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# SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT: BRITISH TELEVISION AND AMERICAN CULTURE, 1960-1980

VOLUME I

By

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ABSTRACT

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Traditional analyses of transnational communication involving the United States have focused on the apparent power of American media producers as hegemonic exporters of culture. The cultural imperialism hypothesis advanced by Schiller (1969) and others presents American media texts as the means by which corporate capitalists and their governmental partners can subjugate weaker cultures to American values and interests. This argument has been countered recently by scholars working out of a cultural studies paradigm focusing on the activity of audiences in creating meaning. Local populations in foreign nations, they suggest, construct unpredictable readings of American media texts based on their own cultural norms that may subvert any imperialistic intent.

The dissertation attempts to negotiate the space between those paradigms, rejecting neither but demonstrating the limits of both when applied to an actual historical practice. It also challenges the assumption of both paradigms that American culture can be examined only as embodied in the role of hegemonic exporter. Using concepts of dialogue and assimilation developed by Bakhtin (1986), the work considers the relationship between British television programs representing three genres -- spy series, historical drama, sketch comedy -- and American viewers in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition, it examines the response to British television imports made by Hollywood television producers, who recast British programs and genres as American, with American characters in American locales. The project uses textual analysis to situate programs in a British-American cultural dialogue; more importantly, it considers the way those texts were shaped by external utterances -- pre-existing and conterminous ideologies, values and social conditions --

including publicity and journalistic commentary, political movements, governmental involvement and changes within the American television industry itself.

The import of television programs from Britain and the responses occurring following their encounters with American beliefs and institutions with specific historical locations, the dissertation concludes, themselves offer a potent response to theories of transnational communication based on unilateral control by either participant and arguments based on the assumption of an exceptional and monolithic American culture industry.

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Dedicated to the memory of my parents.

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# Introduction

"Here not there."

So the poet William Carlos Williams addressed his many friends and colleagues who flocked off to Paris as part of the international migration that characterized American intellectual life in the 1920s. Rather than running off in search of the courtly muses that had defined the past, Williams argued, American poets and artists would be better off rooting themselves in their native soil and drawing their resources from the culture of which they were a vital part.[1]

This is a study of transnational communication that follows Williams' injunction. While researchers and scholars of communication have traveled around the globe to examine the ways in which American media have affected other cultures, few have stopped to examine the places that media artifacts from other cultures have occupied here (not there) in the United States. The reasons for this seem both simple and obvious: The American export of popular culture far exceeds its import from other societies; because of the amount exported and because of the United States' position as an economic and military superpower, those films and records and television shows have a direct effect on the societies in which they are seen and heard. The first assertion is inarguable, at least in terms of the material goods themselves. The second, however, codified in the cultural imperialism hypothesis developed by Herbert Schiller in *Mass Communication and American Empire,* contains two questionable assumptions that become the points of departure for this project. First, the tenet that American popular culture is an imperialistic device through which other cultures can become absorbed into a vast, gleaming American whole assumes a univocality in the relationship between cultures that, while elegant as

theory, cannot be borne out in practice. Media ethnographers including Ien Ang and Elihu Katz and Tamar Liebes have shown that members of cultures around the world apprehend American television shows and films in far different ways from those in which Americans perceive them -- to say nothing of the different ways they perceive those shows among themselves.[2] Meaning is a much more difficult commodity to impose on a society than are fighter jets and Cruise missiles. Second, this assumption of univocality suggests that if and when media artifacts from elsewhere enter American culture, they are sloughed off as the cultural equivalents of dental plaque or dandruff. Given the strength of the American entertainment industry, one might readily grant the common sense of such an assertion; more to the point, given the centrifugal patterns of American media scholarship, one has a difficult time coming up with anything to argue against it. The number of books, scholarly or popular, written on one of the most significant events in American popular music history, the "British invasion" led by the Beatles in the mid-1960s, for example, can be counted on one finger.[3]

That is the imbalance I hope to address in some small way with this study. Rather than popular music or film, however, I intend to focus on the medium that appears to be the most dominant internationally and most impregnable domestically: television. Specifically, I am going to examine the ways in which British television programming made its way onto American networks during the 1960s and 1970s, and the ways in which American audiences made sense of programs that represented a culture different from their own. The time frame for this study is significant: The 1960s, when British shows found their way into the flow of American prime time broadcasting, represented the peak of power for the three commercial networks. As the opening to the 1963 American series *The Outer Limits* suggested, ABC, CBS and NBC really did control the horizontal, the vertical, and all you saw and heard while the TV set was on, at least during prime time, from production to sponsor sales to distribution. It was a hegemony that hewed more closely to the Marxist *realpolitik* definition than it did to the more flexible use of the term developed in the work

of Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams.[4]

That hegemony began to disintegrate late in the 1960s, however, due to network decisions to pursue specific, demographically defined audiences in order to deliver advertisers the viewers they wanted and to Federal Communications Commission rules that limited network control of production and programming time. The recognition of audience segmentation as a programming strategy speaks explicitly to the economic aspects of the broadcasting industry; it also, however, addresses the cultural components of American television as well. Following Clifford Geertz's definition of culture as "webs of meaning,"[5] the deliberate break-up of a mass audience attracted to what NBC executive Paul Klein defined for the industry as "least objectionable programming" revealed that meaning as disseminated by American television networks was not a unilaterally defined, univocal commodity but a construct consisting of many strands.[6] While those audience segments may have been defined by criteria that served the commercial capitalist interests that paid for programming, they also demonstrated that meaning was something to be negotiated between the broadcaster and the viewer, a negotiation that would be played out in the forms of programming in which the relationship was forged and the ways in which those programs were received. Indeed, with segmented audiences, the battles for ratings to determine advertising costs showed American television to be the site of not only struggles of economic survival and supremacy but contests of meaning as well. On one level, then, part of my intent with this study is to trace the significant role British programming played in the development of these contests. From their arrival in the mid-1960s, British shows did not appeal to or have an effect on a mass audience; instead, they were viewed primarily by people who were highly educated, either already wealthy or upwardly mobile, and young. The relative importance of each of those criteria would shift depending upon the program, but all three were always present, and all three played off the notion that British programs were indeed different from what American producers were offering.

This is not to say, however, that the meanings those viewers generated from British

programs necessarily were those that British producers or American broadcasters intended. John Fiske, among others, has discussed at length the polysemic nature of television programming: the notion that televisual texts consist of a variety of codes, each of which can be interpreted differently from viewer to viewer depending upon where those viewers are located socially and culturally. These negotiations, he argues, may in some instances lead to concrete social action against a preferred, dominant ideology contained in that programming.[7] As British television in America reveals the cultural intermeshings contained within the economic machinery of the medium, so it also reveals the variable meanings and readings possible with a given text. The most important legacy of the spy shows of the 1960s, for example, was a character American women saw as a model for a new role in society -- and a character American television producers saw as a model for recasting their own crimeshows. British comedy programs in the 1960s and 1970s similarly created a potential for humor in American television that had been either previously untapped or left mouldering since the early years of the medium. But while these readings demonstrate the power of the audience in creating meaning from a media text, the import of British television to America also demonstrates the limits of a theoretical approach based on the free play of signifiers and the ultimate authority of the audience. Though British programming did indeed represent something different from domestic shows, the meanings constructed around those programs were shaped by and contained in American cultural and ideological structures, at times purposefully so, in a fashion seeming to resemble what Todd Gitlin would come to call the "absorption and domestication" central to the functioning of hegemony.[8]

What I hope to do, then, is to negotiate the distance between theories of an imperialistic media culture and empowered active audiences, rejecting neither in toto but demonstrating the limits of both when applied to an actual historical practice. To accomplish this, I am considering the relationship between British television shows and American viewers in the 1960s and 1970s as representative of a cultural dialogue,

following the definitions of that term as established by Mikhail Bakhtin. Writing in his essay "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin says that while language may be the determining component in understanding the meaning of a given "utterance" linguistically, the actual meaning is "understood against the background of other concrete utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view and value judgments -- that is, precisely that background that, as we see, complicates the path of any word toward its object."[9] Meaning, in other words, is a shared commodity, the sole property of neither the creator/author nor the viewer/ reader. Further, it is a commodity that undergoes a continual process of shaping and reshaping as it encounters other voices and visions in its journey from sender to receiver. The import of programming from Britain and the complications that arise when those artifacts encounter distinctly American values, accents and ideologies act as exemplars of Bakhtinian dialogism -- or, to use the term he himself employs, assimilation -- and as such argue against understandings of intercultural communication as being unilaterally controlled by either participant in the interaction.

Robert Stam, in his Bakhtinian analysis of cinema *Subversive Pleasures*, writes that one culture understands the films of another through "an interpretive grid that predisposes it to certain readings as opposed to others."[10] In the case of imported British television, part of that grid is constructed by the composition of the audience itself. Beyond the demographics, however, the ways in which American audiences interpreted these texts were guided by Bakhtinian "utterances" within American culture itself. Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott discuss such utterances and their use in constituting meanings of specific texts as "reading formations" in *Bond and Beyond*, their analysis of the James Bond phenomenon. Reading formations, they write, are "those specific determinations which bear in upon, mould and configure the relations between texts and readers in the determinant conditions of reading."[11] Their definition goes on to suggest that reading formations are constructed around intertextual organizations that establish readings based on "cues" that are not necessarily present in the text itself. Another primary goal of this

study, then, is to establish the parameters of the reading formations used by American audiences in deriving meaning from British programs. As Bennett and Woollacott point out in their book, these formations may shift dramatically over time, depending upon the ways in which the "determinant conditions of reading" are structured at a given moment. I intend to show those shifts in American formations, shifts that speak to the varying relevance of historical, cultural and institutional components of the relationship between the domestic audience and the British texts.

In presenting a study based on a Bakhtinian notion of dialogism and exemplified by Bennett and Woollacott's work, I will spend a limited amount of time and space on British programs themselves. Some textual analysis -- visual and verbal -- will be necessary in order to give those shows their place in the transnational dialogue. But that type of analysis will be secondary to an examination of the ways in which the relations between those shows and American viewers were configured. Toward that end, I will be drawing from methodology used by Bennett and Woollacott, as well as by several feminist scholars of media artifacts, all of whom have examined the placement of specific texts in a general discourse through voices other than the text itself: advertisements, promotional devices, newspaper and magazine reviews and articles, fan clubs and newsletters.[12] I intend to employ all those forms of intertextuality, in addition to the public voices of viewers at the time (when available) in examining the types of utterances that influenced the Britain-America dialogue and established American reading formations. Not wishing to forget the larger institutional elements shaping these reading formations, I will also use governmental, network and other corporate documentation, including Nielsen ratings, when needed, particularly in my discussion of British programming and the Public Broadcasting Service. In employing this theory and method to consider British programming in America, I hope to avoid two common fallacies that enter the arguments of many cultural historians: the use of a given historical text to exemplify hidden essences of a culture, and the privileging of the historian's own current assumptions in his or her readings of such a text.[13]

As to the formation of the reading to follow this introduction: Chapter 1 introduces the main issues of the book. Using the 1975-76 legal case of *Monty Python vs. The American Broadcasting Company* as a touchstone, the chapter offers a look at the historical and cultural issues that came to define the study of intercultural communication from an American perspective, and then examines in detail the paradigms of cultural imperialism and polysemic postmodernism through which this study navigates, as well as the concepts of dialogism and reading formations with which it steers.

Chapters 2 through 6 examine the place of British television in American culture through specific genres. As it happens, those genres proceed chonologically through the period in question. Chapter 2 considers the historical utterances that guided the reception of British secret agent series that appeared on the commercial American television networks beginning in 1965. Articulated with the presidency of John F. Kennedy through the figure of James Bond, *Secret Agent*, *The Saint* and *The Prisoner* managed on the one hand to represent the Utopian (and, eventually, the dystopian) aspects of the "Camelot" myth that followed Kennedy's assassination. On the other hand, the British imports functioned ideologically to turn the apocalyptic Cold War struggle between the Free West and the Communist East into an exotic and glamorous duel between sexy, albeit dangerous, adversaries that was attractive to younger viewers. Of particular significance in that audience were young women viewers, for whom the most successful of the secret agent imports, *The Avengers*, provided something never before seen in American action series: a strong, physical female lead character. The way in which new American utterances concerning the place of women in society intersected with meanings available in and around the text of *The Avengers* to create a specific reading formation for young American women is the subject of Chapter 3.

This first wave of British programming ended in 1969 with the network cancellations of *The Avengers* and *The Saint.* British television shows were still made welcome on American airwaves, however, through the channels of educational

broadcasting. The success of the British serialized historical drama *The Forsyte Saga* on American educational stations coincided with the organization of those stations into a new "service" designed to bring oases to the "vast wasteland" of commercial broadcasting. The Public Broadcasting Service, conceived during the halcyon days of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, quickly became an unwanted bastard child to the Nixon administration present at its birth. Following an agenda devoted to the silencing of media criticism of its actions, that administration issued political utterances which radically changed what was initially regarded as an alternative to commercially dominated airspace into a broadcasting system that, like the BBC in its original form, was explicitly devoted to an elite audience and featured programming representing an Arnoldian vision of culture: the best of the past -- and preferably not an American past. Chapter 4 traces the role that *The Forsyte Saga* and the British system of broadcasting it represented played in this political manipulation.

Chapter 5 in turn examines the political and economic utterances guiding the American reception of the PBS program that most directly capitalized (in every sense) on the success of *The Forsyte Saga*. *Masterpiece Theatre*, shaped in part by the British tones -- or so they seemed -- of host Alistair Cooke, brought a series of serialized British dramas, frequently based on will-known literary works, into the homes of American viewers weary of what they tasted as the stale sourdough bread of *Bonanza* and saw as the gaudy Russian circuses of *The Ed Sullivan Show*. That presentation, however, came courtesy of the corporate munificence of "sponsor" Mobil Oil, which was anxious to use the show as the cornerstone of a public relations effort to improve its reputation and its status among an audience of viewers rich in -- or those poised to become so -- cultural, educational and financial capital. The peak of success for *Masterpiece Theatre*, defined both by viewership numbers and by Mobil's own assessment of the series, came with its presentation of *Upstairs, Downstairs*, a serial drama based on the relations between an aristocratic family and its servant staff in Edwardian England that ran in installments over three seasons (1974-76). The utterances, both economic and aesthetic, shaping that popularity will

provide the bulk of discussion in this chapter.

Chapter 6 moves backward before it moves ahead. While the spy series was the first genre to cross from England to the States in the 1960s, the first BBC program to reach American airwaves was the topical sketch comedy *That Was the Week That Was*, which arrived in 1963. Though produced in New York with primarily American performers and writers, *TW3*, as it was called, followed the format of its British progenitor and introduced American audiences to David Frost, one of the British show's stars and leading writers. The American *TW3* lasted only one and a half seasons, but it established comedy as a potentially profitable export commodity for British distributors. That potential would be realized in the 1970s with the unprecedented public syndication success of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Given the conventional wisdom that comedy doesn't travel, Chapter 6 will consider, following shifting demographic patterns and the internal structures of those programs, the utterances, comic and otherwise, that shaped their relationship with American audiences.

The final chapter stays rooted in the 1970s but switches its focus from British series to the single audience on whom that programming had its most measurable effect: American television producers. In their own dialogues with the domestic market, increasingly defined by specific demographic targeting, producers such as Norman Lear redirected utterances concerning race, class and gender that had defined unexported British programs to create shows including *All in the Family* and *Sanford and Son* that spoke with American audiences. At the same time, other producers, including Lorne Michaels and David Wolper, brought what Horace Newcomb and Paul Hirsch refer to as American "cultural elements with embedded significance" to British genres and formats that had previously been successful in the States.[14] In their recognition of the contestatory and dialogic nature of television, a recognition evident in the structure and substance of the shows they created from British programming, those producers became responsible for some of the most resonant voices of this televisual dialogue between Britain and America.

The work of those producers also presents a basic contradiction in the paradigm of cultural imperialism that informs this project. On the one hand, the decision of American television producers to fashion their own products out of non-native programming presents a direct effect of British series on a given audience; on the other hand, their work can be seen as the absorption and domestication of utterances of otherness Gitlin defines as the operation of hegemony. That contradiction, however, is mitigated by the fact that audience responses in every case considered read around assumptions made by institutional authorities on both sides of the dialogue. While those responses, circumscribed by the same cultural and ideological elements that framed the re-creation of British shows as American, were not themselves limitless or necessarily resistant, they demonstrate the multivocality of televisual texts, as well as the flaws in theories and models that presume linear and unilateral relations of power. In the end, it is Bakhtinian assimilation, with its varying degrees of otherness and "our-own-ness," that best explains the processes of transnationalism as seen in the American reception of British programming.

Anglophilic viewers and readers will note that the organization of this study is not all-inclusive. I have not considered British documentary, fact-based or interview shows (including David Frost's). My focus here is on the entertainment programming which attracted the largest audiences in the American broadcasting market and the dialogue that entertainment -- which, as anthropologist Victor Turner has pointed out, literally means "holding between" -- has created between Britain and America.[15] I have also not, within the context of entertainment, dealt with several popular children's shows (*Fireball XL-5*, *Stingray*, *Thunderbirds*) in which British producer Lew Grade deliberately masked the British origin of the shows with American English vocal dubbing. And I have not considered the two major British science fiction imports, *Space 1999* and *Doctor Who*, as each is so exceptional to other concepts and genres examined here that to deal with either at any length would quickly turn into a tangential discussion. Finally, I have chosen the year 1980 as the terminus for this project in order to limit the discussion to the years preceding

the exponential growth of cable television services in America, some elements of which (Arts & Entertainment, The Discovery Channel, C-SPAN, even the early ESPN) have drawn heavily on British imports. As a result, I am also not dealing with music video, a genre of American television the origins of which are almost exclusively British.

Despite these omissions, I hope that this project shows both the significance British television programming has had in the ways Americans have defined their own culture as well as the complexity involved in the relationship between the exporter of cultural artifacts and their recipients. I do not intend to suggest that the relationship described here is a model for every example of intercultural relations -- Britain and America both possess exceptionally strong cultural industries, and the relation between those two cultures is of necessity different from that between either and postcolonial Third World societies whose "culture" exists only in the eyes of cartographers. Nonetheless, I do want to suggest that this relationship demonstrates that while audiences in any culture have less power to turn meaning into concrete social action than some theorists assume, they also have a good deal more power in constructing meaning from foreign texts than other theorists believe. Indeed, if this work is successful, it will prove its title a lie: In terms of culture, nothing is completely different. The only differences we can find are the ones we create ourselves, here not there.

## Notes, Introduction

1) William Carlos Williams 1956, 74.

2) See, for example, Ang 1985 and 1991, and Katz and Liebes 1993.

3) The British invasion in popular music is chronicled and analyzed by Kelly 1991, who argues that the influence of the Beatles and their mates was primarily a coastal phenomenon that was exaggerated into a national craze through the media located in New York and Los Angeles. He also contends that the music of the British invasion consisted largely of recycled American pop music, making American consumers of British pop groups in reality consumers of their own culture.

4) For the institutional history of American television during the 1960s and 1970s, see Barnouw 1990 and Les Brown 1971.

5) Geertz 1973, 5.

6) Marc 1984, 31-32.

7) Fiske 1989, 62-83.

8) Gitlin 1980, 256.

9) Bakhtin 1981, 281.

10) Stam 1989, 43.

11) Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 64 .

12) See, for example, May 1988 and Spigel 1992.

13) See Fischer 1970, especially pgs. 68-70 and 135-140.

14) Newcomb and Hirsch, in ed. Newcomb 1987, 457-458.

15) Turner 1977, 68. Newcomb's use of Turner will be treated presently.

## Chapter 1: Reading Between the Lines (Cultural Imperialism, Active Audiences and the Middle Ground)

### Naughty Bits

> QUEEN VICTORIA: Theme...of modern poetry here in Germany. We are not...amusiert? Entertained. From now on, ants is verboten. Instead, it's skylarks, daffodils, nightingales, light brigades, and...was ist das schreckliche Gepong...es schmecke wie ein Scheisshaus...und so weiter.
> --expurgated lines, ABC-TV *Monty Python* broadcast, 1975 [1]

On October 3, 1975, the ABC television network was prepared for what it considered a major commercial broadcasting coup. Bob Shanks, the network's vice president for late night programming, had cut through the initial reluctance of his own network, as well as the reluctance of a series of distributors, producers and writer-performers, to present a 90-minute compilation of three episodes of the British comedy series *Monty Python* (neé *Monty Python's Flying Circus*) never before seen in America. Presented as part of the ABC omnibus title *Wide World of Entertainment*, the special Python broadcast replaced the network's usual Friday late night offering: *In Concert*, a pre-MTV effort to bring rock and popular music acts live into the homes of their fans and potential consumers. Like *In Concert*, the Python show appealed to the younger viewers -- the second wave of baby boomers -- that ABC hoped to pry away from NBC's late night fortress, *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*. Unlike *In Concert*, whose format was so simple that several imitators, including NBC's own *Midnight Special*, took to the air within weeks of its first broadcast in January 1973, *Monty Python* promised to be something completely different. How different, ABC would soon discover.[2]

The network had scheduled its broadcast almost at the peak of the group's stateside popularity. Originally produced for the BBC in three 13-episode installments between 1969

and 1972, *Monty Python's Flying Circus* made its way to the United States in the summer of 1974, when Dallas public television station KERA decided to pick up the sketch comedy revue. By the summer of 1975, the show was being syndicated to some 130 public broadcasting outlets (as well as commercial stations in Las Vegas and Houston). A number of those stations reported ratings for the import in excess of anything they had ever shown before.[3] The troupe responsible for the TV show released its second feature film, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, in the spring of 1975 to critical raves and strong box office. (The first Python film, a collection of sketches from the TV series called *And Now, For Something Completely Different*, performed weakly on its Stateside release in 1972.)[4] What ABC had purchased from Time Life, the show's U.S. distributor, was a final six-episode installment of the show made in 1973 that had not been included in the public broadcast syndication package. Indeed, these shows were strikingly, though not completely, different from their predecessors. John Cleese, the most distinctive and among the most popular performers on the series, had left, pleading burnout. And the British press, which had lauded the first three installments of the series, was less enthusiastic about the fourth season.[5] Naturally enough, ABC didn't bother to dampen the expectations of its viewers with this news: It had new Python shows, and it knew how to use them. That was all that was necessary --with one apparently minor exception.

Because of the commercial-free basis of BBC broadcasts, the half-hour Python shows were precisely that: 30 minutes in length. The time slot for ABC's *Wide World of Entertainment* was 90 minutes -- including 24 minutes of commercials. With a promised compilation of three *Monty Python* episodes, ABC found itself having to make 90 minutes of British television fit into 66 minutes of American broadcast time. Fortunately for the network, its Department of Standards and Practices was willing to lend its assistance. Charged with making ABC programming acceptable to a broad-based audience, the censors in S&P found enough potentially offensive material in the three shows to render any time concerns held by network programmers meaningless. Addressing concerns with sex,

violence and offensive or scatological language, Standards and Practices removed chunks of the show ranging from two seconds to four minutes and sixteen seconds. All references to bisexuality and homosexuality were removed. Animation using nude women was removed. All uses of the words "bitch" and "bastard" were removed, along with a plethora of "hells" and "damns." An entire sketch based on the notion that any word taken out of its context can become sexually charged was cut up to remove the terms "intercourse," "erogenous zones," and "pert thighs," as well as the absolutely forbidden "tit" (used in the sketch to illustrate a "tinny sounding" word). A scene focusing on the rear ends of army officers in a court martial was removed. A reference to ant droppings was removed, as was a reference to one ant touching another's hindquarters with its antennae. A sentence in which Queen Victoria uses the German epithet "*Scheisshaus*" was removed. Even the phrase "naughty bits," used in euphemistic reference to human genitalia, was removed. By the time it was done, Standards and Practices had eliminated some 25 percent of the programming the network had purchased -- material that the show's public broadcasting viewers watched regularly and that had done nothing to hinder their appreciation.[6]

The members of Monty Python -- Graham Chapman, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, Michael Palin -- were working at home in Britain when the ABC special aired. They knew nothing of the cuts and splices the American network made until a month later, when Nancy Lewis, their American representative, brought them a tape of the show. The response was less than gleeful. Terry Jones, in a note to his agent, wrote:

> We were all absolutely appalled at what someone had done to our shows.... Quite honestly the show made us look berks and could have done us no good at all. A fact born out by the bad feed-back we've had from fans over there.
> Our main concern at this moment is twofold: 1) To disociate [sic] ourselves from the show that has already gone out. 2) to prevent the next show going out or, if we really cannot, to remove our names and the name of Monty Python from it (Hewison 45).

A second group memo concluded with what amounted to a policy statement: "We cannot state too strongly that this show is not Monty Python. Monty Python is the shows we made and edited. We want to do everything we can to stop them putting out another

show like this" (Hertzberg 72). Everything they could do had to be done quickly, however: ABC was planning to broadcast the second package of new episodes as *Wide World of Entertainment* on December 26. When the network refused to accede to the troupe's requests either to remove the program from its schedule or to allow them (Monty Python) to do the editing themselves, the British comedians took a final, very American step to stop the show. They sued ABC, charging the network with copyright infringement and unfair competition (against the shows as they had been made and presented in Britain and though syndication in America) and asking for $1 million in damages along with a restraining order forbidding ABC to broadcast its second compilation.

The legal action centered around the issue of ownership. The writer-performers of Monty Python claimed that as creators of the programs in question, they had the final say in what was broadcast. Indeed, their contract with the BBC stipulated precisely that -- an agreement they had used with frequent success in keeping the censors of that network at bay. ABC argued that Monty Python had no say whatsoever in what the network did with *Monty Python*, a collection of videotapes it was renting from Time Life Films, which had acquired American distribution rights from the BBC. Indeed, its contract with Time Life stipulated precisely that ABC could do whatever it wanted with the tapes that it was paying for. The muddled relations between the troupe, its American exhibitor, and the two international communication giants acting as middlemen led Morris Lasker, the judge assigned to preside over the hearing of the Python request for an injunction, to characterize the case as "one of those unhappy situations in which both parties have proceeded entirely in good faith by walking by each other" (Hewison, 47).

While the issues on which the case would be heard and decided concerned legal definitions of ownership, of equal concern to the troupe itself were the cultural ramifications of censorship. It was not just that the show had been edited -- or mutilated, as the charge against ABC read -- to meet the exigencies of American commercial television that bothered them; it was the way in which the cuts had been made and the specific types

of material that had been deleted that particularly rankled the comedians. Both Michael Palin and Terry Gilliam, who came to New York to represent the Python troupe on the witness stand, repeatedly attempted in their testimony to link the quantitative issue of mutilation with the qualitative nature of the cuts made by network censors in order to make the British program acceptable to an American audience. Palin, for example, cited one instance of what the group found to be overzealousness by ABC's Standards and Practices:

> [Edit] Number One [in the transcripts], the words 'The Secret Loves for Bi-Sexuals.' In fact, in the script, as it is, it is 'The Secret Love for Algy the Bi-Sexual Navigator,' which, you know, introduces another element. Just saying 'The secret love for bi-sexuals,' he is not saying what we said and I think alters our intention (Hewison 49).

Gilliam, in his closing statement, said:

> I think one of the important things to me about what has happened with *Monty Python* in the States is there are a lot of people who have come to believe in *Python* as a form of honesty, I suppose, as opposed to what is normally presented on television.... By putting out the show we are talking about, I think it is a very compromising show. I think it completely -- I think it could be read, and I think the first show was read, this is my impression from people I have spoken to, things I have heard, that *Monty Python* has finally accepted the standards of commercial television as opposed to our own standards (Hewison 53).

For the members of Monty Python, at least, the court case in which they were embroiled was as much a contest of meaning as it was a legal battle for ownership. Curiously enough, their opponents did not find it a point worth debating. Both Bob Shanks and Richard Burns, the ABC vice president in charge of contracts, testified to the importance of their Standards and Practices division in establishing parameters of meaning for the television audience. Burns told the court:

> The very reason for the existence of the ABC's Department of Broadcast Standards and Practice is to exercise a responsible judgment over the program material that ABC puts on the air, not only for the stations that it owns, which are only five in number, but for the other almost two hundred stations around the country that comprise the ABC television network. I think this is a central function for any broadcaster...(Hewison 52).

For Judge Lasker, however, this particular matter was of but secondary interest. The case was not about the relevance of standards but about the rights of the creator of a mass-distributed work to have that work presented as he or she -- or they -- wished it to

be.[7] And it was on those grounds that the judge announced his decision at the end of the December 19 hearing. The *Monty Python* compilation presented by ABC in October had indeed mutilated the original work, he ruled, noting that the network's editing "...comes near the border at which one might say that the cuts, if not fatal, certainly made it very difficult for the patient to live in good health" (Hewison, 54).[8] But the compilation scheduled for broadcast December 26, he continued, could not be enjoined, due to the existing confusion of copyright control and because denying ABC the right to broadcast material for which it had paid in good faith would result in loss of money and reputation for the network. He did, however, allow the Python troupe the right to have its own disclaimer presented at the beginning of the show. ABC in turn filed and won an appeal to that ruling. The second *Monty Python* compilation was broadcast on December 26, again with 22 minutes of cuts, but with a small graphic at the opening of the program noting that it had been "Edited for Television by ABC."[9]

The court battle, however, was not yet over, and the contest for meaning was again to be joined. Following the second broadcast, the Python team filed an appeal to Judge Lasker's initial injunction order. The U.S. Court of Appeals Second District, after hearing arguments on April 13, 1976, returned with its decision on June 30. The three judges ruled in favor of the comedians in every facet of the case. Monty Python, they said, as the creators of the material to be broadcast were in fact the holders of the copyright, not the BBC, Time Life or ABC. As the American network was not going to show the compilations again, all concerns of financial harm to ABC were no longer applicable. And the judges found the program excisions, which ABC argued would make the program "more palatable to the American public," were in several cases "inexplicable" and overall infringed on the troupe's copyright. "If ABC honestly determined that the programs were obscene in substantial part," the judges wrote, "it could have decided not to broadcast the specials at all, or it could have attempted to reconcile its differences with appellants" (Hewison 55). Monty Python, six months after the fact, was entitled to its injunction.

That was as far as the case of *Monty Python vs. American Broadcasting Companies* would go. With ABC willing to spend an immense amount of money -- more than Monty Python either had or could hope to win -- and go to the Supreme Court in order to overturn the injunction and deny any financial reward, and with Time Life and the BBC wanting to stay out of court altogether, the group agreed to a unique and historic settlement: In return for dropping charges against ABC and releasing their advance payment for reruns, the Python court costs were paid by Time Life; of greater significance, Time Life and BBC agreed to return all distribution rights to the Monty Python television show to Monty Python when their current options expired. In the meantime, the ABC compilations would be given back to the troupe, never to be broadcast by the network again. All 45 of the original shows would be broadcast via syndication in their entirety.[10] The comedy team had established a new legal foothold for artists in their ongoing struggles with the institutions of the American communication industry.

The importance of the Python case legally, however, should not obscure its importance in matters of communication and popular culture in America. It was, after all, a case in which American legal precedent was established by a British television program, a development that reveals the flaws in traditional assumptions about a monolithic American popular culture industry as well as raises questions about the potential "effects" of foreign programming on American audiences. The Python case additionally demonstrates the multiplicity of meanings available in a given cultural text, meanings that are explicitly brought into direct conflict when a text from one culture is introduced into another, as the directly oppositional readings constructed by ABC's censors and Monty Python itself show. It also, however, points out the institutional limits to this multiplicity: ABC, in its presumed role as cultural gatekeeper, succeeded in controlling the meanings available to its presumed audience through its circumscription of the *Monty Python* broadcast. In order for viewers not to construct the word "tit" as a vulgarity referring to a woman's breast in a sketch in which the term is used to define a tinny-sounding word, Standards and Practices

removed all possible "potential of meaning" by eliminating the word. ABC's power to shape meaning, always masked in its role of producing and distributing American programming to Americans, suddenly became visible with its broadcast of a British comedy show, an occasion of no small import.

Despite the power held by the network, however, ABC could merely limit meaning, not dictate it. Among the most powerful of the meanings brought to bear in the Monty Python hearing were those of the troupe's American fans. These fans were part of the audience that the network had assumed would be viewing its broadcast; clearly, though, they were not assumed to be the only audience watching. ABC's cuts essentially marginalized those viewers, who then let everyone involved know of their displeasure, including the members of Monty Python themselves. The memo by Terry Jones and the testimony of Terry Gilliam indicate the regular dialogue the troupe held with their American fans, an individual dialogue that represented the larger dialogue between two cultures to define meaning in a shared text.

As the case of *Monty Python vs. American Broadcasting Companies*shows, the presence of British programming on American television during the years of network television's hegemony over the medium raises issues of meaning, of audience response and of cultural construction here in the United States that communication scholars, mesmerized by the idea that the only possible cultural relationship America could have with the world was that of dominator, have long ignored.Before addressing them directly, however, it is necessary to examine the history out of which those issues and the ways in which they have been addressed develop.

## Out With the Bad Air

> The Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth have probably the fullest poetical nature. The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem.... Here at last is something in the doings of man that corresponds with the broadcast doings of the day and night. Here is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations.
>
> --Walt Whitman, Preface to *Leaves of Grass*[11]

A century after Whitman wrote his 1855 paean to nationalism, American scholars and critics by and large proclaimed the greatest poem complete, down to the last iamb and the final couplet. A xenophobia nurtured by the tensions of the Cold War combined with a starry-eyed adulation of unprecedented American prosperity led most of the nation's leading thinkers to conclude that America had at last fulfilled its destiny as a shining city on the hill, a moral (and now economic and intellectual) beacon to the rest of the world. Like Whitman, however, whose barbaric Americanist yawp concealed his scholarly study of the Bible and the texts of ancient Greece, his obsession with Egyptology, and his passionate devotion to Italian opera, the admiration of the United States expressed by 1950s nationalists masked the thriving presence of European ideas and culture in their country.[12]

As historian Richard Pells relates in his *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, the intellectual movement born out of the 1950 CIA-sponsored Congress for Cultural Freedom took its stand against both Soviet-led Communism and those who would brook neutrality in a global struggle between the freedom of the West and the totalitarianism of the East. An international gathering at its inception, the Congress quickly spawned a specifically American affiliate, the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, which enlisted intellectuals ranging from Sidney Hook to Norman Thomas to argue for the American way of life. Those intellectuals and their fellow academics spent the next ten years reshaping their scholarship into a celebration of America and, by extension, a repudiation of all things even vaguely affiliated with communism.[13] The tenor of the decade was voiced perhaps most succinctly in the introduction to a 1952 *Partisan Review* series, "Our Country and Our Culture," which united Committee for Cultural Freedom intellectuals with new voices -- C. Wright Mills, Norman Mailer – in a discussion on why America worked as well as it did. While several of those writers, Mills and Mailer among them, addressed problems they perceived in the meter and line of "the greatest poem," the introduction to the series nonetheless asserted the reunion of American intellectuals with ideals of the nation in which they worked:

> Politically there is a recognition that the kind of democracy which exists in America has an intrisic and positive value: it is not merely a capitalist myth but a reality which must be defended against Russian totalitarianism.... [Writers and intellectuals] now believe that their values...must be realized in America and in relation to the actuality of American life.[14]

There was indeed no place like home.

