Bundy’s deftly swumg axe through the array of equipment. Indeed all that pertains to middle class American consumerism and life-style meets a similar fate - demolished verbally or physically - Al Bundy is the champion of the silent majority. The family endures - a living testament to the antithesis of values proffered by the aspiring middle class and childless next door neighbours, Steve and Marcie. ”If humans and dogs let you down,” says Al, ”let’s get a machine. If the machine lets you down let’s smash it to pieces,” thus restoring the patriarchal hierarchy, at the same time voicing a protest against the pressures of ’life-style’ consumerism, glorifying failure in the

US prime time world of power and success, while the family unit remains sacrosanct.

American television's preoccupation with the nuclear family contrasts the reality of its steadfast disintegration. So influential is the US television sitcom 'myth' that when one series portrays the single-parent family (Murphy Brown) in a US Presidential election year (1992), the network responsible finds itself embroiled in political controversy. Similarly, the parodic Soap was taken off the air in the early 1980's when the Moral Majority movement boycotted advertisers sponsoring the programme. In lampooning the sanctity of the American nuclear family,Soap had transgressed US television's unwritten law.

David Marc notes that "by the last years of the eighties, the nuclear-family sitcom was back on top of the ratings, even though, according to the Census Bureau, such families had become increasingly rare: among the have-nots, teenage pregnancies and single-parent households had risen dramatically: among the haves, career-orientated men and women were increasingly putting off marriage until later in life or foregoing it completely; the divorce rate was setting in at about one out of every two marriages."

In 1980 Arthur Hough predicted a move toward heavily dramatic comedy, which he described as "the toughest of all comedy to write and to perform, because it involves the sensitive process of increasing audience tension with serious dramatic elements, and then breaking that tension with comic relief."

Plot, Character and British Social Structure

According to John Cleese, the strength of Fawlty Towers was the work put into structuring the scripts into plots, "that are logically consistent", which took he and co-writer, Connie Booth, six weeks per episode compared to the 1 - 2 weeks of a normal sitcom script.

"We'd start writing one or two things down; an idea at the beginning, an idea at the middle... slowly over two weeks a plot would be constructed... We used to get two or three, sometimes four, threads and then a particular point they come together... the best ones are when they all come together right at the end."

In the episode entitled 'Communication Problems' (broadcast February, 1979), a deaf woman, Mrs Richards, insists that Basil has her money which she had misplaced. The money, in fact, Basil had won on a horse race, an activity frowned upon by wife, Sybil. "Don't say anything to anyone about the horse," says Basil to Manuel; a plot point occurring ten minutes into the episode. Twenty minutes later, facing the accusations of Mrs Richards and her missing money, Basil must extract a statement from Manuel that Basil has indeed won the money on a bet:

Basil: Tell Mrs Richards. Tell her I had the money yesterday.
Manuel: (with pride) Ahem. I know nothing.
Basil: What?
Manuel: I know nothing.
Basil: No, no.
Manuel: Nothing.
Basil: No, no, forget that.
Manuel: I forget everything. I know nothing.
Basil: No, you can tell her. You can tell her.
Manuel: No I cannot.
Basil: Yes, yes, tell her, tell her, please, please, tell her, tell her... I'll kill you if you don't.

In scriptwriting terminology, Basil's warning to Manuel, early in the story, constitutes the set-up, and Manuel's denial 20 minutes later, the pay-off. "Whenever we were getting plot points across we would always make it as funny as possible so that people thought it was put in because it was funny, but at the same time they would have absorbed the plot-point."

'The Germans' episode (broadcast October 1975) consists of three story lines; Basil hangs up a moose head, Basil organises a fire drill and Basil entertains the German tourists.

The three stories, episodes within the episode, each about ten minutes long, are not directly related to each other, but each one leads into the other - each story line culminating in a climax of physical turmoil.

The episode consists of five scenes:

1. Basil visits Sybil in hospital 3 mins
2. Basil puts up the moose head - chaos (Climax 1) 7 mins
3. Fire drill - culminating in fire - chaos (Climax 2) 9 mins
4. Basil in hospital - Basil escapes 3 mins
5. Polly assists German guests - Basil returns (Climax 3) 8 mins

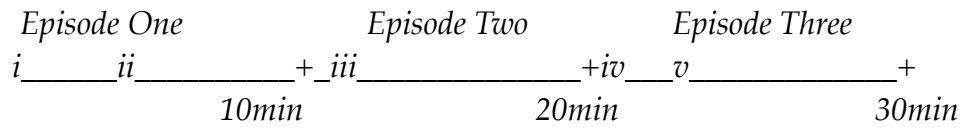

Fig 6.1 The topography of The Germans illustrating dramatic peaks

Climax 1: Polly on the phone to Sybil as Basil hangs up the moose head;
"It's up. (The moose falls off the wall on to Basil's head) It's down again. (to Basil) Did you use a wall plug?
Basil: Give it to me, give it to me.
(He rushes for the phone, falling over Manuel who is still messing about out of sight behind the desk).
Polly (to phone) No, he just fell over Manuel... and he seems to have got himself jammed under the swivel chair... and the flowers have just fallen on him... no, everything else is fine. (Scene ends)

Climax 2: During the fire drill an actual fire has broken out in the kitchen, but Basil refuses to believe Manuel that such is the case. In the panic that ensues when it becomes apparent that such is indeed the case, he injures himself first with the fire extinguisher, than bangs his head on Manuel's frying pan, rendering himself unconscious. (Scene ends)

Climax 3: Having offended a group of German guests with impersonations of Adolf Hitler, and behaving strangely following the affects of concussion, Basil is pursued by a doctor with a hypodermic needle. The moose head from Episode One falls on top of Manuel.

"I like physical acting", says John Cleese. "A physical movement is always funnier than something verbal - it goes in deeper."

Much of the Fawlty Towers humour, as much of British humour, is based on the expression of anger or the inability to express anger - where characters force upon themselves a mask of normality under the least normal of circumstances. "Connie and I have always had a thing about suppressed rage - people who can't express their rage properly, which neither of us can. We always find it very funny to see people getting really steamed up and not being able to 'blast'."

Fawlty Towers, with its combination of imaginative and complex plot structure and ingenious characterisations, reflects the dominating preoccupation of the British situation comedy - the hierarchy of social structure. According to John Cleese, his contributions to the scripts consisted of plot structure and story lines whilst Connie Booth developed the characters.

John Cleese describes Basil as depressed. "The reason why people sympathise or even like Basil, is that he's not in control of his life. The most popular character is Manuel - the kids identify with Manuel amazingly - and I'm sure that's because Manuel is seen as having no control over his life at all. Most in control, and least liked as a character... is Sybil - Sybil seems to be running the show, so there's not much spare sympathy... I think that tells us a lot about how people respond to other people; that it's helplessness that makes us feel good about them. If they can look after themselves then we don't like them."

Basil Fawlty also represents the Englishman 'everyman' placed in the middle of a social hierarchy, impotent before its rigidity and its

permanence. The British situation comedy depicts an 'upstairs - downstairs' scenario with the protagonist permanently lodged somewhere in between. Tony Hancock acquiesced to his social superiors, realising himself to be superior to 'working class' Sid James, or 'colonial' Bill Kerr. Basil Fawlty acknowledges Sybil's authority, content that Polly and Manuel rank lower than he in the hierarchical pecking order.

In The Young Ones, Mike heads the household, with Vyvian as the second in command henchman. Rik, the pseudo-socialist, yields to their authority (to Vyvian because of his propensity to violence), knowing that hippie Neil is permanently placed on the ladder's lowest rung. Everyone dumps on Neil.

The development of Rowan Atkinson's Black Adder character through four incarnations, from the grovelling whining original son to Richard II, to the cynical and shrewd attendant to mad Queen Bess, to the manipulative 'Jeeves' at the service of the dithering Prince George, to the world weary WW1 commissioned officer under the mad command of his superior officers, depict the same basic hierarchy of social sub-ordination. A superior, by virtue of birth rather than merit, thwarts Black Adder's aspirations for social elevation - his only consolation, Baldrick, the social inferior - who has no aspirations whatsoever.

There is no sanctity to the social structure metaphor of British situation comedy but its form is as perennial as the family is to US television's sitcom.

7 DRAMA

Serials

Cindy is an EastEnder. She's concerned that ladies man, Simon Wicks, Wicksy to his friends, is not taking the problems of life seriously enough. "This is real life", says Cindy. "It isn't Dallas."

The British television serial prides itself on a kitchen sink realism, from the 25 years of working class despondency in Salford's Coronation Street, split families in Liverpool's Brookside, the comings and goings of the now defunct Midlands Crossroads motel, or the grit and earthiness of the London East End estate dwellers - the integrity of failure has been the mainstay of the British soap opera, in contrast to the glamour serials of the US and the exultation of success and bad taste, the family sagas of Latin America, and the triumph of mediocrity in the Australian serials.

Neighbours is a low budget serial set in Melbourne's middle class eastern suburbs, where Kylie and Jason's traumas rarely escalate beyond which shampoo to chose at the local Seven-Eleven. If the British serial is about the celebration of oppression, and the American counterpart is the glorification of the vulgar, the Australian serial sits midway in a limbo world, incapable of offending, except by virtue of its own inoffensiveness. Neighbours is a make believe world where there is no poverty, no drugs, no racism, and so clean that for once the term 'soap' is almost relevant. By 1990 it had become a top rating television serial in Britain, and sold to networks throughout Europe.

Australia's Channel Seven (Grundy) Network aimed for "...a less melodramatic serial that didn't look at the 'heavy' side of life too much... a cast of young characters... not about families in conflict but more about the family together looking out to the world." Despite the programme's seeming innocuousness the British television critic, Mary Whitehouse, noted that "... the youngsters in the show are beginning to sleep together, so I'll be dropping the producers a line..."

According to the BBC, "true soap, whether it be weekly, twice or thrice weekly - may be profuse in plot, but it must be simple in presentation, capable of casual viewing by the family while it's completing it's meal. The stories must progress slowly, ensuring that anyone who misses a couple of episodes can pick up the threads without difficulty. One often gets the impression, coming back to a soap after a couple of weeks, that nothing has happened at all. The portrayals tend to be basic, relying more on the personality of the actors than any deep character examination."

'Soap opera' may evoke images of idle housepersons and unemployed and recently redundant labouring persons wiling away afternoons before television sets issuing forth prolonged and meaningless dramas, that become more addictive the more that people watch them. Drawing comparisons to 'soap opera' watching and drug abuse is not uncommon. It's a derisive term and the sooner that television serials are referred to as television serials, so much the better. 'True soap' is the pink bar on top of the bathroom sink, and are unlikely forums for social issues and low-key drama, which can be realised by television serial drama. The term is further confused by large budget fantasy dramas of the wealthy and the ridiculous, grouped alongside low budget dramas aspiring for social realism. Programmers refer to 'daytime soaps' and 'peak-viewing soaps' or 'evening soaps'. According to Dorothy Hobson; "The reality and credibility of the characters and their everyday lives are a particularly crucial ingredient for the success of the British soap operas. There is a world of difference between the way audiences view American series like Dallas and Dynasty, where fantasies and incredible happenings are accepted as part of the fiction, and the realism which is expected from British soaps."