While those writers and intellectuals devoted their efforts to the promotion of the "reality" of American democracy, there was one aspect of that democracy that many of them found most disquieting and worthy of criticism, if not outright contempt: popular (or "mass") culture. The seeds of their despair were cast in the 1930s, when the popularity of radio and movies during the Depression led critics and social scientists to question how those media shaped public opinion and private dreams.[15] The Cold War itself nurtured those seeds, as the entertainment industry grew to be of singular importance to politicians anxious to prove that communism was insinuating itself into the hearts and minds of Americans via movie screens and public airwaves.

These political concerns about popular media were augmented, however, by arguments shaped in Europe -- arguments that revealed the influence of continental thought on New England minds. The 1930s critiques of mass man and mass culture made by José Ortega y Gasset and F.R. Leavis, among others, nourished the growing intellectual animus toward movies, radio and television; T.S. Eliot, long since expatriated to Britain and long before his libretto for *Cats* would become part of the longest-running musical in Broadway history, sounded his own contempt with the encroachment of commercial interests on art in his 1948 *Notes Toward a Definition of Culture*.[16] But while Eliot's standing in academe as one of the paragons of modern poetry assured that his views would be greeted with great favor by American intellectuals, it was the work of emigrants from Germany who had fled the horrors of Nazism that provided the backbone for their critique of mass culture and media. All too familiar with Hitler's use of propaganda and mass media to accrue and augment his power in Nazi Germany and alarmed by mechanisms of American democracy that appeared ready and able to replicate the practice, if not the theory, of fascism, Theodor

Adorno and Max Horkheimer throughout the late 1930s and 1940s described the popular arts and their technological means of distribution as a new, more insidious form of the social coercion that led to the Holocaust in their native land. Writing in their 1947 work *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer condemned the popular arts and media as replacing the transcendent qualities of great art with an artificial, mechanistic style. The resulting "culture industry," they maintained, had at its core not an elevation but a "subsumption" of the public in its blind obedience to social norms:

> By subordinating in the same way and to the same end all areas of intellectual creation, by occupying man's senses from the time they leave the factory in the evening to the time they clock in again the next morning with matter that bears the impress of the labor process they themselves have to sustain throughout the day, this subsumption mockingly satifies the concept of a unified culture which the philosophers of personality contrasted with mass culture.[17]

Adorno continued his attacks on the culture industry in a 1954 essay, "Television and the Patterns of Mass Culture." The institutional system of mass culture now most visibly represented by television, Adorno argued, rid all tension from art and placed audiences on the "safe ground" of conformity and adjustment. Television was particulary insidious in the way in which the "hidden messages" of its programs reinforced rigidly conservative social values. Those "hidden messages" could be found in the way television series viewed suffering and humiliation as entertaining even to the characters, thus eliminating any questioning of social norms and inviting the audience "...to look at the characters in the same way without being made aware that indoctrination is present."[18]

With these thinkers serving as their grounding, American social critics of the 1950s could launch their attacks on the American film, broadcast and popular print media as threats to their ideal democracy. The Bible of this response was the 1957 anthology *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America*, edited by Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White. Beginning with classic commentaries on culture and the masses from writers including de Tocqueville and Ortega y Gasset, and featuring essays on popular culture artifacts ranging from Little Orphan Annie to Zorro, *Mass Culture* throughout follows the

tocsin sounded by editor Rosenberg in his introduction: "[T]he mass media present a major threat to man's autonomy. To know that they might also contain some small seeds of freedom only makes a bad situation nearly desperate."[19] With the notable exception of Marshall McLuhan, already heading down the open road toward the global village celebrated in *Understanding Media*, those who dared spill those "seeds of freedom" -- co-editor White, Gilbert Seldes -- did so with the argument that the seeds would eventually flower in a renaissance of great art -- the plays of Shakespeare, the dance of Nijinsky, the symphonies of Mozart -- available for the first time to American masses.[20] As for the Westerns, quiz shows and rock and roll of the moment: These, too, shall pass. Indeed, the attacks made in *Mass Culture* on the emptiness of American popular culture and the numbing conformity it overtly or covertly promoted become so repetitive that they assume an emptiness and conformity all their own, exemplifying what critic Harold Rosenberg had referred to early in the mass culture debate as "the herd of independent minds" (Pells, 223).

The fear and loathing made evident in *Mass Culture* and the writings of Adorno and Horkheimer were all the more ironic due to the fact that the culture industry that served as its target was going through a period of major restructuring. The centralized radio networks had all but died by the mid-1950s, their talent and programs having been siphoned off to nourish the infant television. Market segmentation rapidly followed, with black blues and gospel stations and rural country music outlets becoming part of the radio landscape. The Top 40 format, with its disc jockeys, loud commercials and tightly controlled playlists, grew throughout the 1950s as rapidly as did its designated market segment: the post-World War generation that would come to be called the baby boomers.[21] Television itself, though built along already-centralized network lines, was under thrall to the whims and fancies of program sponsors who had no problem in dictating program content, up to and including, in one of the great scandals of the period, predetermining the outcome of quiz shows.[22] The weakness of the networks in relation to advertising interests was compounded by the affiliate system upon which they were structured, a system in which the owners of local

stations exerted a good deal of power over decisions made by central network officials.[23]

The film industry for its part had been literally shattered by a 1948 Supreme Court ruling finding the eight major film studios guilty of violating Sherman Antitrust statutes. The ruling forced an end to practices of block booking and blind selling by which the studios mandated what movie houses around the country would or would not show. More importantly, it ordered the studios to divest themselves of all their substantial interests in theaters, thereby ending the production-distribution-exhibition vertical monopoly through which they maintained themselves silent era.[24] Along with the collapse of the studio system, the film industry had been demoralized by the House Un-American Activities Committee investigations of communism in Hollywood in 1947 and 1951 (the latter taking its toll in the broadcast industry as well), and faced in television competition that seemed, based on early returns, ready to overwhelm what was left of the industry.[25] In order to survive, motion picture companies began to exploit resources that the small black and white screens showing up in living rooms and dens across the country could not: vivid color, wide screen processes, even three-dimensional effects. The big studios began to produce programs for the networks by the mid-1950s; at the same time, independent producers took advantage of the freedom in the marketplace afforded by the 1948 Supreme Court ruling to make cheap films for young, affluent audiences who had both money and time to spend.[26]

A further development of the postwar reorganization of the film industry, one which speaks directly to later issues in television with which this study is concerned, was the arrival of a number of films from Europe and Japan and the concomitant growth of the "art house" circuit. With thousands of servicemen and women returning from the foreign fronts of World War II and the immediate boom in college populations due to the GI Bill, distributors realized that a burgeoning market existed for movies produced overseas. Second-run exhibitors in metropolitan areas and college towns, looking at extinction following the 1948 ruling and the advent of television, found their salvation in the films of Michael Powell, Roberto Rossellini, Marcel Carne and others. While film audiences overall

dropped in the early 1950s, the art houses saw an increase in attendance, followed by an increase in their numbers. One exhibitor estimated that by 1958, some 800 art houses were in operation, with an increase in foreign films from some 90 in 1948 to more than 530 by 1957.[27] The influx of foreign films had no small impact on their audiences; curiously, that influx also led to a successful legal challenge against movie censorship in a case that would parallel *Monty Python vs. American Broadcasting Companies* 25 years later.[28]

Despite the changes in the culture industry they criticized, many 1950s intellectuals continued to argue that the standards which had made thier nation "essentially the greatest poem" were being threatened from within by the demon gods of popular culture. No one was louder or more influential in that criticism than Dwight Macdonald. More radical politically than Adorno and Horkheimer, and possibly more conservative culturally, Macdonald presented his most severe indictment of the culture industry in his seminal 1960 essay "Masscult and Midcult." Mass culture, he wrote there, offered:

> ...neither an emotional catharsis nor an aesthetic experience, for these demand effort. The production line grinds out a uniform product whose humble aim is not even entertainment, for this too implies life and hence effort, but merely distraction.... It asks nothing of its audience, for it is 'totally subjected to the spectator.' And it gives nothing.[29]

Macdonald's excoriation of "masscult," in which he includes "almost the entire output of such new media as the radio, television and the movies" as a product of mechanized and consumer-oriented society, is noteworthy not only for its thorough historical critique of American popular culture as well as the ideas that form the basis of that critique (including those of Adorno and Horkheimer), but for the way in which Macdonald successfully lumps everything offered by American electronic media under a single malign rubric. Summing up 1950s critiques, Macdonald presents movies and broadcasting as a monstrosity "imposed from above [that] exploits rather than satisfies the needs of the masses" (Macdonald 4-5).

The complaints voiced by Macdonald and his fellow intellectuals, while often tinged with a Marxism that would never be a part of the American grain, managed finally to make their way into the mainstream in 1961 through, of all sources, the head of the federal

broadcast regulation organization. Newton Minow, a young lawyer appointed head of the Federal Communications Commission by President Kennedy, faced his first major appearance before the industry at the 1961 convention of the National Association of Broadcasters. Minow congratulated the assembled broadcasters on the profitability of their industry, as well as on important achievements, ranging from the Army-McCarthy hearings to *Playhouse 90* to *Peter Pan*, that television had offered in its short history. Before the delegates got too self-satisfied, however, Minow gave the criticisms made by American intellectuals for the previous decade an official imprimatur:

> But when television is bad, nothing is worse. I invite you to sit down in front of your television set when your station goes on the air and stay there without a book, magazine, newspaper, profit or loss sheet or rating book to distract you -- and keep your eyes glued to that set until the station signs off. I can assure you that you will see a vast wasteland (Barnouw 299-300).

Minow then catalogued the mountains, deserts and swamps of the wasteland, putting a special emphasis on the "mayhem, violence, sadism, murder" of primetime action shows and the "screaming, cajoling and offending" commercials that sponsored them. From the list of offending programs to the invocation of T.S. Eliot himself, Minow had given American broadcasters -- and through them, the American public -- the position defined by Macdonald and the other *Mass Culture* contributors wrapped up in government-approved rhetoric. Implicit in his comments as well was the belief that the programs and commercials broadcast on television had some sort of effect, whether overt, through screaming and cajoling, or covert, through "hidden meanings," on their audiences.[30]

Minow's speech, though it addressed the "wasteland" visible in American living rooms and dens, came at precisely the moment at which the game shows, family comedies, westerns and cop shows he derided were being exported en masse to other countries for the first time.[31] Indeed, the possibilities and problems inherent in international broadcasting were a topic already on the Kennedy administration agenda following the Bay of Pigs debacle; the President himself spoke to the same NAB convention at which Minow had delivered his speech, telling the delegates: "The essence of free communications must be

that our failures as well as our successes will be broadcast around the world." He did not, however, include that *The Flintstones, Bonanza* and *Perry Mason* might be part of that package as well.[32] The wasteland was spreading, and as it seemed to have the effects of distraction and subordination in the culture which gave it birth, the harmfulness of its effects elsewhere could only be imagined.

It would be the task of communication scholar Herbert Schiller to do that imagining in his 1969 book *Mass Communication and American Empire.* Written during the hottest years of both the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement, and with clear references to both, Schiller's book presents Whitman's dreams of a "nation of nations" as a nightmare come real. The export of American media, particularly television -- the "broadcast doings of day and night" -- had become the tool of "an emerging imperial network" of governmental, military and financial interests, to be used for that network's "defense and entrenchment wherever it exists...and for its expansion to locales where it hopes to become active."[33] That thesis, which owed a substantial amount to the political philosophy of C. Wright Mills as expressed in *The Power Elite*, also was indebted to the cultural philosophy of Adorno and Horkheimer.[34] The mechanized culture presented and represented by television offered a vision of an American way of life, Schiller argues, that focused on nothing more than the consumption of material goods. And if the trade of those goods was the mechanism that allows a powerful economy to dominate a weaker one, then a free flow of information and communication "...is the channel through which life styles and value systems can be imposed on poor and vulnerable societies" (Schiller 8-9).

Thus was born what came to be called the cultural imperialism thesis. It is worth noting from the start that Schiller's construction of "cultural imperialism" is both more and less than what its popular definition came to be, as expressed in 1977 by Jeremy Tunstall: "[the claim that] authentic, tranditional and local culture in many parts of the world is being battered out of existence by the indiscriminate dumping of large quantities of slick commercial and media products, mainly from the United States."[35] Schiller's book offers

much more than that in its assertion that the "dumping" of media products is anything but indiscriminate; rather, the interlocking directorate of corporate, governmental and military interests guiding the culture industry used "slick media products" directly for ideological and profitable ends. This activity was not so directed and planned that one could call it a conspiracy, Schiller argues, but there was a clear consciousness of means and ends in the export of media products, particularly to weak and poor nations. Moreover, it was not simply television shows and movies that were being exported, but entire systems of commercialized broadcasting that would create markets not merely for cultural artifacts but for American businesses and advertisers. The American economy needed to propagate itself through the development of foreign markets. And, Schiller says, "Wherever big company influence penetrates, electronic communications are subverted to salesmanship" (100).

While Schiller's consideration of cultural imperialism extends far beyond what the term would later convey in terms of imperialism, it does far less in providing an understanding of what is meant by culture. As John Tomlinson points out in his critical examination of the cultural imperialism debate, Schiller's definition of culture seems to begin and end with American corporate capitalism, as his description of exported television and radio broadcasts indicates: "The image is of a mountain of material artifacts, privately furnished and individually acquired and consumed.... The imagery envelops all viewers and listeners within the range of electronic impulses patterned after the American model, and that radius is untiringly being enlarged."[36] But while this imagery blankets the international community, nowhere does Schiller describe or even suggest what it is that is being smothered. Indeed, while his greatest concern lies with the "have-not" postcolonial nations of Asia and Africa, the societies most clearly defined as being covered by an American media blanket include those of Canada, Britain, Finland and Hong Kong, capitalist bastions all. Ironically, then, as Schiller attempts to demonstrate the ways in which the American culture industry is used to bring the world under a dominant model of getting and spending, he himself manages to cover the world with his own assumptions of

malevolent media and unwitting and undifferentiated tabulae rasae, waiting for the moving finger of American corporate capitalism to write and, once having written, move on.

By subsuming any definition of culture into the economic and political ramifications of imperialism, Schiller presents what Fred Fejes has identified as one of the great fallacies of the cultural imperialism thesis: its blindness toward national and local factors -- indigenous patterns of belief and behavior -- that mitigate for or against any imperialistic intent of imported media. The simple power of the thesis presented by Schiller and others, Fejes argues, obscures the complex dynamics that exist between a native culture and an external culture.[37] In so doing, however, Schiller's book is of a piece with its time, an extension of the vision of the culture industry presented by Adorno and Horkheimer and filtered through the critiques of 1950s intellectuals, brought to bear on a world in which American military adventurism, supported by domestic corporate and governmental spending, did indeed seem to be "indiscriminately dumping" an American way of life, in the form of bombs and napalm, on poor and vulnerable societies. And while his analysis focuses almost entirely on the malign effects of American institutions, Schiller's debt to Adorno and the 1950s critics in terms of media artifacts themselves becomes clear in the final chapter of *Mass Communications and American Empire*. Television lifted from a marketplace structure, he says, would lead to broadcasts of government hearings, of interesting educational programming, and of cultural programs that would present "...the best in the universe of national and international arts and humanities" (Schiller, 153). Curiously, too, this is the only place in the book that international cultural products are mentioned as having any potential effect on American culture via television -- a tacit acknowledgement that the walls of Fortress Mediamerica are not quite impermeable, but equally a tacit declaration of the elevating effect of external High Culture on commonfolk.

The power of Schiller's arguments in *Mass Communication and American Empire* became evident in the decade following its publication, as numerous researchers used his thesis as the basis of their own investigations into cross-cultural commnication.[38] For his

own part, Schiller maintained those positions over the next 25 years, focusing still on the hegemony visited upon societies around the world by exported American cultural artifacts and systems. If anything, he argues in his 1991 article "Not Yet the Post-Imperialist Era," history has not only proved him right but taken the issue far beyond the role played by broadcast media: "The cultural submersion now includes the English language itself, shopping in American-styled malls, going to theme parks...watching the Cable News Network in scores of foreign locales, reading translations of commercial best sellers, and eating in franchised fast-food restaurants around the world."[39] The fact that this submersion is now not merely the product of an America weaker politically and economically than it was in 1969 but also of transnational corporations such as Sony, Siemens and Saatchi and Saatchi only speaks more loudly to the success enjoyed by American business and government in those earlier days and to the continuing influence the American model exerts on the activities of current multinational organizations.[40]

Schiller, however, does not deal with any potential effect the new transnational corporate powers might have on what he himself calls a "weakened" America. Again, culture is subsumed in the political and economic practices of imperialism. He does not speak to the ways in which management techniques or technological advances or advertising expertise developed in those corporations out of indigenous elements in Japanese, German or British culture might exert a measurable influence on industries in the United States. And he cannot, as a result, deal with the ironies of a case such as *Monty Python vs. ABC*, in which a cultural product made for a media organization whose ties with the political, economic and cultural elements of imperialism are even more evident than those of its American commercial cousins has an impact on both American law and American audiences. Examining those problems would require turning away from at least some of the arguments made by Schiller and some of the assumptions underlying those arguments. What it would mean turning toward, ironically, was another strand of thought developing out of the work of Theodor Adorno and his fellow emigrants.

**The People, Yes**

> You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things
> from me,
> You shall listen to all sides and filter them from yourself.
> --Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself" [41]

In 1947, Adorno and Horkheimer assailed the culture industry represented by movies and broadcast media as depriving people of the use of their imaginations and repressing their real desires while (con)forming them into an amorphous, unthinking mass. "From every sound film and every broadcast program the social effect can be inferred which is exclusive to none but is shared by all alike," they wrote. "The cultural industry as a whole has moulded men as a type unfailingly reproduced in every product" (Adorno and Horkheimer 34). Between that analysis and Adorno's *Mass Culture* screed "Television and the Patterns of Mass Culture," however, the notion of a social effect "exclusive to none but shared by all alike" went through some considerable revision. Television programs, Adorno argued in the later piece, functioned as "layers of meaning superimposed on one another." While they did not have the depth of "authentic works of art, which can never be boiled down to some unmistakeable 'message,'" television shows nonetheless remained a part of the "heritage of polymorphous meaning" (Adorno 478-479). Adorno was still none too sanguine about the meaning of many meanings, as they included the "hidden messages" that might not be resisted consciously and that would lead as a result to social conformity. Nonetheless, with the attention to the processes of psychology evident in the 1954 work, Adorno brings to the discussion of the effects of mass culture the possibility that many effects may be available, and the inherent possibility that the individual does possess the power to sift through and choose from the meanings or messages made available.

This amelioration in Adorno's philosophy, H. Stuart Hughes suggests, may well have come from his experience as an emigrant in America and his exposure to positivistic empirical social science.[42] If that is the case, then one of the most important influences in that shift was fellow emigrant Paul Lazarsfeld. One of the pioneers in empirical media

research, Lazarsfeld preceded Adorno to America by three years; upon hearing of Adorno's arrival, he arranged work for him in 1938 as a member of the Office of Radio Research being run out of Princeton University.[43] Lazarsfeld's work at Princeton and Columbia produced pioneer reports on audience ratings and the relationship between print and broadcast media; out of that research, however, came another study that offered a very different view of the ways in which media functioned in a mass society from that of Adorno and, later, Herbert Schiller. *The People's Choice*, published first in 1944 and then in a more widely distributed edition in 1948, presents the work done by Lazarsfeld and associates Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet in examining the voting patterns of a group of Ohio residents in the 1940 presidential election. The researchers wanted to find out what influenced people to vote the way they did; a key part of their study dealt with the effect of the mass media on those selections. Despite prevalent beliefs about the power of propaganda, Lazarsfeld and his team found that radio and newspaper broadcasts had but a limited effect on the behavior of voters. What effect there was seemed to be on the most influential people in a given social group, who were aware of their exposure to and the influence of media. Those "opinion leaders" also tended to choose sources that presented opinions generally in agreement with their own predispositions. The effect of media, then, followed what Lazarsfeld calls a "two-step flow": from radio and newspapers to opinion leaders; from opinion leaders to group members. Much more important in decision making by voters who were undecided at the beginning of the campaign, however, were personal contacts, both with opinion leaders and with other members of their particular social group. Those personal contacts, which led to a sharing of attitude and experience, developed a desire for stability and a willingness to adapt to prevailing opinions in order to preserve feelings of individual security, Lazarsfeld argues, and did so through mechanisms that mass media could not easily (if at all) reproduce.[44]

In many ways, *The People's Choice* serves as a touchstone for issues that would both enervate and energize social critics, including those represented in the *Mass Culture*

collection, in the 1950s. It represented an adaptation of functionalism to the study of communication that would be codified during that decade as the uses and gratifications model: a model that, while granting power to the audience, locates the source of that power in the needs of individual audience members, which are gratified in the use of media.[45] That pluralistic model, with its reliance on the management of individual needs to fit in with group norms, itself fit snugly with the trend throughout the social sciences to focus on social adaptation and adjustment as a means of achieving both personal happiness and national consensus, in lieu of examining the sources and results of social conflict.[46] Even so, Lazarsfeld was not without his own moments of Adornian critical energy. In his contribution to *Mass Culture*, "Mass Culture, Popular Taste and Organized Social Action," written with sociologist Robert Merton, Lazarsfeld criticizes advertising-based broadcast media for maintaining a political and cultural status quo by reinforcing the acts of getting and spending instead of addressing more important social questions.[47]

Despite this adherence to the general vision presented in the Rosenberg collection, as well as their agreement with others involved that the content of television broadcasting did little to elevate its audience and less to help general standards of culture, Lazarsfeld and Merton continued to assert one of the main points of *The People's Choice*: that only in a very special set of circumstances could media exert a direct effect on its audience to change behavior. The survival of the limited effects model in the midst of a concentrated onslaught against the perceived juggernaut of mass media suggested that in the term "effects," there was still common ground between the two schools of inquiry in their assumption of a linear flow between sender and recipient, whether that flow be defined as a hypodermic injection of ideology or a two-step flow of opinion. But it also suggested that a new road for research on what Harold Lasswell called the central question of communication -- who says what to whom and with what effect? -- might yet be cleared.[48] And Lazarsfeld himself suggested the direction that road might take in the introduction to *The People's Choice.* While the norm in group relations is for the individual to follow group opinions and

attitudes, there are occasions in which that is not that case, Lazarsfeld writes. Such change, he continues, can be in part attributed to "the activation of previous experiences and ideas. Each individual carries around with him germs of observations and half-forgotten experiences which are in a sense 'recessive,' usually because they do not fit into the prevailing...interests of the group to which he belongs" (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet xxi). In other words, the what said by who may well depend upon the whom, and determining how mass communication functions may well depend on studying those "previous experiences and ideas" and "germs of observation."

Lazarsfeld's destabilization of the effects model at the level of the receiver, combined with the destabilization suggested by Adorno in the message itself, represented the beginnings of a paradigm shift in an understanding of the relationship between mass communication and audiences. But that shift would be slow in coming for reasons internal and external to the culture industry. Within television itself, the late 1950s and 1960s marked the ascendancy of the three networks to a hegemonic position, as sponsoring advertisers faded from their position of prominence due to rising costs and the reaction to the quiz show scandals.[49] This network hegemony was solidified through their news departments, which grew into a position of primacy in the American news industry as a result first of those scandals and then of their power to bring the sights and sounds of early 1960s events including the civil rights struggle, the space program and, most importantly, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy to an expanding audience.[50] This apparent centralization of the culture industry into three sets of initials still funded by advertising simply fueled the effects argument, as psychologists and sociologists created an industry of their own examining the links between violence on television and violence in the streets. Those projects led to three years of congressional hearings and a 1964 report urging that violent programming be observed closely by networks, parents and researchers for further evidence of its effect upon children.[51]

These developments within and around the television industry, which appeared to

validate every fear of the 1950s mass culture critics and every assertion of the direct effects argument, were augmented in the 1960s by developments in American society and culture. American military adventurism -- in Cuba in 1961, the Dominican Republic in 1965, and, finally, in Vietnam throughout the 1960s -- grounded any claims of cultural imperialism in its very real political and economic analogues. Domestically, the behavior of law enforcement officials, both in their brutality and their polite turning of heads and wringing of hands when presented with evidence of that brutality, led many on the left to see a further analogy with imperialistic foreign policy. Finally, the student movement that grew in response to these issues drew heavily philosophically from figures including Adorno, C. Wright Mills, and Adorno colleague (and fellow emigrant) Herbert Marcuse -- people who had contributed significantly to the mass culture commentary of the 1950s and the notion that artifacts of mass culture exerted a malign influence on their consumers.[52]

With these factors in the television industry itself and in American society as a whole working at this time, the limited effects argument and the openings it presented to other examinations of the social and cultural role of mass communications appeared in 1960s American discourse almost solely as a response to the dominant direct effects paradigm, and a response that was often tainted with the support of the television networks and their executives.[53] A cluster of other ideas, however, from numerous fields of inquiry and national origins were growing to fruition during the 1960s and early 1970s. Individually and collectively, those ideas would lead to the shift from an effects paradigm to an audience paradigm at which the earlier work of Adorno and Lazarsfeld hinted, in a fashion evidently opposed to the linear positivism the effects paradigm represented.[54]

*European structuralists and poststructuralists.* The work of Claude Levi-Strauss, followed by that of Roland Barthes, Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci, progressively broke down the traditional Marxist distinction between economic base and cultural superstructure so that meaning no longer existed as a given in nature and was not something imposed

univocally or unilaterally. Instead, they maintained, meaning is a construction, the result of social behavior that involves contest and struggle. While there are elements in all four that would seem equally as home had they been expressed by the critical Marxist Adorno, their resituation of the fundamental constituent of society from economics to language resulted in a new attention to culture and the role of humans as not just prisoners but creators of culture that would soon take root in fertile soil.[55]

*Reader-response theory.* A school growing out of separate strands of British, French and German literary and aesthetic studies, reader-response theory argued that meaning was not inherent in a given literary work but rather something that grew or was constructed out of the relationship between the work and the individual reader. Its pioneer American proponent, Stanley Fish, defined that relationship in 1970 as being "monitored and structured by everything the reader brings with him, by his competences..." -- a loud echo of Lazarsfeld's tentative break from an effects model, but now used explicitly to speak to the power of the literary reader.[56]

*Feminist literary criticism.* Developing out of the American women's liberation movement of the 1960s, literary feminism of the 1970s effaced a radical break from Eliot's followers of the New Critical school, which maintained the sanctity of inherent meaning, precisely in its ability to see literature as a communications event.[57] The senders -- male authors -- represented a dominant patriarchal ideology that refused women into the greater world of literature, either as writers or readers; the messages -- the constructed works by those authors -- deliberately disfigured their representations of women. Most importantly, however, American literary feminism recognized that "the reader" was not a universal given, that women were as often "the reader," given the functioning of the academic canon of American literature that framed the act of reading, as men.[58] It therefore became incumbent upon those women to "resist," using Judith Fetterley's term, the meanings of

womanhood sent them through patriarchal literary works so that "we can accurately name the reality they do reflect and so change literary criticism from a closed conversation to an active dialogue."[59]

*Interpretive social science.* While the writing of American literary feminists was adding to an understanding of communication focusing on the power of the reader to construct meaning and the multivocality of any given text, the work being done by social scientists working in a new interpretive framework was making perhaps the most direct contribution to the shift in communication paradigms. As Paul Rabinow and William Sullivan would explain it, interpretive social science was devoted to the proposition that "all human inquiry is necessarily engaged in understanding the human world from within a specific situation.... it means that science, like all human endeavors, is rooted in a context of meaning which is itself a social reality, a particular organization of human action defining a moral and practical world."[60] By so operating, they argued, interpretive social scientists refuse to reduce the processes of signification to consciously directed products but instead operate from the understanding that "the web of meaning constitutes human existence to such an extent that it cannot ever be meaningfully reduced to constitutively prior speech acts, dyadic relations, or any predefined elements" (Rabinow and Sullivan 6). Their goal is to describe and understand the multivocality of culture, "the shared meanings, practices and symbols that constitute the human world" (Rabinow and Sullivan 7).

The most important practitioner of this interpretive social science in terms of its influence on communication research has been anthropologist Clifford Geertz, whose *The Interpretation of Culture* would play a key role in defining a new paradigm. Geertz begins his book with a definition of culture, following Max Weber, as "webs of significance," and a definition of his role as an anthropologist as participating "not [in] an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning."[61] Culture is not something that can be separated from society; instead, the effort to understand culture "is

like trying to read a manuscript (in the sense of 'construct a reading of') a manuscript... written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behavior" (Geertz 5). This is not something, Geertz comments, that social science researchers following either a direct effects model (which he associates with "strain theory") or a functionalist, gratification model ("interest theory") have done very well, particularly in their efforts to deal with ideology: "Both interest theory and strain theory go directly from source analysis to consequence analysis without ever seriously examining ideologies as systems of interacting symbols, as patterns of interworking meanings" (Geertz 207). Only by examining those "patterns of meanings" can social scientists understand not only those patterns' public function as ideology but their own places in the meanings they investigate.

*James Carey and American communication studies.* Using the concepts of interpretive social science that Geertz presented and embodied, communication theorist James Carey presented two essays in the mid-1970s that mark key moments in the paradigm shift from textual effects and a passive audience to cultural construction and an active audience. In the 1975 essay "A Cultural Approach to Communication," Carey defines the study of communication as having been dominated by a "transmission" view: an understanding of communication as "a process whereby messages are transmitted and distributed in space for the control of space and people."[62] With that paradigm asserting itself almost as naturalized history, another view of communication as ritual, focusing on "the representation of shared beliefs," had been overlooked and ignored (Carey 18). Yet communication consists of processes of symbolic action, events in which symbols are created, maintained and used. The study of communication should focus on those processes and the worlds they create, not the ones researchers believe they describe, he argued. Similarly, his 1977 essay "Mass Communication and Cultural Studies" cites Geertz at length in making the argument that "what is called the study of culture can also be called the study of communications, for

what we are studying in this context are the ways in which human experience is worked into understanding and then disseminated and celebrated (the distinctions, as in dialogue, are not sharp)" (Carey 44). To do otherwise, as has been the case throughout the history of communication research, he suggests, is to deny human activity and to reduce the participants in culture to the status of automatons.