She refers to Brookside which is filmed on a location that actually exists, a Merseyside housing estate, to illustrate that "audiences also view British soaps as fictions, but they expect the serials to be based on accurate factual knowledge of the areas in which the programmes are set and the lives of the people who would live in those areas."

Why Doesn't Anyone Watch Television in Dallas?

No-one watches soap opera on Dallas. The trend among well-to-do west coast Americans is to organise weekend 'soap opera parties', where friends gather and watch taped episodes of the week's offering, with champagne and avocado dip. But not on Dallas. Not even Sue Ellen or Pam in an idle mid afternoon moment is tempted to turn on the television and catch a glimpse of The Bold and the Beautiful or Days of our Lives. Does anyone watch television on Dallas? J R once turned on a television set in time to watch an evening news bulletin announcing that his attempts to start a war in the Arabian Gulf had been unsuccessful.

Dallas gives an impression of taking itself seriously, but the pleasure for many viewers is the programme's unintentional parodic element, such as the unannounced and unclarified physical transformations of key characters - Miss Ellie, John Ross Jr and Christopher Ewing, are replaced and swapped around to the nonchalance of all and sundry, reminiscent of scenes of Don Siegel's Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956). Actor Patrick Duffy's decision to leave the series (permanently), then re-join (permanently) was written into the story line as an assassination by motor car, clarifying his year long absence, though his re-appearance with Pam's awakening from a 'dream', (which it transpired turned out to be an entire season of episodes) left many viewers bewildered. (It gives the dream researchers who claim that dreams last on average less than one second, something to bite on). Executive producer, occasional director and lead actor, Larry Hagman, announced the end of the series in 1990. "There's a limit to what happens to a family and we went over the top." An exchange between J R and Bobby summarises the programme's dramatic theme: "The only thing that really counts is family, right?", whereas the reality as to what really counts is family viewing, and counting up the ratings figures. By the late 1980s Dallas ratings began to wane; the programme represents a television style of the late 1970s too restrained for the last decade of the twentieth century.

In 1979 Clive James described Dallas as "like every soap opera you've ever seen, all rolled into one and given an unlimited charge account...", a

view which bears comparison to Umberto Eco's analysis of Casablanca, as every Hollywood film you've ever seen, all rolled into one. The Dallas creator, David Jacobs, claimed in a 1978 Playboy magazine interview, the inspiration behind the programme was Ingmar Bergman's Scenes from a Marriage, a six part television series first broadcast in 1969. The first episodes concentrate on the contrast between the 'happily married couple', and the destructive married couple, bearing more than a slight resemblance to the marriages of Bobby and Pam, and JR with Sue Ellen.

Dallas, which began as a dissection of marital problems and family feuds, soon developed to embrace a specifically American mythology; the influence and hierarchy of the Ewing family bears no slight resemblance to the Kennedy lineage; two brothers named John and Bobby, set up in the 'business' by Father (Jock/Jack), influential patriarchal figure teamed with steadfast matriarch (Miss Ellie/Rose). The choice of location is significant, in view that at the height of the series popularity, J R is shot by an unknown assassin for unclear motives, and the newspaper headlines of the popular press (in the US and Great Britain) rivalled the coverage of the 'actual' 1963 Dallas assassination. Brother Bobby is left to take over (Ewing), albeit briefly; Jack Kennedy could be written out of the US political drama, but Dallas couldn't survive with J R written permanently out of the series. Bobby (Ewing), with the generous provision of fiction's implausibilities, was resurrected within a year of his 'death'.

Masculine-Feminine: Classical Structure-Serial Structure

The dramatic structure of the television serial has been described as a possible alternative to a 'masculine' narrative form, most evident in the 'classical' structure of mainstream commercial cinema. We have seen evidence of the 'masculine myth' in television and cinema narratives, in news, sport and pornographic films. A 'masculine' structure is described as causal, goal-orientated; based on the psychological identification of a single protagonist and a single problem. Dramatic tension escalates leading to the conflict resolution within a climactic conclusion. Parallels

have been drawn to the male sexual experience, as opposed to the "open-ended, slow paced, multi-climaxed structure" of the serial form, which according to Marsha Kinder, is "in tune with patterns of female sexuality."

Tania Modleski compares the serial's narrative form, with it's constantly deferred resolutions and climaxes, to the rhythms women experience in their daily lives, where there is no resolution, constant repetition and interruptions. Soap operas are constructed around multiple plot lines and offers a number of identifications, minor problems and their resolutions. A story rarely sustains interest for too long which reflects the state of constant distraction the housewife copes with from children, household chores, telephone, etc. She maintains that the soap opera emphasises specifically feminine attributes, dealing with personal relationships, personal and domestic crises, 'training' women to read people rather than just the text. The persistent use of close-ups "contrasts sharply with other popular forms aimed at masculine visual pleasure which is often centred on the fragmentation and fetishisation of the female body." The female perspective provided by the soap opera, accounting for both their appeal and pleasure, although not progressive, at least offer an alternative to a dominant masculine perspective.

Gillian Dyer writes: "The issue of female subjectivity and narrative theory's stress on resolution and coherence are important in the consideration of soap opera. Classic narrative theory cannot, for instance, account for tensions and contradictions that remain unresolved, particularly as regards audiences of different gender. Nor can it account for narratives that do not close, like the long running soap opera on TV. Soap opera offers the viewer a far more open structure through a complex organisation of time, temporary resolutions and a proliferation of enigmas."

The Bold and the Beautiful, with over 2000 episodes broadcast to 1995, exemplifies the serial discourse; an ellipsis protracted and fragmented disrupting linearity and causality, duplicity/ambiguity of main characters (Shiela, like Dallas' JR, exacts both contempt and sympathy

depending on plot lines), complexity of conflicts involving three different families, with the main focus on the Forrester dynasty. Parallel development disrupts lineal flow, extending an undefined ellipsis - a single episode usually follows three plot lines, issues around male - female relationships which are problem raising, or problem identifying, but never problem solving. Establishment shots are avoided, and regard to verisimilitude is minimal - exteriors are as blatantly studio-bound as interiors. Close-ups, interior monologues and exposition through dialogue is extreme; it is soap par excellence. Most viewers are women yet the feminine/feminist label on the narrative's serial structure is an uneasy one.

The classification of narrative forms by gender has its complications. It can be argued that classical structure is more the structure of commerce than gender (raising the issue of 'masculinity' and commerce) however, the serial structure is also implicity related to commerce - a means of ensuring that viewers follow a programme over a prolonged period. It is a narrative device with precedents in Victorian literary magazines (the serialisation of Charles Dicken's novels, for example), in radio drama serials, and the silent cinema serials of Fantomas (1913) Perils of Pauline (1914), and their successors, created to ensure the fidelity of the cinema patron.

Verina Glaessner argues that the study of 'soap opera' has its origins in film studies on the one hand, which emphasises the text, and in television studies on the other, emphasising audience viewing in a sociological context. "A more theoretically orientated study could involve locating a position within the text itself, which would apply regardless of the gender of the particular viewer."

In his analysis of the masculine myth, Antony Easthope maintains that gender is marked in three areas or levels of human experience - that of the body and the biological (male - female); that of social roles (man - woman); and that at which gender is defined internally in the unconscious (masculine - feminine). He says the masculine myth (and

this applies as much to the feminine myth), "aims to bring together all three levels in a perfect unity, the completely masculine individual."

Our understanding of the 'masculine' and the 'feminine' are born of dominant patriarchal ideology, and our identification with either can be attributed to social 'training'. That men watch sport, and women watch soap opera relates to the social training within the dominant culture. Narrative and discourse, the story and the way it's told, doesn't necessarily pertain to one gender or another. The narrative structure for film and television are predominantly (but not exclusively) the structures of commerce; the selling of commodities, life-styles or ideologies.

High Culture - Low Culture: Serialisations and Series

Just as the classification of a 'masculine - feminine' television is a convenient division of sides, ready made for audience identification, so too is television's divisions of 'fact' and 'fiction', two competitive elements vying for air-time, viewers and ratings, each with its 'identifiable' viewing public.

'Fact' - news, documentaries, current affairs, debate and reportage programmes; information; on the one side, and 'Fiction' - drama, plays, television serials and series, on the other; entertainment. Sport, which is neither fact nor fiction, can interrupt, postpone or cancel fiction programmes, but not fact programmes. The political quarter supports parliamentary televising, extended news bulletins, extra news bulletins, extra current affairs, as these programmes are showcases for their own dramatic and narrative talents, whereas the drama programmes represent valuable airtime consumed by 'entertainment'. Most actors, though not all, tend to perform better than political performers, and most scripts, though not all, are better written than political party scripts.

The British dramatist, David Hare, claims that: "The BBC is run almost exclusively by ex-journalists - sportsmen predominate and arts men rarely rise to the top - and there is a sense in which journalists neither

understand nor accept the claims of fiction. They are bewildered and hurt by the idea that a playwright offers something which is necessarily partial, which is only an aspect of the truth, because for them, of course, the truth is verifiable. It is a piece of paper which passes across the news desk. They are most unsettled by the storyteller's central claim - that by compressing events and telling unrepresentative stories in personal ways he may reveal truths which are at least as important as the journalists."

Television serials, 'low-culture soap opera', with writer 'teams' and 'anonymous' authors are at worst, cliché stories with stereotype characters, and at best, forums for social issues and topical events. Serialised drama, with the stamp of an individual author and aspirations to 'high-culture', is rooted in the crises of individuals, and the drama of theatre and 'art-cinema' transposed to the television screen.

As the serial has no predetermined ending it can continue as long as viewing ratings are favourable. A weekly episode requires no closure, nor does the end of a season, regardless as to whether it will continue or not. The series, however, consists of self-contained episodes involving the same characters and settings - its continuation from season to season is also determined by audience ratings. In recent years a series/serial hybrid has emerged; programmes such as Hill Street Blues, LA Law, the BBC's Casualty, etc, with overlapping plots and interwoven story lines.

Serialisations are complete narratives told within a set number of episodes, with a clearly defined beginning and ending; twelve parts of Brideshead Revisited, six parts of The Singing Detective; long running serialisations like The Forsythe Saga, Rich Man Poor Man, or the three part 'mini-series' which has become a popular form for the television adaption of novels. The narrative structure of the series is essentially a literary structure adapted to television; structural forms termed by turn, classical and epic, lineal and cyclic, masculine and feminine.