*Raymond Williams and British cultural studies.* Carey's call for a new way of seeing communication was matched from across the Atlantic by British cultural theorist Raymond Williams. It was Williams who first brought the questions raised by Carey directly to television with his 1974 book *Television: Technology and Cultural Form.* While the book would become most noted for its groundbreaking analysis of the sequence and flow of television, it also called into question both the precepts and the methodology of the effects tradition, both direct and limited.[63] The "effects" adduced to media in such studies, Williams argued, were products not of some distant and arbitrary source but of greater social and cultural processes that helped define both the distant and arbitrary source and the research being conducted on it. Insisting that television had certain specific effects and that its producers were up to no cultural good was meaningless "until the forms of society which determine any particular socialisation and which allocate the forms of control and communication have been precisely specified" (Williams 120). Williams in the end agrees with Schiller's notion that American broadcasters are part of a corporate-governmental-military power elite using television for its own ends; what he does not accept is that those ends are achieved in any measurable way, significantly citing the acceptance of American television by the British working class, who saw it not as domination but as an alternative to the dominant elitist model of the BBC.[64]

With mass communication thus being considered as an integral part of the "shared meanings, practices and symbols" constituting human culture, not as a malignant superorganism manipulating helpless audiences, a whole new field of inquiry suddenly

opened up, ready for exploration by communication and culture researchers. That process began first in England; by the time Williams' book was published there in 1974, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University, then under the leadership of Stuart Hall, had been up and running for a decade. With a focus on the quotidian experience of the British working class and the role of media in defining social relations and ideology, the CCCS, along with similar schools at the University of Leeds and London's Open University, would come to play an important role in American communication studies, as will presently be seen.[65]

*Television aesthetics.* The American response to the developing paradigm moved more slowly, despite Carey's groundbreaking essays, and along a line that initially responded to the aesthetic concerns of the 1950s mass culture critics rather than the social and ideological components of their arguments. Horace Newcomb's *TV: The Most Popular Art*, published in 1974, followed the work of popular culture scholars such as John Cawelti in addressing the formalistic and formulaic properties of television genres. In so doing, Newcomb cited the need of television scholars "to concentrate on the entertaining works themselves rather than on the psychological effects of those works on and within the mass audience."[66] While *TV: The Most Popular Art* was conservative in its formal approach to television texts, it also argued convincingly that the medium needed to be lifted out of the linear effects model that had dominated its study to date. That Newcomb's book was published at a moment when "quality" television seemed at last to becoming a reality -- thanks in no part, as he notes, to imported British programming -- was fortuitious; nonetheless, the confluence led quickly to further humanistic study of the medium, as the first Newcomb-edited anthology *Television: The Critical View* demonstrated in 1976.[67]

With these influences variously nudging and turning the linear model of effects, both direct and limited, that had defined the study of American television from the

medium's inception during the founding years of the Cold War, a new way of considering the relationship between television producers, distributors, texts and viewers was ready to be born. One of the first voices to be heard in the new paradigm issued from Britain in the form of John Fiske and John Hartley's 1978 *Reading Television.* Deeply imbued in the poststructural revisions of Marxism that defined British cultural studies, Fiske and Hartley work through Barthian semiotics and Gramscian notions of hegemony, as well as anthropological considerations of ritual, to present a picture of television as the "bard" of a culture, serving as a mediator to bring its audiences to the center of that culture. Though their analysis sometimes seems but a variation of the limited effects paradigm, with their discussion of "functions," "uses," "messages" and "transmission," it also argues that television needs to be considered as a medium with a multiplicity of meanings; more importantly, it is a medium in which authority resides not with the "author" or the text but with its audience, in which individual members "negotiate" their responses to the bard "with reference to their own peculiar circumstances."[68] Negotiation was further considered by Stuart Hall in his influential 1980 essay "Encoding, Decoding," in which he proposed that readers of television texts constructed meaning along three lines: the dominant position, in which the reader goes along with the hegemonic meaning encoded in the text; the negotiated position, in which the reader accepts the dominant meaning on a large scale but reads against it in specific, situational moments; and the oppositional position, in which the reader refuses to accept encoded hegemony and instead constructs an alternative, politically charged meaning.[69]

The growing interest in the activity of the audience being discussed by Fiske and Hartley and Hall led to a series of ethnographic studies in Britain performed by researchers David Morley and Charlotte Brunsdon studying the way working-class viewers made sense of television programming.[70] In America, those concepts, along with the similar approach followed by feminist scholar Janice Radway in examining the popularity of romance novels to a female audience, found a voice in the work of television researchers investigating

programming ranging from soap operas to the new genre of music videos.[71] More importantly, however, they took root in the writing of Horace Newcomb. In two seminal essays, Newcomb showed how far poststructural thought, the influence of anthropology and British cultural studies had taken him from the literary formalism of a decade earlier. In the 1983 "Television as Cultural Forum," co-authored with Paul Hirsch, Newcomb brought together the concepts developed by James Carey, Raymond Williams, Fiske and Hartley and anthropologist Victor Turner to present a view of American television as a public forum in which questions are raised rather than answers given and in which meaning is contested rather than imposed.[72] Television as such a forum, Newcomb argued, allowed for the study of the "sociology of interpretation." Borrowing the term from Levi-Strauss, Newcomb called the television viewer a *bricoleur* who constructed meaning out of the various codes that compose the television text: "Bringing values and attitudes, a universe of personal experiences and concerns, to the texts, the viewer selects, examines, acknowledges and makes texts of his or her own" (Newcomb and Hirsch 512). Newcomb further focused the notion of the forum in his 1984 essay "On the Dialogic Aspects of Mass Communication," in which he argued, following the work of Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, that mass communication in general and television in specific functions as a dialogue between producer and viewer. Both parties have a say (literally, given the operative metaphor) in the making of meaning out of the multiplicity of messages available in a text. And again, the audience is in some ways the stronger partner in that act of construction: "the intentions of an originator of communication are constantly refracted by the contexts of reception."[73]

Newcomb's conversion from formalism to poststructuralism was further documented in the selections he made for continuing editions of his anthology *Television: The Critical View*. What in its initial 1976 edition contained primarily journalistic critiques, formalist analysis and a few effect- oriented social science articles (including Adorno's "Television and the Patterns of Mass Culture") was by its fourth edition in 1987 a panoply

of articles focusing on television's place in ideological discourse, whether in individual programs, genres or the medium as a whole.[74] Two other collections of essays on television -- E. Ann Kaplan's *Regarding Television* and Robert Allen's *Channels of Discourse* -- also indicated the degree to which the paradigm based upon the multiplicity of meanings and the power of the audience had ascended in television studies.[75] That paradigm received its fullest explication, however, in John Fiske's *Television Culture*, published in 1987. By that time a resident of the United States, Fiske brings together strains of both American and British communication theory, as well as their continental antecedents, to present television as the center of active dialogues in which groups of viewers construct meaning that, as often as not, subverts the hegemonic intent of producers. After working through discussions of encoding/decoding and the ways in which the various codes involved in television naturalize a created social order through their reliance on a realist aesthetic, Fiske arrives at the philosophical, if not the physical, center of his book: his consideration of active audiences, active texts and intertextuality. Fiske argues that television needs to be considered as an open space in which meaning is derived not from producers' intentions but from "the social experience of the reader."[76] Citing ethnographic research on the reception of television programs by Australian schoolgirls, American gay men, and Arabic Muslims and Jews, Fiske contends further that the meanings constructed by various "powerless" subcultures can be "the vital first step towards being able to do something about that powerlessness" (Fiske 70). Television is particularly suitable to this sort of political action, he continues, because of the polysemy -- multiplicity of meanings -- made necessary by the capitalist system in which it works: "To be popular, the television text has to be read and enjoyed by a diversity of social groups, so its meanings must be capable of being inflected in a number of different ways" (Fiske 66). An important component of those inflections is intertextuality, which Fiske defines not only as the way individual texts refer to other individual texts, either generically or as a part of Raymond Williams' "flow," but as the way that texts about television, ranging from

magazine articles and ads to gossip and fanzines, circulate and help promote selected readings of a given program. Again, particularly in the case of fan organizations, intertextuality develops an alternative subcultural construction of meaning that can lead to social action.

Fiske, like Newcomb, makes a strong case for the idea of the television text as a central site of an ideological struggle for meaning, and for the power of audiences to read through dominant ideological constructions to resist social and political control. Fiske's argument, however, reveals flaws both in his own construction of the active audience paradigm and with the model as a whole. While he attempts to backpedal away from the idea as often as he can, Fiske's concept of polysemy as an "essential characteristic of television," together with the notions of the open text and intertextuality, suggest that a given television text has at least as many meanings as it has viewers, each of which stands ready to be activated with a wave of the remote control and/or a quick reference to *TV Guide*.[77] Beyond that, the subcultures and groups he finds creating meanings that oppose or resist those of the dominant social structure vary little, either in their makeup or in the way they create meaning as a group, from the groups described by Lazarsfeld in *The People's Choice* and used as models throughout the limited effects argument.[78] Finally, Fiske's own readings of television texts ranging from *Hart to Hart* to Madonna videos to a segment of an Australian news broadcast inevitably recenter them as sites of non-negotiable meanings and foreground his own privileged involvement with those texts.[79]

The latter two problems, while specific to *Television Culture*, also address significant general problems with the active audience paradigm. For all its talk of decentered texts and multiple meanings, readings performed in the active audience paradigm almost invariably return to the notion of a single text containing a meaning to be apprehended by an audience. That meaning may not have an effect -- although Fiske's argument that polysemy may lead to social action comes very close to that argument -- and the text may offer more than one meaning for more than one audience, but the basic model

of communication remains within the transmission paradigm defined by James Carey. And while criticism of the pluralism that links the active audience model with the uses and gratifications model can be excessive, both in its critique of the models and of pluralism itself, that criticism points out the failure of scholars working in the former model to examine the social context in which their own texts have developed: The products of theories and methods that came of age during the leftist antiauthoritarian, anti-institutional ferment of the 1960s and early 1970s, the active audience paradigm asserts itself during the high years of Thatcher's Britain and Reagan's America of the early 1980s, when rightist anti-institutionalism had in fact become the dominant ideology in both societies. As such, the active audience paradigm may well work as part of the hegemony it has criticized.[80]

These problems with the active audience paradigm have reduced its effectiveness as a tool in analyzing international mass communication, even though the concept of interpretation so central to the paradigm would seem ideally suited for such an investigation. The pioneering work of British-based media ethnographer Ien Ang exemplifies the shortcomings of active audience readings in an international context. In her *Watching* Dallas: *Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination*, Ang uses the written correspondence of Dutch women who watch the American import *Dallas* to show that Schiller's notion of cultural imperialism simply does not hold when brought into the actual viewing experience of foreign audience members. In so doing, she shows the ways in which local, national and continental constructions of meaning, particularly those framed by the cultural and economic elite, became as important a part of readings as did any intent on the part of the American producers and distributors. In the end, however, her analysis falls into an almost inescapable trap: *Dallas* to these Dutch viewers fills needs -- for entertainment, for an alternative to an oppressive national culture, for some sort of meaning to life -- and creates "pleasures" (gratifications) for those viewers.[81] Similarly, the work done by Elihu Katz and Israeli researcher Tamar Liebes in examining readings of *Dallas* among ethnic groups in Israel, while acknowledging the "active and social" nature of the

viewing process and the open, multivocal nature of the text, follows a focus group methodology that in its application and its results is as much a product of the uses and gratifications tradition in which Katz is such a central figure as much as it is a product of the active audience paradigm.[82]

In some ways, the case of *Monty Python vs. ABC* is an event in cross-cultural communication that subverts an analysis based on uses and gratifications: The only "use" addressed in the incident is the commercial one of ABC in broadcasting the program, and while the lack of gratification experienced by the audience could be examined, it can only fruitfully be done so in relation to the gratification experienced from viewing the show on public broadcasting outlets, which immediately throws the problem back to the institutional level. But the Python case also reveals the other major problem in the active audience paradigm -- the claim of viewer autonomy in the construction of meaning.[83] The actions of ABC in trimming the broadcast almost perfectly exemplify the arguments of Mike Budd and his colleagues about limits that commodification of an audience -- which is precisely what a commercial broadcast of a program previously seen on a noncommercial network does -- has on audience freedom.[84] Indeed, the broadcast of the Monty Python episodes on a commercial network and the inability of the series' audience to prevent the second broadcast indicate the limitations of John Fiske's assertion that activated audiences reading activated texts can perform meaningful social action. Equally clear, however, is the fact that ABC's broadcast did indeed attract, if not create, an activated audience, an audience whose indirect influence becomes evident in the use of audience response by members of the Python troupe as part of their legal argument for an injunction.

The ABC broadcast of the *Monty Python* episodes, then, stands as a communication moment that supports some elements of both the direct effect/cultural imperialism model and the opposing decentered text/active audience model, while similarly refuting elements of both. What remains, therefore, is the construction of an understanding of the event that manages on the one hand to incorporate both models and on the other hand

to open a door into further investigation of what happens when an audience from one culture encounters a text from another.

## Between the Lines

> O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues!
> And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths
> for nothing.
>
> --Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself"[85]

Horace Newcomb introduces the "cultural forum" of his 1983 essay by discussing the concept of "liminality" introduced by anthropologist Victor Turner. In Turner's formulation, the liminal stage of cultural development represents the moment at which the members of a culture are playing outside its prescribed rules and roles, "...making possible the deconstruction of the 'uninteresting' constructions of common sense, the 'meaningfulness' of ordinary life'.... Liminality is the domain of the 'interesting' or of 'uncommon sense.'"[86] Turner's concept has obvious implications in considering the activity of audiences in creating meaning, but it also, in its use of the term "domain," suggests a spatial realm not defined by the linearity explicitly represented in the effects paradigm and implicit in the rhetoric of the active audience paradigm. As Newcomb's 1984 essay on the dialogic aspects of communication suggests, the most profitable exploration of that liminal space can be found in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin.

Though his career as a literary critic and theorist began in the Soviet Union during the 1920s, the repression of the Stalinist regime against works it viewed as ideologically suspect followed by the exigencies of the Cold War kept his work hidden from the West until the 1960s.[87] With his work reaching readers of English at precisely the same time that French structuralists and poststructuralists were being published for the first time in America and Britain, Bakhtin was frequently lumped together with Barthes, Foucault and others as part of a general movement in literary and linguistic studies.[88] His philosophy, however, voiced in the seminal essays "Discourse in the Novel" (written in 1934-35) and

"The Problem of Speech Genres" (1952-53), argues against some of the key concepts of French poststructuralism that have drawn from and contributed to the direct effect/active audience question, and opens a new space in the understanding of communication that speaks directly to the issues that are the focus of this study.

Two key terms that emerge from Bakhtin's essays are "heteroglossia" and "dialogue." The former, as he explains it in "Discourse in the Novel," refers to "the social diversity of speech types...a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships" (Bakhtin, 1981, 263). This multivocality seems to have, at least initially, much the same thrust as the term "polysemy": the notion that texts and audiences cannot be thought of as unitary wholes in which a single meaning resides, waiting for the clear light of day to emerge. Similarly, the notion of dialogue as a "classic form of speech communication" presents and supports the idea that audiences are active in creating meaning from a given text. As Bakhtin explains the notion in "The Problem with Speech Genres": "The fact is that when the listener perceives and understands the meaning...of speech, he simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude toward it. He either agrees or disagrees with it (completely or partially), augments it, applies it, prepares for its execution, and so on." He further calls an effects paradigm into question by labeling constructions based on the speaker (sender) and the listener (receiver) "fictions" that distort "the complex and multifaceted process of speech communication" (Bakhtin, 1986, 68).

These terms, and Bakhtin's successful application of them to explaining the ways in which meaning is made in and from novels, have proved fruitful to a number of scholars working in the area of film and television studies.[89] Those writers, however, have not fully explored the ways in which Bakhtin's ideas move around assumptions of communication that are built into the work of poststructuralists. Those moves are organized around what he defines as "the *real unit* of speech communication: the utterance" (Bakhtin, 1986, 71). The utterance, to Bakhtin, is the way in which speech obtains a concrete reality that belongs to an actual speaking subject. It is concrete because it has, in and of itself, absolute

boundaries in the beginning of an individual's speech and its end. Dialogue comes out of those utterances, as a second speaker listens and then responds to the first. To this point, Bakhtin's model differs from a direct effect model only in that the second speaker is active in constructing meaning from the utterance of the first. There is still a speaker who sends a message, and, Bakhtin contends, that speaker expects some sort of response, expects that his or her message will have some defined effect.[90] But he breaks from that tradition in his refusal to limit dialogue simply to the beginnings and ends of the concrete utterances that compose it. Before one begins a dialogue, he argues, one has to assume the existence of other utterances on the same subject. No utterance comes into being *sui generis*; rather, every element of discourse is itself a response, however indirectly, to elements that precede or accompany it. This necessarily drains the speaker of any illusions of omnipotence -- as Bakhtin puts it, "He is not, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe" (Bakhtin, 1986, 69). Moreover, it destabilizes the "message" as well, as every utterance is shaped from its concrete beginnings by other points of view expressed in other judgments. Any awareness of other utterances, he continues, "gives the speech a dialogical turn that cannot be produced by any purely referential theme with its own object" (Bakhtin, 1986, 94).The utterance itself, then, like the speaker, becomes enmeshed in a web of meanings that Geertz and Carey see as defining culture.

So, too, is the respondent. The object of the utterance, Bakhtin argues, is already "overlain with qualification, open to dispute, charged with value...enveloped in an obscuring mist -- or, on the contrary, by the 'light' of alien words that have already been spoken...." With both speaker and respondent having to respond to other thoughts, views and arguments, both in the present and in the past, as part of their own dialogue, the utterance "...enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgements and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse..." (Bakhtin, 1981, 276). This quote is crucial, in that it depicts visually

the way in which Bakhtin's model of communication goes beyond concepts of active audiences and activated texts employed by Fiske, Ang and other scholars. While their work of puts to rest the rigid linearity of the direct effect paradigm, the relationship of text to audience, even in a polysemic environment, still suggests meanings inherent in a text that audiences can apprehend in a linear fashion (though perhaps this line is dotted) depending upon preordained sociological variables. Even the terms "oppositional" and "resistant" represent a Newtonian positivism that would not be scorned by any effects researcher.

Bakhtin, however, presents a field through which speaker, utterance and respondent all must move. Communication in his model is not a straight line, solid or broken, from one to another through the third, but a series of vectors, eddies, collisions, refractions and reflections that inevitably result in dialogue. The many voices of Bakhtinian heteroglossia as a result cannot be quantitatively defined the way the many meanings of polysemy can, as those many voices can be heard not simply in concrete social and ideological constructions but in relationships that exist outside those constructions historically and culturally, and in relationships whose existence may be temporary to the point of being ephemeral.

Bakhtin's ideas, while directed toward the process of communication in general, have particular relevance in considering textual communication between cultures. Indeed, Bakhtin himself makes this connection clear in "The Problem of Speech Genres":

> ...the unique speech experience of each individual is shaped and developed in continuous and constant interaction with others' individual utterance. This experience can be characterized to some degree as the process of *assimilation* [italics his] -- more or less creative -- of others' words (and not the words of a language). Our speech, that is, all our utterances, (including creative works), is filled with others' words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of 'our-own-ness,' varying degrees of awareness and detachment (Bakhtin, 1986, 80).

A more accurate description of a process through which a text created in one culture enters another, for any number of reasons (economic, political, social, aesthetic) and is then apprehended by any number of people for any number of reasons in any number of ways could hardly be imagined.[91] Bakhtin's introduction of the term *assimilation*, with the

creative and multivocal inflection he brings to that term, also introduces two problems -- one theoretical and one methodological -- to this study, however.

The theoretical problem concerns the relationship of assimilation to the process of hegemony derived from the work of Gramsci and given a cogent explication by Todd Gitlin: "[T]he hegemonic ideology of bourgeois culture is extremely complex and absorptive; only by *absorbing and domesticating* [italics this author's] conflicting values, definitions of reality, and demands on it, in fact, does it remain hegemonic."[92] In many ways, the traditional definition of assimilation -- one that allows for neither creativity nor multiplicity of meaning -- and the definition of hegemony posited by Gitlin present the same model of a dominant set of meanings grabbing and devouring meaning introduced from a foreign source. E. San Juan further suggests that the major flaw in Bakhtin's dialogic construction of communication and assimilation is that, like the polysemic model employed by Fiske and Ang, it fails to suggest the ideological limitations presented by power structures that Gramsci employs in his description of the process of hegemony.[93] Both Gitlin and San Juan employ arguments of hegemony that cast the term along positivistic Marxist lines of dominance and resistance (San Juan presents African-American playwright Imiri Baraka as an example of "counterhegemony" whose verbal "assaults" on a dominant white ideology cannot be explained by a dialogic model of utterance). In so doing, they step back into an earlier communication paradigm that fails to consider the processes of negotiation -- dialogue -- central to Stuart Hall's and Raymond Williams' discussions of hegemony and that suggest, as does Bakhtin that both partners in the act of assimilation have something to say about the transaction.[94] Nonetheless, the relationship between the two terms remains a charged one, and will be addressed at several points throughout the current project.

The methodological problem with Bakhtin's theory is simply stated: How does one accurately describe or do measurement in a system in which a speaker is allowed intent but only with the understanding that this intent may not count for anything, in which a

respondent is allowed activity but an activity that is not predictable in its direction, in which the message itself is bounced around other messages -- personal, social, cultural, historical -- of which either party may or may not be aware? And how does one bring such a model, which is based on the individual communication patterns of dialogue, to a discussion of mass communication, much less mass communication that spans cultures?

One answer can be found in the work of British scholars Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott. While they cite the work of theorist Pierre Macherey instead of Bakhtin's dialogism and heteroglossia, their work in *Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero*, is almost Bakhtinian in its effort to read between the lines established by the effects and the active audience paradigms. They base their study of the cultural import of James Bond on the notion that fictional forms such as Bond must connect in some way with popular experience. Understandings of those forms based on an aesthetic analysis of the text itself, as those of traditional Marxists and cultural conservatives are, ignore readers and the act of reading in favor of an omnipotent text that exists outside of time and space. Those, however, who argue on behalf of an analysis that focuses on the situationally determined variables of a given audience and the many meanings available from those situations also posit a central, immutable text from which those meanings spring. Neither approach speaks appropriately to the place of popular experience or the role of social and ideological relations in the way people apprehend cultural artifacts; in Bakhtinian terms, neither approach takes into account the other voices and utterances that inflect dialogue.

Instead, Bennett and Woollacott argue, the best way to understand the relationship between texts and their audiences is through what they call "reading formations":

> By reading formations here, we have in mind...those specific determinations which bear in upon, mold and configure the relations between texts and readers in determinant conditions of reading. It refers, specifically, to the inter-textual relations which prevail in a specific context, thereby activating a given body of texts by ordering the relations between them in a specific way such that their reading is always-already cued in specific directions...not given by those 'texts themselves' as entitites separable from such relations.[95]

The reading formation in essence produces both the text and the reader. Bennett and Woollacott are not saying that texts and readers do not exist outside those formations but, returning to their critique of the dominant paradigms of the discussion, that neither the text nor the reader has any self-determined property for defining meaning. Meaning can only come out of "inter-textuality," which they define as the relation between texts and readers in specific cultural and historical contexts. This is not, they argue, "so much a question of reducing text to context as an attempt to rethink the concept of context such that, ultimately, neither text nor context are conceivable as entities separable from one another" (Bennett and Woollacott, 262).

To bring their theory to practice, Bennett and Woollacott use sales charts, marketing devices, newspaper and magazine reviews and interviews, political history, genre analysis and the books and films themselves to present the historical development of James Bond from the mid-1950s to 1980. That development, as they track it, moves Bond from the cultural position of an upper-crust cold warrior in his early novelistic incarnations to that of a nationalistic lower-middle-class hero as he becomes part of the paperback and tabloid serial market to that of a swinging mod protector of detente in the early films to his function as the center of ritual in the 1970s films. Along with these shifts in meaning come similar shifts in the place of the villain (from the communist East to unaffiliated terrorists threatening both East and West) and the role of the "Bond girl" (from villain to liberated supplicant to threat to Bond's power). In showing the different constructions of James Bond at different times, the authors present their subject as "a variable and mobile signifier," one that changes depending upon "the different sets of ideological and cultural concerns that figure [serves] to coordinate" (Bennett and Woollacott, 42).

Clearly, an understanding of the relationship between text and reader which bases that relationship on the ideological and cultural concerns surrounding both has some relevance to the transfer of texts from one culture to another. Indeed, the concept of the "mobile signifier" is directly applicable to international communications: While Bennett and

Woollacott present the mobility of "James Bond" in time, "James Bond" is no less mobile in space. The authors themselves hint at this by discussing the responses in other countries -- the ways in which Bond is "assimilated," to use Bakhtin's term and meaning -- following the release and export of the Bond films: increased sales of novels in France, comic book publications in Scandinavia, *Playboy* serializations in the United States.[96] But while Herbert Schiller would see these developments as exemplary of cultural imperialism, an approach based upon the ideas presented in *Bond and Beyond* would see Bond not as a container of corporate capitalist ideology but as part of a complex relationship between text and audience defined by specific and determinant elements of the histories and cultures of those societies Bond entered in the early 1960s.

The case of *Monty Python vs. ABC*, with which this survey began some time and space ago, can finally be most profitably analyzed using the concepts introduced by Bennett and Woollacott. In that framework, and without getting too far into issues to be discussed later in this study, ABC's broadcast of *Monty Python* becomes a moment in the mobility of a signifier. Broadcast first on stations affiliated with the Public Broadcasting Service, which defined itself and was in turn defined by its audience as a "quality" alternative to the three commercial networks -- in part because of its use of British programming -- the Python show arrived in America at the height of the Watergate scandal, a time at which doubt of traditional American institutions was running high.[97] With its anarchic sketch form and its notably non-American accents and vocabulary complementing the exceptionalism conferred by its channel of distribution, *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and its audience were part of a reading -- or viewing -- formation that was indeed something different from those associated with commercial broadcasting. That difference was augmented by the arrival in America of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (and the re-release of *And Now For Something Completely Different...*) and the wide release of albums presenting Python sketches sans visuals. When Bob Shanks and ABC picked up the remaining six Python episodes for commercial broadcast, they endeavored to shift the

text from a formation based on difference to one that, while not representing a mainstream American point of view (hence the late-night time slot), would place the text-reader relationship in the institution of commercial network broadcasting, the acme of conformity and the heart of darkness in American communication. This was a shift that neither the creators of the program nor its audience would brook -- a fact that the court challenge itself made evident and that the remarks of Jones and Gilliam about the response of American fans made explicit. The shift in the text came not with the commercial broadcast of *Monty Python* but in the group's response to that broadcast and its ultimate victory over ABC. The Python willingness to take on a corporate gargantua -- and win -- added an element of deliberate rebelliousness to the Python formation, an element that would come into play with the attack on organized religion that constituted the bulk of their next film, *Monty Python's Life of Brian.*[98] And, in a sense, that rebelliousness, while augmenting the difference between the group and American institutions, also appealed to very American values that were part of but dormant in the relationship between Python and its American audience from its inception.

The case of *Monty Python vs. ABC* in short exemplifies all the unpredictabilities and all the variables that Bakhtin sees in the simple act of dialogue and that Bennett and Woollacott find in the mobility of James Bond from time to time. It also shows the degree to which the meanings constructed in one cultural and historical situation can play with, off of, and against those of another situation to create a third meaning, completely different from neither but very different from would either would predict. And as such, it is but one moment in a dialogue that extends back to the earliest days of American television.

## Notes, Chapter One

1) Chapman, et al. 1989, 272.

2) On *Monty Python vs. ABC*, see Hewison 1981, 41-58 and Hertzberg 1976, 69-85, as well as Perry 1983 and Wilmut 1980. Specifics on programming throughout this study are drawn from Brooks and Marsh 1988.

3) Hewison 1981, 41; Hertzberg 1976, 69-70.

4) Perry 1983, 136-138; Wilmut 1980, 214.

5) Wilmut 1980, 221-222.

6) Hertzberg 1976, 78-80; Hewison 1981, 43-45.

7) For more on Lasker's approach to the case, see Hewison 1981, 50-51.

8) Also see Hertzberg 1976, 83.

9) Hewison 1981, 55; Hertzberg 1976, 85.

10) Hewison 1981, 56.

11) Whitman, ed. Van Doren 1975, 5.

12) See Kaplan 1980, especially 165-183.

13) See Pells 1985, especially chapter 3, 117-183. Pells documents how sociologists such as Seymour Martin Lipset and Daniel Bell wrote glowingly and without irony of an "end to ideology" in the smoothly functioning pluralistic economy of postwar America, while historians such as Henry Nash Smith and literary scholars such as R.W.B. Lewis wrote of the uniqueness and exceptionality of American life over the previous three centuries.

14) Cited in Miller and Nowak 1977, 222.

15) Pells 1985, 217-218.

16) See Eliot 1949, especially "Culture and Politics," 84-96.

17) Adorno and Horkheimer, in ed. During 1994, 38.

18) Adorno, in ed. Rosenberg and White 1957, 480.

19) Rosenberg, in ed. Rosenberg and White 1957, 5.

20) See David Manning White, in ed. Rosenberg and White 1957, 13-21; also McLuhan, 489-495; Seldes, 557-561.

21) Sterling and Kittross 1978, 336-340; see also Nye 1970, 404-406.

22) Barnouw 1990, 243-246.

23) See Les Brown 1971, especially 174-181, 204-218, 225-232.

24) See Balio, in ed. Balio 1985, 402-404 and Borneman, 447-462; also Barnouw, 1990, 115-116.

25) On Hollywood, HUAC and the red scare, see Caute 1978, 487-542; Balio 1985, 408-412; Cogley, in ed. Balio 1985, 487-509; and Barnouw 1990, 105-110; 117-130. Barnouw chronicles the direct effect of television on the motion picture industry: In cities with television in the years 1948-52, motion picture attendance dropped 20-40 percent,

leading to numerous theater closings in major metropolitan areas. See Barnouw 1990 113-114.

26) See Balio 1985, 425-433; Barnouw 1990, 193-198. The story of the development of the teenage movie audience is told in Doherty 1988.

27) See Gomery 1992, 171-196; Doherty 1988, 32.

28) When Rossellini's *The Miracle*, a short film about a peasant woman who believes she is pregnant with the Christ child, opened at New York's Paris Theatre in December 1950, protests led the city's theater license commissioner to order its removal from the screen (on December 23). Following several lower court appeals and reversals, as well as several openings and closings of the film and several accompanying protests, the case of *The Miracle* ended up in the U.S. Supreme Court, where a 1952 ruling established for the first time that films were subject to protection as free speech under the First Amendment. See Gomery 1992, 191. Gomery also discusses the influence foreign films had on the downfall of the American movie industry's own Production Code.

29) Dwight Macdonald 1962, 4-5.

30) Barnouw 1990, 300-303. Kennedy, who had chosen Minow for the FCC post as a last resort after his first two choices were pulled out on conflict of interest problems, was continually supportive of the chair's efforts to reform broadcasting along the lines of information and culture for which he showed a preference in his NAB speech.

31) Tunstall 1977, 38-39.

32) Barnouw 1990, 299. The three programs mentioned were the first American exports to be broadcast on the state-controlled Swedish television network, in 1961-62. See Nils-Olof Franzen et al. 1974.

33) Schiller 1969, 3.

34) See Mills 1956, especially Chapter 1, 3-29, and Chapter 13, 298-324.

35) Tunstall 1977, 57.

36) Schiller 1969, 3. See also Tomlinson 1991, 37-41.

37) Fejes 1981, 281-289.

38) Schiller's central thesis became the basis of the influential UNESCO studies on the "one-way flow" of communications by Nordenstreng and Varis (1974). See also Varis 1984, 143-152. Among the other major studies of the following decade to respond to Schiller were Read 1976, which presented American television exports economically as part of a natural product flow cycle; Tunstall 1977, which argued that American (and British) media had achieved a global position of dominance through technical and organizational superiority rather than as a tentacle of a corporate ideology; and Lee 1980, which criticized Schiller's work for a lack of empirical support and argued that relationships between cultures were too flexible to be defined simply as dependent. More recently, scholars including Collins 1989 and Straubhaar 1991 have brought elements of the active audience paradigm to bear on their responses to Schiller: Collins addresses television exports as material goods which have differing appeals to different populations,

while Straubhaar argues that foreign audiences actively choose the programming they view, and that the choice will generally favor local or regional material over that exported to them.

39) Schiller 1991, 15.

40) Schiller's own pantheon of transnational corporatism includes Philips of the Netherlands, Lever Brothers of Britain, Daimler-Benz of Germany and Samsun of Korea, in addition to Sony. See Schiller 1991, 15-16.

41) Whitman, in ed. Van Doren 1975, 33.

42) Hughes 1975, 166.

43) The effort failed, as Adorno's intense critical approach and the rigors of Lazarsfeld's group social research were a match made in purgatory at best, but, Lazarsfeld believed, the data gathering and analysis techniques Adorno observed as part of the Princeton team seemed to help him and his west coast colleagues in their work defining *The Authoritarian Personality*. See Lazarsfeld, in eds. Fleming and Bailyn 1969, 322-326.

44) See Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet 1948, especially 120-136; 150-158.

45) See Katz 1987, S37-38; Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, in eds. Blumler and Katz 1974, 21-22.

46) Pells 1985, 144. See also May 1988, 14-15, 26-28; Miller and Nowak 1977, 230-231.

47) Lazarsfeld and Merton, in eds. Rosenberg and White 1957, 464-467.

48) Lasswell, in ed. Schramm 1960, 117.

49) Sterling and Kittross 1978, 335-336; 393-394; Barnouw 1980, 55-58.

50) Barnouw 1990, 281-340.

51) Barnouw 1990, 303-306; Stirling and Kittross 1978, 419-422. For information on research concerning television and violence, see Aronson 1972, 150-152, 158-161; also Eysenck and Nias 1978, 100-113, 125-133.

52) For information on the 1960s, see Hodgson 1976, Gitlin 1987, Matusow 1984, Miller 1987, O'Neill 1971 and Wittner 1974. O'Neill's account, written most nearly to the time he describes, is particularly useful in capturing a sense of how television and mass media were regarded; see in particular 222-227. Gitlin, a prominent radical leaders during the 1960s, writes that the effects of television during the 1950s included one that wasn't cited by the critics of the day: That of comics Steve Allen, Sid Caesar and Ernie Kovacs, who mocked "the boobery of the boob tube" itself on the sensibilities of teenagers who would soon be going off to college and questioning other orders of society. See Gitlin 1987, 35-36.

53) One of Lazarsfeld's chief associates with the Office of Radio Research in the 1930s and early 1940s was Frank Stanton, who went from there to become president of CBS in 1946. While at CBS, Stanton funded several research projects, most notably Joseph Klapper's 1960 *The Effects of Mass Communication*, which furthered the models of limited effects (reinforcing rather than creating attitudes) and uses and gratifications -- a result that would both buttress the networks' position against the mass culture critics and at the same time allow them to build up news and documentary operations after the quiz show scandals. See

Miller and Nowak 1977, 203-208; Sterling and Kittross 1978, 187; Barnouw 1980, 57-58; Barnouw 1990, 247-260.

54) Other discussions of influences on the active audience paradigm can be found in Allor 1988, Grossberg 1984 and Newcomb 1986.

55) See, in particular, Levi-Strauss 1963 and 1966, Barthes 1973, Althusser 1971 and Gramsci 1971. A lengthy discussion of their contributions to the active audience paradigm exceeds the parameters of this project; such discussions are available in, among others, Allor 1988 and Grossberg 1984, as well as in Fiske 1989. For more on the contributions of Levi-Strauss in specific, particularly the concept of *bricolage*, see Crick 1976, 37-57, and Hawkes 1977, 32-58. It is worth noting, however, that the arguments made by Barthes and Althusser, in particular, broach on the position of Adorno in the relative powerlessness each assigns to individuals trapped in naturalized constructions of history (Barthes) disseminated through ideological state apparatuses (Althusser). Barthes, for his part, presents a scheme in the essay "Myth Today" that suggests at least the possibility of resistant readings of myth (128). Gramsci's fluid definition of hegemony as a negotiated form of social "leadership" opened up Althusser's understanding of ideological power to not just the possibility but the inevitability of opposition. While Barthes and Althusser are seminal figures in what would come to be called poststructuralism, they are perhaps better viewed in terms of theories of mass communication as transitional figures between passive and active audience models.

56) Fish, in ed. Tompkins 1980, 85. See also Tompkins' introduction, ix-xxvi. It should be noted that among the French contributors to reader-response theory was Roland Barthes, whose "Death of the Author" defined a text as: "...multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not...the author." See Barthes 1977, 148. For a discussion of the application of literary reader-response criticism to television studies, see Robert Allen, in ed. Allen, 74-112.

57) Moi 1988, attacks what she calls "Anglo-American feminist criticism" for its aversion to scientific literary theory and its "complicity" with patriarchy in refusing to kill off traditional notions of the author and the text (70-88). Her arguments in re literary theory raise some valid concerns about American literary feminism in the 1970s and early 1980 (though they are not without a bias of their own); her objections, however, speak precisely to those elements of feminist criticism that prove most useful to criticism of mass communication.