In an age of televisual post-modernism, critical due is increasingly paid to an dramatic form specific to television; the serialisation in which the writer's credit is the main credit, in contrast to film, where 'authorship' is

bestowed upon the director. Dennis Potter began by writing television plays in the mid 1960's and progressed to serialised drama in the 1970's. Pennies From Heaven (1978) and The Singing Detective (1987) are 'classical' narrative structures 'told' over six episodes; they are narratives with a single protagonist, Bob Hoskins as the seller of sheet music in the former, Michael Gambon as Phillip Marlow, author of detective stories, and victim of a rare skin disease in the latter.

Pennies From Heaven is a chronological narrative interspersed with fantasy sequences to the backing of popular songs of the immediate post-war period in which the story is set. The narrative diverges periodically to pursue a minor character, but always returns to the perspective of the protagonist. In The Singing Detective, several narrative strands are pursued; Marlow's childhood, the 'fiction within the fiction' - Marlow's novel, and subsequent plots which reveal themselves as fantasies of the protagonist. The main story is concerned with the shedding of Marlow's old skin, both physically, as his body recovers from the psoriasis during his hospital convalescence, and metaphorically, as he sheds the 'poisons of his mind', the narratives which make up the indecencies and injustices of the past, and the paranoia of the present. As with Pennies From Heaven, and some of Dennis Potter's earlier plays (Blue Remembered Hills, Cream in My Coffee, etc), the narrative is interspersed with fantasy sequences accompanied by popular songs of the '30's and '40's.

Blackeyes (1989) marks a further development in Dennis Potter's television drama, where the text is so deconstructed as to alienate viewer identification to the point where we question our own participation in the author's semiotic manipulations. The viewer is excluded, or an encumbrance, or finally, one more object of the author's game playing.

Blackeyes consists of four 50 minute episodes, each episode consisting of about 12 sequences. There is no single main character, but main characters; Morris Kingsley, author, narrator and uncle to Jessica; Jessica, a one-time model and inspiration to the fictitious model 'Blackeyes'; Jeff, a young writer and initially a character of Morris Kingsley's narrative;

the police inspector, Sexton Blake, investigating the apparent suicide of Blackeyes. To this list of characters must be added the voice of the author, Dennis Potter, who narrates a story not altogether synchronised to the visual narrative.

Each episode begins with a photographic session; Blackeyes applying for a modelling assignment, Blackeyes modelling, Morris Kingsley photographed for a magazine article, and an outdoor filming session featuring Blackeyes in a television advertisement.

"Do we invent ourselves or do others do it for us?" asks the voice of Dennis Potter in episode one. "Do we think, or are we thought?" In Blackeyes not only do the plots interweave but so too do the characters. The manic police-inspector's speech pattern resembles that of the victim he vows to avenge. ("I'll make them pay my sweetheart", he says, tearing up photographs from her modelling sessions into tiny pieces. "This man is really unhinged", comments Dennis Potter). Morris Kingsley, an author who fabricates a character called 'Jeff', it transpires, is himself the fictitious character - Jeff is the author. The story is structured around the investigation of Blackeye's suicide, but in Jeff's narrative she becomes in turn his lover, and finally independent; whereas Jessica, the character on which she is supposedly based, does kill herself.

The narrative is built on frustrations - the inadequacy of the characters to achieve their goals, the laboured and protracted speech mannerisms, the pacing of scenes that extend the frustrations of the characters onto the viewer. The continual presence of the author's voice (and the sound of his word-processor), references to television texts (Jeff impersonates the gibberish sounds of The Flowerpot Men, a Watch With Mother BBC childrens television series from the 1950's), are narrative elements that continually refer back to the text; constantly preventing the viewer from becoming absorbed into a fictitious but self-contained story. In Blackeyes, Dennis Potter attempts to do the opposite of most television narratives which is to convince the viewer that the story on the screen is as 'real' as the medium can convey. In Blackeyes the viewer is reminded that the story is not 'real', that we are watching texts within texts, and if a

narrative 'sense' is lost somewhere in the sounds and images, the viewer is invited to participate as a secondary author, to restore a narrative order of their own devising.

Dennis Potter writes that "a television play is always in danger of collapsing into the ceaseless flux that surrounds it. The prevailing unexamined 'naturalism' of the medium as a whole, and the way the living-room set itself becomes just another sort of domestic appliance, continually works against that alert attention which any writer wants to evoke in his reader or his audience... But isn't this the dilemma of the writer in general in our contemporary world?"

The demands of the television serialisation are that much greater, yet so are the rewards. The Danish series, Matador, written by Lise Norgaard (1981), recounting the community of Korsbaek between 1928 and 1947 over 20 episodes, concentrates on two families - the established merchant class family and the rising nouveau riche. No one single character is emphasised, no one conflict dominates. The episodes range from 50 to 70 minutes and Danish television (DR) respected the author's intention that each episode be allowed the time it takes to tell. (Once exported, however, some television stations re-edited the series to fit into a prescribed 50 minute time slot).

Similarly, the German series, Heimat (1984), written and directed by Edgar Reitz, chronicles a Westphalian village from the end of the Great War to the 1980's. Originally conceived as a film for theatrical release lasting 15 hours and 20 minutes, it was broadcast on television in 11 episodes between 60 and 90 minutes duration.

However, the mainstay of television drama is the weekly series, usually about 50 minutes long, stories built around a single character, or duo, dependent on a 'character' actor or actors, and like mainstream commercial cinema, if not imported directly from Hollywood, so influenced by Hollywood style narrative as to make little difference. Like Hollywood cinema, the series is strictly bound by the conventions of genre; the western series, the police series, the private detective series,

the agent series, the law series, the science fiction series, the medical series, etc.

The pre-occupation of the US television series, like serials and situation comedy, is the prevailing unity of the group or family. The 'family' in LA Law consists of the patriarch, Leland Mackenzie - the morally resolute and authoritarian head of the law firm/family; the 'eldest son', Douglas Brackman, ruled by money and professional commitment to the detriment of his private life; the 'middle sons', Mike and Arnie, and the adopted 'younger brother', Sifuantes, champion of the weak and oppressed. Arnie's secretary, Roxanne, is the token 'teenage daughter' with ongoing personal crises, but when a financial windfall allows her the freedom to leave work, the 'family ties' are such that she stays on, in order not to disrupt 'family unity'.

The representation and idealisation of the family/group can be discerned in series including Mission Impossible, The Man from UNCLE, Kojak, Hill Street Blues, Startrek, etc, emphasising (a) 'the happy family' and (b) the social function and moral strength of the unified group. British series frequently emphasise the 'outsider' or 'individual', a perennial example, The Prisoner, where the 'wayward son' is continually and unsuccessfully coaxed into re-joining the 'false family'.

David Thorburn compares the television series to the tradition of melodrama of the Victorian novelists with its reassurance structure and moral simplification. He emphasises the importance of the principle actor and suggests that "the smaller television screen (is)... perfectly adapted to record those intimately minute physical and vocal gestures on which the art of the realistic actor depends", without the exaggerated 'malicious' affect of the cinematic close-up.

In The Melodramatic Imagination, Peter Brooks argues that in melodrama virtue is tested to the limit by evil (villains) but evil is finally defeated by the forces of good. Melodrama is consistent with the modern consciousness because it's always provisional in its dramatic resolutions. The forces of evil are inevitably the driving impetus behind the

narrative, and that 'good' should continually triumph, says Brooks, accounts for melodrama's lack of prestige. Culture and quality drama should be tragic, providing insight into the ultimately tragic nature of the human condition. Melodramatic characters have no basis on reality; they confront each other with their deepest and most intimate feelings, beliefs, fears and anxieties. Melodrama, like the drama of psychoanalysis brings to the surface repressed feelings and desires, and as with dreams and nightmares not usually expressed in the wakened state can be portrayed. In melodrama every conversation is a confrontation, which, according to Brooks, is one of the secrets of its fascination.

The term melodrama combines the Greek words, drama (action) and melo (music) and has emerged as a kind of meta-genre combining romance, adventure, horror, tragedy and comedy. Where realism demands that characters be well-rounded and psychologically plausible, melodrama explores the way characters go through all sorts of transformations of 'identity', likening it more to folk tales with their themes of metamorphosis, crisis and rebirth.

But avoiding realism in television drama does not necessitate a departure from values of quality. Troy Kennedy Martin, author of the BBC's Edge of Darkness, writes: "The deep-rooted attitude shared by artists, critics, and executives within the industry alike that naturalism is synonymous with TV drama must be got rid of... (the new dramatic form) will be much more personal in style. It will compress information, emphasise fluidity, free the camera from photographing faces and free the structure from the naturalist tyranny of time. Through stream of consciousness and diary form it will lead to interior thought, interior characterisation. Further, it will open up 250 years of novels and stories from Defoe to Virginia Woolf, allowing television to draw ideas from a mainstream of English creative life rather from a naturalist backwater."

The Television Film

Films made especially for television is a comparatively recent innovation, instigated by the flagging Hollywood film industry in the 1960s. An NBC film entitled 'Fame is the Name of the Game' produced in 1966 is regarded as the first Made for Television film in the US. (Don Seigel's remake of The Killers, fondly remembered as Ronald Reagan's last film, and made for television in 1964, was rejected on the grounds of excessive violence and was distributed theatrically instead.) Just as films had been compared derisively to theatre in the early days of the cinema (echoes of derision which rebound to the present day); so were films made for television, 'MTV Movies', reviewed with contempt, summarised as B products limited by their low budgets, hasty production, unknown actors and a structure which incorporated commercial breaks.

The US MTV film quickly emerged as an identifiable television form in contrast to the Hollywood studio productions, each form with its own commercial demands: theatrical films produced to attract ticket-buyers, television films produced to attract advertisers, and plotted accordingly, to accommodate segments of advertisements every 15 - 20 minutes.

In Europe the divisions are less clear - the European television networks, during the 1980's, have become the largest producers of films intended for theatrical release, as well as television. As most European television, up to the 1980's at least, is predominantly public service television, without the pressures of advertising sponsorship, a television film is a far more diffuse area of study. Original plays for television were commissioned by the BBC as early as 1947, and developed into regular television drama programme allocations - Playhouse, The Wednesday Play, Play for Today. The plays began as studio bound televised drama, and according to Shaun Sutton, 'the moment of truth for the single (television) play' occurred in the early 1960's with the production of Dennis Potter's first plays, The Confidence Course, Alice, and two Nigel Barton plays; the Garnett/Loach/Sandford production of Cathy Come Home, and Nell Dunn's Up The Junction. In more recent years

productions have included John Schlesinger's An Englishman Abroad, the dramas of Alan Clarke, and with formation of Channel Four, the remaining barriers between film for television and film for cinema, disappeared for good. Television films such as The Draughtsman's Contract (1982), My Beautiful Laundrette (1984) and Letter to Brezhnev (1985), were considered good enough to enable cinema distribution. Steven Spielberg's debut, Duel (1971), a television film for Universal studios, failed to get cinema distribution in the USA until the 1980's after its favourable reception at European film festivals.