58) The obverse to this sender-message-receiver argument was also arguable: Works by women were either misread by male critics who sought to reconstruct the work along the lines of dominant patriarchal ideology or removed from circulation altogether. Several of the essays in Showalter 1985 address both sides of the issue. See in particular Kolodny, 46-62; Baym, 63-80; and Robinson, 105-122; as well as Showalter's introduction, 3-18. Showalter's later contribution to the volume (243-270), with its explicit debt to Clifford Geertz, relates most directly to the concepts taken up in the communication studies active audience paradigm, if not to the earlier elements of feminist criticism addressed here.

59) See Fetterley 1978, xxiii. Fetterley's book is perhaps the strongest example of the way in which 1970s feminist criticism liberated and empowered the concept of "the reader" along gender lines. See also Allor 1988, 222-224.

60) Rabinow and Sullivan, in eds. Rabinow and Sullivan 1987, 20-21.

61) Geertz 1973, 5.

62) Carey 1989, 15.

63) Raymond Williams 1975, 78-118.

64) See Williams 1975, 129-134.

65) For a thorough history of British cultural studies, see Turner 1992; for a further gloss on intellectual twists and turns therein, see Fiske, in ed. Allen 1987, 254-290.

66) Newcomb 1974, 244.

67) For hia comments on British television, see Newcomb 1974, 230-236.

68) See Fiske and Hartley 1978, 85-101.

69) Hall, in ed. During 1994, 90-103. Fiske would later suggest that Hall's three distinct readings were too arbitrary, and that virtually every reading of televisual texts is to some degree negotiated. See Fiske 1989, 64-65.

70) See Brunsdon and Morley 1978; Morley 1980.

71) See Radway 1984. On soap operas, see Modleski, in ed. Kaplan 1983, 67-75; and Robert Allen 1985. The major *Dallas* studies are treated elsewhere. John Fiske's own ethnographic research on Madonna and music videos is presented in ed. Allen 1987, 254-290.

72) Newcomb and Hirsch, in ed. Newcomb 1994, 503-515.

73) Newcomb 1984, 40.

74) Newcomb 1976 and 1987. The first edition includes 20 articles, only two of which -- James Chesebro's "Communication, Values and Popular TV Series" and David Thorburn's "Television Melodrama" -- are among the 32 articles in the fourth edition.

75) See ed. Kaplan 1983 ; ed. Allen 1987.

76) Fiske 1989, 64.

77) Fiske 1989, 15. Fiske, for example, in arguing for the characteristic of polysemy, writes: "The hegemony of the text is never total, but always has to struggle to expose itself against that diversity of meanings that the diversity of readers will produce." He then immediately adds,however: "But this polysemy is not anarchic and unstructured: the meanings within the text are structured by the differential distribution of textual power in the same way that social groups are related according to the differential distribution of social power." (93). Later, he reverses the order: "The plurality of these meanings and articulations is not, of course, a structureless pluralism, but is tightly organized around textual and social power." (126) But: "Not only is the text polysemic in itself, but its multitude of intertextual realtions increases its polysemic potential." (127) For a further critique of Fiske's construction of polysemy, see Condit, in ed. Newcomb 1994, 426-447.

78) See also on this point Curran 1990, 135-164; Evans 1990, 147-168.

79) The clearest example of "Fiskean hegemony" comes with his analysis of an Australian news report on an industrial dispute in Perth. He focuses first on the verbal element of the report, paying little attention to the visuals, and deconstructs the news reader's use of language. The word "strike," for example, implies to Fiske "union agency. Striking is what unions do and management suffers." The viewer is thereby "contained" within dominant ideology -- if one follows Fiske's construction of a dominant ideology as one that mandates management suffering. Similarly, in a bow to visual as well as verbal coding, Fiske reads the term "grim-faced strikers" as presenting "potential contradiction with visuals; fictional convention for representing villains." That "grim-faced" is also a convention for representing serious work, serious illness or bereavement is not a potential reading for this (Fiske-)centered text. See Fiske 1989, 296-300. For similar readings of *Hart to Hart*, see 2-13, 83-93, 139-142; for *Into the Groove*, see 250-254.

80) Leftist critiques of the active audience paradigm and its association with pluralism can be found in Budd, Entman and Steinman 1990, Seaman 1992 and Schiller 1989, 148-156; in addition to Schiller, 1991.

81) See Ang 1985; also Ang, in eds. Schneider and Wallis 1988, 69-77.

82) Katz and Liebes, in ed. Newcomb 1987, 419-432. See for further detail Liebes and Katz 1993, especially 3-33. Katz's commitment to the active audience paradigm can be further called into question, given his attacks on poststructuralism and, in particular, on the research done by Ien Ang. See Katz 1987, S30-S33, S37-S39.

83) This problem becomes particularly visible in Ang 1991. Ang attempts to ameliorate her "micro-situational" research with the call to address the macro-situational exigencies of culture and society. To do so in a traditional sense, she argues, would simply further the mythology of positivistic science: "There is no whole picture that we can strive to gradually 'fill in,' because actual audiences are temporally and spatially dispersed and continuously changing formations that can never be pinned down as such." (165) Unbridled polysemy would seem to reign triumphant in this construction. Ang's further discussion of this issue will be addressed later.

84) Budd, Entman and Steinman 1990, 137-139.

85) Whitman, 37.

86) Turner 1977, 61-80.

87) For biographical information on Bakhtin, see Michael Holquist's introduction to Bakhtin 1981, xv-xxxiii; also Stam 1989, 1-25.

88) In 1985, the executive director of the Modern Language Association, as part of a "trend-spotting contest," offered a prize to the first person who could find the first reference in the journal *PMLA* to Bakhtin, Barthes, Derrida, Freud, Levi-Strauss and Marx. See Michael Holquist's introduction to Bakhtin 1986, ix.

89) See, for example, in addition to previously cited works by Newcomb 1984, Fiske 1989 and Stam 1989, Reeves, in ed. Newcomb 1994; Rowe, in ed. Newcomb 1994, 202-211; and Kaplan 1987.

90) Bakhtin (1986) discusses this idea in conjunction with the concept of "addressivity" and the addressee in "The Problem of Speech Genres" (95-98). It is here that he comes closest to traditional American constructions of the communication process in his assertion

that speakers in some ways shape their utterances to match their conceptions of those with whom they are engaged in dialogue. His argument, while differing from those of the direct effect tradition in his insistence on the power of the responder in shaping the message, also comes perilously close to a sort of pluralistic demographization of the speaker-respondent relationship: those involved in scientific dialogue will use a different process from those involved in educational dialogue will use a different process from those involved in business dialogue, and so forth. In the end, he acknowledges the diversity of dialogue available at the level of mass communication (which he refers to as an "objectively neutral style of expression") and leaves the matter for others to consider.

91) The notion of "cultural discount" as developed by Hoskins and Mirus 1988 can be directly related to Bakhtin's discussion of assimilation. They argue that communication based in one culture will be popular in another depending upon similarities in styles, institutions and behavioral patterns represented – the "varying degrees of otherness and our-own-ness...awareness and detachment" of which Bakhtin speaks.

92) Gitlin 1980, 256.

93) San Juan 1995, 35-50. Again, Hoskins and Mirus' cultural proximity thesis suggests the ways in which language serves to limit dialogue between cultures; as this study has already suggested, the corporate capitalism within which the American television industry was conceived and was operated also limits the proliferation of meaning within the process of assimilation as defined by Bakhtin. This does not, however, suggest that other forms of utterance are without power in shaping the reception of a foreign text.

94) See Hall, in ed. During 1994, 101-103; Raymond Williams 1977, 111-114.

95) Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 64.

96) Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 32-33.

97) See Carroll 1990, 139-160; also Hodgson 1976, 463-490.

98) For the American controversy over *Life of Brian*, see Hewison 1981, 78-84.

## Chapter 2: Danger Men
## (Kennedy, Bond and the Secret Agent Genre)

There's a man who leads a life of danger
To everyone he meets, he stays a stranger
With every move he makes
Another chance he takes,
Odds are he won't live to see tomorrow.
Secret agent man, secret agent man --
They've given you a number
And taken away your name.

--"Secret Agent Man"[1]

Though on the surface a textbook case of political economics at work, the arrival of British television in the United States during the early 1960s represents a field of shifting and complicated cultural relationships typifying Bakhtinian dialogue. The British side of that dialogue developed as producers there sought to take advantage of a burgeoning transnational trade in television programming. While the nations of Europe and the British Commonwealth provided the most readily available consumers, the United States, with its economic wealth, geopolitical power and broadcasting resources, was the motherlode that British producers dreamed of tapping.[2]

One producer, Lew Grade, believed that success in the States lay in giving American audiences British programming unrecognizable as such: shows that employed American actors, accents and settings but that were produced in Britain, with American revenues returning to fund further production.[3] Grade's transatlantic strategy, developed throughout the 1960s, worked in industrial and economic terms; in terms of popular success and the making of meaning, however, he fared less well: Only three of his primetime series -- *The Saint*, *Secret Agent* and *The Prisoner* -- attracted audience numbers and interest enough to impress their American network distributors. The success of those

shows and the ability of American audiences to make sense of them came less from Grade than from another British import: James Bond, the suave, womanizing spy hero of Ian Fleming's little-read 1950s novels. Bond's popularity in the States inflected the readings of any number of American audiences -- not least of which were television producers, who sought to recreate Bond in their own terms and out of their own conventions.

That popularity, however, addressed specific historical and ideological concerns also embodied in the period by an American given heroic trappings: John F. Kennedy. A living model of a polyvalent text, Kennedy, like Bond, combined ideological signifiers of an old, traditional order -- moneyed family, Harvard education, love of *Kultur* -- and the established politics of the Cold War with Utopian signifiers of youth, power and virility, and a vision of a new *Pax Americana*.. Indeed, Bond's place in American culture was set by an endorsement from Kennedy, an endowment of cultural capital that ideologically linked the two figures, one barely more fictional than the other, in a way that transcended national boundaries. Kennedy's assassination in turn brought to the fore the conspiratorial dangers of the world in which Bond worked, elevating at once both his heroism in triumphing over those dangers and the horrific nature of the world in which he worked. And as Bond would go in an American understanding, so would go those who followed him, whether of American or British origin: When Johnny Rivers would sing of his "Secret Agent Man": "Odds are he won't live to see tomorrow," American audiences knew that indeed there were those in their own land who had not.

What starts as an apparently simple economic deal to bring British television to America, in other words, turns out to be a complex transaction of meaning, with social, political and historical utterances -- including the element of difference itself -- shifting that meaning from moment to moment. It was a dialogue whose result could not have been predicted when it began, with the cherry blossoms unfolding on the banks of the Potomac in the first spring of America's Camelot.

**Grade-A TV**

On April 5, 1961, 10 weeks after John F. Kennedy's inaugural address and two weeks before the Bay of Pigs invasion, CBS broadcast the first episode of a new British series replacing *Wanted: Dead or Alive*. *Danger Man*, unlike the Western it supplanted, was both of and in the modern world: "Patrick McGoohan stars in this half-hour filmed series as NATO special investigator John Drake, whose assignments take him all over the world," read the *TV Guide* description of the series.[4] Explicitly compared by the show's British producers to the Ian Fleming's James Bond character, *Danger Man* entered the American market, where Fleming was no more yet than a dime-a-dozen (almost literally) pulp fictionist, without any such context.[5] Instead, the show's publicity foregrounded its Cold War elements, as the *TV Guide* description overstated the relationship between Drake and NATO, which was closer to that of an editor and a freelance writer than it was employer-employee. This allowed for the development of Drake as a rugged individual hero, working within and without a bureaucracy, that was familiar to American audiences from Western and detective novels, movies and television series. That familiarity was enhanced by the series' use of a first-person narrator, also a staple of the private eye genre.[6] *Danger Man*, in short, found its way to American audiences through traditional ideological and formal means, rather than being blessed by any glamour from a popular new American president.

While John Kennedy may not have played an appreciable role in the arrival of this new British series, another forceful and impressive presence most certainly did. Lew Grade, in his role as deputy managing director of the commercial broadcasting company Associated TeleVision (ATV), was coming to personify the British commercial television industry in a way that no single figure could the American broadcasting system. One of the foremost proponents of television exports, Grade launched a subsidiary company -- Incorporated Television Company (ITC) -- to handle overseas sales of ATV programs, including *Danger Man*. Overseas for Grade meant in particular America, which could provide money other broadcasting systems could not, and which would in turn help fund

British (i.e., ATV's) commercial production. *Danger Man*, with its overt referencing of East-West tensions and detective fiction conventions, as well as a soupçon of rock-'em, sock-'em violence, represented a clear effort by Grade to ameliorate British accents and exotic foreign locations with elements addressed specifically to American audiences.[7] In a sense, Grade was willing to assist the American television industry in its hegemonic "absorption and domestication," to borrow Todd Gitlin's phrase, of his own work.[8]

Even so, *Danger Man* came and went in six months with barely a trace, bringing to an apparently quick end the British presence on American primetime television.[9] But Grade was not about to give up on the profits to be tilled in the American market. In 1962, having gained full control of ATV, he brought British actor Roger Moore, known to American television viewers from a year as James Garner's replacement on the Western *Maverick*, back to the United Kingdom to star in *The Saint*, a series based on the adventures of the roguish gentleman detective Simon Templar, already familiar to American audiences from Leslie Charteris' books and a series of movies released in the 1930s and '40s. Grade's ITC company began syndicating the show the following year in a number of American markets, where it performed surprisingly well.[10]

Grade's attempts to create a "mid-Atlantic" programming represent the most obvious manifestations of British-American dialogue during the 1960s. His deliberate inclusion of structural elements in British programs that in some cases literally spoke to audiences in the United States constitutes what Louis Althusser would call a "hailing" of those audiences in his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." Without reference to Bakhtin, Althusser uses a dialogic model to explain the ways in which social structures -- church, school, media, etc. -- constitute individuals as subjects in their ideological discourse:

> I shall then suggest that ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits'subjects among the individuals...or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects...by thatvery precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing:'Hey, you there!'[11]

When the hailed individual turns around as a response and/or to respond, he continues, he/she, in the act of recognizing and responding, becomes a subject of a shared ideology.[12]

The ideologies for which Lew Grade most directly spoke -- the power of commercial broadcasting on the one hand; a world in which large forces of evil must be fought and can be defeated by lone, good (even saintly) individuals on the other -- were ideologies that required little interpellation of American audiences. The fact, however, that they came from a source outside of America necessitated, in Grade's view of the matter, extra hails: familiar characters, familiar settings, familiar actors, familiar accents. As the decade progressed, Grade became more and more convinced of the need for these hails. *The Baron* (ABC, 1966), *Court-Martial* (ABC, 1966), *Man in a Suitcase* (ABC, 1968) and *The Champions* (NBC, 1968) each offered a new take on the international agent working for the forces of good. Rather than the British protagonists and foreign settings used in the first programs, Grade cast American actors as the leads in each of the series and added American locations to *The Baron*, a World War II setting to *Court-Martial* and a superhero device to *The Champions* order to make an even more obvious appeal to American audiences. All three series were cancelled in less than half a season.[13] An attempt in the 1970s to bring the same type of hailing to the science fiction genre resulted in the expensive flop *Space: 1999*, which lasted only 18 months in stateside syndication despite the presence of American stars Barbara Bain, Martin Landau and Barry Morse.[14]

These failures indicate the problems inherent not only with Grade's strategy of hailing but with Althusser's theoretical use of the term, which represents a basic linear Marxist understanding of communication. As Bakhtin's work suggests, no hail can occur in a vacuum. The assumption that an individual will respond to the call of "Hey, you there" on the street, to take the example presented by Althusser, fails to consider any number of variables that might influence both whether the individual will respond and the form any response might take: the tone of the voice; the recognizable gender, age, racial or other characteristics in that voice; the number of people on the street; the condition of the street

itself, to name an obvious few suggested by the metaphor. The argument Althusser presents concerning the power of ideology to construct the subject, in other words, is based on a flawed understanding of dialogue that denies agency to the recipient of the hail and fails to acknowledge the power of utterances or situations that might precede and/or accompany that address. The lack of popularity in America of much of the Grade-ATV British programming that veritably shouted "HEY, YOU OVER THERE!" makes concrete the difficulties with an assumption of a single, inevitable response to a call for recognition.

This should not suggest, however, that hailing as Althusser describes it cannot and does not occur when other variables work in its favor: One is far more likely to respond to "Hey, you there" on a quiet avenue in the afternoon than on a deserted and dark city street at night, for example. Likewise, the success of *The Saint*, which ran in syndication for four years before being picked up by NBC for three half-seasons (1967-69), indicates that not all of Grade's hails to American audiences fell on willingly deaf ears. The most notable of those hails, however, came with the revival of *Danger Man* in 1965. Now called *Secret Agent*, the show even in its title hailed American viewers with signifiers of a new popular hero, British in origin, who in turn signified and reconfigured a lost popular hero, American in origin. In responding to John Drake, American audiences also responded to James Bond, now much more than the paperback hero he was when *Danger Man* first showed up on American screens; in responding to Bond, those audiences also responded to the man who made Bond what he was in America: John F. Kennedy.

## The President's Agent

It was not until the week after President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963 that the appellation "Camelot" was applied to his administration: by his wife Jacqueline, in a *Life* interview with campaign historian Theodore White.[15] That association has been turned into something of a cliché by historians of the 1960s who have, in a sort of *post hoc ergo propter hoc* historiography, have sought to explain Kennedy's appeal and ascendancy

in terms of the English ur-legend.[16] Indeed, even at the time of his election, the "text of Kennedy" available to most Americans had assumed a mythic quality, with the candidate's youthful good looks, patrician background, war heroism and cultured sensibilities adding up to what Norman Mailer assessed during the 1960 campaign as "a hero America needed, a hero central to his time."[17] The links between the American president and the British myth that would define him for the ages, however, had a concrete foundation in the circumstances of Kennedy's own life. With his father serving as Franklin Roosevelt's ambassador to Great Britain in the late 1930s, Kennedy, as one friend would later report, grew out of his "anti-British elements [his Boston Irish background]...by the end you couldn't have found a more British person." He then channeled the experience and contacts gained during his stay in England into his Harvard undergraduate thesis, quickly published as the book *Why England Slept*. A study of Britain's failure to respond to the threat posed by Hitler that was highly critical of the "appeasers" led by Neville Chamberlain, Kennedy's work became a best-seller on both sides of the Atlantic.[18]

To Americans in 1960, the British elements of the "text of Kennedy" were not nearly as foregrounded as were those of his "anti-British" background, due largely to the controversy over his Catholicism.[19] Kennedy's British ties would quickly reassert themselves in foreign policy, however, in his development of a relationship with Great Britain and Prime Minister Harold MacMillan that one historian would refer to as "the golden days" in the "special relationship" between America and England in the years after World War II.[20] It would also reassert itself soon enough in American popular culture, in which Kennedy fast assumed a remarkable prominence. As Mary Ann Watson points out in her examination of television in the United States during the Kennedy years, virtually everything John or Jackie Kennedy wore, played or sat in became part of an American lingua franca in the early 1960s. The Kennedys became almost regular characters on American prime time television, serving as reference points on situation comedies, as the topics of sketches and songs on any number of variety shows, and as the models (the

president in particular) for what Watson calls "New Frontier character dramas" -- shows such as *Dr. Kildare*, *The Defenders* and *Mr. Novak* that focused on young professionals dealing with social problems in ways that demanded breaks from the past.[21]

Kennedy's most significant contribution to American popular culture, however, came not -- at least immediately -- from television. The March 17, 1961 edition of *Life* -- released three weeks before the first broadcast of *Danger Man* -- featured a report from Hugh Sidey on "The President's Voracious Reading Habits." In addition to citing his speed reading abilities, the article included a list of the president's ten favorite books, a list predominated by political biographies, many of which were British -- David Cecil's *Melbourne* and Winston Churchill's *Marlborough*, among others. The list, however, included a novel that seemed most curious, given the company: *From Russia With Love*, by Ian Fleming.[22] The book was one in a series following the adventures of British secret agent James Bond, a man who enjoyed golf, a good martini and the company of beautiful women as much as he did thwarting the plans of evildoers intent on taking over the world. Fleming had been writing Bond novels at the rate of one a year since the early 1950s, but his success had been marginal at best on both sides of the Atlantic -- until 1961.[23]

Kennedy's mention of the Bond novel constituted a massive investment of cultural capital, to use the term developed by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, into Fleming's work -- enough to legitimize the paperback writer to middle class and educated American audiences. According to Bourdieu, culture and accompanying "distinctions" of taste are controlled as capital in a given society by those who acquire needed cultural knowledge through education or inherit it through social origin. Kennedy possessed both the education and the social origin to manifest a wealth of cultural capital, which he flaunted from Robert Frost's poetry reading at his inauguration to the classical concerts he enjoyed at the White House.[24] By including on his list of historians and novelists a little-read spy novelist, Kennedy employed that capital in a way Bourdieu calls "affective investment":

> [W]hen he moves, as if by instinct, towards what is, at each moment, the thing to be loved, like some businessmen who make money even when they

> are not trying to,he is not pursuing a cynical calculation, but his own pleasure, the sincere enthusiasm which, in such matters, is one of the preconditions of successful investment.[25]

That investment made the British secret agent and his creator suddenly accessible and acceptable to a much larger American audience (which Bourdieu would criticize as "middle brow" and "bourgeois") than the genre devotees who might have been previously familiar with either.[26] With the president's endorsement, James Bond and Ian Fleming joined touch football, pillbox hats and endless repetitions of the Boston-inflected "vig-ah" as part of the Kennedy aura surrounding and suffusing American popular culture.[27] Sales of Bond novels began to climb, a rise further boosted by an even more fortuitious development occurring almost simultaneously with the Kennedy acknowledgement: Fleming's sale of the film rights to his books to Canadian-born British producer Harry Saltzman. The sale culminated a decade's worth of effort by Fleming on both sides of the Atlantic; indeed, the first filmed adaptation of a Bond novel was not the cinema's *Dr. No*, but a one-hour television adaptation of *Casino Royale*, retitled *Too Hot to Handle*, shown on the CBS anthology series *Climax* in 1953-54.[28]

By the time *Dr. No* had its American premiere in 1963, however, Fleming had become a household name, at least in the households of those possessing cultural capital, due largely to his legitimization by Kennedy. *Time* reviewed his novel *The Spy Who Loved Me*, in its April 13, 1962 issue: "Among the shocks and disappointments 1962 still has in store for President John F. Kennedy and many thousands of other unsuspecting people is the discovery that the cruel, handsome, scarred face of James Bond does not turn up until more than halfway through Ian Fleming's latest book."[29] In a profile for the "Talk of the Town" section of the April 21, 1962 *The New Yorker*, Fleming, over martinis appropriately made with American vermouth and Beefeater gin, turned Kennedy's endorsement into a story of his first meeting with "Jack and Jackie Kennedy" in Washington some months earlier: "Not *the* Ian Fleming!' they said. What could be more gratifying than that?... I think the President likes my books because he enjoys the

combination of physical violence, effort and winning in the end."[30] The Kennedy-Fleming connection was inflected differently by conservative spokesman Russell Kirk, in the October 8, 1963 *National Review*: "President Kennedy's New Frontier...is the sexy-nightmare world of James Bond.... Ian Fleming, a worse writer than [James M.] Cain and a smuttier pornographer than [Mickey] Spillane, seems insufficiently prepared to guide President Kennedy down the happy path to universal peace."[31]

With "Jack and Jackie" paying for his induction, Fleming's Bond entered American culture at last, becoming a text in and of itself that would both acquire and provide various meanings within that culture. As sales of the books took off, Fleming's other stories began appearing on a regular basis in *Playboy* and other magazines. Meanwhile, the first Bond movies did a brisk, if not overwhelming business. *Dr. No*, made in 1962 and released stateside in 1963, made $2 million in North America, doubling its production costs. *From Russia With Love*, made in 1963 and released in 1964, doubled the profit of *Dr. No*.[32] But it was *Goldfinger*, the first Bond film to be made and released after the assassination of President Kennedy and the beginning of the Camelot myth, that would make James Bond a powerful "British" signifier in America.[33]

**From Britain With Love**

In their study of the "career" of James Bond as symbol and text, Bennett and Woollacott define several "moments" at which Bond articulated cultural and ideological concerns in Britain, two of which bear closer scrutiny in examining Bond's career in America. The first, following the Suez crisis of 1956 and centered around the serialization of *From Russia With Love* in the tabloid *Daily Express*, saw Bond as a definitively British hero fighting and triumphing over definitively Russian/Communist villains, as well as a definitively male hero triumphing in battle and in bed over definitively female villains and/or heroines. In the second incarnation, built around the Bond films starring Sean Connery (which, as the authors point out, necessarily inflected readings of the novels from

which the first Bond was constructed), Bond sheds both his Cold Warrior mantle and his veneer of traditional British class to battle against more ill-defined global sources of evil and, at times, against the old-fashioned class ideals and mores of the British Establishment. And as Bond freed himself from outdated political and social norms, so he and "the Bond girl" freed themselves from established, repressed norms of sexuality -- though the Bond girl's "freedom" was defined by Bond's needs and desires.[34]

In many ways, those two "moments" of Bond telescope into one when Bond enters American culture. As Ian Fleming's frequent appearances in *Playboy* might indicate, the "modernized," unrepressed sexuality of the Bond books and films were as much a representation of shifting sexual mores in America as they were in Britain.[35] But while the sexuality of Bennett and Woollacott's second Bond seemed to be read by most Americans as part of the "text of Bond" from his arrival, James Bond remained, even at his most anti-Establishmentarian and even with the imprimatur of John F. Kennedy, a resolutely British figure in the States. Certainly references to the British Secret Service and British luxuries in both the books and the films contributed to this positioning of Bond as outsider; the juxtaposition of Bond to the helpful but lesser American CIA agent Felix Leiter in *Dr. No* contributed as well.[36] But these obvious British signifiers, Alexander Walker argues, were assisted remarkably in an American construction of Bond by the casting of Sean Connery in the films. Producers Broccoli and Saltzman wanted to avoid using a familiar face like David Niven or James Mason (Fleming's choices); in choosing the little-known Connery for the part, they also got a Scottish accent that on the one (British) hand worked entirely outside of specifically English class linguistic distinctions and on the other (American) hand avoided the already familiar -- and assimilated -- mid-Atlantic accents of Niven or Mason.[37]

Just as the text of Bond retained qualities of a British national character, if not outright nationalism, in America that Bennett and Woollacott see him losing in Britain, so it retained its Cold War elements. Two of the first three films -- *Dr. No* and *Goldfinger* -- represented the United States as the target of foreign madmen associated politically and/or

linguistically with Central and Eastern European powers. The third -- *From Russia With Love* -- was, as already noted, the most blatant representation of Soviet-West tensions that Fleming had produced. *Saturday Evening Post*, in a 1963 profile of Fleming, praised the author for his perspicacity in pinning down many of the specifics of the Cold War before they happened: "We know now that the Russians *do* build missile bases in nearby Caribbean islands (*Doctor No*). They *do* plot carefully to get beautiful girls into the beds of Allied agents (*From Russia With Love*). Fleming said it first."[38] The arrival in America of Bond as Cold Warrior might be chalked up to a mere cultural lag between Britain and the States, as well as between the books and the films, were it not, however, for Cold War politics of the Kennedy administration that seemed to mirror, if not make real, the world of James Bond. One month after the American public discovered that *From Russia With Love* was one of the president's favorite books, Kennedy launched the Bay of Pigs invasion, an attempt to overthrow Cuban Communist leader Fidel Castro that ended a fiasco. Continuing efforts to assassinate Castro through ludicrous technological means seemed to be lifted from Fleming's books.[39] The events leading to the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, which saw the United States and the Soviet Union come within hours of all-out nuclear war over Soviet missiles positioned in Cuba, bore an eerie parallel to the plot of *Dr. No*, whose title villain used a Caribbean island (Jamaica) as a base to disable all Western missile systems. The missile crisis began only two weeks after the film *Dr. No* opened in Great Britain and, as the *Saturday Evening Post* indicates, indisputably shaped the film's reception a few months later in the States.

Tensions eased, at least officially, between the United States and the Soviet Union in the months following the missile crisis. On the popular level, however, they were immediately brought back to the fore following the assassination of Kennedy just over a year after the missile crisis. In the immediate hours after the Dallas shooting, media attention focused on right-wing groups in Texas and the south who had made no secret of their virulent dislike for the president. By the time the police had apprehended Lee Harvey

Oswald, however, news coverage foregrounded the suspect's Russian wife and the fact that he lived in the Soviet Union for some time.[40] The later news of Oswald's involvement with the leftist Fair Play for Cuba Committee in New Orleans added to the frisson of the ultimate Communist plot, with Fidel Castro joining the Moscow commissars in political violence now hued with personal revenge.[41] It was in this atmosphere that *From Russia With Love* was released in the United States in the spring of 1964 and *Goldfinger*, the film that made James Bond a household name in the United States and around the world, was produced and released in the fall of 1964.

The East-West conflict still imbued in American constructions of James Bond took on an added dimension after the Kennedy assassination, however. The Warren Commission's official investigation of the assassination, released in September 1964, failed to answer many of the most relevant questions about the shooting and instead led to a profusion of conspiracy theories.[42] The "trauma," as Todd Gitlin would later call it, created by the assassination was not healed by the investigation but rather opened up and left to bleed yet again (Gitlin 1987, 313). This kind of trauma, suggest John Cawelti and Bruce Rosenberg in their genre study *The Spy Story*, both created and fed a public anxiety and personal alienation that "makes the figure of the spy so compelling as a contemporary everyman hero."[43] Cawelti and Rosenberg, in their readings of spy novels, particularly those of Ian Fleming, argue that what they call "clandestinity" -- the ability to act in secret, the need to become invisible to do so, and the eventual sense of isolation involved in both -- speaks directly to fears and frustrations about the powers of bureaucracies and massive institutions, including foreign governments and alien ideologies, to control people's lives.[44] According to their formulation, James Bond, the individual agent who takes on -- and defeats -- global conspiratorial organizations, at times necessarily going beyond the authority and technology given him by the bureaucracy of Her Majesty's Secret Service, directly addresses the concerns of an era defined by an individual who used clandestine bureaucracies against opposing powers and whose end seemed to come at the bequest of

any number of powerful and secret institutions.[45]

While Cawelti and Rosenberg's analysis of the spy story and the Bond phenomenon fails to define with precision "clandestinity" and at times falls into a simplistic individual-against-society argument that could aptly be used to define much of Western literature, the connections they make between the popularity of Bond and the events of the Kennedy years are borne out in the exponential growth in the popularity of Bond following the assassination of the president.[46] At the end of March, 1965, *Goldfinger* had made $10.4 million in its 14-week release in America, a record-breaking total and almost twice as much as the first two Bond films put together. "No other film in memory...has ever performed with such speed for such a volume," wrote then-*Variety* reporter Vincent Canby. "The social historians of the future may study the James Bond syndrome to try to figure out why *Goldfinger* in this particular year of the 20th Century struck such a responsive chord" (Canby, March 31, 1965, 3).

Notes of that chord were struck not because James Bond, as Bennett and Woollacott suggest, literally becomes an American agent to American audiences, but because the "text of James Bond" had been so articulated to the "text of John Kennedy" as to make of a British hero an American one: Kennedy had, literally and figuratively, created a bond with the British agent.[47] On the one hand, the American president's position within a moneyed, elite Establishment, as well as his firm resolve against conspiratorial agencies of evil, particularly Communism, were present in an American reading of Bond. On the other hand, the charm, sexuality and youthful vigor -- shown at times in his willingness to fight against elements of the Establishment he represented -- that had signified Kennedy to a great number of Americans were also present in an American reading of Bond, especially as that figure was embodied by Sean Connery. Indeed, the figure of Bond in America, through its articulation to Kennedy, comes to typify the functioning of American mass culture defined by Frederic Jameson in his essay "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture." Jameson argues that for mass culture to imbricate (or hegemonize) its consumers in its

ideological purposes, it must also present meanings that oppose those ideological purposes, presenting a world as it should be, not as it is. While overly and overtly dependent upon the direct effects paradigm, developed out of the work of Adorno, that assumes meaning inherent in a text, Jameson also allows for the presence of contrary meanings.[48] Those meanings are quite visible in Kennedy's Bond, who at one and the same time represented the contemporary corporate nature of the power elite at work in the Cold War and the older, idealistic notion of the active, attractive individual fighting alone against all manner of arrayed forces in service of a better world for all.

With the events of Dallas 1963, however, the latter reading of the "text of Kennedy" lost its immediate Utopian function. Instead, it became purposefully reconstructed as "Camelot" -- a Utopia irretrievably lost, a tragic legend with specifically British overtones. This in turn enabled the "text of Bond" in America to be reconfigured further along its Utopian lines: the noble individualistic warrior fighting for a better world -- who succeeds and doesn't die in the end. Bond became, in Kennedy's sudden absence, the hero America needed, the hero central to his time. The ties between Kennedy and Bond and the tremendous boom in the popularity of the latter following the demise of the former suggest the development of a further element in the assimilation of British cultural artifacts into American society: Difference itself. To follow Cawelti and Rosenberg's argument, cultural difference gained power during the national "trauma" of the Kennedy assassination, when other messages and meanings lacked the cohesiveness they would have in calmer times. Internal anxiety took precedence over the anxiety of influence, further opening the door for artifacts from other cultures -- in this case, Britain, with whom a language (if not a complete vocabulary) was shared and with whom social, cultural and political ties had been strengthened during the Kennedy years.[49] Bond is only one example of the significant power of difference brought to bear on British texts in American popular culture in the years following Kennedy's death. The award for Best Film of 1963 given at the Academy Award ceremony immediately following Kennedy's death went to *Tom*

*Jones*, a British film that both successfully combined signifiers of olde England and modern British cinema and told the story of a young, sexually aggressive male who triumphed over conspiratorial forces arrayed against him.[50] The cultural viability of the British "difference" was no less important in the American acceptance of the Beatles, as *Time* made explicit in its coverage of the group's February 1964 appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*: "There is a considerable difference, however, between the colleopteran flight of these four English boys and the phenomenon of Elvis Presley or Frank Sinatra.... The one word that teen-agers use over and over to describe them is 'different.'"[51]

Again, as Hoskins and Mirus, Straubhaar and other cultural proximity theorists would point out, Bond, *Tom Jones* and the Beatles were not *too* "different" from their American audiences. To some observers, the involvement of American corporations in the financing and distribution of British popular culture artifacts and texts created some question as to whether Bond, Master Tom or the Beatles were really "British" at all.[52] As the response indicated, however, American audiences of the day saw those texts as "different" and were willing to let that "otherness" override the "our-own-ness" of traditional American cultural utterances. Difference, in short, became one of the "specific determinations," to use Bennett and Woollacott's term, that guided the reception of British television by American audiences in the 1960s.

**Bond and Beyond: The Tube**

According to Bennett and Woollacott, the "second moment" of Bond included not just shifts in signifiers of nationalism and sexuality, but the development of signifiers of commodity and consumption.[53] Those signifiers were always present in Fleming's novels; as Cawelti and Rosenberg point out, part of the Bond fan culture of the 1960s included compilations of catalogues detailing Bond's brand name choices in both the necessities and the luxuries of life.[54] Bennett and Woollacott, in a frame-by-frame analysis of the opening scene and title sequence of the film *Goldfinger*, show the same advertising sensibility at

work, as Bond's Rolex watch and Lotus sports car are identified as clearly as they might have been in a television commercial.[55] The shift comes, they suggest, when Bond himself becomes a brand name and advertising slogan.[56] In the United States, the success of *Goldfinger* brought a plethora of Bond products onto the market, ranging from toys based on the technological gadgets of the films to a line of Colgate-Palmolive toiletries (including Bond deodorant) to 007 golfing sweaters and trenchcoats.[57]

These images and commodities, Bennett and Woollacott argue, become elements of a construction of contemporary male sexuality around which contemporary female sexuality can itself be structured. That issue will be considered in greater detail in the following chapter; more important in the current discussion is the way in which the figure of Bond as representative of consumerism and as a commodity itself acts as another vector shaping the arrival of British television to America in the 1960s. The emphasis on product identification in the Bond books and films and the development of Bond as a commercial property came at the precise moment of a paradigm shift in the commercial structure of American television. Programs during the 1950s, following radio procedure, had been licensed to individual sponsors, who bought the best time available for selling their products on the network schedule. With the 1959 scandal surrounding the Revlon-produced and sponsored *Twenty-One* and *The $64,000 Question*, however, the networks decided to take control of their schedules. Programs would be produced by those best qualified to do the job and would be licensed to the networks, who would in turn schedule the shows and sell advertising themselves. This last meant that while a program could still have a single advertising sponsor, the network could sell individual spots to different companies.[58]

Though this change in the way networks, producers and advertisers did business was major enough on its own account, it had economic and ideological ramifications that were even greater. By making individual sponsors relinquish control of their series, the networks increased the importance of ratings services. Advertisers, looking for the largest possible audiences, sought to spend their money in the places where they could get the

most return -- the most "homes using television," to use the A.C. Nielsen ratings term -- for their dollars. The audience, as a result, itself became a commodity to the companies purchasing advertising time. And as the price of commodities varied in a free market according to supply and demand, so the price of an audience began to vary in "free" television, with highly rated shows commanding higher advertising rates. With this grand commodification of television, however, came an increasing understanding that as various groups of consumers would choose products based upon the needs or desires of that group, so might advertisers choose audiences based upon their own needs and desires for sales. The Nielsen company during the 1960s configured new survey tools that could measure the age, gender, ethnic, geographic and socioeconomic locations of viewers; by the end of the decade, both networks and advertisers were speaking of demographics as the concept defining the commercial practices of the medium for the foreseeable future.[59]

Into all these changes floated the figure of James Bond, a character who first represented a life defined by commercial endorsement, only to become a character who was a commercial that endorsed a particular way of seeing the world: a commercial as culture. The evolution of Bond mirrored the evolution of television from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, particularly in the television genre the Bond films came closest to representing -- the crime show. In its early years a genre represented by the sturdy male cop (Joe Friday of *Dragnet*; Dan Matthews of *Highway Patrol*) or the vigilant private investigator (*Peter Gunn, Richard Diamond*) taking on and episodically vanquishing (individual) sources of disorder in the city or on the highways connecting the cities, the crime show took an interesting turn at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. Instead of lone heroes consumed by their need to serve law and protect order, a group of shows produced by Warner Brothers for ABC -- *77 Sunset Strip, Hawaiian Eye, SurfSide Six, Bourbon Street Beat* -- featured agencies, teams of young, hunky private eyes who lived in then-exotic Sunbelt locales, drove fast cars, hung with hip crowds and made out with the chicks between their various adventures in bringing down evildoers.[60] The Warner-ABC shows brought many

of the signifiers of the "text of Bond" -- youth, (male) sexuality, the joys of creature comforts -- to American television in advance of Bond's arrival in the movie theatres. That they failed to articulate the significant British difference of Bond, as well some of the other concerns -- bureaucracy and conspiracy, and the role of the individual against each -- comprising an American reading formation of 007 is perhaps best measured by the fact that all were cancelled by 1964, the year of *Goldfinger*.

The short-term success of these American predecessors to Bond, inflected by the growing public fascination with the character during the Kennedy years, would necessarily attract the interest of American television producers, whose job it was (and is), as Horace Newcomb and Robert Alley suggest, to be sensitive to social and cultural changes in order to create a popular new product.[61] So it was that Norman Felton, producer of the prototypical New Frontier drama *Dr. Kildare*, approached Ian Fleming in 1963 to ask for his help in shaping a first script about an American secret agent. Fleming, ever entranced with the possibilities of American television, was enthusiastic about the project, giving Felton the name of a minor character from two of his novels -- Solo -- as well as his blessings in making a series pilot. The networks, still skeptical, showed no interest in the project. Felton, still convinced that an American TV Bond could be sold, reworked the concept he and Fleming had developed, drawing from both the earlier ABC private eye shows in giving Solo a partner (curiously eliminating the signifying value of the name) and an agency, and from the Bond Cold War formula in giving the agency a secret, conspiratorial foe bent on subversion and world domination. The result was *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, which NBC bought and first presented on September 22, 1964.[62]

The recombinations, to use Todd Gitlin's term, of other television and film forms that Felton and writer Sam Rolfe brought to the series proved to be its most interesting elements.[63] U.N.C.L.E. -- the United Network Command for Law and Enforcement -- was apparently a post-Cold War secret organization of good guys trying to maintain detente and world peace. Solo, a proud American, had as his partner a Russian, Illya Kuryakin;

both reported directly to organization head Alexander Waverly, a Briton, thereby maintaining an iconic "British" superiority in matters of international spying that Fleming's novels and the Bond films had already established. Indeed, Felton and Rolfe made no effort to mask the British influence on the show. Cast as Alexander Waverly was veteran Hollybrit actor Leo G. Carroll, familiar to American audiences from his lead role in the 1950s sitcom *Topper*. More intriguingly, the role of Illya went to David McCallum, a Scottish-born actor who first gained attention in early "angry young men" films in Britain and had more recently earned American notice for his roles in *Billy Budd* and *The Great Escape*. McCallum, repeating the instant celebrity accorded countryman Connery, proved to be the breakout star of the series in the United States, with teenagers writing the producers for photographs of his toes (McCallum was regularly profiled in teen fan magazines) and posters of him as Kuryakin becoming best sellers.[64] Fleming's personal influence, however, was also visible in U.N.C.L.E.'s chief foe. THRUSH was based on Fleming's SPECTRE organization, a secret bureaucracy composed of evildoers from around the globe that was removed from the direct control of the Kremlin, under which previous Bond enemy SMERSH labored.[65] The SPECTRE formula used in *U.N.C.L.E.* was the only one film producers Broccoli and Saltzman would use, as they believed the elevation of evil from historic to mythic would serve them better in the world market.[66]

Whether Norman Felton had the world market on his mind with the creation of *U.N.C.L.E.* is a moot point. His adaptation, in any case, of the SPECTRE formula to an American television series opened up potential meanings and pleasures for American audiences not necessarily interested in direct geopolitical allegories. That polyvalence was evident in reviews of the show that focused on its obvious relationship to the Bond books and films, referring to it consistently as a "takeoff" and a "spoof"; Robert Vaughn, who played the Solo character, told *Time* that the show was "a massive put-on."[67] Once the program became a hit, following a mid-season schedule change that put it in the highly youth-oriented 8 p.m. time slot on Monday, its commodification proceeded apace,

following directly on the success of the James Bond consumer lines: Ideal Toys merchandised toy guns and other gadgets based on the show; a line of clothing (including the "U.N.C.L.E. Official Pajamas") was introduced; board games, puzzles, paperback novels, cards and other assorted properties were pushed into the juvenile market.[68] A fellow producer and father of four wrote directly to Norman Felton: "Nice children who are, in all other respects, perfectly normal, they beg me continually, constantly, to get the U.N.C.L.E. cards, THRUSH cards, photos of Robt. Vaughn, the blond kid (Illya?), etc." (Raddatz, 16). *U.N.C.L.E.*'s deliberate foray into mythic good-evil confrontations and its willingness to sell itself obfuscated its Cold War heritage, as such viewers testified.

While the pleasures derived by many of its viewers from*The Man of U.N.C.L.E.* masked the Cold War tensions at its ideological core, however, they did not eliminate those concerns. As one college student wrote to the program's producers: "[A]fter watching The Man from U.N.C.L.E. I felt that a letter of appreciation was in order. I feel that your program offers an escape from our problems. The cast has its problems, but they're mostly of a child's dream world of spies and counter-spies" (Raddatz 16). The program offers an "escape," but the "problem" of the Cold War is still present in an unnamed, naturalized form. The Bond films and *U.N.C.L.E.* may have moved from overt representations of East-West conflict to other concerns -- modernization, commodification -- but they nonetheless retained the notion that the world was divided into large secretive institutions of Good and Evil, constantly pitched against each other with the lives of innocent and powerless billions held in thrall. While one could read SPECTRE and THRUSH as mythic organizations of evil and nothing more, they still contained a core utterance of a conspiratorial -- Communist -- Other that for many could not be inflected out of existence.

Even if, as Bennett and Woollacott argue, the Bond films and *U.N.C.L.E.* represented a shift in signification concerning American-Soviet confrontation, that shift was eradicated in the slew of programs that came along in 1965 drawing from the popularity of Bond-*U.N.C.L.E.* and recombining elements of their success with other texts. *The Wild*

*Wild West* sent its secret agent team back to the post-Civil War frontier, as employees of the U.S. Treasury Department. *I Spy* continued *U.N.C.L.E.*'s multiculturalism by replacing Russian good guy Illya Kuryakin with African-American good guy Alexander Scott (played by popular young comic Bill Cosby), sending him and fellow agent Kelly Robinson around the world explicitly to do the work of the CIA. Even Amos Burke, the dapper protagonist of *Burke's Law*, in 1965 gave up his lucrative legal practice in order to do his patriotic chores as a U.S. government secret agent. Only the new female private detective series *Honey West* failed to (re)introduce -- and name -- the U.S. government as the institution of Good.[69]

These American cousins of Bond represented an important twist in the process Roland Barthes defines as "ex-nomination": the power of the ruling cultural class to naturalize its status by leaving itself a nameless universal while naming -- nominating -- competing ideologies (Communism, to use Barthes' own example) as threatening Others.[70] In the political climate of America in the years following the assassination of President Kennedy and marking the escalation of involvement in the war in Vietnam, however, that process had to be reversed. The secretive, bureaucratic institution fighting for Good had to be identified as such to differentiate it from bureaucratic institutions of Evil whose power derived from their abilities to disguise themselves -- the power of Communism in America as defined in and since the McCarthy era.[71] In so doing, those shows literally brought the ideological programs of the Bond films and *U.N.C.L.E.* home to American audiences and made the process of making meaning a visibly complicated one indeed: While the college student could write to the producers of *U.N.C.L.E.* in praise of the show's "child's dream world," s/he also saw it as an escape from unnamed problems in the "real world." Other viewers, meanwhile, were more explicit in their recognition of the Cold War elements of the text: "Our two teen-age sons have pictures of Mr. Vaughn and Mr. McCallum in their room along with those of Barry Goldwater and Dr. Wehrner von Braun," a Kansas mother wrote to Felton and his partners (Raddatz, 18).

In the four years since John F. Kennedy welcomed and ushered him in, the British figure of James Bond had wrought a literally spectacular influence on American culture, linking that culture with new forms of commodification and reconfiguring Cold War tensions in a way that both mythified and rehistoricized those tensions. By the mid-1960s, a large part of American television culture had been recast along and between the lines visible in the text of Bond. A further recasting would come with the assimilation to that culture of one of Bond's stepbrothers: John Drake, Lew Grade's *Secret Agent*..

**They've Given Him a Number...**

With a proven track record and contacts at the network already in place, and with the now unprecedented success of *Goldfinger* and James Bond to add to its marketability, Grade and ITC sold 24 episodes of the new, hourlong *Secret Agent* to CBS in 1964. The deal brought ATV $1.25 million; more importantly, Grade said, it meant that "at last British product is getting a showing on an American network."[72] That showing began on April 3, 1965, when *Secret Agent* moved into a Saturday night timeslot preceding *Gunsmoke* and following *Gilligan's Island.* Grade's transatlantic hails were again almost immediately evident. The title sequence, featuring animation and graphics bearing a distinct kinship to the work of Saul Bass (*The Man With the Golden Arm, North By Northwest, Psycho,* etc.) and the credit sequences for the Bond films, appeared on-screen backed by a song featuring a twangy electric guitar, heavy drumbeat and a vocal by American recording star Johnny Rivers.[73] *TV Guide*, for its part, again linked the show to ongoing political concerns: "Based on the *Danger Man* series, this expanded hour-long program continues the adventures of urbane John Drake, a special security agent assigned to NATO."[74]

The premiere episode, however, undercut expectations that those moments might have created. While the theme song may have been hip-shaking rock'n'roll, the harpsichord was the primary musical instrument heard in the episode's background music. And it became clear immediately that John Drake was not working for NATO but was

instead connected with a specifically British secret service organization. Indeed, the villain in the show ("Battle of the Cameras") was not affiliated with the Communist Party in any way; rather, he was a corrupt businessman out to sell military secrets to the highest bidder. The episode, simply put, provides the viewer with a prime example of a polyvalent text, as signifiers of youth and an active individual hero central to American constructions of the Bond formula are combined with signifiers suggesting on the one hand a long-lost classical age and on the other an agent of evil that is (literally) politically neutral.

This is not to negate other elements of *Secret Agent* already present in an American reading formation for the show. While removing Drake from any kind of NATO auspices took away one obvious Cold War referent, the fact that he was now clearly a national government agent nominated the government bureaucracy as "the good guy," much as Kelly and Scott's work for the CIA in *I Spy* or James West's work for the Treasury Department in *The Wild Wild West* did in those American programs. And *Secret Agent* was not loathe to cite the dastardly Reds as villains when need be: In the fifth episode shown in the U.S., "Yesterday's Enemies," Drake has to bust a spy ring in Beirut headed by a former British agent who freely admits his past as a "fellow traveler" as part of the reason he is giving information to "the opposition."[75] That episode also features another element of the series speaking to the issues raised by Cawelti and Rosenberg: Drake decries the tactics of his own bosses as "worthy of our enemies" when they eliminate the former agent after he has agreed to come back over and sell out his Eastern contacts. The heroic individual agent, when confronted with bureaucratic treachery on his own side, sticks to his principles, even though he knows they are meaningless in the end. This stretching of the tension between the individual and the bureaucracy, present at times in the Bond series, becomes more and more important in the Drake saga, as will be seen.[76]

The dialogue between signifiers that exists in the text of *Secret Agent* reveals a difficulty in the concept of the mobile signifier as Bennett and Woollacott use it in their analysis of the popular history of James Bond. For those critics, the mobility of Bond is a

linear one -- from classbound Cold Warrior to classless defender of detente to enactor of contemporary ritual; from conqueror of women to liberator of female sexual desire. Clearly there is mobility as well in the "text of John Drake/*Secret Agent*" as it was constructed by an American audience, but it is mobility operating in several directions at once. The music moves forward to a mainstream acceptance of pop and rock'n'roll (itself inflected by the import and popularity of the Beatles) and with it the growing importance in the marketplace of a young audience and its buying/consuming power; at the same time it steps back to earlier significations of "British" that accent the heritage and class of the civilized, landed aristocracy. Ideologically, the show moves beyond Bond in suggesting the machinations of capitalism as a source of global evil at the same time that it also overtly names communism as "the opposition"; moreover, it extends from the construction of Bond both in valorizing individual morality as a response against bureaucracies of all stripes and refuting its agency -- literally -- in the modern world. In a sense, then, the mobility of signifiers evident in *Secret Agent* as it becomes assimilated into American culture is not linear but quantum. This again speaks to the relevance of Bakhtin in addressing the nonlinear way in which cultural utterances bend and shape the construction of meaning. It also again demonstrates the power of the audience in creating that meaning, as well as the limitations placed on that audience by ideologies shaping the text: No reading of *Secret Agent* would define communists as good guys or individualism as a corrupt ideal.

Those limitations are further visible in what John Ellis calls the "narrative image" of the series. Ellis defines the narrative image of a film as "the cinema industry's anticipatory reply to the question 'What is this film like?'...[I]t is the promise, and the film is the performance and realization of that promise."[77] The narrative image is composed, he continues, of advance publicity and conversation about the film, as well as general public knowledge about the actors, director, producers and other elements of the creation and production of a given film. The narrative image is, in other words, the sum total of what both Fiske and Bennett and Woollacott refer to as intertextuality before the audience

actually encounters the text in question.[78] Ellis goes on to argue that the concept of narrative image can apply only to media such as film that require single product differentiation, and not television, which relies on formulae and convention. In so doing, however, he fails to recognize from a British perspective the demands of the commercial American television market, particularly in the 1960s, with each of its three networks seeking madly to differentiate its programming from the others, and the very real significance of narrative image in achieving success within that market.[79]

As previously noted, the post-Kennedy popularity of James Bond in the States acts as a major vector in introducing the spy series to American television, and it is a significant part of the entré given John Drake and *Secret Agent* to American audiences. As was the case in its first *Danger Man* incarnation in Britain, publicity about the series and its star, Patrick McGoohan, used Bond as a major referent; as was the case in Britain, that publicity sought to position *Secret Agent* and John Drake as a step beyond Ian Fleming's creation in some ways. A *New York Times* profile accompanying the return of the series for its second season in 1966 presented McGoohan as a decent alternative to the decadent sensuality of Connery's Bond: "[He] is just as adventurous and virile as Bond, but the 37-year-old McGoohan insists that Drake owes more to the traditional virtues than he does to electronics, violence or animal magnetism. 'Drake is moral,' he emphasized. 'He's all business. Ladies might be an interest, for example, but he never reciprocates.'" McGoohan goes on to call Bond "'a sort of cartoon-strip fantasy,'" compared to Drake, who is "'basically good, is unarmed, never kills and never has promiscuous relationships.'"[80]

On one level, McGoohan, who had a creative and financial interest in the series, is engaged in product differentiation. Drake has to be both like Bond yet unlike Bond. One of the show's fans validified McGoohan's efforts in a letter to *TV Guide*: "The Man from U.N.C.L.E., or his sidekick David McCallum, or even James Bond, are [sic] no match for Patrick McGoohan and his jolly good show, *Secret Agent*."[81] But that strategy also included the means for audiences to read around it. As the *New York Times* profile notes:

"An English television magazine is currently printing his fans' various explanations of Drake's indifference to women. The actor admits to being pleased with this concern" (Kirtz, II-17). While the "text of Drake" is explicitly defined as absent the sexuality that Bennett and Woollacott find in the "text of Bond," that absence becomes a presence to many of the show's viewers -- a presence that the publicity in turn exploits. Indeed, Robert Musel's 1966 *TV Guide* profile of McGoohan ("James Bond Is No Hero to Him") reiterating the moral rectitude of John Drake concludes on a note less pure than prurient:

> There was a stampede when word first reached the secretaries that McGoohan had come to film at Shepperton. His effect on women is remarkable.... The biggest stars have played at Shepperton, but you wouldn't have believed it from the stir his arrival caused. Pretty heads spun his way. Red lips smiled in his direction. McGoohan, the family man, paid them no attention.[82]

The publicity used to differentiate the program, in other words, serves as yet another example of the nonlinear mobility of signifiers in the apprehension of imported cultural artifacts: It deliberately presents signifiers that speak as directly to meanings concerning modern sexuality being constructed by audiences reading the "text of Bond" as its text speaks to opposite constructions.

While McGoohan and Lew Grade's companies, with the assistance of the American popular press, were playing out complicated market games of differentiation, however, the more significant differentiation occurring with American audiences again was the one defined by language and locale. Following Bakhtin's definition of assimilation,*Secret Agent*, despite the "our-own-ness" of its "rockabilly" theme, Cold War context and individual hero that shaped an American reading formation, as well as the fact that McGoohan was actually born in the United States, still represented the "otherness" of Britain.[83] As the "jolly good show" from the program's first fan letter indicates, the importance of the show's British heritage was a common theme in reader mail to *TV Guide*. Anne Meyer, responding to a satiric editorial comparing British and American television, accused the magazine of "trying to destroy Anglo-American relations.... Has

chauvinism clouded your judgment against these imports, particularly the thrilling *Secret Agent*?"[84] Mrs. D.H. Eller wrote: "...by comparison, *Secret Agent*, *The Baron* and the older ones you also mentioned...are superior to the American programs."[85] When resident critic Cleveland Amory chose McGoohan best actor of the 1965-66 season in his annual awards column, Constance A. Clarke wrote: "His selection is smashing.... How indeed do the British consistently produce quality shows that intrigue viewers week after week?"[86]

Members of the homes-using-television audience were not the only people asking similar questions. Following the strong ratings showing of *Secret Agent* in its first CBS run -- a 20 percent increase over the performance of its predecessor, *Mr. Broadway* -- *Variety* television correspondent Les Brown noted in a front-page column in June 1965 that with the advent of satellite technology and a decline in available and affordable creative talent in Hollywood, American networks were starting to look to Great Britain as a potential major program source. The success of *Secret Agent* on a network and *The Saint* in syndication, Brown argued, proved both that British programming was "on target" with American tastes and that it was possible "to resolve the resistance here to speech differences."[87] Similarly, *Variety* reporter Roger Watkins noted in a November article that *Secret Agent* and *The Saint* had "firmly nailed a once-predominant notion that British production values are too sluggish for the U.S. 'big-league' broadcasters."[88] Again, both comments indicate the way in which American audiences in various living rooms around the country and in very specific offices in New York and Hollywood had chosen to accept and welcome the differences evident in British television programs.

Those audiences, however, were not substantial enough to keep *Secret Agent* working past the summer of 1966 -- in part because the show was no longer different enough from American programs. The fall of 1965, as previously noted, saw a glut of spy and espionage series; it was the year in which *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* rose from being a candidate for cancellation to enjoying a Top 20 ratings slot. When *Secret Agent* returned to CBS in December 1965, its competition was NBC's *Get Smart*, a spoof of the secret

agent genre that had quickly established itself as a Top 20 show.[89] By February 1966, *Secret Agent*, though improving its ratings by 35 percent, according to one source, over the show it replaced that season (*The Trials of O'Brien*), was rumored for cancellation; by May, the deed was done.[90] Les Brown, writing in *Variety*, attributed the demise of the import in some degree to a lingering concern about British accents and references by American programmers, but more importantly to the efforts of the American television industry to duplicate James Bond on their own terms and turf:

> With Beatlemania still in vogue, with James Bond the oversized hero of adolescent America, why haven't the British made it on American network TV?... (L)ike Japanese industrial producers, US telefilm series [producers] make marvelous copycats. In short, the British have a tough time trying to protect what may be their very own.[91]

John Drake was brought down in America, in other words, by a curious paradox: He was too different, yet not different enough, from the American Bonds.

That paradox, however, was not a problem for the many viewers who still watched the show -- including *TV Guide*'s Amory, who called the program "easily the best, best acted and most believable of a dozen or more shows in its field" and referred to its cancellation as "idiotic."[92] Lew Grade's ITC distribution company used the massive amount of mail it received following the cancellation of *Secret Agent* to mount a successful syndication campaign for the show.[93] There were evidently large numbers of Americans, many of whom were young and if not already well-educated, getting there, for whom the differences in the "text of *Secret Agent*' remained attractive at the same time that they spoke to changes in their own society and culture. That audience helped convince Patrick McGoohan and Lew Grade to elevate those differences to a higher level. The result was a program that no American "copycat" producer would try to remake.

### ...And Taken Away His Name

The extraordinarily long (two and a half minutes) introduction to each episode of *The Prisoner*, broadcast by CBS in the summer of 1968, presented a linear narrative of a

man angrily resigning from some sort of bureaucracy and then being gassed into unconsciousness by unknown enemies. That narrative, however, was accomplished without spoken dialogue in a presentation that visually and aurally incorporated sophisticated filmic techniques including montage, lighting wipes and jump cut editing.This was, the silent film said, something very different from standard television fare.[94] The narrative represented in that film, while linear, also left the viewer with several key questions that introductions usually answered: Who is the man? Why did he resign, and from what? Who after him? Why do they want him? What happens after he passes out?

The only one of those questions ever to be answered directly was the first one -- and that required stepping outside the fictional text of the program. The man was definitely Patrick McGoohan, erstwhile *Secret Agent* John Drake and now executive producer, star and frequent writer and director of *The Prisoner*. As to who he was in the program: That was left entirely up to the viewer, in a deliberate move by McGoohan to create as open a text as possible.[95] The photo of McGoohan used in the introduction certainly looked like John Drake; one could plausibly assume that some form of intertextuality was in play, particularly given the sly reference to the previous series' best-selling title song in the first lines of dialogue from the premiere episode, "Arrival": Upon regaining consciousness, "Drake" attempts to use the telephone, only to hear a voice ask: "What is your number?" "Haven't got a number," he says. "No number, no call," comes the response.[96] He soon discovers that he indeed is a number -- Number Six -- and that he doesn't have a name, a discovery that prompts the program's signature line toward the end of the episode, a line repeated in the first scene of each following episode: "I am not a number! I am a person!"[97]

"Arrival," which introduces the protagonist both to the viewer and to his new environment, a quaint turn-of-the-century seaside village in which every move is either watched or dictated by an unseen technological bureaucracy, further suggests a link between "Number Six" and "John Drake" in presenting the reason for his abduction: "It's acquisition of your imagination," Number Two, the visible head of the new bureaucracy,

tells him. "The information in your head is priceless. I don't think you realize what a valuable property you've become.... They want to know why you suddenly left. I believe you -- I do think it was a matter of principle." After being assuaged that his cooperation would mean a pleasant existence in the village, Number Six responds: "I will not be pushed, filed, shaped, indexed, briefed, debriefed or numbered! My life is my own!" ("Arrival"). The presumed "agent," in short, wants to regain his agency; each episode of the series would recount his effort to do so by attempting to escape from the village. The only agency in the program, however, was that of McGoohan's, whose disembodied head (his? Six's? Drake's? all of them?), zoomed to fill the screen over the village background, led into the show's commercial breaks.

The openness McGoohan sought to develop in *The Prisoner*, however, was immediately closed off for at least some of its American audience by publicity in the American press that set the show's narrative image by focusing on its single recognizable signifying element. In the *TV Guide* preview for the series, writer Joan Barthel notes that the abduction of the protagonist might be a bit more than expected of an employer upset with an angry resignation, "[b]ut this is no routine employer; this is the Government. This is no routine handsome fellow; this is Patrick McGoohan, wanting out of his intelligence-agent job."[98] Similarly, Robert Lewis Shayon's critique in *Saturday Review* tells the reader that "*The Prisoner* is *Secret Agent* and *Secret Agent* is *The Prisoner*."[99] The review in *Time* spends most of its first paragraph offering a synopsis and evaluation of *Secret Agent* to lead into McGoohan's new series.[100] John Fiske argues that the amalgamation of the representational and the real as evident in these articles is "fun," as it plays with the reader's position in apprehending the "text" of McGoohan/Drake/ "the prisoner."[101] Clearly, McGoohan meant for the possibility that Number Six was John Drake to be one of the open "mysteries" for the audience to ponder; certainly viewers of *The Prisoner* have had fun over the years attempting to determine whether or not Number Six is actually Drake.[102] More importantly, however, the intertextual messages surrounding the program make an

ineradicable connection between a text viewers had not yet encountered and a specific program (and genre) preceding it that is never directly borne out by the new text itself.[103]

The willingness of the American press to foreclose meaning around the "text of McGoohan" -- which also included his British background -- was not the only attempt to inflect the program toward the perceived expectations of an American audience. Again produced and distributed by Lew Grade, *The Prisoner* was, aside from McGoohan's presence, free of the usual Grade-imposed American hails: The village (in actuality the Welsh seaside resort Portmeirion) was, in its collection of tiny shops, formal gardens and uniformed brass bands, as well as the accents heard there, distinctly British, and distinctly pre-modern British at that; the various Number Twos (with one exception, Number Two was different from episode to episode) were all British or continental.[104] This did not, however, preclude Grade's concern for the American market. According to David Buxton, McGoohan's original plan for the series called for just seven episodes; Grade, however, ordered 19 more, to give an American network a half-year series with the potential for renewal. The two settled on a compromise of 17 episodes, a standard summer run.[105] CBS, where *Secret Agent* had enjoyed its American success, bought the show (which had just started production) in the fall of 1966, and began its effort, a la Robert Shanks and *Monty Python*, to remove elements of the series that it thought might be problematic for Americans. CBS programming chief Michael Dann asked McGoohan to consider making his protagonist less troubled than he seemed to be in the first episode: "I told him that no matter how brilliant the production, the public likes to identify with a winner," Dann told *TV Guide* (Barthel 24). The secret agent genre in its Flemingized form, as Cawelti and Rosenberg point out, did require that the lone individual win in the end, and Bond himself was still around (whether John Drake was or not) to define that victory.

While McGoohan told the network that he wished to follow his own design for the series, Robert Shayon, in his *Saturday Review* article, argues that as the series progresses it seems to accede to the CBS requests, as the protagonist develops into more of a standard

hero, not escaping himself from the village but enabling others to leave alive.[106] This formal shift, though a less direct hail than the inclusion of American signifiers, is nonetheless an effort to engage American viewers through a recognizable convention. Reviewers of the series also tried to claw the series back, to use John Fiske and John Hartley's term, into familiarity through references that went beyond the McGoohan-Drake-Six conjunction.[107] *Saturday Review*, *Time* and the *New York Times* all compare McGoohan's creation to the dystopia of George Orwell's already-assimilated *1984* in their critiques of the series. *Time*, for its part, describes the village in familiar Cold War terms: "...a detention camp for retired spies, defectors, nuclear scientists and others whose memories are weighted with state secrets. Among the purposeful ambiguities of the series is that neither the prisoner nor the viewer is ever certain which side of the Iron Curtain he is on" ("Private I," 65-67). And Shayon brings the show into the American political present with his description of Number Six: "[T]he switch to the Nixon posture of the 'eternal loser' who refuses to quit but is in there fighting all the time was rather a refreshing stirring in TV's static world of the plot formula."[108]

The actions of both the producers and distributors of *The Prisoner* in America, as well as the work performed by the American press in creating a narrative image for the show, seem to fill the functions of "absorption and domestication" Todd Gitlin ascribes to the process of hegemony, as the "our-own-ness" of meanings surrounding the text appears to overwhelm its "otherness." While much of the publicity about *The Prisoner*, as the above quote from *Time* indicates, allowed that McGoohan was attempting to create an open, multivocal text, his show's publicists and programmers at the same time pushed that openness into a framework defined in America by the secret agent genre in general, and by the British secret agent, call him John Drake or James Bond, in particular. Such an analysis fails to consider, however, the way in which McGoohan's "purposeful ambiguity" makes such closure impossible, leaving *The Prisoner* in America an example of what Raymond Williams calls a work that is "irreducible to the terms of the originial or the adaptive

hegemony, and [is] in that sense independent": an example, in short, of Bakhtinian assimilation, with utterances inflecting meaning in various and independent ways.[109] Indeed, that ambiguity served as a viable and meaningful difference in the program for many American viewers, as letters to *TV Guide* loudly attested.[110]

McGoohan's dystopia and his trapped hero -- which level the ideological and Utopian functions Jameson identifies elsewhere in "mass culture" -- typify not a static concept of the secret agent necessary for a hegemonic reading of *The Prisoner* in America but a mobility in the signification of that character, brought about by a shift in the reading formation of American audiences in the 1960s. Robert Shayon's connection of Number Six to what might be called the "text of Nixon" is most revealing in this respect. Gone from this construction of the secret agent figure, in spite of CBS' efforts to construct it otherwise, were the references to John Kennedy that had so clearly defined an American response to James Bond and his various kith and kin, including John Drake. The vigorous youth, the cosmopolitan cultural consumption, the sense of privilege -- all here were drained. The sexuality remained, to some degree -- as Joan Barthel's *TV Guide* description indicated, Number Six, if indeed he was Drake, had not quickly gone to seed -- but it was an element of the "text of Number Six" that was much less overt than it had been with either Kennedy or Bond -- or Drake.[111] What remained, in 1968 America, of the secret agent formula defined by Cawelti and Rosenberg and embodied by Bond and Drake, was the lone individual, now typed as a prisoner, an "eternal loser," against an overwhelming conspiratorial bureaucracy, ever more dependent upon technology to conduct its repressive business. As such, *The Prisoner* spoke not just to viewers who enjoyed the program's openness as a matter of aesthetic and intellectual taste but to viewers who found in that openness an ideological critique unavailable in any American television program.