Television has also had its effect on the aesthetic of film production; Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho (1960) was made with his regular television crew from Alfred Hitchcock Hour television show, to enable a quick production and a 'television look' imitative of the B films of several decades earlier. French director, Jean Renoir, directed his version of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde in 1959, Le Testament du Dr Cordelier, using television recording techniques, and introduced by Renoir himself, in a television studio, filmed entering the television building and preparing himself for the on-camera presentation.

According to John Morris, the Director of the South Australian Film Commission, the main distinction between films for television, and films for cinemas, is risk. "The thing about TV is that there is a clearly defined upper limit. If you are highly successful in TV you know how much money you'll get; and if you're just good you know how much money you'll get; and if you're bad of course you get nothing! In cinema there is no upper limit because a film, if it takes off, can make millions and millions and millions. So theoretically there is much more money to be got out of cinema than out of TV but the risks are that much greater."

Films on TV

Before films were made for television, the film industry purveyed its own views on the new medium; the ’films on TV’ subheading refers to

the industry's representation of television. In 1948 televersion ownership in the US was 1%; by 1952 close to 60%.

In Dreamboat (Binyon, 1952) Clifton Webb plays an academic who disdains and conceals his earlier career as swashbuckling star of the silent cinema, Bruce Blair. His former co-star, Ginger Rogers, now a television hostess, uses their old films, with modified intertitles designed by the TV producer, to advertise Double Passion, Exotica and Five Sins perfumes. Webb indignant over his 'rediscovery' presses charges, and the accused placed on trial is Television itself. Webb, to prove the inanity of the medium, tunes into a used car salesman, then invites the opposition to 'pick a station' and comes with a commercial for hair tonic. In the court case against television arguments for and against (TV producers/Ginger Rogers - for; Webb - against) formed these oppostions:

TV- : TV+
Webb : Rogers
serious : fun
academic : popular
isolation : sociable
intelligent : crass
culture : commerce
art : money
knowledge : entertainment

Yet, although Webb, now a withdrawn dedicated teacher of literature, scorns the new medium, the ultimate victory is not television, but the movies. He signs a Hollywood contract, begins a movies star career anew, and together with his bookish daughter, rejects an academic career (as 'Ironheart') in favour of fun, glamour and Ginger Rogers.

The British film, Meet Mr Lucifer (Pelissier, 1953), made the following year, exploited the new television mania (television is the agent of the devil), and in subsequent years the industry's preoccupation with television became apparent, not only in technological innovations (Cinerama, widescreen, 3-D, stereo, etc), but also content. Charlie

Chaplin's exiled European king's horror over the commercial skullduggery of the new medium in A King in New York (Chaplin, 1957); the commercial possibilities of television and the pin-up girl in The Petty Girl (Levin, 1950); leather jacketed motorcyclists disdain of the diner TV set in The Wild One (Benedek, 1954); alien Klaatu's bemusement - the television newsreader as the first non-military human face he confronts in The Day the Earth Stood Still (Wise, 1951); Ginger Roger's as a gangster moll in Tight Spot (Karlson, 1955) - staring at a blank wall is more diverting than the television set in a hideout motel.

At the end of All That Heaven Allows (Sirk, 1955) Jane Wyman (Mrs Scott) loses out on young gardener Rock Hudson but gets a TV set as a Christmas present from her two grown-up children to compensate: 'drama, comedy... life's parade at your finger tips' says the salesman as her doubting face is reflected in the screen. The television set is the icon of alienation and isolation. In Nicholas Ray's Bigger Than Life (1956) James Mason turns up the TV volume playing funfair music, to drown out the sound of his slaying his own son.

With Rear Window (1954) Alfred Hitchcock provided insight into the 'new voyeurism' that television manifested, directing a film he described as 'about people watching people' at the height of American preoccupation with television. L B Jeffries, a photographer confined to a wheelchair with a broken leg, watches his neighbours to alleviate the boredom. The sub-characters that make up the sub-plots of the surrounding neighbours represent projections of Jeffries' own views on marriage and relationships. His negative views culminates with the most abhorrent aspect of married life of all; that a man can be driven to murder his wife. These sub-plots, seen through the windowed frames, resemble episodes of television dramas with presentation, conflict development and resolution.

A middle-aged couple own a dog, which is pampered and spoiled, as though it serves as a substitute child. The dog is killed and the woman especially reacts desparately, arousing sympathy and indig-nation from the other neighbours. At the end of the story they've acquired a new dog.

A newly-wed couple enter an apartment and close the blind. Jeffries ignores this couple almost entirely. Occasionally the young man opens the window, half-naked, for fresh air, only to be called back by his wife who's demanding attention. At the end of the story the couple argue; the wife has the last line in the film: "If you told me you'd quit your job we'd never have gotten married", she says.

Miss Torso is the nickname for the attractive young dancer across the way. She regularly entertains, always men. She is sociable to all of them, but resists all of them. In the closing minutes of the story Stanley comes home, a tubby little soldier with glasses. He heads straight for the refridgerator. But she loves him.

Miss Lonely-Hearts is the middle-aged woman who lives alone. She makes dinner for two, but her guest is make believe. The pretence is too much - she breaks down and cries. She goes out to a cafe and meets a man, invites him home, but his advances become violent and she fights him off, forcing him out of the apartment. "That's a very private world out there", says Jeffries' detective friend. As Lisa Fremont is fighting off Thorwald in his apartment, Miss Lonely-Hearts prepares herself to take an overdose of tablets. She hears her neighbour playing a wistful melody on the piano and stops. Finally she meets the composer and they become friends.

In the opening credits the composer gets up tired and listless, according to a radio broadcast, and tries a few chords on the piano. But he can't find the melody. He tries out a tune with his agent (Alfred Hitchcock), but it's still not right. At a party he finally gets the tune, and plays it with inspiration. Miss Lonely-Hearts hears the melody and puts the tablets away.

Lars Thorwald argues with his invalid wife. But when he speaks on the telephone she can get up in order to eavesdrop. She's not ill at all. The next day the bedroom curtain is drawn, and Thorwald is in the kitchen with some large blood-stained knives. There's no sign of the wife. Finally

Thorwald is provoked into revealing his guilt. His wife's body is buried in the newly-laid cement floor of the upstairs apartment.

Jeffries tunes into Channel 1 (first window) a murder mystery drama; did Thorwald kill his wife? Channel 2: sex comedy - Miss Torso vs the wolves, reunited with Stanley; Channel 3: melodrama - Miss Lonleyhearts; Channel 4: sitcom - the newlyweds; Channel 5: the married couple as soap opera drama. Even Jeffries' own relationship takes on a new perspective when viewed from a distance; as he watches Thorwald attack his girlfriend Lisa, Jeffries agonises over his impotence. Through the 'extended - eye' of his overtly phallic telephoto lens he watches 'his' woman attacked by another man. Now that she has become an object of his gaze she becomes of erotic interest. When they're in the same room he regards her with indifference. Lisa is interesting only when she's on 'TV'.

For Hitchcock Rear Window "is a film about people watching people." Many cineastes regard the film as a metaphor for the cinema itself. Within the confines of the living room glaring at the television's flickering screen, we all become people watching people - specifically watching the most intimate and private aspects of people's personal lives. Nurse Stella's accusation that "we're becoming a nation of peeping toms" is directed as much to the viewing public as to Jeffries, for as he is an immobile but self-willed observer to the scenarios played out in the apartment windows facing his own, so too is the television viewer watching in self-imposed volition, the scenarios portrayed on the screen. The relationship between Jeffries and Lisa Fremont is comparable to that of the film maker behind the camera and the performer in front of the camera, as well as the spectator watching the screen - our own legitimised form of voyeurism.

Now, more than 40 years on, the industry's preoccupation with television continues; the satire of Network (1976), the indignation of Broadcast News, 1987 (William Hurt fakes tears in an interview), the outrage of Quiz Show (Redford, 1994: producers manipulate television's most popular programme for commercial gain).

Nowadays films are as much in television as about television - the narrative structure of recent box offices successes; Short Cuts, Forrest Gump and Slacker, represent more the fragmentary and ongoing structures of television than the causality of classical Hollywood narrative.

8 TWIN PEAKS

‘Created by Mark Frost and David Lynch,' claims the series credit. Mark Frost, with his background as a television scriptwriter, has provided a story line and characterisations which allow Lynch to exercise the full reign of his visual prowess. Twin Peaks is both auteur (customarily reserved for the cinema), and peak hour commercial television drama. A television drama with distinctive tonal variations.

Lynch is a 'choirmaster' to a group of collaborators which make up some of the more engaging talents working within American film and television. Among the fourteen directors is Tim Hunter, who directed River's Edge (1986 - the film begins with a high school girl drowned in a river in a small American town); Diane Keaton, whose directorial style in Twin Peaks was evident in her highly original feature film debut, Heaven (1989); Tina Rathborne, who directed Lynch and Isabella Rossellini in Zelly and Me (1987), Stephen Gyllendaal who directed Paris Trout (1991) with Dennis Hopper in the title role, and Waterland (UK, 1992), and Duwayne Dunham, Lynch's editor on Blue Velvet and Wild at Heart.

Mark Frost's writer's credit extends to ten episodes; the other regular contributors (among a total of nine writers) include Robert Engels (co-writer of Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me) and Harley Peyton. Under Lynch's direction and inspired by his predilection for the bizarre, they created a series which revitalised the ailing medium of the American television serial drama. Serials which had dominated audience ratings up until the late 1980's had folded; Dallas, Falcon Crest, Dynasty; entrenched in a television drama style of the 1970's.

Although the interiors are recorded in the modest Los Angeles City Studios, Twin Peaks features a generous proportion of exterior location shooting (Snoqualmie, near Seattle, in Washington State), and shot on 35mm film. Principle cinematographer, Ron Garcia, avoids the usual flat television lighting in favour of soft hues and suggestive chiaroscuro.

Twin Peaks, however, is not just well-produced television drama. Twin Peaks succeeds because it is not just television drama. It is television, all television. It is soap opera, melodrama, murder mystery, situation comedy, high school romance - Twin Peaks is the unabridged collection of television clichés. It is Peyton Place, Gibbsville, Days of Our Lives, The Andy Griffith Show, The Blackboard Jungle, Columbo, The Prisoner, and much more besides.

'Casablanca became a cult movie because it is not one movie... it is "movies "', suggests Umberto Eco. Twin Peaks is 'cult television' for the same reason.

Eco maintains that using just a few of the formula 'from a repertoire that had stood the test of time... the result is simply kitsch.' Casablanca is the accolade of the Hollywood system because its authors have 'used wholesale' the 'repertoire of stock formulas.'

Twin Peaks does not use the entire repertoire of television formula, no one programme could, and is shamelessly kitsch. Television is ephemeral and the cinema endures. Casablanca resonates as soundly now as upon its release fifty years ago. If Twin Peaks does not simply disappear into television's depository of ephemera it may well be due the programme having gone beyond television cliché and extracting chunks of film history.

It is 'the murder mystery', with Holmes and Watson (Cooper and Truman) in pursuit of an archfiend, Moriarty (Windom Earle). There are elements of 'black comedy'; Bobby and Shelly conducting their clandestine love-affair before the salivating and incapacitated Leo Johnson. Andy Brennan's charge of a six year old boy, whom he is convinced is a murderer. Nadine's preoccupation with the silent curtain runner. The doughnut fixation of Lucy Moran.

It is 'the romantic drama'; doomed love between James Hurley and Donna Hayward, between Ed Hurley and Norma Jennings, between Audrey Horne and her millionaire boyfriend, John Wheeler, between

Harry Truman and Jocelyn Packard, between Dale Cooper and Annie Blackburn.

Twin Peaks is also film noir, screwball comedy, melodrama and gothic romanticism. It is It's a Wonderful Life, Peyton Place, Frankenstein, Sunset Boulevard and Blue Velvet. It is also 'surrealistic'; 'the imaginary tends to become real,' transgressing the established modes of television narrative. Measured against US television's interminable output of television drama, Twin Peaks is decidedly odd, yet the odd is consistently juxtaposed against the conventional and the identifiable.

Some of the initially normal characters become odd; Leland Palmer, Major Briggs, Benjamin Horne; while other decidedly odd characters are introduced as the plot develops; Dr Jacoby, Laura's analyst, Margaret, the 'log lady', FBI forensic scientist, Albert Rosenfield, supervisor Gordon Cole, 'the man from another place', the giant - and as many others as the series progresses. But the majority of characters are identifiable from any number of American television dramas. Sheriff Truman from The Andy Griffith Show, Dr Hayward from General Hospital, the high school students from Blackboard Jungle, and so on. The 'tragic' characters of the series (James Hurley, Josie Packard, etc) are contrasted against 'malevolent' characters - Leo Johnson, Jean and Jaques Renault, later Windom Earle, and others.

But the unifying character is FBI Special Agent, Dale Cooper; his contrast with the psychopathic 'Bob' is as purely white and purely black as any two opposing characters are likely to be. Cooper is paradoxically the most straightforward character, and the most complex. He is without blemish either physically or morally. As an outsider he has no dark secrets; indeed his function is to cast light on the 'darkness' of others.

The hunt for a killer becomes an excuse to visit small town America with its idiosyncratic characters, and sub-surface perversities. The heightened absurdity of specific plot and character contrivances periodically reduce the validity of the 'place' to parody and pastiche. Consequently, the series is imbued with the dynamic of the unexpected, where absurdity

contrasts the conventional. It is television in which the viewer is denied a 'reading' (dream sequences, 'lodge' sequences) amidst television in which the viewer is thoroughly familiar.

The People

The polarising of opposites prevails throughout the series, and the development of key characters provide examples of the series' binary structure: about thirty plot-bearing characters are presented in the first episode, most of whom undergo a conversion from one extreme to another. These make up stories within the story, which reflect the essence of the main narrative. As we go beneath the image of the pristine Laura Palmer, we uncover someone else; the person who is Laura Palmer's shadow - promiscuous, predatory, drug addicted: defiled.

Leland Palmer is the grieving father, 'a highly respected citizen of the community,' according to Sheriff Truman (II.4). Leland becomes deranged through grief, his hair turns white and he begins to 'dance out' his madness. He is transformed into a 'vengeful' murderer, and suffocates the injured Jacques Renault in his hospital bed, the man suspected of Laura's murder. Finally, he is the 'psychopathic' murderer, as he kills his niece, Madeleine, by beating her to death, and throwing her in the river as he had done with Laura. The conversion is complete: the persona ('mask') of his personality is stripped away to reveal the face of 'Bob', the embodiment of evil.

'Bob's' identity is not revealed until the second series (II.6) yet those who describe his appearance many episodes earlier, are Leland himself, his mediumistic wife, Sara, and Laura's cousin, Madeleine. 'Bob' remained within the family, until Leland had destroyed himself in a fit of rage, locked in a prison cell, beating his head against the stone wall.

Sheriff Harry S Truman, as stalwart a character one could encounter in the pantheon of American television drama, is, at the end of Episode

One, revealed to be passionately involved with Jocelyn Packard, the beautiful Hong Kong widow of the sawmill owner, Andrew Packard.

His blind entanglement leads to his undoing. He ignores the evidence of Jocelyn's duplicity - her attempted murder of Cooper, and successful murders of underworld figures in Seattle, and her implication in her husband's attempted murder. Truman is finally a witness to another of Jocelyn's successful ploys as she shoots her former 'owner', Thomas Eckhardt, then, mesmerised by an unknown fear, dies before him. (II.16) Truman, as upright and steadfast as the president from which he takes his name, retreats into hiding, incommunicado, at the mercy of copious quantities of alcohol. Only an attempted murder by one of Eckhardt's envoys, the seductress Amanda, jolts him back to reality. (II.18)

Truman's ordeal - the initiatory journey through a hell shaped by desire - is the ordeal the series protagonist, Cooper, must also face. The unsullied souls of Lucy Moran and Andy Brennan, Ed and Nadine Hurley, Eileen and Will Hayward, even Donna and James, make their respective descents into passion's darkness.

Lucy and Andy, well intentioned innocents, and as likely a pair of twin souls to be encountered in Twin Peaks, drift apart after communication failures concerning Lucy's pregnancy, and Andy's poor sperm count. Lucy's brief infidelity leaves her uncertain as to who is the father of her expected child. There are dark moments for Andy and Lucy both, but finally she chooses Andy regardless (II.22) and the couple are reunited in one of the series' two instances of a return to unity. Bobby and Shelly constitute the other.

Ed and Nadine Hurley's relationship makes a similar cyclic return to its uneasy status portrayed in Episode One. Ed's clandestine affair with Norma, the owner of the Double R Diner, comes out into the open following Nadine's concussion, where she regresses into a seventeen year old high school girl. (II.1) She embarks on a high school romance with Donna's former boyfriend, Mike, whose 'conversion' is as drastic as Benjamin Horne's. From an unruly brawling delinquent (I.1), under the

powerful ministrations of Nadine, he transforms into a well-dressed quietly spoken young man, with brylcreemed hair and open-eyed awe over Nadine's sexual prowess (II.20). After a second blow on the head, however, Nadine reverts to her 'true self', and reclaims her hold on Ed (II.22). Ed and Norma's marriage plans are abandoned.

The victim of the most savage 'practical joke' - and most drastic 'conversion' - is Leo Johnson. Leo Johnson is introduced by his vehicle (I. 1) - a murderous truck lifted from the storyboard of Steven Spielberg's Duel. When Bobby Briggs and Leo's wife Shelly drive to Shelly's place to pursue their amorous diversions, the sight of Leo's truck is enough to promptly cool their ardour, and send Bobby's hand to the gear stick's reverse position.

Leo passes his time by terrorising Shelly, and running drug deals across the border. He is involved with a catalogue of illegal activities -and for all his jealous rages against Shelly, his own sexual entanglements are many. Laura Palmer's last night was spent with Leo.

Leo's shotgun wounds, on the eve of the sawmill burning down (fired by Norma's husband, Hank; I.8) leaves Leo mentally and physically handicapped - a drooling vegetable before Shelly and Bobby's ongoing affair (II.1). His sudden recovery scarcely enables him to reek his vengeance on the defenceless Shelly (II.13), and he flees wounded into the night, only to become a victim himself in the malevolent hands of a psychotic more demented than himself, Windom Earle (II.14). He becomes the tortured and demeaned victim he had made of his wife, a house slave, at the sadistic whim of Windom Earle. The fate of Leo Johnson (ultimately undisclosed) and the completed conversion from persecutor to victim, sees him the hapless dupe to Windom Earle's elaborately fiendish practical joke - he attaches a wire to Leo's teeth which is connected to an explosive device, set to ensure Leo's rapid demise with so much as an ill-timed twitch. Lynch fulfils the obligations of narrative drama's formal closure with parodic brutality.

The Place

A 'gothic' element pervades Twin Peaks - 'a timeless town', embracing the decades between 1950 and 1990. Cooper and Truman search for the community's 'lost love' - the person behind the portrait of Laura Palmer.

Ghostwood, outside Twin Peaks, is a mysterious part of the forest where spirits and people alike, disappear and reappear. From Major Briggs to the husband of the 'log lady', Margaret, twenty years earlier.

The forest is the foundation of the Twin Peaks community; its timber is the town's lifeblood, yet as the story opens, the sawmill is running at a loss and Benjamin Horne and Catherine Martell attempt to hasten its bankruptcy in order to implement their redevelopment scheme. The scheme would mean the end of Ghostwood as a forest. Following Benjamin's 'conversion' (II.16) he determines to 'save' Ghostwood, at the same time protecting the local pine weasel.

More sinister powers are at work, regardless of Benjamin's and Catherine's schemes; Ghostwood is the 'unknown' and the 'unknowable' - the realm beyond the enclaves of civilisation. Ghostwood is 'nature' to Twin Peaks' 'culture'. Shots linking scenes consist of trees blowing in the wind - the forest; or traffic lights swaying over an empty road - the town.

Ghostwood is linked to an arcane past - Hawk, the native American deputy, describes a 'white lodge' and a 'black lodge' housed within the woods; 'the dweller on the threshold where you face your shadow', he says. (II.11) Following Major Brigg's disappearance (II.10), Cooper concludes 'there's a powerful force that exists in those woods.' (II.11)

In the final episode Cooper, during the ritual of evening coffee, unravels the mystery of the Ghostwood map containing its oblique references to the giant and the dwarf of the red chamber. Windom Earle, forces Annie through a secret opening in the forest, and leads her into the Black Lodge. The idea 'that a little opening could exist and we could go

somewhere else', says Lynch, 'excites me.' Cooper enters the realm from which he will not return.

Transgressions: (1) Television Codes

The first episode established a form for the series, whereby television drama conventions alternate with parody. As we attempt to orientate ourselves in the 'whodunnit' aspects of a television murder mystery, we are set adrift amid irrationalities and television genre burlesque. By the final episode even the Norwegians involvement in the Ghostwood redevelopment project is imbued with a certain logic.

In Episode Three Lucy recapitulates plot points of Twin Peaks' favourite television soap opera, 'Invitation to Love' and excerpts are screened till the end of the first season. Episodes to 'Invitation to Love' begin with the facial close-ups and interminable dialogue of daytime soap opera, as played out by the programme's four principle characters: Jade, Chet, Montana and Jared. It becomes more macabre, more sinister as it develops, correlating to the escalating violence in Twin Peaks. In the penultimate episode (I.7), as the Johnson household's television screens Chet shooting Jade, Shelly shoots Leo, who flees wounded into the forest.