David Buxton, in his analysis of *The Prisoner*, attempts to construct that critique as one speaking to the concerns of an inherently conservative upper middle class itself trapped in a new age of commodification and consumption, state intrusion into private lives, and,

reflecting what he refers to as "Leavisite literary criticism" and what could as easily be called "American cultural criticism," the role of mass media in creating mind-numbing conformity (Buxton 95-96). Those concerns are evident to some degree in the almost unprecedented response to the series that was printed in *TV Guide*, given repeated references to "intelligence" and "sophistication" that indicate an audience possessing the cultural capital that defines an elite. In his description of the concerns of that audience, however, Buxton displays a rigidity in his conception of class structure that speaks much more to British culture and audiences (of which he is a representative) than it does those in America and that oversimplifies the readings possible due to what he finds "peculiar" about the time in which the show was made and originally viewed (Buxton 96).

Buxton's analysis of the audience of *The Prisoner* as being representative of an inherently conservative bourgeois elides significant shifts in that class in 1960s America. While elements of the program might indeed appeal to such conservatives -- the Cold War ideologues and cultural critics of the 1950s -- in matters both political and cultural, it also contained elements attractive to their children, who were at least for the moment rejecting the bourgeoisie and establishing new forms of political and cultural radicalism.[112] Some of those radicals -- the New Left -- followed the social and cultural critiques of their 1950s mentors, adding to them the belief in the power of individuals to act together in a participatory democracy to rid society of institutional repression; others of those radicals -- the counterculture -- believed that repression was obliviated through the discovery and cultivation of the individual spirit, frequently through the use of psychedelic drugs.[113] Buxton fails to take into account the "peculiarities" of the show that might be considered by those new audiences. Its representation of state oppression via technology addressed those growing up in a world in which computers, viewscreens and remote control death were no longer fanciful science fiction, while its odd juxtaposition of visual elements and its cinematic style had a definite psychedelic flair.

Buxton's further assertion that the series allowed for a "resistance to commodified,

mass-mediatized society" among its viewers both assumes a linear, transmissive relationship between text and audience that can in no way be borne out and considers neither the way in which *The Prisoner* itself addresses commodification nor the relationship of its younger American audience to commodification and the mass media (Buxton 96). The show itself is, as might by now be expected, open-ended in its depiction of consumerized post-industrial society: The village in which Number Six is imprisoned is virtually pre-industrial, with only the instruments of surveillance and death representing technological advancement; the "escape" for which he struggles would propel him back into the world of Lotus sports cars, Carnaby Street fashion and the commodified geography of travel brochures.[114] Nowhere in the program, meanwhile, are there the obvious endorsements for expensive or technological creature comforts that marked both the Bond films and previous television secret agent sagas. Young American radicals were equally mixed in their attitudes toward a consumer society, rejecting both consumerism and the affluence on which it was based on the one hand yet buying and dealing massive quantities of a new culture -- music, books, drugs -- on the other.[115] However "trapped" any of these younger viewers might have considered themselves by American commodification and consumption, *The Prisoner* spoke to other, more immediate concerns than Buxton's -- and than those represented by previous British secret agents in the United States.

The openness of the text of *The Prisoner* in the end makes an analysis such as Buxton's an exercise in futility -- a problem he himself admits.[116] The multiplicity of meaning available in the show, a multiplicity that makes the program more than any other discussed here truly polysemic (as opposed to polyvalent), renders any sort of definition of its single "meaning" an inflection and closure similar to that performed by the American press and television industry upon its arrival from Britain. Examining the program and the responses of its viewers, however, in light of that specific process of assimilation reveals much about the peculiarities of the time. *The Prisoner* may have indeed spoken to concerns about commodification and consumerism in a British context; in America, however, the

show addressed a time and a people for whom the dreams of a Camelot had passed, as domestic racial violence and the bloodshed of the Vietnam conflict had superseded whatever Utopian sense of beauty, adventure and glory might have been represented by John F. and Jackie Kennedy. While those dreams lived on for a while in the forms of James Bond -- or, more specifically, Sean Connery as James Bond -- the men from U.N.C.L.E. and John Drake, the success of the lone noble knight errant against forces superior in number and strength became an increasingly dubious proposition as those forces became more global, more impersonal, more technologically advanced -- and more and more seemed to include the castle to which the knight was supposed to return at mission's end. Buxton observes that part of the inherent conservatism he finds in *The Prisoner* lies in its definition of individualism as the total rejection of society; it was entirely possible in the America of the late 1960s, however, to invert that definition: Society totally rejects the individual, frequently violently.[117] Though it is a historical coincidence that the first episode of *The Prisoner* aired in the States eight weeks after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. and four nights before Robert Kennedy was gunned down, that coincidence made another potential meaning of the series all too evident: The dangers of the real world were simply too great for even the most noble men who attempted to fight them. While Number Six had the existential misfortune of losing his name as the result of that fight, others had the primal misfortune of losing their lives.

Whether Patrick McGoohan actually considered *The Prisoner* a continuation of *Secret Agent* is something only he knows with certainty, regardless of the efforts made to inflect it as such in the States. In any case, and with all its ambiguity, it acted as a *fin de siecle* for all that John Drake represented to American television audiences. When *The Prisoner* came to its broadcast end in the fall of 1968, so did *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* and *I Spy*. The Western-spy genre hybrid *The Wild Wild West* remained on the air until 1970, as did the spoof *Get Smart*, but both did so with declining ratings.[118] Just as Lew

Grade's loudest hails to American television audiences had fallen unanswered throughout the decade, so now the more subtle and potent hails to the texts of James Bond and John F. Kennedy evaporated.[119] Other social and cultural utterances had become too powerful for American television: Perceived forces of evil were at once too organized and too surreptitious to be managed by individuals alone; they now had to be addressed by corporate crimefighters working as unquestioning *apparatchiks* of massive bureaucracies, both internationally and domestically: the Impossible Missions Force (*Mission: Impossible*), *The F.B.I.*, the LAPD cops of *Dragnet*, San Francisco cops of *Ironside* and Honolulu cops of *Hawaii Five-O*, even *The Mod Squad.*[120] And the fight could no longer be conducted by the British -- one now could only trust one's own. The differences that had enabled *Secret Agent* and *The Prisoner* to speak to American concerns in ways that American programming itself could not were no longer of value -- with a significant exception. One British program during the 1960s managed to continue the cultural dialogue represented in the secret agent genre by addressing an American audience and issue that the danger men in their prime could only briefly embrace and then toss aside: Women.

## Notes, Chapter 2

1) "Secret Agent Man (Theme to *Secret Agent*)," music, P.J. Proby, lyrics, Steve Barri, performed by Johnny Rivers, 1965.

2) Nordenstreng and Varis 1974 note that the United States did not become the primary sales market for British broadcasting companies until the late 1960s. Other major British markets in the decade included the Caribbean and the Middle East, thanks largely to the BBC decision to dub its programs beginning in 1966. See Nordenstreng and Varis, 34.

3) Grade was also a pioneer in insisting on technical elements in British series, particularly the use of color and film instead of videotape, that would make them saleable in the American market. See Richards, *Variety* June 2, 1965, 38; also "Lew Grade's Example May Stir Brit. Vidfilmers to Pursue O'seas Loot," *Variety* July 28, 1965, 34.

4) Program description, *TV Guide*, April 1, 1961: A-45 (Minnesota edition). Publicity for the series' British debut in September 1960 linked it to chivalric legends represented in earlier British series and the soon-opening Broadway musical *Camelot*:: "As Drake wends his knightly way across the world, seeking out villainy, his fists will be as virtuous as his cause. Those who fall before him will have been clobbered with a fairness which will make the Queensberry rules look almost criminal...." See Buxton 1990, 78.

5) Buxton 1990, 78.

6) For further discussion of the *Danger Man* series, see Brooks and Marsh 1988, 183.

7) Lew Grade's rise to power is detailed in Tinker 1980, 37-78.

8) Gitlin 1980, 256.

9) A vestige of 1950s costume dramas, *The Adventures of Sir Francis Drake*, was broadcast on NBC in summer 1962. Coincidentally, the series included a character named John Drake (the adventurer's son), played by Michael Crawford, long before he donned the mask of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Phantom of the Opera.* Brooks and Marsh 1988, 17.

10) "'Saint' Suddenly No. 1 Summer Sub," *Variety* August 16, 1967, 31; also Brooks and Marsh 1988, 499-500, 682.

11) Althusser 1972, 162-163.

12) Althusser rightly cites himself for using a sender-response model to illustrate the functioning of ideology, which acts outside of a temporal sequence. See Althusser 1972, 163. Bakhtin's model, however, suggests that temporal, i.e. historical and cultural, elements play a clear role in the relationship between individuals/subjects and ideology: Discourse is only seen "...by the 'light' of alien words that have already been spoken." Also see Fiske 1989, 52-58.

13) See "Britain's Sale of Shows to Yank Nets Sparks a New Anglo-US Video Era," *Variety* October 27, 1965: 1. For further information on casts and outlines of shows, see Brooks and Marsh 1988, 63; 169; 481.

14) Brooks and Marsh 1988, 730-731. Landau and Bain were stars of *Mission: Impossible*, itself a product of the Bond-Kennedy; Morse was Richard Kimble's nemesis Lt. Gerard in *The Fugitive.*

15) White's interview with Jacqueline Kennedy, "For President Kennedy: An Epilogue," appears in *Life* December 1, 1963: 158-159. According to White, Mrs. Kennedy insisted that the references to "Camelot," which she claimed was her husband's favorite song, not only remain but be given prominence in the final article, over the objections of White's editors. See White 1978, 518-524.

16) The notion of *post hoc ergo propter hoc* historiography is borrowed from Fischer 1970, 166-167. William O'Neill 1971, in his connection of Kennedy with Arthurian England, titles his chapter dealing with the Kennedy administration "Building Camelot." "If [Americans] cannot have a happy ending, we must have the promise of one," O'Neill writes in the chapter's conclusion. "Out of this need was born the legend of Camelot, whose doomed Prince gave the nation a moment of glory before dying for its sins, but who also created the possibilities of change and left behind the means for effecting it" (93). British journalist/historian Godfrey Hodgson 1976 uses the same connection to reverse O'Neill's optimism about the Kennedy-Arthur legacy:

> The Kennedy myth has been so potent because it is a myth of hope shattered by absurd, meaningless death. It thus inverts the redemptive promise of the most universal and powerful of all human myths, in which the blameless king dies so that the people may live.... In retrospect, people looked back to Friday, November 22, 1963, as the end of a time of hope, the beginning of

> a time of troubles.... In January 1961, *Camelot* was still a musical. It was playing at the Majestic, on West Forty-Fourth Street, with Richard Burton and Julie Andrews (4, 6).

Lawrence Wittner 1974 links Kennedy not to Arthur but Sir Galahad (a character who did not appear in the musical) in his positive twist on the myth: "For, particularly among young people, the myth of Kennedy as a liberal Sir Galahad, cut down in his youth, served a valuable function: it filled the terrible need to find an American President who fought for peace and social justice in the Cold War era" (236). Todd Gitlin 1987 writes that the young liberals in the Kennedy administration worked "jockeying around the margins of Camelot, testing the limits of rationality and conscience" (91). The assassination, he later writes, led to fatalism and the belief that "even the steadiest of institutions, the august presidency, was fragile indeed. The Camelot legend was recycled: moments of grace and glory don't last" (312). Even those historians who don't refer overtly to Camelot use language that references the romance of the legend and the musical. Allen Matusow 1984, more critical of Kennedy than many, writes that "legions would follow Kennedy...not for his achievement but for his promise. The man had mysterious recesses of character that hinted at great deeds someday to be performed" (14). And Jim Heath 1975 cites Kennedy's "personal charm and undeniable intelligence" as leading to a "clarion call to action. He stimulated an aura of excitement and enthusiasm and helped to restore a sense of national purpose" (11).

17) Mailer, *Esquire* November 1960, 123. For historical readings of the "text of Kennedy" at the time of his election, see in particular Matusow 1984, 13-14, and O'Neill 1971, 14-15; 21-24. In addition, Wills 1981 provides a thorough construction and deconstruction of the mythic figure established by Mailer, among others. See in particular the sections on "Image" and "Charisma," 127-218.

18) Kennedy's experiences in Britain are fully outlined in Nunnerley 1972, 15-23.

19) For the British and Irish elements in the "text of Kennedy," see Wills 1981, 61-83.

20) See Dickie 1994, 105-132; also Nunnerley 1972, especially 25-37 and 225-236.

21) See Watson 1990, 35-70.

22) Sidey, *Life* March 17, 1961, 59.

23) British sales figures for Bond novels are given by Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 26-27. They show a marked increase in sales of all Bond books in 1961, the year in which Kennedy made his endorsement, and an exponential increase beginning in 1962, the year the film of *Dr. No* was released in Britain. Yearly sales figures for the American market are harder to come by, in large part because Fleming's novels sold almost exclusively in paperback editions; American sales, however, were dramatically affected by the Kennedy endorsement. It is also worth noting that the Bond novels with the greatest sales through 1975 were those that were made into the Connery films: *Thunderball, Goldfinger, From Russia With Love, Dr. No.* For specific sales figures, see Hackett 1977.

24) For more on Kennedy's cultural sensibilities, see Wills 1981, 141-150.

25) Bourdieu 1984, 86.

26) Bourdieu 1984, 70. The fact that Kennedy's list appeared in *Life*, one of the magazines excoriated by Dwight Macdonald as bearing forth middlebrow culture, gives Bourdieu's concept in the current instance all the more credence. See Macdonald 1962, 38-41.

27) Watson 1990, 54.

28) The network saw nothing of real interest in the Bond character -- played by square-jawed American TV stalwart Barry Nelson -- and pursued him no further. Fleming returned to CBS later in the decade with 32 scripts, none of which made it to the air, although several were turned into short stories. A similar script rejected by NBC became the plot outline for *Dr. No*, the first Bond film produced by Saltzman and his Italian-American partner Albert Broccoli. See Walker 1974, 183; also Brooks and Marsh 1988, 154.

29) "Of Human Bondage," *Time* April 13, 1962, 102. The review concluded with a note that Fleming "was careful to send a complimentary copy to his fan in the White House."

30) "Bond's Creator," *The New Yorker* April 21, 1962, 33-34.

31) Kirk, *National Review* October 8, 1963, 308. The importance of Kennedy in the acceptance of Bond was noted on both sides of the Atlantic: British journalist/historian Christopher Booker wrote in his 1969 chronicle *The Neophiliacs* that the "curious way in which the Bond phenomenon had become a shadow to the history of the age" had been assisted when *Life* "revealed that one of the most fervent Bond readers was President Kennedy." That revelation, he noted, had caused sales of the books in Britain and America to soar. Booker is cited in Denning, in ed. Mulhern 1992, 212.

32) Canby, *Variety* March 31, 1965, 3.

33) In their chapter "The Transformations of James Bond," Bennett and Woollacott deal specifically with the changes made when *Goldfinger* was adapted from its novel form into the movie; they do not, however, deal with transformations that occur when the movie made its way across the Atlantic. See Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 143-174.

34) For more on the "moments of Bond," see Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 22-37.

35) The "moment" of Bond as stud in America was presaged by events involving other imports from Britain: the 1959 furor over the U.S. Postmaster General's attempt to ban D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* from the mails; and the loosening of Hollywood morality codes, which gave foreign "art" films, including several from Britain, access to an American audience. Michael Denning also identifies *Lady Chatterley* as a significant vector in the public acceptance of Bond. Both, he suggests, represent key moments in a new organization of sexuality in consumer capitalism that uses the word "liberation" to cloak fetishization and oppression of women. See Denning, in ed. Mulhern 1992, 227.

36) Bennett and Woollacott argue that Leiter becomes a major inflection for American audiences in the Bond films in the way he links the power of American intelligence and military forces to the lone British agent; see Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 209-210. For more on the significance of Leiter in the Fleming *oeuvre*, see Sauerberg 1984, 154-156.

37) See Walker 1974, 186-190. Walker also cites the reviewer of *The Times*, who criticized Connery's "faint Irish-American look and sound" in *Dr. No* as part of a bias toward an American audience. The comment, of course, articulates a whole history of "the troubles" between Britain and Ireland; one can also, however, see the comment as a British recognition of the articulation -- in both senses of the word -- of the Bond character and the Irish-American John Kennedy.

38) Bocca, *Saturday Evening Post* June 22, 1963, 68.

39) According to Hinckle and Turner 1981, Fleming himself may have played a role in some of the Castro assassination hijinks. At the dinner Fleming described in *The New Yorker*, Kennedy asked the author what means Bond might employ were he to be assigned to dispatch the Cuban president. Fleming, who felt that Castro was being given far more credence than he was worth, jokingly responded that the United States should drop money over Cuba, make a cross appear in the sky, and then leaflet the island with notices that atomic tests had left the Cuban atmosphere radioactive, and that radioactivity was contained longest in beards and led to impotence. Versions of all three ideas were discussed seriously and/or attempted by the CIA during the Kennedy administration (109-111).

40) This comment is based on *JFK Assassination: November 22, 1963 -- As It Happened*, a six-hour compilation of NBC News' coverage of the Kennedy assassination November 22-23, 1963, hosted by Edwin Newman and presented on the Arts & Entertainment Channel, November 22, 1988.

41) Hinckle and Turner 1981, 267-268.

42) See O'Neill 1971, 94-103; Gitlin 1987, 312-313.

43) Cawelti and Rosenberg 1987, 32.

44) Cawelti and Rosenberg 1987, 11-32.

45) Cawelti and Rosenberg 1987, 151-156.

46) The authors themselves criticize Palmer 1978 for his individual-vs.-society approach to the spy novel. Palmer's book offers a historical examination of the thriller formula used by Fleming and other spy novelists -- a formula he defines as being constructed around competitive individualism and the fear of conspiracy, which becomes a fear of social institutions that threaten the lone hero.

47) Jameson suggests that the multiple meanings that Fiske and others find liberatory in fact work in the opposite way, in naturalizing the objects in a given text and reifying them as representatives of a dominant ideology. As such, he argues explicitly against a dialogic model for communication studies. Nonetheless, his contention that those texts of necessity present, if not a resistance to, an escape from that ideology makes it applicable to this study -- and particularly to the construction of Bond in America. See Jameson 1979, 130-148.

48) Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 208-209.

49) Despite the obvious similarities in the written language, the problem of the differences between spoken British and American English had been for some time considered a hindrance in a cultural dialogue between the two nations. British films had generally done poorly at American box offices, with the assumption being that audiences outside of major coastal cities had no desire to hear British accents. Even with the relative popularity and critical favor visited upon British "New Wave" films of the late 1950s and early 1960s, British accents -- particularly those outside of Oxbridge Received Pronunciation and stereotypical Cockney -- proved to be problematic for many reviewers: Albert Finney's Midlands accent in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* was described by Crowther in the *New York Times* (April 4, 1961, 44) as being "grotesque...you have to keep your ears open to understand [it]"; Weiler's review of *This Sporting Life*, also in the *Times* (July 17, 1963, 19), notes: "Despite the thick Yorkshire dialect, these are easily recognizable three-dimensional people...." Similarly, the reviewer for *Variety* cited "...the peculiar Midland accent which is not always comprehensible" of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*

(November 9, 1960, 6) and noted that the Yorkshire accents of *This Sporting Life* "...should not harm the production's prospects any more than the Midland burr of *Saturday Night* did (February 13, 1963, 6). *Time*, for its part, merely mocked British English, as in its review of *A Kind of Loving*: "[H]e chats up a little bit of allright who is just as twee as she can be on five quid a week" (October 19, 1962, 92). That American audiences grew to accept these British accents after the Kennedy assassination can be attributed in part to Kennedy's own "Bahston" accent, as well as the dialects of Connery and the Beatles, which did not, as Alexander Walker points out, reference old class distinctions. See Walker 1974, 189-190; also Macnab 1993, 78.

50) Walker 1974, 133-146.

51) "The Unbarbershopped Quartet," *Time* February 21, 1964, 46. The relation of the Beatles' ascendancy in American popular culture and the death of President Kennedy was discussed by Washington, DC, disk jockey Carroll White, who was reputed to have introduced the Beatles to the American listening public on December 18, 1963. In an interview on National Public Radio, White said that he believed the immediate popularity of the Beatles was largely due to a desire on the part of Americans to put the shock and grief over the Kennedy assassination behind them.*Weekend Edition*, host Scott Simon, National Public Radio, September 9, 1995. White's comments are given further credence in that several radio stations in small markets played Beatles' records earlier in 1963 with little or no public response. *Weekend Edition*, host Scott Simon, National Public Radio, November 18, 1995.

52) The topic of American financial involvement in the British film industry during the 1960s is the core of Walker 1974; see in particular 56-58; 136-138; 178-184. See also Guback 1969, 164-180.

53) As its title indicates, Denning's essay "Licensed to Look: James Bond and the Heroism of Consumption," in ed. Mulhern 1992, also considers the connections between Bond and the development of consumerism in the 1960s. In his analysis, Bond is a neocolonialist for whom danger most profoundly exists in the revocation of his "license to look" -- his pleasure in taking and using what he can of exotic cultures and women.

54) Cawelti and Rosenberg 1987, 138; 151-152.

55) Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 148-153.

56) Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 35.

57) See "Sexy Sleuth 007 Goes Way of All Box Office Hits," *Variety* December 2, 1964, 13; "James Bond vs. Red-Nosed Rudolph," *Variety* February 24, 1965, 2. Lawyers for the film studio United Artists were very careful about the marketing of Bond, forcing Prince Macaroni to quit advertising their product as "Goldnoodle," and Bond Bread to cancel their ads featuring "James Bread for Bond." See Canby, *Variety* June 2, 1965, 5.

58) Barnouw 1980, 41-55. Vestiges of this system can still be found in the daytime serials produced and sponsored by Procter & Gamble (*Another World, As the World Turns, Guiding Light*).

59) Barnouw 1980, 68-73. For other comments on commodification and American television, see Marc 1984, 1-38; also White, in ed. Robert Allen 1987, 143-146; Meehan, in ed. Newcomb 1994, 563-572.

60) Marc 1984, 82-85.

61) Newcomb and Alley 1983, 32-33. The role of the American producer in the British-American cultural dialogue is discussed at much greater length in Chapter 7.

62) For the Felton-Fleming story, see Bogdanovich, *TV Guide* October 24, 1964, 10-13; and Meyers 1981, 96-97.

63) Todd Gitlin uses the term to describe the way in which television producers reconfigure elements of already successful shows (or other popular culture artifacts) to "create" their own successes. See Gitlin 1985, 75-81.

64) On McCallum's background and popularity, see Meyers 1981, 100-101; also Raddatz, *TV Guide* March 16, 1966, 15-18. McCallum, in a scene from the 1958 British juvenile delinquency film *Violent Playground*, also serves as the cover image for Hill 1986. Hill notes as well that McCallum was favorably compared in reviews to American icon James Dean (80).

65) THRUSH allegedly was not an acronym, although the show's fan club decided that the initials stood for the Technological Hierarchy for the Removal of Undesirables and the Subjugation of Humanity, according to Meyers 1981, 101-102. For discussions of the SMERSH/SPECTRE constructions in the Bond novels, see Purdy, in ed. Golson 1983, 58; Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 33-34; Cawelti and Rosenberg 1987, 131-132.

66) See Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 33-34.

67) Given the ideological limits within which *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* operated, Celeste Condit's term polyvalence, as discussed in Chapter 1, is a more appropriate definition of its multiple meanings than polysemy. See Condit, in ed. Newcomb 1994, 444. Vaughn is quoted in "The Man Inside the Man from U.N.C.L.E.," *Time* January 29, 1965, 68; for other quotes on *U.N.C.L.E.*, see review, *Variety* September 30, 1964, 35; Amory, *TV Guide* January 16, 1965, 21; "Inside UNCLE," *Newsweek*, July 5, 1965, 54.

68) See "The Toys from U.N.C.L.E.," *Variety*, June 30, 1965: 42; also Meyers, 100-101.

69) A three-page photo feature, "Great TV Spy Scramble," in the October 1, 1965 issue of *Life,* hilariously portrays the various heroes of the numerous new secret agent series with guns blazing against a black background (except for bumbling Maxwell Smart, who is seen speaking into his shoe). The accompanying text describes the importance of Bond in the establishment of the subgenre: "Solo is himself a direct steal from James Bond (118-120).

70) Barthes 1973, 138-143. Also see Fiske 1989, 42-44.

71) See Cawelti and Rosenberg 1987, 30-31.

72) See "Lew Grade Sees Secret Agent Sale as Major Brake [sic] for Brit Shows," *Variety* March 10, 1965, 42. There was obviously a certain amount of disingenuity in Grade's comments. What was truly important about the sale, as the *Variety* article notes, is the new marketability of British programs in America made possible by the use of film technology instead of videotape. Most British programming was still recorded on tape, which by 1965 looked cheap compared to filmed American primetime series.

73) The theme song, which went to #3 on the *Billboard* charts (April 23, 1966) and earned a gold record for Johnny Rivers in its single release, was a particular point of contention

for *Variety* critics otherwise impressed by the series. In the review of the premiere episode, the reviewer commented that a major "strike against the show is its souped-up musical signature, etched by go-go belter Johnny Rivers." The review of *Secret Agent*'s second season premiere panned the show's producers for pandering to a lowest common denominator audience by "lay(ing) on a rockabilly theme with rube lyrics that would be more appropriate to *Rawhide* as a mitigating defense against the British accents within the show." See review, *Variety* April 7, 1965, 38; December 15, 1965, 46. The *Billboard* review of the single, which was far more favorable ("Swinger should hit hard and fast in the teen market"), also noted that Rivers had recorded and released the single "by popular demand." See "Pop Spotlights," *Billboard* March 12, 1966, 18.

74) See *TV Guide* April 3, 1965: A-12 (Minnesota edition).

75) Dialogue taken from "Yesterday's Enemies," *Secret Agent*, exec. prod., Ralph Smart, prod. Sidney Cole, writ. Donald Jonson, dir. Charles Crichton, perf. Patrick McGoohan, Maureen Connell, Howard Aaron Crawford, CBS, May 1, 1965. Even this overt reference to the Communist enemy, however, is problematic: The reason, the former agent says, that he became interested in going over was because "...they were the only people who wanted to fight Hitler and Mussolini." Indeed, the title of the episode suggests the way in which the Cold War conflict between East and West could be shut down in a given reading, just as it suggests a possible difference between a British understanding of that conflict and an American one.

76) Buxton 1990 also addresses this episode (titled "Double Man" in Britain) in his discussion of *Danger Man/Secret Agent*. Arguing that Drake is an emblem of fashionable, classless pop modernity, he cites the contretemps between Drake and his supervisors as proof of state control over the pleasures of consumption it apparently endorses: "[Drake's] freedom to consume in exotic places, to frequent the sites of pleasure, is no more than a 'compensation' for his enslavement to a government bureaucracy..." (82).

77) Ellis 1982, 30. His discussion of narrative image is amplified throughout his Chapter 2, 23-37.

78) On intertextuality and its relation to Ellis' narrative image, see Fiske 1989, 117-127; Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 44-57.

79) At no time was this more true than in the 1960s, when network domination of American television was at its peak. See Les Brown 1971, 3-16.

80) Kirtz, *New York Times* January 23, 1966, II-17.

81) "Letters," *TV Guide* September 18, 1965, A-2.

82) Musel, *TV Guide* May 14, 1966, 12.

83) McGoohan's American heritage is actually a minor concern in this case: Though born in New York, his family moved to Ireland when he was six months old. See Kirtz, II-17.

84) "Letters," *TV Guide* April 2, 1966, A-2.

85) "Letters," *TV Guide* April 2, 1966, A-2.

86) "Letters," *TV Guide* July 16, 1966, A-2. Amory, a fan of British imports in general (as will presently be seen), was a particular partisan of *Secret Agent*.

87) See Brown, *Variety* June 30, 1965: 1. Ratings figures for *Secret Agent* are taken from a syndication ad placed for the series by ATV/ITC in *Variety* July 27, 1966, 46.

88) Watkins, *Variety* November 3, 1965, 25.

89) Brooks and Marsh 1988, 907.

90) ITC advertisement, *Variety* July 27, 1966, 46. The ABC competition for *Secret Agent* was *The Lawrence Welk Show*, which also was a Top 20 program during the 1965-66 season. See Brooks and Marsh 1988, 968.

91) Brown, *Variety* February 23, 1966, 35. Antipathy toward British programming, as well as the audiences which felt that antipathy, was evident in *TV Guide*, where one reader wrote to protest the replacement of *The Jimmy Dean Show* with *Court Martial*: "If ABC wants to 'revamp' -- that's one thing, but taking off the only good Western-music show for more British stuff -- c'mon." Mrs. M.D. Perry, letter, *TV Guide* February 26, 1966, A-2.

92) Amory, *TV Guide* June 11, 1966, 12.

93) See "ITC -- The Rocking Redcoat: Biz Booming on All U.S. Fronts," *Variety* May 4, 1966, 179. The ATV/ITC ad in *Variety* used Amory's comments about the show, network-reported ratings boosts and the success of Johnny Rivers' record of the show's theme to push the program, "already sold in 37 markets." See *Variety* July 27, 1966, 46.

94) A standard of comparison is provided by the former lead-in for *Secret Agent*, *Gilligan's Island*, which also featured a narrative introduction that brought the characters into the situation of the show. The *Gilligan* introduction, just over a minute in length, tells its story literally, in song lyrics; each of the archetypal characters is introduced visually and verbally; the technique is straightforward, with no jump cuts, odd lighting or sound effects.

95) McGoohan's plan for the series is made clear in a special *TV Guide* preview, which actually quotes the ATV-ITC press material: "'He has no idea who has abducted him,' says the publicity booklet for the series. 'They could be his own people. They could be enemies. Perhaps both.'" McGoohan himself refuses to say anything to the magazine that would make Number Six or his situation any clearer other than to deflect any "metaphysical" readings of the show. See Barthel, *TV Guide* May 25, 1968, 23-24.

96) Dialogue taken from "Arrival," *The Prisoner*, prod. George Markstein, David Tomblin, wri. Patrick McGoohan, dir. Don Chaffey, perf. Patrick McGoohan, CBS, June 1, 1968.

97) To which Number Two responded: "Six of one, half a dozen of the other." As it appeared in the remaining 16 episodes, the line became: "I am not a number! I am a free man!" For the full dialogue from the opening scene, see Meyers 1981, 112-113.

98) Barthel, 22. Barthel's confusion of McGoohan and the character he portrays was mirrored by McGoohan's own play with the publicity for *Secret Agent* and his public image in the first episode of *The Prisoner*: When the village bureaucracy uses a beautiful woman in an attempt to seduce him, Number Six foils the plot, telling her, in a remark directly referencing his previous putdowns of Bond and his "girls": "They were wrong about that, too."

99) Shayon, *Saturday Review* September 7, 1968, 54.

100) "The Private I," *Time* June 21, 1968, 65.

101) Fiske 1989, 123.

102) According to Brooks and Marsh, viewers of the show have carried on an ongoing debate about whether Number Six is or is not John Drake. Proponents of the connection claim that at one point in the series, Number Six is actually called "Drake"; opponents cite that as a mishearing of the command "Break!" Brooks and Marsh 1988, 637.

103) Fiske considers the relation between publicity and televisual texts only in concurrent terms; that is, only in terms of publicity speaking directly to and about a specific program as that program is available to the viewing public. The *TV Guide* preview steps outside of that boundary -- it creates expectations for a series before a public exists, and beyond what the publicity for the series itself would suggest. See Fiske 1989, 117-124.

104) On Grade's hands-off approach with McGoohan's idea, see Barthel, 22.

105) Buxton 1990, 93; also see "CBS Pacts Carol Burnett Series, Buys British 'Prisoner' & Dickers Doris Day," *Variety* October 12, 1966, 35.

106) Shayon, 54. In the final episode of the series, "Fallout," Number Six does escape: After being offered leadership of the village, he storms "The Castle" in which the prison wardens live and confronts the never-before-seen Number One -- who turns out to be Six himself. Acting from the shock of recognition, Six, with three other prisoners, destroys the castle and all its repressive mechanisms and then flees back to London...where the final scene of the show replicates the opening scene of the introduction to "Arrival." The episode closed off no meanings whatsoever; indeed, a reading of the entire series as a bad dream is every bit as plausible as attempting to account for an entire season of *Dallas* with the same explanation. See "Fallout," *The Prisoner*, prod. David Tomblin, writ./dir. Patrick McGoohan, perf. Patrick McGoohan, Kenneth Griffith, Alexis Kanner, Leo McKern, CBS, September 11, 1968.

107) Fiske and Hartley 1978, 86-87. Here Fiske and Hartley use as an example the ways in which nature programs anthropomorphize their subjects so as to literally "claw back" and create a "like-us-ness" that articulates the audience and the culture the program represents. Fiske later discusses the role of television news personalities in clawing back news from potential disruption to social and cultural containment. See Fiske 1989, 288-289.

108) Shayon, 54; also "Private I," 65; Gould, *New York Times* June 17, 1968, 79.

109) Raymond Williams 1977, 114.

110) However they may have read the series, a surprising number of Americans took to the new British import in a way they had no other from Lew Grade and his company. *Variety* reported that ratings for the first three episodes were well above average for the summer months, with the show drawing a 34 percent share of the audience in its time slot. See "Variety Shows Summer Faves in Nielsen Book," *Variety* July 24, 1968: 29. Beyond that, *The Prisoner* prompted an extraordinary outpouring of mail to *TV Guide*. In addition to printed letters citing the show as "one of the most exciting, intriguing, suspenseful new shows ever to hit television" and "providing the intelligent public with an intelligent program," the magazine included a rare editorial synopsis of other letters it had received: "[R]eaders called it 'refreshingly new...utterly fascinating...unusual ... sophisticated... startling...ingenious...a thinking man's series at last...Kafka in pop clothing.' Said one: 'Tripe.'" See Mary Ann Rizzio, Kit Farber, "Letters," *TV Guide* June 29, 1968: A-2; also parenthetical response from editors on same page.

111) Barthel, 22.

112) The final episode of the series overtly recognized both groups as part of the text and part of the audience. The final authority Number Six faces in the village identifies, in the persons of two other prisoners, the offensive forms of revolt that result in containment and punishment: "The first -- uncoordinated youth, rebelling against nothing it can define. The second -- an established, successful secure member of the establishment turning upon and biting the hand that feeds him." Number Six, of course, represented both in the text of the show; outside the text, however, the dialogue acted as a clear hail to the demographic groups McGoohan and Grade had hoped to attract. Dialogue taken from "Fallout," *The Prisoner*, CBS, September 11, 1968.