'Each day brings a new beginning and every hour holds the promise of... an invitation to love,' claims the programme announcer. 'Yeh right', says Shelly, in an early episode. The final episode of 'Invitation to Love' (I.7) sees Shelly traverse full circle her domestic situation. As she shoots Leo, the programme shows a close-up of a handgun despatching one of the soap opera's leading characters. Shelly's life and the 'Invitation to Life' television serial begin both as soap opera drama and end in film noir.

Twin Peaks embraces the tube as fearlessly as it embraces its narrative forms. The television serial convention requires a recapitulation of plot and characters in order to refamiliarise viewers, usually an interior dialogue scene - the breakfast table at Southfork, the law firm board

room in LA Law. Cooper's Tibetan deduction technique is a further example of Lynch's transgressive approach to television drama - an exterior sequence involving a blackboard, a map of Tibet, a glass bottle and a bucket full of stones. Cooper provides the assembled cast with a background lecture on the political oppression of Tibet and claims that 'following a dream three years ago' he had ' subconsciously gained knowledge of a deductive technique involving mind body coordination operating hand in hand with the deepest level of intuition.'

He lists the names of the characters onto the blackboard and casts stones at the glass bottle as each name is called out. A broken bottle will single out a key figure in the mystery, perhaps even the culprit.
Truman: Coop. The idea for all of this really came from a dream?
Cooper: Yes. It did.

Truman slaps him on the shoulder, smiles and nods. The gesture is directed toward the viewer.

Julee Cruise sings a Lynch ballad in the pilot episode, Audrey dances to an Angelo Badalamenti theme on the juke-box at the Double R diner. 'Isn't this music just too dreamy?' she asks Donna. Yet the purpose of their encounter is to underline Audrey's estrangement from her father and explain her hostility toward Laura. 'Did Laura know my father?' asks Audrey, before succumbing to the music in slow sensual movements emphasising the sexual jealousy on which her enquiry is based.

Likewise Leland Palmer's preoccupation with dance and music serves both as a sexual metaphor and unsettling element of transgressing the television mode: Leland, grieving, plays big band music ' Pennsylvania Six Five Thousand' and dances clutching a portrait of Laura. When Sara enters, he grabs her and insists, 'We have to dance for Laura.' Leland's dancing create uneasy scenes of Dionysian excess combined with a macabre humour, which culminates in the murder of Madeleine. (II.7) In this sequence he breaks the portrait glass, cuts his hand and smears blood on her image which he then presses to his face. Leland's 'dance of

grief' which inspired an entire dance floor at the Great Northern Hotel in the previous episode, leaves the viewer intrigued and disorientated. Leland's blood on Laura's portrait already indicates his implication in Laura's death.

The first season concluded with Cooper shot in the chest by an unknown assassin. The opening of the feature film length first episode to the second season begins with Cooper, wounded in the chest, and incapacitated upon the floor. While an ancient hotel room service waiter agonizes over the delivery of Cooper's glass of warm milk, the giant appears to Cooper and 'tells him three things,' including that 'the owls are not what they seem.' Also something is forgotten - a note to Cooper it transpires, concealed beneath Cooper's bed. The cliff hanger 'Who shot Cooper?' ending of the first season pays homage to the 'Who shot JR?' device of Dallas ten years earlier.

The second season suggests a tendency toward extremes of eccentricity which were moderate in the first. Self-parodic elements are advanced - the cry of an anonymous guest, 'Godamm that pie is good', introduces us to the Double R diner. By the sixth episode Leland is revealed as the murderer, and Lynch's directorial hand portrays one of the most savage scenes of violence made for prime time television. At the roadhouse James and Donna grieve over the death of Harold Smith, Julee Cruise sings two Lynch/Badalamenti numbers ('The World Spins' and 'Rockin Back Inside My Heart') as the sheriff, Cooper and Margaret 'the log lady' sit at a table and watch. Margaret has already assured Cooper that 'something is happening.' Light descends on Cooper and the giant appears. 'It is happening again,' he says.

Leland transforms into Bob before the mirror and puts on a pair of white gloves. He holds Madeleine and punches her with clenched fist, then picks up her limp semi-conscious form as if to dance. 'Laura... my baby,' he mutters. 'You're going back to Missoula Montana.' He pushes her head into a framed landscape painting. A predatory bird lurks in the foreground. Missoula, Montana is Lynch's place of birth.

The scene is cross cut with Leland's transformation into Bob, and intensified with a roaming spotlight and hand held camera. Bob's roars evoke a bestial hunting scene. Cooper is lost in his trance at the Twin Peaks roadhouse, and the giant shakes his head and disappears. An old man waiter approaches Cooper and tells him: 'I'm so sorry.' Julee Cruise continues her melancholic ballad, and the atmosphere of loss and inevitably affects Donna and James, who sit holding hands in a nearby booth. Donna weeps. The ambivalent contrast of sentiment and cynicism, of psychopathic violence and mawkish humour, is more unsettling than the extreme violence of the murder itself.

(2) The Family Unit

The focal point of US television drama, whether soap opera, situation comedy or the weekly drama series, is always 'family.' American television's preoccupation with the mythical family and mythical family unity extends beyond the parameters of TV drama and into news bulletins, advertisements and presidential elections. Twin Peaks, on the other hand, is concerned with community and the social structure of the community. Not only is the community more significant than 'family', it emerges that family in Twin Peaks conceals deceit and fraud that result in, at best, disruption (the Haywards) and at worst, murder (the Palmers).

The focal point of the television series is the 'image' of Laura Palmer - both figuratively and literally. The portrait of Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) stands framed in the Twin Peaks High School glass cabinet along with school medallions and trophies. Laura is a prize. The smiling portrait of Laura is the image of youthful beauty and innocence - she is the pride of the Twin Peaks community, the homecoming queen, an 'American sweetheart' straight out of a 1950's copy of True Romance.

Laura's picture is an image of ambiguity that pervades not only the high school corridor, but the Palmer residence; the bedroom of her best friend, Donna; the home of the introspective Harold Smith; the outsider, James

Hurley, and the desk of Twin Peaks' elder, Benjamin Horne. Laura belongs to everyone.

Father daughter relationships constitute a particular complication in Twin Peaks, not least the incestuous relationship between Laura Palmer and her father. Audrey Horne, whose sexual precocity sabotages father's business deal (I.1), decides to investigate Laura's death herself, and secures a job at One Eyed Jacks, one of 'father's' more clandestine business ventures, by tying a cocktail cherry stalk into a pretzel with her tongue. Her first client is to be none other than the establishment's (and her) 'patron', a prospective encounter which teasingly ends the series' first season.

Audrey's tale about helping Cooper find Laura's murderer is further subterfuge concealing her jealousy over father's interest in Laura. Audrey's suspicions have estranged them - she is resolved to become her father's lover, without 'the bite of the serpent' that poisoned Laura. As the series develops the antagonism between father and daughter is displaced by clan loyalty, and following Benjamin's 'conversion' ('I just want to be good' II.16), they collaborate to do humanitarian 'good deeds'; saving the pine weasel and saving Ghostwood from redevelopment.

Meanwhile Audrey embarks on a brief romance with a young millionaire colleague of 'father's'; John Justice Wheeler, whom, at her behest, plunders her of her virginity in his private jet, just minutes before he takes off for South America (II.20).

Her now unhindered alliance to father, results in her chaining herself to the vault doors of the local bank (in protest against the bank's involvement with the Ghostwood project: II.22), on the same day Andrew Packard, together with Pete Martell, comes to check the contents of a bank box left by arch-rival, Thomas Eckhardt. The bomb that kills all three is one of a number of barbed 'practical jokes' which make up the final episode.

Another, is the departure of Donna from the Hayward household, when she discovers her biological father is none other than Benjamin Horne (thus Audrey's half-sister). Benjamin's new found urge 'to be honest' discloses this jumbo-sized skeleton in the Hayward closet, so that Dr Will, too, undergoes a conversion from peaceful loving 'good father', to enraged and violent 'non-father'. 'We're so happy to have a daughter like you,' Dr Hayward tells Donna in the closing minutes of the first episode. In the final episode Donna stands weeping on the doorstep, to leave for destinations undisclosed.

(3) Narrative Conventions

The final episode portrays a series of transformations as characters become their psychological opposites, the most drastic of which occurs in Cooper himself. At the Double R, Cooper, using Sara Palmer as a medium, tells Major Briggs, 'I am in the Black Lodge with Windom Earle.'

Cooper 'loses himself', both literally and metaphorically in the labyrinth of red velvet. 'Some of your friends are here', the dwarf tells him. Laura appears. 'I'll see you again in 25 years,' she says, then disappears. The giant appears, sits next to the dwarf and explains to Cooper that he and the dwarf are 'one and the same.' An old waiter serves coffee which turns solid.

Cooper's showdown, first with Windom Earle, then Bob, culminates in a deal that for Cooper's soul, Annie is allowed to live. Cooper and Annie are found in the forest and in the bathroom mirror of his hotel room, Cooper reveals his 'conversion' into Bob. Cooper it seems has lost touch with reality - he has succumbed to his unconscious 'dark' side.

Bob is the wild primitive force - an antithesis of Cooper. Long haired, unshaven, slovenly dressed, mad with uncontrolled irrational sexual appetite. Cooper is the clean shaven, immaculately groomed and obsessively controlled celibate. The dichotomy between the two

characters likens Orpheus and Dionysus, Baldur and Loki. Cooper and Bob are the archetypes of a post modern quasi mythology.

Cooper's wholesome form conceals an uneasy obsessive mind. He is poet, psychic and psychotic. His tenuous contact with reality was expressed through one of the few pleasurable recourses of his physical senses - drinking coffee. Cherry pie might be next on the list, but sex wasn't on the list at all, making Cooper an easy mark for the sexual destructivity that 'Bob' represents. Cooper's coffee is a solid plastic lump and he has lost his grasp on reality. 'How's Annie?' he gloats into his transformed reflection, savouring the pleasure of releasing 'Bob' upon the next unsuspecting victim. Cooper's days of celibacy, self-control and rationality are at an end. The final credits appear over a cup of solidified coffee. The portrait of Laura Palmer emerges against the black background. The story however is incomplete.

Twin Peaks is a collection of folktales and myth, of television and cinema. Cooper’s narrative path constitutes what Joseph Campbell refers to as a monomyth. The first stage of the monomyth describes the separation of the hero from his home and 'the call to adventure'. This is followed by the trials and victories of initiation. The third stage constitutes the return and reintegration into society. Without this final stage the hero has failed to integrate wisdom or pass on his teachings to others. Campbell cites the example of Prometheus who is trapped by his inability to integrate wisdom, "crucified on the rock of his own violated unconscious."

"The norm of the monomyth requires that the hero now begins the labour of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess, back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community..." The final episode of Twin Peaks leaves Cooper ('the good Dale') trapped in the Black Lodge while his 'unconscious' self, consumed by the psychopathic 'Bob', prepares to run amok in the community he has attempted to revitalise after the traumatising affects of Laura's murder.

In Lynch's film release, Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me (1992), portraying the events leading up to Laura's murder, Laura awakens to find a blood-covered woman in her bed. 'My name is Annie,' she says. 'The good Dale is in the Lodge and he can't leave.' In the final episode of the television series Cooper journeys into the Underworld to retrieve Annie; Orpheus undertakes his quest for Eurydice. Orpheus is the poet of love, Dionysus, its daemon. Baldur is the refined poet of Nordic myth and Loki, his heinous assassin. Orpheus journeys into the underworld to claim Eurydice, poisoned by the bite of a serpent. Annie is abducted by Windom Earle and the serpent that bit Laura Palmer poisoned her beyond redemption.

Cooper and Bob are archetypes of a post modern quasi mythology which has generated records, T shirts, pulp fiction (The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer, The Autobiography of FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper, An Access Guide to Twin Peaks), and charter trips to Snoqualmie for Japanese tourists who are served Dale Cooper coffee, slices of cherry pie and have themselves photographed wrapped up in plastic on the banks of the Columbia River. According to Lynch, 'Twin Peaks on television is gone. The jury is out on whether or not we will ever be able to go in there again.' Cooper's destiny likens that of Baldur - he remains in the underworld until all creatures weep for his release.

9 TELEVISION RHETORIC

Links

"The BBC is conducting a search for a superwoman. She must have a super personality, charm, tact, a mezzo voice and a good memory. She must be as acceptable to women as to men. She must photograph well. She must not have red hair and must not be married." So advertised the BBC in 1936 prior to the first live broadcasts for an 'announcer hostess.' Red sensitivity was a major concern; a redhaired girl may appear to be without hair at all.

Until the advent of commercial television in the early 1960's, BBC Television newsreaders were anonymous voices behind news item film, still photos or the test pattern. Stations oscillate between the link presenter personality - the familiar face - and the unnamed voice behind the trailer or station logo.

The presenter aids the televisual 'flow', ensuring the fluid transition from one programme to the next. Yet while the viewer registers links as facilitating television's continuity, for the station links and trailers consist of segments of television rhetoric. They are for selling programmes and marketing the station's identity. When TV station executives choose the face and voice of a presenter, they choose a mode of narrative - the recurring presence that is both familiar yet not intrusive. Where news demands authority and credibility, links require amiability and control.

The facade of control is a prerequisite to credibility, created by the presenter, the station logo, the computerised clock, and outside the hours of broadcasting, the test pattern. The clock precedes transmission start, news bulletins and follows evening close-down. The clock is the icon of actuality - the image of regulation. The clock at the beginning and end of Hill Street Blues expresses authenticity and credibility for the programme's narrative; just as the television medium perceives itself as the purveyor of legitimacy.

Advertisements

A man in a dinner jacket stands in an elegantly furnished room, inhales on a cigarette, and turns to address the television public:

"Is there a cigarette that helps take the fear out of smoking? The answer is yes. One cigarette. One cigarette that takes the fear out of smoking. Because it's made with Dye G-L; a great scientific discovery that protects YOU from certain harsh irritants in the smoke. And that one cigarette is Phillip Morris. This exclusive ingredient, Dye G-L, protects you from irritants. That's why Phillip Morris gives you every good thing you want from a cigarette, without the need for filters or gadgets. Remember, Phillip Morris, in the great new King Size, or the popular and famous Regular Size. The one and only leading cigarette that has always used Dye G-L, the scientific ingredient that means gentler smoking. So, because you want protection, because you want full flavour, full aroma and full smoking pleasure, change to Phillip Morris, the cigarette which takes a real fear out of smoking."

So runs the text for a 1950's television advertisement for cigarettes. By the 1980's, when in most countries cigarette advertisements are banned, a film of a moustached man careering down a South American river in a canoe and a special pair of boots, is sufficient 'rhetoric' to promote a particular cigarette brand.

In Film Art, David Bordwell, describes four attributes of the 'rhetorical film';

1. Focuses on the viewer - attempting to induce the viewer to a new conviction, intellectually or emotionally.
2. The subject of the film is not an issue of scientific truth but a matter of belief - it is up to the filmmaker to make a convincing case for this conviction. This implies the expression of ideology.
3. If the issue cannot be 'proven' the filmmaker addresses the viewer's emotions, rather than presenting factual evidence.
4. The viewer is persuaded to make a choice effecting the daily life routine; what shampoo to use, who to vote for, what record to buy, what

kind of God to believe in, support or rejection of military aggression, ecological action, etc.

Although these attributes are most conspicuous in the advertisement, other examples of 'rhetorical film' on television include:

(a) party political programmes
(b) videos
(c) TV links and trailers

Like the 1950's cigarette advertisement, the early political party broadcasts featured a politician talking directly to the camera. Appreciation for the sophistication of the television medium has resulted in the political party 'promo', exploiting the devices and technology of music video production.

Similarly, the public service film is no longer a wagging finger and an authoritative voice. An anti-smoking film, produced in Sweden by Alf Mork, and shown on television sets throughout four continents, won international acclaim. (The film was banned in Sweden).

A young girl, about 13, lies naked on a carpet, filmed from the waist up. She is holding a smouldering cigarette. She looks at the camera then closes her eyes. A stream of black tar begins to pour on the girl's chest, at the same time a low-rumbling explosion emanates from the sound-track and the camera zooms into the flowing black tar, which now covers the girl's chest. A narrator's voice claims: "Twenty cigarettes a day make half a pound of tar in a year." The image now consists of black tar, and white text reads: "If you start smoking before age 15 you have extra high risk of getting lung cancer." The film lasts 35 seconds.

The form or substance of a film defines its ideology, just as a film's ideology is contained within its form. A stylistic analysis of the advertisement describes the stages from substance to ideology and vice-versa.

In Introducing Stylistics, John Haynes, describes the process accordingly, in a diagram which can be read from top to bottom or bottom to top:

Ideology - what the message is, who or what is represented by it

Situation - the time and place, the main character and opposition character, the conflict; what is described

Discourse - the way in which the 'story' is told

Form - sequence and structure of camera shots

Substance - sounds and images; what we see and what we hear

Fig 9.1 Reading the Message

In Television Culture John Fiske defines the codes of television on three levels: Reality, Representation, Ideology. In other words, the situation, how it is represented electronically, and how that representation is structured into a narrative form, and how the spectator is able to 'read' that representation through socially acceptable ideological codes.

What we see and what we hear can either be analyzed or interpreted. The committee who banned the televising of Alf Mork's anti-smoking film interpreted the black stream of tar as a "phallic symbol" and unsuitable for public broadcasting. An analysis of the same film may lead to a different conclusion.

Similarly, our interpretations of the television advertisement leave us susceptible to its persuasion. According to Peter Conrad "the purpose of the ads is to fictionalise the things they're promoting. Even perhaps to mythologise them - which means to ally them with the gods who prompt and reprove us... the age of advertising is a latter-day age of faith, which reconstitutes myths and ritualises the dreary secular routine of our existence."

Videos

Music videos are a form of advertising as their main purpose is to sell records or recording artists. Broadly speaking, music videos are either narrative or descriptive - in the latter case showing the artist singing the song in a studio or concert, and using the accompanying images to describe the situation of the performance without any intention of 'telling a story'.

'Narrative' videos tell a story either with, or without, the aid of the song text - an instrumental video by Phillip Glass entitled Jealousy, within its prescribed three minutes, relates the story of a husband's act of violence over the discovery of his wife's infidelity. The husband is tried for murder, released on the grounds of mitigating circumstances ("defending his honour"), the wife bears a child to her now deceased lover, dies in childbirth, and the widower husband vows to raise the child as his own. The husband's profession as photographer enables a visual style based on the early experimental 'motion' photographs of Eadweard Muybridge (nee Edward Muggeridge - emigrated from Yorkshire to California) in the late 1800's. An entire drama in three minutes told with images, still and moving, and two fabricated newspaper front pages.

The theme to the video of Bronski Beat's Small Town Boy relates to the victimisation of a young homosexual - in this video no effort is made to integrate the song to the images, which independently relate a narrative of a youth in search of friendship/companionship. The primary location is a swimming pool and the youth's gaze at young men in swimming trunks establishes the source of the conflict, and allows a free range of associations; for example, a slow motion shot of a young man diving into a pool intensifies the gaze of the observer (in this instance, Jimmy Somerville who sings the song and plays the lead role in the video), and hesitates long enough to evoke a reconstruction of the David Hockney painting 'A Bigger Splash' - also the title of a film made by Hockney in the 1970's about the London gay scene. Other visual references include Jimmy Somerville under a 'Manpower' advertisement billboard, and a breakfast scene with an uncomprehending father, absorbed in 'cracking a

hard boiled egg'. When his son finally leaves home he can offer him a five pound note, but can't return an outstretched hand of friendship. The repeated coda of the song text, 'Run away, walk away, run away', is edited to the image of Jimmy Somerville on a train, and various shots of railway track and departing Inter-city expresses. Finally he is seated in a train and strikes up friendship with a group of youths of the same age-group.

A period of rock video narrative experimentation flourished for a few years in the mid 1980's, but by the 1990's most video promotions relied on technological gimmickry and computer animation techniques. The rock video, born of advertising returns to advertising.

10 CONCLUSION

A Televisual Form

Links, advertisements and videos represent a narrative form by and large peculiar to television. These are forms in which narratives are contained within short segments, either with a barrage of images of information, or within the scope of a single shot. MTV's Buzz represents an on-going development of loading the television screen with an optimum of sound and vision. The artist, Tom Phillips, who worked with Peter Greenaway to create the eight part A TV Dante, claimed that "the general view is that television fails if not everything can be understood within a single viewing", whereas the aim of A TV Dante was that "we have failed if the viewer can understand everything within a single viewing." The aim of the programmes, he said, was to draw the spectator back for second and third viewings, as the flow of information was too much to absorb in one screening.

A TV Dante contains the text of Dante's Inferno, illustrated with images of nature and David Attenborough's commentary, of art, of television, of enacted scenes, of modern day representations of Dante's text, at times separately, but most frequently, fighting for space on the same screen, a multi-layered presentation of information, image, literature and inserted extracts of conventional relevant television programmes.

The post-modernist artist becomes a player in a game of signs, an operator in an electronic media network. amidst an anonymous interplay of images which he parodies, simulates or reproduces... "wandering about in labyrinth of commodified light and noise, endeavouring to piece together bits of dispersed narrative... disseminating multiple images and signs which he himself has created and over which he has no control."

Richard Kearney describes "the post-modernist paradigm is that of a labyrinth of mirrors which extend infinitely in all directions - a labyrinth where the image of the self dissolves into self parody."

The MTV programme, Buzz, exemplifies "bits of dispersed narrative" structured around a programme theme and formatted in way similar to the music videos transmitted 24 hours a day on MTV satellite and cable stations around the globe. The programmes are 25 minutes long and divided into segments between two and two and a half minutes. Themes have included 'Heroes', 'Love and Sex', 'Censor', etc; subject material considered relevant for a predominantly youth market. (The programmes are originated by MTV Europe and boast international co-operation with contributions from eastern and western Europe, Australia, north and south America, and some Asian countries).