113) For a specific and skeptical discussion of the roles of -- and the distinctions between -- the New Left and the counterculture in 1960s America, see O'Neill 1971, 233-318. Gitlin's (1987) memoir of the decade throughout juxtaposes the two, with the author, an early leader of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), coming down solidly on the side of the New Left. See in particular 195-221; 232-235; 353-361.

114) The travel brochures Number Six packs into his briefcase in the show's introduction directly connect him to Denning's analysis of the role of tourism in the Bond sagas as redeeming and making heroic "the discourse of the spectacle, the discourse of consumer society." Bond, as the secret agent working in "thrilling cities" around the globe, is someone for whom that world is a packaged commodity to be observed and eventually controlled. See Denning, in ed. Mulhern 1992, 219-223.

115) For a thorough discussion of what he calls the "yin and yang of the same epochal transformation," see Gitlin 1987, 195-221.

116) Buxton notes, prior to his final assessment of *The Prisoner*, that the series "both invites and resists the kind of interpretation I have attempted here." Buxton 1990, 95.

117) Buxton 1990, 96.

118) *Get Smart* was actually cancelled by NBC in 1969; CBS, however, picked it up for its 1969-70 schedule and altered the program in significant ways. See Brooks and Marsh 1988, 294-295; also 387,481, 863, 968-969.

119) Grade's hails did work to some degree in the variety show genre, in which he took familiar American programs (*Hollywood Palace, Kraft Music Hall*) and inserted requisite English settings and stars; American stars also appeared on each of the shows regularly. ATV-ITC also produced and distributed summer variety series for American stars John Davidson and Liberace, setting the groundwork for Grade's greatest production success during the 1970s: *The Muppet Show*. See Watkins, *Variety* November 10, 1965, 47; "'Palladium' in ABC Summertime Plan," *Variety* January 26, 1966, 1; "Brit Lew Grade Not Moanin' Low; Making It In Vaudes on US Video," *Variety* February 1,1967, 39; "ABC-ATV in Tie On Tom Jones for Series of Specs," *Variety* June 12, 1968, 35; "ITC Makes Music for All Three Networks" (ad), *Variety* April 23, 1969, 40-41.

120) For further discussion of the shifts in the crimeshow genre during the late 1960s and early 1970s, see Marc 1984, 85-93.

## Chapter 3: Mrs. Peel Goes to Washington (*The Avengers* and the Ideology of Domestic Containment)

> I became an icon for the feminist movement in America. I still get people writing to me or coming to see me and saying 'you were a role model for me when I was a girl' and all that. It's very sad that they had to take their role models off the television.
>
> --Diana Rigg[1]

Though Lew Grade's spy shows made overt efforts to hail an American audience, in an Althusserian sense, they also included naturalized assumptions that made the hails all the more possible to answer. Perhaps the most naturalized of those assumptions was that the job description for secret agent, at least for the good guys, was male only. Women might be employed in Her Majesty's Secret Service, but like Fleming's Moneypenny, they were assigned desk work -- and were accused of being incompetent at that.[2] Female spies were employed by the enemy and accomplished their tasks with neither mental nor technological resources, but with the sexual use of their bodies -- a more dangerous weapon than even the most creative of villains might dream up.

The 1966 import to America of *The Avengers* , as a result, marked a paradigm shift in the secret agent series, in that one of its title characters was a woman. American television in the previous year had already produced a prototypical female detective, in the form of ABC's *Honey West* . As the Flemingesque name indicates, however, Honey relied far more on her sexual wiles and her burly, longsuffering male colleague Sam Bolt than she did on her limited organizational and analytic skills.[3] Publicity for *The Avengers* with its arrival in 1966 focused on its distinctive difference, the secret agent Emma Peel, trying to portray her as tough but sexy -- "kinky," to use a term employed in several descriptions of the show. That publicity, however, turned on itself. Instead of creating an image of an Anglicized Mata Hari, American promotions and advertisements for the series, as well as

the program itself, presented a strong and smart British woman who was in control, physically and mentally, of whatever situation in which she might find herself. Further inflected by the concomitant development of a new American feminism, *The Avengers*, a representative of a male genre aimed at a male audience, became in the United States a model of liberation for young middle-class women, as those women read around elements of its construction designed to contain it within male-defined ideological conventions. That model, however, was closed down when the program's American distributors, ABC, misreading the dialogue represented in its success, contributed to the reshaping of the show in traditionally gendered secret agent genre patterns: *Honey West* redux.

## Male Bonding

One of the most significant constructions in the "texts of Bond" during the 1960s and '70s, according to Bennett and Woollacott, is the relation between the secret agent hero and "the Bond girl." In the novels and the Bond films of the 1960s -- the Sean Connery years -- the Bond girl represented a liberation from repressive sexual and moral codes in much the same way that Bond modernized male norms previously defined by class-based codes of chivalry and restraint. That liberation, however, merely re-placed the Bond girl in a patriarchal order, as Bond made it part of his "mission" to provide sexual healing to women who did not fit dominant codes of heterosexual femininity. Characters such as Honeychile Rider in *Dr. No* and Pussy Galore in *Goldfinger*, while free from traditional marital and domestic roles, are liberated only insofar as they pleasure Bond. The male still defines the woman's place in Bond's sexual order; while the Bond girl is assuredly naked, to borrow from William Carlos Williams, she is not being born into a new world.[4] Still, Bond's complicity in whatever liberation does occur and the notion of the Bond girl exercising choice and free will, if nothing else, in the relationship, marks a significant ideological moment in the career of Bond, Bennett and Woollacott argue. That moment passes by the time the Bond films of the 1970s -- the Roger Moore years -- are released,

removed by a concern with the Bond girl having gained too much freedom and power and needing to be put "back into her place." Those later Bond films and the publicity surrounding them suggested that while sexual liberation in the service of Bond was a good thing, taking that liberation into political and economic realms was a mistake requiring immediate correction.[5]

Though clearly a response to the women's liberation movement on both sides of the Atlantic, the textual shift in the significance of "the Bond girl" makes evident, as Bennett and Woollacott also point out, a naturalized assumption about the Bond books and movies: The implied reader/viewer is male.[6] Indeed, the whole secret agent genre, based as it is on the role of the lone individual (male) in protecting and preserving the established social and political order by any means necessary, even when he disagrees with the order he is protecting and preserving, is one created by males largely for males. As such, the secret agent books, movies and programs popular in the 1960s mirrored the structure and flow of American prime time television during the same period. While prime time programs have always, as John Fiske notes, attempted to attract as many diverse elements of the viewing public as possible out of the need for numbers to survive, it has also been the case that those prime time programs, particularly in the years surveyed here, followed the circadian rhythm of a male-defined workday.[7] Presented in a medium relying upon codes of realism to speak to its audience, the fictional genres largely defining prime time television during the 1960s -- situation comedy, action adventure, the professional drama -- all began at a specific time, presented a specific single problem to be solved, and worked through the solution, often using physical strength and/or action, to achieve closure. While underlying problems -- the unpredictable child or neighbor, the cruelty of nature or society, the threat of crime or communism -- remained from episode to episode, prime time shows worked through the specific problem to a satisfactory resolution, much as the breadwinner could close the door behind him when he left the factory, store or office at the end of the day.[8]

That women were a large part of the prime time audience during this period speaks

to the many meanings that were available in those programs; the popularity of such figures as Napoleon Solo and Ilya Kuryakin suggests that some of the pleasures women and girls derived from looking at the medium were similar to those enjoyed by men and boys.[9] Those meanings, however, were still circumscribed by the social definitions of American women and girls culturally represented in those programs: A teenager might hope to be a "Kuryakin girl," but she could not hope to be Kuryakin as the program's implied reader could. With the success of Bond and *Secret Agent* as proof that cultural constructions created outside America could now also speak to that audience of implied readers, however, ABC decided to see what would happen if it went to the same source for an update of the hip private detective series it presented early in the 1960s -- an update that would give the sexy secretary brains and a gun.

## M Appeal

*The Avengers* was hardly an unknown quantity by the time it arrived on American television screens on March 28, 1966. Originally plotted in 1961 as a pairing of a domestic crimefighter and a doctor whose wife's murder was the initial act to be avenged, the program only caught on in England when the doctor was suddenly replaced early in its second season by a female anthropologist.[10] Cathy Gale, according to notes from then-series producer Leonard White, was to be "a 1960s version of Shaw's emancipated young woman, providing the Conscience in combat with Patrick Macnee's contemporary Chocolate Soldier" (Rogers 32). Gale was a professional anthropologist who gained impressive skills with firearms and judo during her time working in Kenya, where her husband was killed in the Mau Mau rebellion, and fighting with Castro in the Cuban revolution of 1958-59, before she was expelled for not becoming a communist. Honor Blackman, the actress hired to play Cathy Gale, was pleased with the potential for the role: "I'm a first for television. The first feminist to come into a television serial; the first woman to fight back" (Rogers 32) By the end of her first year in the role, Blackman, Macnee (who

played John Steed) and *The Avengers* had become a cause celebre, particularly among the "Bright Young Things of Belgravia and Chelsea" who would soon make Carnaby Street and Abbey Road addresses known around the world.[11] With the popularity of the series and her character reaching epic proportions, both in Britain and in the international market, Blackman began to entertain attractive film offers and announced, near the end of taping for her second season of the show (1963-64), that she was leaving *The Avengers* to take the role of Pussy Galore in the new James Bond film, *Goldfinger*.[12]

With that announcement, the cultural value of *The Avengers* increased exponentially in the United States. Already considered as the source of a Broadway/West End musical before Blackman announced her departure, the program became the immediate subject of a May 9, 1964 article in *TV Guide*.[13] Under the title "Violence Can Be Fun," European correspondent Robert Musel chronicled the ascension of the show's popularity and the condescension of the aristocratic British elite toward its success, noting that Blackman was moving on to the next film installment of the Bond series.[14] Though Musel's article was directed to the American television audience, it also suggested the American television industry's interest in the show -- an interest that had already been voiced to the British Associated Broadcasting Company by America's ABC network: A run of a filmed *Avengers* series in fall 1965.[15] Blackman's departure cast a pall on those plans; *The Avengers* made enough of an impression on ABC and independent producer Aaron Spelling, however, to cause the network to buy Spelling's *Honey West* , a show based on a series of crime novels but which *Variety* television columnist Les Brown noted was "fashioned after" the British hit, for its fall 1965 schedule.[16]

While *Honey West* moved through preproduction toward being the first American representation of what *TV Guide* critic Cleveland Amory would call "Jane Blonde, or perhaps we should say Woman from AUNT," *The Avengers*' British producers, headed by noted film producer Julian Wintle, worked to recast their program in the hope of a future sale to the American market.[17] Steed's new partner was to be, like Cathy Gale, a highly

educated widow with several years of experience working in counterespionage, according to the character outline. Literally a member of the jet set (her late husband was a test pilot), she drove only the coolest cars and wore only the latest fashions -- indeed, one of the show's major marketing devices in Britain and Europe would be the fashions designed specifically for the character by John Bates and Alun Hughes.[18] At the same time, she was an expert, like Cathy Gale, both at martial arts and at using weaponry. Called "Samantha" in early drafts, the character acquired another name by the time the series went into filming: According to popular mythology reported by Rogers, series publicist Marie Donaldson decided that the character had to somehow represent "Man appeal," which she shortened to "M appeal" and finally to "Emma Peel."[19] Finding the person to portray Emma Peel proved to be a similar step-by-step process. When the first actress hired to play the part turned out not to have qualities sought for the character, producers Brian Clemens and Albert Fennell turned to an actress from the Royal Shakespeare Company who also had experience in television, Diana Rigg. Rigg's screen test immensely impressed both the producers and co-star Macnee: The show had found its Emma Peel; now it could find the American market.[20]

That search, however, required two other adjustments in the program, both of a technical nature. First, in order to compete with the visual appearance of American primetime programming, *The Avengers* had to switch from videotaping, which gave the show the cheap, flat look of American daytime serials, to filming; indeed, the hiring of Julian Wintle to oversee the series, according to Rogers, was made with precisely that adjustment in mind.[21] Second, with the rapid development of color television technology in America, both in production and manufacture, color would become a necessary component of any import hoping for success in America.[22] It was these issues that truly opened up the dialogue, on both the commercial and the cultural levels, between the show's British producers and audience and its American distributors and audience. In late 1965, ABC-UK offered the American ABC-TV the right to purchase 26 filmed black-and-white episodes of *The Avengers*; if the show attracted an acceptable audience share, the American network

would then have an option to buy a new, 26-episode color series. ABC-US decided to take them up on the offer, paying over $1 million up front. However, American executives attempted to control the dialogue even further, offering ABC-UK even more money either to add American elements to the show, a la Lew Grade, or sell the format outright. The British network refused those offers, choosing instead to present its product in America as it was originally presented in Britain.[23]

With the deal struck, a television program made in Britain for British audiences without content adjustments for foreign audiences would arrive in American homes early in 1966. The problem, then, for both British producers and American distributors, became that of shaping the program for the tastes and expectations of its American audience, of furthering the cultural dialogue established in the commercial realm. That dialogue would indeed develop at length and at surprising depth, but the efforts of both ABC-UK and ABC-US would play only a minor part, at least initially, in that development.

**Both Eyes Peeled**

ABC-UK announced its sale of *The Avengers* to the American market with a full-page ad in the January 28, 1966 edition of *Variety*. The top three-fourths of the page consisted of a head-on photograph of Diana Rigg/Emma Peel on a windy beach, wearing a Bates-designed outfit (called "Flash") of hiphugger pants, a low-cut metallic bikini top and a jacket slung off her left shoulder, and pointing a gun toward the camera. The bottom left portion of the Rigg/Peel photograph was covered with an inset of a dapper Patrick Macnee/John Steed pinning a carnation into his lapel. At the bottom of the page, the ad copy announced "ABC U.K. Sells to ABC U.S.A. For 1966," promoting the show as "combining toughness and fast-moving action with a glitter of sophistication and wit." Macnee, though first to be mentioned in the text, is described merely as "the suave bowler-hatted secret agent John Steed"; Rigg's character, meanwhile, is feted as a "cool, resourceful accomplice who fights fast, free and furious with every technique from judo

and karate to a straight left to the jaw."[24]

The *Avengers* ad was nothing special in terms of space bought in *Variety*, where two-page ads replete with busty starlets and crude line drawings depicting all manner of racy behavior were and are commonplace. In terms of establishing the show's "narrative image" for an American audience, however, ABC-UK's ad is of central importance, focused as it was on the body of its female star and protagonist.[25] The photographic element reduces the male -- the first-billed star and senior partner within the story -- to a wallet-sized afterthought while presenting the legs, hips, bust, lips and eyes of the female star in full frontal display; the written copy accomplishes much the same, with the emphasis on what those Rigg/ Peel body parts will do when confronted with a threat. That image is precisely replicated in the first major American journalistic publicity for the show: an article in the entertainment section of the Sunday *New York Times* of March 13, 1966 -- two weeks before the airing of the first show. "From Lear to Leer" dominates the page, including the same photo of Rigg/Peel used in the *Variety* ad, running three columns wide and half a page tall. A photo of equal size showing Rigg/Peel throwing a man down a flight of stairs introduces the copy, by Stanley Price. "The lady is tall and shapely," Price begins. "The combination of her natural contours and the white trouser-suit and the black peaked-cap are quite enough to turn the normally level heads of smart Bond Street shoppers on a chill March morning." After detailing her encounter with a Jamaican man in London (whose English she does not correct) and outlining the switch from Shakespearean roles to "a hokey mixture of adventure and counter-espionage" intimated in the headline, Price returns to the body of his story: "[She] has worn just about everything except a long skirt, including the way-out leather ensembles, harem bras and panties, toreador outfits with bare midriffs, and indescribably modern outfits, half spaceman, half country-girl."[26]

*Newsweek* also participated in the construction of the narrative image for *The Avengers* in its April 4, 1966 edition. With the heading "Good-Chap Sexuality," an article announcing the arrival of the program to ABC-US devotes a quarter of its space to a photo

of Rigg/Peel karate-chopping a man across a boiler room, with the caption: "Diana Rigg: Strictly for kinks." The show's "kinkiness" provides the story's lead, with Rigg identified as "the kinkiest thing" about it. In the article's fifth paragraph, Rigg herself speaks: "I never think of myself as sexy.... I identify with the woman in our society who is evolving. Emma is totally equal to Steed. The fighting is the most obvious quality." However, the following -- and final -- paragraph frames her comments by citing the *Times* of London's assessment of the program as "wonderful good-chap sexuality" and Jonathan Miller's description: "Absolute unreality, violence, symbolism, magic, masques, sex, change -- everything that excites the imagination and senses."[27]

The narrative image fashioned for American viewers of *The Avengers*, in short, follows Laura Mulvey's definition of the male gaze as central to the ideological purpose of narrative film based on cinematic codes of realism. Following a Freudian and Lacanian analysis of the unconscious pleasures and fears literally embodied in the image of woman in classic Hollywood cinema, Mulvey argues in her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" that American film necessarily constructs itself, according to a patriarchal order, for a male spectator. The resultant male gaze, she continues, defines and controls -- "styles" being the verb she appropriately uses -- the image of woman on the screen: "[W]ith their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact...they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*."[28] While Mulvey contends that her approach applies only to narrative film, its application to television in general and to the construction of the narrative image of *The Avengers* is self-evident. The focus of both verbal and pictorial pre-broadcast publicity on Diana Rigg/Emma Peel and the literal focus of the camera on her body speak directly to the concept of "to-be-looked-at-ness" and the power of the male gaze Mulvey discusses.[29]

The significance of the male gaze in the narrative image of *The Avengers* was also evident in the pages of *TV Guide*. Cleveland Amory's review of the series, published in the May 14, 1966 edition, was headed with a Hirschfeld drawing of a leather-clad Rigg/Peel knocking down two bad guys. When Amory, whose gaze throughout his reviewing career

was unabashedly male, describes Rigg/Peel in his column, citing publicity copy identifying the character as representing the "swinging girl of today and the forward-looking woman of tomorrow," his comments follow a familiar path: "Pretty good, what? Well, make no mistake about it, she is both pretty and good. Furthermore, she not only dresses to the nines...but she also knows judo, karate and the score."[30]

The narrative image for the show's 1967 second-season return was set in *TV Guide* with an ABC ad in the January 14 issue featuring Rigg/Peel, again wearing a leather jumpsuit, standing front and center with a menacing look on her face; the face of Macnee/ Steed is barely visible over her left shoulder, with the rest of his body off the page entirely.[31] The following week, Macnee and Rigg occupied the cover of the magazine as the prologue to a feature profile of the female star. Titled "En Garde!" and written again by Robert Musel, the article begins with a full-page photgraph of Rigg/Peel, holding a fencing sword in preparation for battle, with the heading "Britain's Diana Rigg is again after the American viewer."[32] Moving quickly from the threat to the "to-be-looked-at-ness" of the image, Musel begins his copy: "Diana Rigg is a tall, auburn-haired Yorkshire lass, perilously close to being beautiful, who is considered a character by her friends because she loses her keys several times a year and has to smash the window of her apartment with a milk bottle."[33] This "kooky" -- unthreatening -- quality to the image is iterated throughout the article: She needs to get tipsy to relax for still photos; her casual approach to work as a fashion model was "unorthodox"; she is baffled by fan mail; she doesn't believe in marriage. At the same time, the visual pleasure of the image is also iterated: "Whatever her height, there is hardly an inch that isn't exactly where it should be and a computer could hardly have programmed a more fetching face," Musel writes. "The eyes are brown, the cheekbones high; freckles dust the clear skin which needs no makeup... and the teeth are strong, white and serviceable" (Musel, 20).

To some extent, the gaze visible in Musel's article and the rest of the publicity creating the narrative image of *The Avengers* in America speaks to issues outside of

Mulvey's immediate concern. As previously noted, the spy fiction of Ian Fleming to which *The Avengers* was directly linked in its American promotional publicity, had as its implied audience males. The gaze, despite Mulvey's psychological essentialism, does not necessarily construct that audience any more than other ideological elements -- the power of the individual in corporate society; the levelling effect of consumerism; geopoliticial hopes and fears -- of the genre that Bond, Steed and Peel represent. For ABC-US, as well as ABC-UK, the focus on Rigg/Peel in creating a narrative image for the program was also good business, as she was that which differentiated their product from others in the genre. And the construction of an American narrative image for *The Avengers* followed and was to a large degree dependent upon the narrative image constructed in Britain. While links to the Bond phenomenon via Honor Blackman -- referred to in every article cited here -- played a more significant role on the western side of the Atlantic, the photographs, biographies and descriptions of Rigg/Peel came from the program's British producers and were used to much the same end in its home country. Indeed, the much-bruited story of the genesis of the Rigg character's name demonstrates the degree to which the show's producers were willing to manipulate signifiers and image for their own domestic audience.

What is remarkable in the American reception of *The Avengers* is not so much the construction of its narrative image nor the significant employment of the male gaze in that construction. Instead, it is the degree to which an American audience read around both, making *The Avengers* a secret agent drama appreciated by females as much as (if not more than) males, and moving the previously accepted signification of women, *vis a vis* the Bond girl, as subservient to men even when liberated to a different paradigmatic level entirely. While that reading and the accompanying mobility in signifiers were accomplished to some degree by elements of the text itself, it was again the intertextuality involved in creating a public image of the show, as well as important extratextual shifts in American social and cultural norms, that inflected *The Avengers* away from the way it had been originally defined by both its British producers and its American distributors.

**Boxed In**[34]

Historian Elaine Tyler May has described the decade of the 1950s in America as one defined by the ideology of "domestic containment." Following -- or, more precisely, accompanying -- the Truman-Eisenhower Cold War policy of containing Communism within its own "sphere of influence" and keeping it out of the West, domestic containment sought to create the middle-class home as a secure sphere of influence in which chaotic social and psychological forces, ranging from technology to sex, could be tamed and adapted to the service of a prosperous and fulfilling life. While both men and women were shaped and defined by the ideal of domestic consumption, May suggests, through its core values of marriage and childbirth, it was women who bore the heavier ideological yoke, as they were the ones who were to be contained within the home: as vessels of sexual pleasure for tired, overworked husbands; as bearers and nurturers of the children who would carry forth both the family and the ideology; and as engineers, responsible for making sure that the home and all the gadgets therein worked as they should. This was supposed to be a small price to pay for the security and comfort provided by the home and family in a time of global insecurity and the threat of nuclear ruination.[35]

It was during these years, of course, that the physical and ideological apparatus of television came into those American homes and families, and exerted its own power within the domestic sphere of influence. With the recognition that the woman as housewife was contained as a day laborer within the home, Lynn Spigel notes, the entire television industry, from the producers of programs to the manufacturers of sets, began to gear part of its output to that consumer. Soap operas, heavy on dialogue and repetition of storyline, were structured to be heard more than seen while the housewife did work around the home. Daytime variety shows and news programs based their formats on women's magazines, presenting discrete segments of information and entertainment to which the home laborer could tune in or out depending upon her needs at the moment. Those discrete segments also became miniaturized sales pitches, as advertisers recognized the power possessed by

daytime viewers as home economists and began to place their products in news and information elements of the shows. Networks as program distributors advertised their daytime schedules as being suited to the labor routines of housewives by suggesting how different programs could be used to accompany various tasks, while the builders of television sets and other appliances regularly portrayed the set itself as an integral part of home day labor and as a reward when those labors were finally done.[36]

While an ideology of domestic containment seemed increasingly to define the place of women in American society, however, the cultural contradictions of capitalism began to exhibit their own power. Though apparently more and more consigned to day (and night) labor within the home, American women in the 1950s were going to college and entering the workforce in numbers never seen before: By 1960, 40 percent of all women over the age of sixteen held jobs, and the rate of married middle-class women joining the workforce increased almost fourfold in the decade between 1950 and 1960.[37] Most of the work done by these women was clerical and service-oriented -- these were jobs, not careers, as Sara Evans points out, following in form and function the duties of the good home economist, and accomplished in order to further the economic security of the home and family. But the involvement of those women in school and work outside the home meant that the energies and forces that were supposed to be contained within were seeping out. The domestic center was not holding.[38]

The tensions created within both the middle-class home and American society as the containment model began to crack became too significant by the beginning of the 1960s to be ignored. In 1960 alone, the leading newsweeklies and women's magazines, as well as CBS and the *New York Times*, presented stories on the problems and paradoxes facing the American housewife.[39] By 1963, the evidence on domestic containment was so overwhelming that writer Betty Friedan was able to give those problems and paradoxes a name in *The Feminine Mystique*. An immediate bestseller, Friedan's book charged that containment had created, instead of the happy nest of security imagined, a "comfortable

concentration camp" in which women were forced to give up the use of their minds in the service of a therapeutic norm, as well as give up their bodies solely for the pleasures of their husbands.[40] The success of Friedan's book legitimized the complaints and fears of the women who saw themselves trapped by the phenomenon she described and gave their daughters, many of whom would soon be college-bound, models of a world to avoid.[41]

Friedan also did not fail to address the role of television in creating and supporting both domestic containment and the feminine mystique. The February 1 and 8, 1964, editions of *TV Guide* presented her essay "Television and the Feminist Mystique," which brought the thesis of her book directly to bear on Newton Minow's vast wasteland. In the first part of the article, Friedan speaks primarily to gendered television images that promote the passivity of women in general and denigrate the housewife in specific, turning her into a "stupid, unattractive insecure little household drudge."[42] The second installment, however, comes down much harder on television's role in the ideology of containment: "Is it a coincidence that millions of real girls who have grown up watching television -- and seeing only that emptily unglamorous housewife image of women -- do not, in high school, have any goal of their own future except being a passive housewife?"[43] Friedan goes on to demand that television dare to improve itself and the place of the women it depicted by creating "more images of real women to help girls and women take themselves seriously and grow and love and be loved by men again" (Friedan, February 8, 24).[44]

Friedan's polemic against television is particularly telling, given later criticism of her work as representative of a middle-class bias that ignored the problems of working-class, poor and minority women.[45] However accurate that criticism might be toward the larger scope of Friedan's construction of women in America, her attack on television also speaks directly to the way in which the male managers of the medium themselves constructed the middle-class housewife as their ideal viewer. Early demographic surveys conducted by the networks found that viewers of daytime television were young women with growing families and incomes who lived in or near major market areas. Mrs. John Q.

Public, producers and advertisers were told, managed a utopian workplace filled with "labor-saving devices," leaving her with the time to be concerned with her own appearance, as well as those of her house, her spouse and her family -- and the time to go shopping to resolve those concerns. She was, in short, "a good customer" -- precisely the sort of person toward whom advertising and the programs that surrounded it should be aimed.[46] Friedan's criticism of this construction and the perceived effect it had on female viewers, while indeed ignoring the specific responses of women of all classes, was particularly appropriate in speaking about the ways in which middle-class women were being mysticized and mystified by society in general and television in specific.

As several historians have noted, this development of a movement focusing on the oppression of middle-class women occurs as but one moment in a general societal examination of civil rights and the treatment of minorities. William Chafe and Sara Evans both point out that the genuine indignation felt by many over the treatment of black Americans and the strategies and tactics adopted to give that indignation a politically and socially effective voice became models for what would come to be called Women's Liberation.[47] It is not insignificant, however, that the nascence of this movement came during the administration of John Kennedy. As Kennedy himself, through his charm and energy, created a new cult of masculinity that in part lent the figure of James Bond an enormous amount of American cultural capital, so did he politically begin to address the concerns soon to be presented by Friedan. In 1961, he established the President's Commission on the Status of Women, chaired originally by Eleanor Roosevelt, which presented a report two years later that, while accepting the status quo of the family, also detailed for the first time the inequality experienced by women as workers, mothers and spouses.[48] At the same time, his wife Jacqueline presented an image of a real woman as something far different from stupid, unattractive or insecure. Though really little different from the First Housewife (and a more-than-two-timed First Housewife at that) in terms of her duties within the family, Jackie was a woman who had had a job, who was interested

theoretically and practically in history, who could bail out the most powerful man in the world by speaking French in France. Her 1962 televised special highlighting the renovation of the White House that she organized and supervised, however awkward it might have been technically, was an enormous success at home and abroad, leading the *Times* of London to refer to her as a "new diplomatic weapon."[49]

It was also no accident, however, that Betty Friedan would issue her broadside against the television industry but a few short weeks after the nation watched a veiled Jacqueline Kennedy bury her husband in Arlington National Cemetery. While the ideology of domestic containment had been developed and implemented during the Eisenhower years, at no point was that ideology more visible on television than during the early 1960s. In addition to daytime soap operas, which increased in number from seven to 12 in 1960, prime time television, set to the episodic rhythms of the male workday, kept women either far away from the office, far under the still-concrete ceiling of the workplace, or completely out of sight and mind.[50] Women were, with the exception of *Gunsmoke*'s Miss Kitty and the profession that dare not speak its name, presented at best as secondary characters and more frequently completely exscribed from the Westerns that dominated the ratings during the Kennedy years.[51] Domestic situation comedies continued to burgeon, with June Cleaver (*Leave It to Beaver*), Donna Stone (*The Donna Reed Show*) and Harriet Nelson (*The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*), among others, perfectly embodying the feminine mystique. Several other sitcoms -- *My Three Sons*, *Bachelor Father*, *The Andy Griffith Show* -- followed the strategy of the Western and simply eliminated women as major characters. Those women who worked -- the girls of the Warner-ABC detective series, Lucille Ball in *The Lucy Show* -- did so in low-status, low-paying secretarial jobs, and more often than not with a remarkable degree of incompetence. The New Frontier workplace dramas discussed by Mary Ann Watson with but one exception focused on men; *The Nurses* added supervisory males to the cast and changed its name to *The Doctors and the Nurses* when its ratings fell after two seasons.[52] Indeed, the New Frontier dramas took

previously accepted women's jobs -- social worker and teacher -- and gave them to men, in *East Side/West Side* (George C. Scott dealing with the economically distressed in New York) and *Mr. Novak* (James Franciscus dealing with the hormonally distressed in a high school).[54] Perhaps the most grotesque representation of domestic containment in prime time came with what were literally domestic comedies: *Hazel*, which reduced Oscar-winner Shirley Booth to a comic strip (and acceptably white) maid for an upper-middle class family; and *Grindl*, which starred the brilliant comedienne Imogene Coca as a temporary worker who usually ended up as a maid/cook/ babysitter to upper-middle class families.[55]

This is not to say that the television portrayal of women during the Kennedy years, however hegemonic its construction, lacked polyvalence. While the situation comedies of the period contained women in Happy Homemaker roles, the men who lived with those women as husbands and fathers were often presented as bumblers who were as incompetent with the mechanics and emotions of home life as Lucy was working in Mr. Mooney's bank.[55] However circumscribing it may have been, the home was indeed the woman's sphere of influence. And in a few instances, women did venture into the workplace with some success: the comedy writer Sally Rogers (*The Dick Van Dyke Show*), welfare administrator Frieda Hechlinger (*East Side/West Side*), hotel owner Kate Bradley (*Petticoat Junction*).[56] It was not until the year after Kennedy's death, however, that the ideology of domestic containment was addressed directly in an American television narrative. Both a traditional domestic comedy and a prime example of what David Marc calls the "magicom" genre unique to the 1960s, *Bewitched*, first broadcast by ABC-US in 1964, took explicitly as the situation of its comedy the efforts of a woman whose talents far exceed the housework that fills her day to make use of those talents, despite her husband's objections.[57] That Samantha Stephens was a witch who could change physical reality with a twitch of her nose merely represented the magicom convention of turning to the supernatural to avoid the "natural" world presented on the network news each night.[58]

Samantha was in many ways the prototypical domestic comedy wife: feminine in

appearance, happy to live and work in her home, bright but willing to accede to her husband Darrin's demands, the most forceful of which is that she not use her powers of witchcraft. Week after week, however, Samantha found herself in circumstances, frequently due to Darrin's idiocy, that required she use the magic she knew so well. The result, as Susan Douglas points out, was a deliberately polyvalent commentary on domestic containment and its discontents: Samantha is perfectly happy to do as Darrin asks and live the life of a suburban housewife; once there, however, she finds that it is far harder to let go of her abilities -- her career, in a real sense -- than she imagines. She is willing to submit to patriarchal rules; indeed, her witchcraft often serves that patriarchy, whether it is taking care of household chores or bailing Darrin out of yet another fine mess. But in using that witchcraft, she breaks the prime directive issued by her husband and taps into powers the patriarchy can neither channel nor control.[59] The long run enjoyed by *Bewitched* indicates the degree to which the multiple readings available in the program text could address women complicit in the ideology of domestic containment as easily as it could women who consciously or not wanted out.[60]

In fall 1965, two other situation comedies addressing the ideology of domestic containment, both broadcast by NBC, made their debut on American television. Containment was a visual trope on *I Dream of Jeannie*, the story of a curiously white and blonde middle-Eastern genie who worked her magic by blinking her eyes instead of twitching her nose. When her "master," an American astronaut, was tired of her misadventures, he sent her back inside the bottle whence she came. Jeannie was an exotic harem girl, not the everyday housewife that Samantha was; on one level, then, the show did not engage the same social and ideological concerns that *Bewitched* did. On another level, however, *Jeannie* represented an even greater threat to the patriarchy, in this case explicitly identified as the United States government and its space program, through powers that were even less manageable than Samantha's -- unless she was contained in her bottle. As with *Bewitched*, *Jeannie* offered meanings that both supported domestic

containment and offered a model for those seeking liberation from its constraints.[61]

Like the aforementioned *Honey West* , *Get Smart* actually brought women out of containment and into the public workplace of the private eye and secret agent.[62] While *Honey West* in many ways brought the loopy female protagonist sitcom convention to the detective show genre -- Honey was tough but incompetent at key moments -- *Get Smart* replicated the domestic comedy staples of the bumbling male and the competent female to situations normally occupied by Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin. Maxwell Smart, self-styled super spy for CONTROL, was forever screwing up ridiculous technology, blowing leads and jeopardizing the safety of the world as it was known, only to be saved by his cool, intelligent and level-headed female partner, the nameless Agent 99.[63] Yet within the patriarchal command structure of CONTROL, 99 was clearly of lesser rank than Smart, and perfectly happy to go along with it. *Get Smart* presented the same contradictions as *Bewitched*, but from the other side: It was woman's place in the working world that was given meaning by replicating the structures of domestic containment. Needless to say, 99 (perhaps herself now a prisoner) married Smart and had children before the series ended.[64]

The multiple meanings available from *Bewitched, I Dream of Jeannie* and *Get Smart* serve as strong evidence of a cultural challenge to a dominant ideology of domestic containment. In the two years between Betty Friedan's essay in *TV Guide* and the arrival of *The Avengers*, America witnessed the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, including Title VII, ending discrimination against women as well as minorities in hiring; the Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964 concurrently developed models of activism for college-age women to address the oppression they observed in American society and their own lives. Friedan's continuing efforts to form a group to effect legislative and social change on behalf of (at least middle-class) women would also come to fruition shortly after the arrival of *The Avengers* in 1966, as the National Organization for Women.[65] The social position of women in America was changing dramatically, and television's constructions of women were beginning to address those changes. Yet those constructions, built as they

were within a system that both helped define and was necessarily defined by domestic containment, seemed unable to offer the critiques of that ideology being voiced by Friedan and others. The most vocal complainant in narrative programming against the domestic norm was Samantha Stephens' mother Endora, another witch who was constructed within the discourse of the series as Darrin's mother-in-law -- not just a witch but the word Barbara Bush would later rhyme with it as well.[66] It was into these swirling cultural currents that ABC-UK and ABC-US dropped *The Avengers* in 1966.