A programme entitled 'Creation' (1990), about artistic creativity, shows:

1. Opening sequence: video and computer images of faces and human forms - a voice over discoursing on the nature of inspiration, creativity and art. (2m30s)
2. 'Buzz' logo, musical coda and programme start. (30s)
3. Still b/w photographs with captions/music background and voice-over of interviewed photographer; "Every artist is attempting to create something." (2m)
4. Rapid montage sequence of actors being interviewed. Most 'clips' include one or two spoken words; 'fun', 'great', etc. (1m)
5. Buzz logo, musical coda - Data: texted items of information. (30s)
6. Rapid collage of paintings; "images of rock and roll" according to the voice over of the American male artist. The soundtrack features hard driving rock. "Art is competing with images, television..." he says. (2m)
7. The music is more ethereal, accompanying video images, occasionally the face, and a voice-over of a Palestinian woman video artist. (2m)
8. An interview with an American woman writer who describes the inspiration to one of her pieces as the opening of a Madonna concert. She refers to the deconstruction of post-modernist writing, and the birth of an idea as "Eureka-land." Sometimes she is on-camera, sometimes bathed in projected b/w images. (2m)
9. Buzz logo - musical coda: collage of images and sounds. The caption: 'Look with both eyes.' (2m.30s)

10. Examples of computer animation. The American woman artist says that computer animation was created by the US military, but with this technique she is creating "a visual language." (2m)
11. 'Future' proclaims an on-screen graphic. Children paint, and the music soundtrack includes their voices. An Hungarian graphic artist declares his inspiration from the paintings of children. His poster is pasted upon city centre bill board. (2m)
12. Two British cartoonists show their strip; 'post-modernist feminism'. "It's fun," they say. "We never take it seriously." (2m)

The programme is structured into segments pertaining to creativity within the arts: photography, drama, painting, video art, writing, 'television', computer animation, children's art - graphic art, the comic strip. Each programme is similarly structured; an episode entitled 'The Love Show' (1990) begins with a two and a half minute introduction of facial close-ups and whispering voices. The segments are divided into; Rules of Love - illustrated with wildlife shots of mating rituals; What is Love - on-camera interviews (including Spanish film director, Pedro Almodovar who claims that "love makes you weaker, but this is necessary"; Homosexuality; Soap-opera ('Number of countries where Dallas is broadcast - 98'); Erotic dancer; Jain buddhist ("Violence breeds violence, love and compassion breed love and compassion"); Mills and Boon romances; 'How to ask for a date'; Fetishism.

Two and a half minutes is the maximum length of time for any one subject, and length of shots rarely exceed two seconds, with most much shorter, including several rapid montage sequences with twelve or more images per second (i.e. a series of images on screen for less than a twelfth of a second). Captions and quotations are either interspersed or disrupt the flow of images. The soundtrack includes non-stop music, also fragmentary; fragments of voice-overs, interviews, and sound affects.

The structure of Buzz is a structure representative of television; twenty five minutes divided up into segments of between two and two and a half minutes, comparable to the structure of the evening news bulletin, of sketch comedy programmes, of situation comedy programmes, of

serials and series. The BBC programme series, The Rock Years, chronicling the 1960's and 70's with news footage spliced together with contemporary popular music, is a similar 25 minute format of two to two and half minute segments, also comparable to the news bulletin format because it is a type of 'news' programme. The success of the programme can be attributed to its popularising of history; nostalgia for the parents and pop-history for their off-spring.

Where programmes such as Buzz and The Rock Years digress from conventional television is not in structure, but the content within the structure. Such programmes, (including A TV Dante) utilise sound and image as separate sources of information, optimising to the point of overload, the amount of information encoded within the image (picture, text, captions, rapid cutting, montage, superimposition and split screen) and sound (music, song text, musical sound affects, ideational sound, natural sound, voice-over, voice interview, voice narration, dialogue, conversation). Conventional television form synchronises sound to picture, a 'television form' (if it can be called so), juxtaposes the two. Tom Phillips says that his irritation with television is due to it being "too slow." So trained is the viewer to the conventions of television narrative that scenes and segments are 'written and read' within the viewer's mind before we see and hear the sounds and pictures issuing forth through the television receiver. The television 'glance' is all that the content warrants.

Richard Kearney suggests that "structural linguistics furnishes us with a valuable weapon in the destruction of the author... This enables us to replace the modern notion of the book (as a project of the authorial imagination) with the post-modern notion of the text as an impersonalised process of writing where the author is absent."

In the same way the television programme, the film, shop windows, signs and food packaging, are authorless 'texts', in turn assemblages of signs, words and images created corporatively - no authors, no artists, no individuals - just consumers and producers.

The Post Modern Hero of Television

In the dramas and myths of antiquity the hero was half mortal and half divine, a man favoured by the gods. At the story's conclusion the protagonist had undergone a transformation while the hero left the dramatic arena unchanged. The dramatic function of the hero is that of catalyst, the narrative agent which ensures the protagonist shall overcome the obstacles raised by the adversary.

Traditionally, the dramatic hero helps the protagonist defeat the adversary, the domestic comedy and television serial patriarch is the unchanging assertion of moral strength. The newsreader is the voice of impartiality narrating the two-sided conflict and coming to the aid of the 'right' side - the 'us' side, helping us defeat the adversary through the rhetoric of word and image.

The newsreader, the detective, the situation comedy patriarch, the television drama patriarch - they have all been heroes in their day, and now their heroic status is being undermined. The hero is no longer favoured by the gods, the status of the hero is being questioned by an approach to narrative termed post modern.

Richard Corrigan suggests that television's narrative form has 'an instability that both severely troubles a more traditional story and perfectly accommodates the viewing of contemporary narrative. With either the serial structure and the single epic screening of one of these post modern epics like The Singing Detective, the narrative and its audience must literally make and remake characters and incidents whose definition is nonetheless constantly eroded by the expanse of time they inhabit.'

The post modern narrative lets no authority go unquestioned, no power remains unchallenged. The questions as to who is in charge and why, make up the basic tenets of post structuralist and post modern thinking. The post modern television hero is a fictional character no longer capable of defeating the villain. With the culmination of every confrontation he is

the prize idiot, disappointed, disillusioned, frustrated and foolish. He is beaten by circumstances. All attempts to portray issues with the clarity of black and white, good and bad, hero and villain, fail. He is impotent in the face of adversity. Masculinity no longer resolves issues and overcomes crises - it creates them. The Marlboro man, masculine icon of the 1960's and 1970's, lighting one more cigarette to the resounding chords of The Magnificent Seven, by the 1990's is dead with lung cancer.

Yet the post modern crisis and the crisis of masculinity that the non-traditional narratives of television proposes, is not necessarily negative. What they propose is a change and the opportunity to refute issues of gender in favour of issues of humanity. The failure of a patriarchal dominance need not necessarily predetermine the success of a matriarchal dominant ideology - the post modern television narrative suggests action requires reflection, reflection can lead to the appropriate action.

In drama, the television series of Dennis Potter, The Prisoner, Inspector Morse, Twin Peaks, Dallas, Dynasty have either transgressed television's mediocrity or raised it to the level of time-enduring cliché; in situation comedy it is Fawlty Towers, Black Adder, Hancock and others. Television's unending stream of narrative is dominated by traditional stories of action-orientated men solving problems - in drama, comedy, debate programmes and news bulletins. Another kind of non-traditional television narrative is gaining increasing acceptance, failing to succumb to the transcience of televisual ephemera.

The main characters are invariably male, and ultimately 'losers'. They are men in grey suits and dark ties attempting to resolve dilemmas, and failing. In contrast to the traditional heroes of action and invincibility these are the men who in the face of adversity, break down and weep. The men in grey suits are not only characters of dramatised fiction, but of current affairs and news. The dramatic structure of television's narratives creates fiction of daily events, with the newsreader as the central figure, and as much the 'loser' as Twin Peaks' Dale Cooper, the 'Village's'

Number Six (The Prisoner), or Potter's Philip Marlow, The Singing Detective.

The post modern television hero fails: Dale Cooper becomes the psychopath he was attempting to destroy, Number Six escapes 'the village' only to be 'imprisoned' by himself, J.R. Ewing, in the open ending of Dallas' final episode probably commits suicide. Inspector Morse not only solves cases, he also fails to solve cases. The sitcom heroes - Basil Fawlty, Al Bundy, Hancock, Black Adder - fail continually, ensnared in the traps of their own devising.

When the structure of dramatic narrative is applied to current affairs, television news bulletins manufacture dramatic oppositions of heores and villains. The UK against Argentina, the US against Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Iran or Irak, depending on the decade; European nationalists against 'Eurocracy', rasists against internationalism - the list is endless. The grey suited newsreader enacts the formalities of narrative closure as the lights go down at the end of the bulletin, but the days events leave him bereft of success - order has not been restored - the chaos is ongoing. In the great Us vs Them conflicts around the globe, the newsreader proffers a weak smile, gathers his A4 sheets of paper, and fades out with the signature tune.

The post modern television hero does not resolve conflicts, does not solve problems. Action leads to humiliation. The crisis-resolving masculine myth is itself in crisis. Whatever it is the man had to do, he would have been better off not trying to do it.

In his assessment of post modern perception, The Wake of Imagination, Richard Kearney describes 'a fundamental crisis in contemporary cinema... an erosion of faith in the power of human action... reflected cinematically in what Deleuze calls the 'action-image' of traditional cinema. This has resulted in the search for a new kind of image - a 'reflexive-image' which self-consciously adverts to its own crisis of representation.'

'Crisis' means simply 'change' and the change of emphasis suggests that the fiction heroes of post modern narrative are more concerned with internal processes rather than external. Or to use the terms of Deleuze, they are portrayed in reflective images rather than action images: they are protagonists of narratives that are problem raising as opposed to problem solving.

Deleuze lists five 'apparent characteristics of the new image: the dispersive situation, the deliberately weak links, the voyage form, the consciousness of clichés, the condemnation of the plot.' If the cinema's new image is the consciousness of clichés, then television is their disperser - television's universality lies in familiarity - cliché is the prerequisite of television narrative. The clichés of masculine/feminine have stamped their indelible print on the popularised culture of television fiction and herein lie deceptive limitations. 'Action' and 'assertion' are 'masculine' modes of behaviour, 'reflection' and 'submission' are 'feminine' attributes. It is a polarity that suggests masculinity is concerned with resolving problems and attributed with success or failure; femininity is concerned with identifying problems, to which is ascribed integration or resignation.

The crisis of masculinity in television fiction (news and documentaries included) implies that 'externalising' and 'internalising' are not issues of gender, but a duality which reflects two essential components of human behaviour. Television's post modern hero seeks balance between two opposing elements; spectator and medium both.

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Index of Programmes