## "Agent Extraordinary"

The surreal opening of the initial episode of*The Avengers* may well have suggested to many viewers that they were watching an extension of the magicom genre into the realm of secret agents. In its one immediate concession to the American market, ABC-UK added a voiceover narration to explain just who these "avengers" were: "Extraordinary crimes against the people and the state have to be avenged by agents extraordinary. Two such agents are John Steed, top professional, and Emma Peel, talented amateur -- otherwise known as the Avengers." While the proper British male voice introduces the series, a man in a waiter's jacket crossing a giant chessboard falls face first, revealing a knife in the middle of a target on his back. Steed and Peel, on cue, walk out to the dead man and take the bottle of champagne he had been carrying from his hand. The next shots identify Steed's trademark umbrella and bowler, followed by Peel's pistol (carried in her boot) and her leather bodysuit. The segment concludes as Steed pours champagne for himself and Peel, and the two, smiling, turn and walk off the chessboard.[67] While this opening deliberately hailed viewers familiar with the conventions of spy dramas, including the Cold War elements invoked by the reference to "crimes against the people and the state," it visually suggested that *The Avengers* were going to be involved in more fantastic, "extraordinary" circumstances than even those involving the men from U.N.C.L.E

The episode that followed fulfilled the promise of the opening sequence. "The

Cybernauts" begins as a tale of industrial intrigue, with several business executives being violently dispatched by someone of apparently superhuman strength. Steed and Peel discover that the executives have all been competing for the rights to new Japanese communication technology. Their investigation leads them to a Dr. Armstrong, the wheelchair-bound head of a toy company, who has developed a corps of invincible robot killing machines; the communication technology enables him to control them anywhere through the use of a transistorized pen.[68] Peel is eventually trapped in the toy company warehouse by a robot programmed to kill her, but at the last minute, Steed redirects the robot to attack another automaton. The cybernauts destroy each other and in the process accidentally kill their creator. The episode ends with Peel, driving her Lotus, encountering Steed sitting in his Bentley doing a crossword puzzle. She offers him a pen, to which Steed responds drily: "I don't hold with those newfangled things." Smiling, she zooms away.

"The Cybernauts," though only the first episode in the series shown in the United States, displays each of the elements that guided the program's reception by American audiences. First, ironically, was the show's resolute Britishness. From the umbrella and bowler in the opening sequence to the automobiles featured in the closing tag, nothing and no one in the program spoke with anything approaching an American accent: Even the foreign business concerns were Japanese. This was a deliberate strategy of producers Clemens and Fennell, who felt that success in the American market depended upon offering something that "copycat" American producers could not imitate: England.[69] "We became terribly British," Clemens later said. "A car is a car is a car, and not an automobile. A lift is a lift is a lift and never an elevator. It is this Britishness that fits the fantasy world so appealing to the Americans."[70] By retaining essential differences in signification between the two cultures, (especially) including language, while at the same time retaining narrative conventions and plot devices familiar to both, the producers of *The Avengers* wisely hoped to appeal to a culture still looking outward to the Mother Country as a participant in recreating a web of meaning following the Kennedy assassination trauma.

Of those narrative conventions coming out of the Bond movies and other secret agent shows, none was more important, as "The Cybernauts" would indicate, than the menace of technology. David Buxton argues that *The Avengers* represents a discourse on the place of technology in accommodating modernity to the traditional British class structure. A danger when used by a nouveau riche class (such as scientists like Dr. Armstrong twisted with dreams of power) without regard to a traditional elite, technology is equally problematic when used by aristocrats and Colonel Blimp-types to defend the old order against the rising welfare state. The middle ground, he argues, is technology in the service of consumption and fashion, a middle ground American audiences already found themselves occupying, thanks to Bond, U.N.C.L.E., Drake and other secret agents.[71] As Buxton himself points out, however, American readings of technology and consumption in *The Avengers* differed from those constructed in Britain: "[I]t is certain that most of the class references...were lost on an American audience for whom the British series had a quaint charm in its juxtaposition of the traditional (country house, fox shooting) and the modern (robots, atomic power plants)" (Buxton 107). Nonetheless, the narrative deployment of technology as the tool of evil, familiar to American audiences not only through previous secret agent movies and television programs but through their own fears of nuclear holocaust, became the central motif of *The Avengers*, superseding the Cold War even in many episodes in which Cold War concerns were directly referenced.[72] In the episode "Mission: Highly Improbable," for example, the conflict between the British secret service and an East German military officer becomes secondary to the technology each is trying to control: an incredible shrinking machine that reduces Steed and Peel to the size of cockroaches. Similarly, in "Two's a Crowd," the Soviet threat to Britain and the alliance is a group of miniature models of war machines that are as deadly as the real things.[73]

More than anything, however, the character of Emma Peel differentiated *The Avengers* from other programs on American television and helped direct the show to a very different audience from that which its creators had imagined. To be sure, Peel could

comport the signifiers of the feminine mystique as well as the next television woman: In the opening credit sequence, following the introduction, she is shown wearing frilly dresses; when she enters Steed's apartment at the beginning of "The Cybernauts," she sports a lovely fur-trimmed jacket. And the conclusion of the episode, with Steed rescuing a cringing Peel from certain death, all too closely replicates the damsel-in-distress convention of patriarchal adventure narratives.[74] Peel, however, is neither contained nor domestic. Her first appearance in the episode, as noted, comes at Steed's apartment, where she is to find out about their next case. The one scene in which she is shown at home visually foregrounds the fact that she is there alone, engaged in a purely leisure activity: doing the daily crossword puzzle in a broadsheet newspaper (an exercise, given the nature of British crosswords, that signifies in that country the character's high levels of intelligence and education). Home, for Mrs. Peel, is not a place of day labor but a place of some form of rest. That rest is disturbed, however, by her anxiety about not hearing from Steed, which grows as a counterpoint to her relaxation until finally she bolts out of the apartment to go rescue her partner. She quite literally cannot be contained within domestic confines.

Even more remarkable in this first episode, however, is the degree to which Emma Peel is depicted as an active, powerful woman who triumphs over the attempts of men to keep her "in her place." In a definitive scene early in the episode, Emma goes to a karate studio to see if she can find a lead on the killer, who (as she knows) used karate to dispatch his victims. The bare and starkly lit training facility is occupied by four male students, a statuesque blonde woman and the teacher (*sensai*). When Peel enquires about taking a class, the *sensai* responds: "It is difficult for a woman to compete in such a category." "It's the idea of competition that appeals to me," Peel responds, to which the *sensai* ripostes: "Then I suggest that perhaps fencing will be more suitable for your purpose." Finally, he agrees to test Peel by pitting her against the blonde woman, "Oyuka -- the immovable one." In a short time, Peel (dubbed "Obaki -- the foolish one") subdues Oyuka, much to the surprise of both the loser and her instructor. "You attacked her as a woman," the *sensai*

rebukes Oyuka, "but she has the skill of a man." To which Emma turns and leaves, flipping her shoes over her shoulder as she walks out of the studio.

This first episode of *The Avengers* in America reveals a shift in reading formations defining the relationship between the secret agent genre and its audience in America; at the same time, it reveals and begins to unravel what Janice Radway calls an "ideological seam": a joining of a dominant ideology of domestic containment with the otherwise inflected utterances and practices of young American middle-class women, a joining that simply does not hold.[75] Samantha, Jeannie and Agent 99 might countermand the direct orders of their men and reveal the naturalized assumptions of the patriarchy, but their unruliness almost always ultimately upheld and strengthened the worlds constructed by their husbands, bosses and masters. Even Honey West, skilled in martial arts, rarely used those abilities until she had already employed her body in more traditional sexual ways to gain proximity to the male villain.[76] For Emma Peel, then, to walk into a space literally defined by male power, endure the insults of and conclusively triumph over the challenge presented by that power, and finally walk out of the space wordlessly, having rendered language itself meaningless, was a paradigmatic moment in American television, and a moment that primetime American programs, still ensnared in issues of containment, could not yet present in their own cultural context. Indeed, the Britishness of *The Avengers*, coded in the program in everything from language to leisure activity to consumer goods, made Emma all the more powerful a role model to audiences of American young women: A contemporary American woman accomplishing Emma's deeds would have been seen as beyond fantasy, given the possibilities available in the ideology of the time. But a contemporary woman from a different place taking on those challenges and succeeding raises the possibility -- within the text and without -- that an ideology of domestic containment is something local, something temporal, and something that could eventually be transformed.[77]

This is not to say that the meaning of Emma Peel in America was constructed solely as that of an avatar of women's liberation. As Robert Musel's profile of Diana Rigg in *TV*

*Guide* suggests, the character retained, for a significant part of the American audience, the "to-be-looked-at-ness" intended with the producers' naming of the character. Indeed, *Playboy* itself defined *The Avengers* for its audience by containing the Rigg/Peel character within its well-established Bond girl formula. In a 1967 "On the Scene" profile accompanying the show's return to ABC-US, the magazine says that Rigg "exudes more sheer sexuality than American TV has previously handled," and that the character of Emma Peel "is an erotic stylization, rather than a character, in pants suits, miniskirts and an incredibly kinky wardrobe." The short article even returns to currency the *Goldfinger* reference used so prominently in establishing the show's original narrative image, pointing out the corrective authority of the Bond figure: "[Rigg] has made British viewers all but forget the show's first female lead, Honor 'Pussy Galore' Blackman, who defected to play with the bad guys until James Bond straightened her out...."[78] And, as David Buxton argues, Rigg/Peel's secondary function within the show as a model for mod fashions marketed internationally adds another layer of "to-be-looked-at-ness" to the character: the "gaze of pop," in which an ideology of fetishistic consumption replaces the real world of social relations.[79] Emma Peel, in short, was still an object to be viewed for pleasure. But with that objective "to-be-looked-at-ness" in the character came the power, neither predicted nor discussed in Laura Mulvey's construction of the male gaze, of looking back -- a power evident not just in the series itself but in the narrative image created for it in its pre-broadcast publicity: While displaying her body, and with it the specially designed "Flash" hip-hugging outfit, in the photo used in *Variety* and the *New York Times*, Rigg/Peel is staring directly into the camera as she points her gun at it.

As such, the Rigg/Peel image directly exemplifies the two "themes" Roland Barthes describes in his critique of the medium of photography, *Camera Lucida*. The "theme" he defines as "studium" derives out of culture; it is the complicity in the photograph between the photographer and the observer: "It is rather that I had to read the Photographer's myths in the Photograph, fraternizing with them, but not quite believing in them."[80] The studium

is always present in a photograph, Barthes argues, but not so the "punctum": a detail in a particular photograph that expands the meaning of the image beyond the recognition of a shared mythology.[81] The studium of the Rigg/Peel photo is precisely the cultural complicity defined by Laura Mulvey in her discussion of the male gaze; the fact that the image is itself contained within the verbal structures of phallocentric discourse merely gives voice to that "fraternization," to use Barthes' oddly appropriate term. The eyes looking back at the camera and the pointed gun, however, are the punctum, the "pricking" (again, Barthes' term) of the ideological order represented in the studium: The male gaze has a respondent, who is, incidentally, pointing a gun at it. The deliberately constructed narrative image of *The Avengers*, representing the woman as object, also presents the opposite image: woman as subject, negating the power of the objectifying look. Moreover, the look back at the looker breaks the two-dimensional containment of the image -- at one and the same time, it reveals and shatters the objectification of women that comprises the studium and its specific application as domestic containment to the growing numbers of middle-class women who still constituted American broadcasters' ideal audience.[82]

With the polyvalence present in the narrative image supported by that evident in the show itself, those middle-class women and their daughters became particularly vocal partisans of the show. "Bravo to ABC for giving us *The Avengers*," Polly Goodenough wrote to *TV Guide*. "Now we can have at least one hour of excellent entertainment all summer long, hopefully even longer."[83] Linda Alfonso wrote in the same issue: "At last, a program with all the cheekiness of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* without being a direct take-off on same. I mean the zero-cool *Avengers*."[84] Following critic Cleveland Amory's selection of Rigg as best actress in a dramatic series for 1965-66, Constance Clarke wrote to praise him: "His selection is smashing, and best among them are *Secret Agent* Patrick McGoohan and Diana Rigg of *The Avengers*."[85] "Amateur Avenger," a correspondent to *'Teen* magazine, the target audience of which is 12-17-year-old girls, spoke to both gender and age in her comments after the first season of the show: "Let's get John Steed and

Emma Peel back on television. 'The Avengers' was the only program that teens alone could understand. It had too much action for the older generation."[86]

Just as important as these letters in terms of revealing the significance of the Emma Peel character to a young middle-class female audience was the first American photo spread Diana Rigg did after the introduction of the series: for *Mademoiselle*, a magazine whose audience of young middle-class women either in or on their way to college was precisely the "real girls who have grown up on television" about whom Friedan was speaking in *TV Guide* two years earlier.[87] Presented in the July 1966 issue, the two-page layout was called "The Lethal Look" and was every bit as polyvalent as the photographs used to establish the narrative image of *The Avengers*.[88] On the first page, Rigg/Peel wears a jacket-brassiere-hiphugger outfit not dissimilar from the lamé "Flash" worn in the earlier photograph -- except this time the material is leather, with studs. Again, she points a gun, this time just to the left of the camera. The second photo features Rigg/Peel in a party dress covered with silver paillettes, looking over her shoulder toward the previous page, with her hands bound behind her back. The verbal text, again foregrounding the Bond connection, complements the pictorial contradiction: "Move over, James, the lady-killers are here, the fantastic females whose delicate fingers tap teacups one moment, pull triggers the next. The latest of the ladies to mix karate with pleasure is ice-cool-witted Mrs. Emma Peel (actress Diana Rigg) of ABC-TV's *The Avengers*" ("Lethal Look," 83).

The *Mademoiselle* layout represents the same dialectic present in the series itself and vital to changing constructions of women in American culture: On the one hand, Rigg/Peel is still forced to play captured princess (looking, given the dynamics of the photo spread, to herself for rescue); on the other hand, she is in control of herself and her situation. On the one hand, as a fashion model, she embodies (literally) "to-be-looked-at-ness"; on the other hand, as the role model that places her as fashion model in a magazine aimed at women entering adulthood, she assumes that look and uses it as a source of power. On the one hand, the photographs emphasize her body to the point that the top part of her head is

cropped off the page; on the other hand, the page cannot contain her. On the one hand, it reveals the "lethal look" of the viewer; on the other hand, it grants Peel/Rigg a similarly lethal look. Like *The Avengers* itself, the Rigg/Peel pages in *Mademoiselle* indicate the new fluidity of roles available to American women, particularly young American women of middle-class status, and help explain the appeal of the show to that group.

**The Fall of Tara**

Though never a Top 20 ratings hit in America as it had been in Britain, *The Avengers*, with its devoted core audience, had performed better than average, which for ABC-US in the late 1960s was a major triumph.[89] After the show returned to the network's schedule in the middle of the 1966-67 season, ABC-US programmers assured its British producers that it would be brought back again at some point the following season.[90] By that time, however, both parties faced a significant problem: Diana Rigg, exhausted with the weekly production schedule and with her character, had decided to leave the series.[91] Rigg's departure activated a new set of utterances that would both sew up the ideological seam her character had ripped open and exemplify the complex relationship between Bakhtinian "assimilation" and the process of "absorbing and domesticating" defining the hegemonic ideology represented by and on American television. The problematic nature of that relationship had already been suggested by the role ABC-US programmers had in mandating the technical changes that allowed *The Avengers* to meet the standards expected by American audiences before its import. With Rigg retiring from her role, those programmers again found an opportunity to reconfigure the show toward a dominant construction of women (while still addressing the women who were a significant part of its audience). Their efforts, however, like similar efforts with the 1975 broadcast of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, revealed their failure to comprehend the importance of difference in imported British programming.

American network executives, upon hearing of Rigg's departure from the series,

decided to hold her final appearances for broadcast in 1967-68 in order to string out the popularity of Emma Peel for as long as possible; in Britain, meanwhile, ABC-UK used her resignation to remove Brian Clemens and Albert Fennell from the series in order to modify the show's entire premise. The erstwhile producers returned after a short time, but the company had already made its most important modification for the show in their absence: the replacement for Rigg/Peel. After a casting call involving some 200 actresses, Linda Thorson, a 20-year-old ingenue, was selected to play Steed's new partner, Tara King.[92] The selection, however, according to sources in the British press reported in turn by *Variety*, was made ultimately not by the show's British producers but by an ABC-US executive based in London, a selection that pleased neither Clemens nor Fennell.[93] Thorson's character was to be a different bird entirely from Mrs. Peel.[94] Tara was young and single; her interest in Steed obviously extended beyond the professional, as did his in her. Her wardrobe, though again exclusively designed by Alun Hughes, was softer, more "feminine," than that worn by Mrs. Peel. And while she would still have the physical toughness of any secret agent, Tara was to rely more on her sexual wiles than on her knowledge of martial arts in vanquishing villains. In short, Tara King was conceived as a move away from the liberatory character portrayed by Rigg back to the model of the Bond girl: woman contained, if not in a home, in a role and image as object defined by the needs and desires of men. The name "Tara King," which Thorson said she created herself, could hardly speak more clearly of patriarchy: Tara, for the O'Hara manse in *Gone With the Wind*; King, for "King and Country."[95]

The narrative image fixed for Thorson/King in *TV Guide* before her American introduction to the series in March 1968 played the actress' own assertiveness about her portrayal of the character against more traditional elements of femininity and sexuality. Robert Musel's profile of Thorson, as was his profile of Emma Peel, is preceded by a photograph of the actress in character. Instead of an intent woman holding a fencing sword, however, the image now shows a crouching woman, wearing a jacket-miniskirt

ensemble, peering out from behind a wall, with the larger, imposing figure of Macnee/ Steed right behind her: The picture is one of containment. Musel's text, bearing the title question "Can She Make Them Forget Mrs. Peel?" suggests an answer in the affirmative, thanks to the new character's body and sexuality. Again exhibiting the male gaze, Musel compares Rigg's "lean and boyish figure, [with] her bizarre black-leather and mod outfits" to that of Thorson: "a notable 5-feet-9-inches tall and 38 inches elsewhere." He also quotes Clemens' assessment of Thorson: "sexier, more pneumatic in build, with a bosom and hips" (Musel 13). Thorson otherwise is presented as a spunky newcomer with her own ideas about who Tara King is; those ideas, however, conform precisely to the expectations embodied in the notion of "to-be-looked-at-ness." She discusses how Tara should "have an affair" with Steed, how Tara would just as soon use a brick in her handbag instead of karate and her sex appeal instead of both, about the renewed fashion emphasis on bosoms: "[I saw] one dress with a top of yards and yards of chiffon, and nothing under it, that I'd love to wear. I hate bras" (Musel 14). Thorson's comment itself has no small amount of polyvalence, coming at a time in which a number of young women were viewing brassieres as, to use Susan Douglas' words, "the most titillating symbol of female containment": It was only six months from the *TV Guide* article to the alleged feminist bra-burning at the 1968 Miss America pageant.[96] Contained, however, in a commentary on a fashion show itself contained in an article otherwise defined by the availability of a woman's body to men, Thorson's statement was liberatory no further than the Bond girl working secretly to service His Majesty.

The creation of Tara King, the hiring of Linda Thorson and the narrative image for *The Avengers* constructed around both represented a retrograde shift in signification similar to the one Bennett and Woollacott find occurring in the Bond girl between the Connery and Moore films: A woman powerful enough to return the male gaze (and thus more powerful than any of the Bond girls) reverts a character whose power lay in her willingness to accept men's sexual objectification.[97] Tara King was much closer in style and spirit to the

American Honey West than to Emma Peel -- no surprise, given both the role of American network executives in seeing the character come to life and the domestic cultural concerns to which they were speaking. With student activism over the war in Vietnam and urban riots at their peak in 1967 and 1968, American television producers sought to present a new model of containment, one that took representatives of dangerous elements of society -- the young, African-Americans, women -- and put them to work preserving law and order under the tutelage of an older male authority. Introduced by NBC's *Ironside* and perfected the following year on ABC by the Aaron Spelling-produced *Mod Squad*, this new model of containment allowed that women could work outside the home, and in an occupation that could be dangerous as well. But in so doing, those women worked only to uphold an ideological status quo that explicitly recognized them as a threat. As a result, they could perform their jobs only as the patriarchy demanded: as the girl Friday.[98]

Tara King fit much more readily into this mold than did Emma Peel; to be doubly sure that the new definition of "the *Avengers* girl" would hold, ABC-US executives played a significant role in another major decision concerning the series: the addition of a superior officer to whom Steed and King would report. In an evident reference to the gender issues the series had already raised, the agency chief, a large paraplegic man (portrayed by Patrick Newell), was called "Mother." Though "Mother" was to have appeared only in the Rigg-Thorson transition episode, ABC-US officials liked the character so much that they told the show's British producers to put Newell under contract as a continuing character.[99] Not only, then, had the role of the female agent been changed, but a new layer of authority had been added to the concept of the show itself, reintroducing the bureaucracy of earlier secret agent series and reducing another element of the show's significant difference from American product. Beyond that, plots for the new series, which had not been above the occasional spoof, frequently became direct parodies of American films, with Avenger-ized versions of *The Maltese Falcon*, *High Noon* and *Five Graves to Cairo* among those to be produced. Producer Brian Clemens, nonetheless, attempted to quell British concerns about

increased American involvement in the production of the show, as well as concerns of the show's American viewers about the changes being made. In an interview with *Variety*, he denied American involvement in the hiring of Thorson. In addition, he said that he and Fennell had never been asked to make any major script or production changes and that of 12 "suggested alterations" made by ABC-US, only three had been acted on.[100]

It was quickly clear, however, that no matter what Clemens or anyone else might say, American audiences were less than pleased with the changes made in the series, whatever their origin. *Variety*'s own review of the first King episode, which acknowledged that Thorson was "a pretty dish," bemoaned the loss of the difference Emma Peel made: "It is obvious that Miss Thorson is going to be much more the femme foil and much less the strong and willful second hand portrayed by Miss Rigg."[101] Viewer response to *TV Guide* was also less enthusiastic than Robert Musel about the change. "With Emma gone, *The Avengers* has lost its ap-peel," wrote Lyn deSaulniers.[102] "I bet John Steed Mrs. Emma Peel," punned M. Goetz.[103] And with the return of Emma Peel in 1968 summer reruns, N. Stanley wrote: "One good thing about reruns with *The Avengers* -- we get back the Peel instead of the lemon."[104]

The ratings of the eight shows broadcast in early 1968 before Rigg departed, however, were enough of an improvement over ABC-US's previous offering on Wednesday night, and the financially strapped network was desperate enough for any programming that might save money, that *The Avengers* was added to the fall schedule for the first time.[105] Programmers, recognizing the appeal the show had to an audience of young women, scheduled the show for 7:30-8:30 Monday nights, opposite CBS' aging horse opera *Gunsmoke*; they failed to recognize, though, that the character responsible for much of that attraction was gone and replaced by one targeted more for the men and boys who watched the CBS show.[106] *TV Guide* hardly made the situation for the network any better when it ran, barely a month before the beginning of the 1968-69 season, another Robert Musel profile of Diana Rigg, "She's Miss Rigg of St. John's Wood, Now."

Musel's article features a discussion about her decision to leave the series, as well as the popularity of her character. In response to American letters that the author has brought with him, Rigg says: "I've come to realize the interest viewers have in television people. It's surprising -- and touching -- that nearly a year later so many should write that they regret my departure."[107]

With the meaningful absence of Rigg documented by Musel already contributing more profoundly to a narrative image of *The Avengers* in its new season than the presence of her replacement, ABC-US made matters even more muddled in terms of its intended audience with its season-opening ad in *TV Guide*. Instead of Tara King, the familiar figure of John Steed, facing the reader, dominates the half-column photograph. King, like Steed in the earlier ads with Peel, appears in a small inset in front of the male character, looking left off the page.[108] Neither this nor any image constructed to promote the program, however, would make any difference with viewers, given the programs NBC chose to present opposite *The Avengers*: *I Dream of Jeannie* and *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In*, a sketch comedy show itself influenced by British television, which had, after a successful spring tryout, immediately become the most popular program in American prime time.[109] Against this competition, as well as *Gunsmoke*, which now could attract an audience looking for something beside the mod offerings of ABC and NBC, *The Avengers* ended up 69th among all regular series for the season; in early 1969, ABC-US canceled the series. Without import fees from the States, and with falling ratings at home, ABC-UK announced that the conclusion of the 33 Tara King episodes would mark the end of *The Avengers*.[110]

*The Avengers* marks a particularly significant moment in the cultural dialogue conducted between British television and American audiences during the 1960s and 1970s. Beyond the direct American imitations it spawned -- *Honey West* before it arrived, *The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.* after -- *The Avengers* provided American television producers with the model for a female crimefighter they would then incorporate into their spy and police

shows of the late 1960s.[111] The work accomplished by those producers in "adapting" *The Avengers* into American texts speak directly to the fluidity of "the hegemonic" as defined by Raymond Williams, as that work recognized and incorporated the readings of an audience outside a dominant ideology of domestic containment in the framework of texts reconstituting a separate ideology of political containment.[112] At the same time, however, the efforts of producers, programmers and promoters to reshape and reframe *The Avengers* following Diana Rigg's departure represent a limit to the process of hegemony, particularly as defined in terms of absorption and domestication. The character of Tara King in both name and deed represented, literally and figuratively, a domestication of Emma Peel, contained if not in a suburban American home then in a patriarchal definition of an active woman. Yet many in the American audience of *The Avengers* rejected that construction, largely because of the way in which the character of Emma represented difference first and foremost through her Britishness -- her lack of domestication. Williams argues that "any hegemonic process must be especially alert and responsive to the alternatives...which question or threaten its dominance" (Williams, 113). In the case of *The Avengers*, however, hegemonic domestication meant negating the alternative -- the appeal of the British Emma to young American middle-class women -- in favor of another signification of patriarchal containment.

Again, it is Bakhtin's use of the term "assimilation," with its multiple "utterances" and the creativity involved in addressing them, that better explains the way in which *The Avengers* made its way into American culture through representations of social changes that American fictional narrative television could not itself present. Developed and exported as a representative of a genre created by males for a male audience, *The Avengers* arrived from Britain at a moment when the ideological construction of the American woman was in flux. While the negotiation of its many "alien words and value judgments" meant that viewers could read the show as its initial promotion suggested it should be -- as a male-oriented adventure -- the character of Emma Peel opened up another reading for the young

women of whom Betty Friedan had earlier spoken: that of the power of an independent woman who operated on equal, if not superior, terms with men in the "real world." The unwillingness, deliberate or otherwise, of American television executives to countenance this reading led to a retrenchment, a forced and false return to earlier genre conventions, that led in part to the show's demise, both in America and in Britain. Finally, *The Avengers* amplified an argument given louder and louder voice since the 1950s, particularly in the pages of *TV Guide*, that British television was better than American television, and that it was the duty of American television, in the public interest, to present the best programming possible. The cancellation of *The Prisoner*, *The Saint* and *The Avengers* in the same year would seem to mark an end to that reasoning. Soon enough, however, the argument would find a new channel -- literally.

## Notes, Chapter 3

1) Sweeting, *The Guardian*, October 19, 1993, 26.

2) In the *Secret Agent* episode "Yesterday's Enemies," for example, the Beirut bureau chief, which is explicitly a desk job, is a woman, whom Drake takes to task for mismanagement when she is unable to supply him with the backup agents he needs.

3) *Honey West* itself was preceded by the short-lived *Decoy* series (ABC, 1957-58), which presented the adventures of New York detective Casey Jones. As Diana Meehan points out, however, Jones took her orders from a paternal lieutenant and, like Honey West, more often than not had to be rescued by males from missions requiring that she use sexual allure as part of her "weaponry." See Meehan 1983, 73-74.

4) The line is taken from Williams' "Spring and All": "They enter the new world naked/ cold, uncertain of all/save that they enter." William Carlos Williams, in ed. Tomlinson 1985, 39.

5) Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 231-232; 241-247.

6) Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 241.

7) A lengthy discussion of the gendered constructions of daytime and primetime television genres, based in part on the work of Mary Ann Brown and Jane Feuer, can be found in Fiske 1989, 215-223. See also Browne, in ed. Newcomb 1987, 585-599.

8) See Newcomb 1974 for complete discussions of sitcoms, Westerns, detective and adventure series; also Fiske 1989, 144-145.

9) The pleasures of the male scopophilic gaze are presented at length by Mulvey in ed.

Nichols 1985, 303-315, which will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

10) Rogers 1989, 12-16; 32-38; 56-61.

11) Rogers 1989, 56. Other newspaper commentary similarly noted the demographic element of the program's popularity; at the same time, at least one of the national tabloids, aimed at a lower- and working-class audience, replaced some of its scantily clad Page 3 models with photographs of Blackman in the new outfit of the week.

12) According to Roger Marshall, head writer for *The Avengers* at the time, at least part of the reason Blackman left the series was her dissatisfaction with the producers' use of videotape instead of film, a decision that she was aware would limit her international marketability. Marshall, letters to the author, May 3, 1996; July 31, 1996.

13) Rogers 1989, 84-86.

14) Musel, *TV Guide* May 9, 1964, 12-14

15) Rogers 1989, 86-87.

16) Les Brown, *Variety* June 30, 1965, 1. Brown's article is the first industry herald of a British television "invasion," citing not only the arrival of *Secret Agent* and *The Saint* but the direct influence British programming and producers had already had on several American shows (all on ABC), including the pop music series *Shindig* and the prime time soap opera adaptation of *Peyton Place*, in addition to *Honey West.* As such, Brown's article offers the first public recognition of the role British programming played in the creative processes of American producers. See also, for the literary genesis of Honey West, Richardson, *Primetime* 15 (1989), 8.

17) Amory, *TV Guide* October 23, 1965, 12; also Rogers, 56-59.

18) Clothing design had assumed a pre-eminent importance in the production of *The Avengers* during the Honor Blackman/Cathy Gale years, when then-producer Leonard White dictated that the character was to become a trendsetter in fashion. Rigg's wardrobe by John Bates was the first instance, however, in which a wardrobe designed for a television series would be adapted in its entirety for sale to the public. For his part, Macnee wore clothes designed by Pierre Cardin. See Rogers 1989, 37; 89-90; 126.

19) On the origin of the "M Appeal" story, which the author heard first in 1970 while attending high school, see Rogers, 87. Roger Marshall, however, who was head writer of the show at the time the name would have been coined, casts some doubt on the myth: "I can truly say that I never heard that until last year.... It's a good story but is -- I suggest -- just that. I think a publicist is credited with the idea. As they say, you couldn't prove it by me." Marshall, letter to the author, May 3, 1996.

20) Rogers 1989, 87-88; also Macnee 1988, 238. Her background with the RSC would be featured prominently in the narrative image for Emma Peel and *The Avengers* in America.

21) Rogers 1989, 87-88. Among projects Wintle had overseen in the past were the definitive British New Wave films *Tiger Bay* and *This Sporting Life*, which had been nominated for several Academy Awards in 1963.

22) Sterling and Kittross 1978, 398-399; also Barnouw 1990, 401.

23) "Brit ABC-TV Poised With Two New Film Series, One With US Partner," *Variety* December 1, 1965, 29.

24) Advertisement, *Variety*, January 26, 1966, 48. *Variety* had several months earlier taken note of *The Avengers* and Diana Rigg in its review of her first episode aired in Britain, using the same discourse of the ad photo and later journalistic copy: "Diana Rigg shaped as a more than adequate sparring partner.... A leggy girl, with a doll's face, she maintained the tradition of fighting prowess.... She had the necessary poise to work well with Macnee, and was dressed in a fine offbeat wardrobe, parading, for instance, in well-above-the-knee skirts which exaggerated her rangy statistics." See *Variety*, October 5, 1965, 44.

25) Ellis 1982, 30.

26) Price, *New York Times* March 13, 1966, X19.

27) "Good-Chap Sexuality," *Newsweek* April 4, 1966, 94. The emphasis on "kinkiness" in the article is an element of the American narrative image that has its origins in British intertextuality: In 1964, *Avengers* stars Macnee and Blackman released what would later be called "the first Marxist novelty-number rap record," "Kinky Boots." Allegedly a celebration of Blackman's leatherwear on the show, the record included lyrics ("Footwear manufacturers are gathering the fruits/Kinky Boots!/Advertising men say 'Try 'em'/And you all run amok to buy 'em") that seemed to indict the audience as dupes in a massive corporate conspiracy. The record stiffed in Britain on its release, although the "kinky" descriptive stuck all the way to America. In a final irony, the record was re-released in 1991 and climbed to Number 5 on the British pop charts. See Rose, *New Musical Express* April 23, 1983, 12; also "Crib Sheet: *The Avengers*," *Mail Magazine*, *Mail on Sunday* (London) October 24, 1993, 80.

28) Mulvey, in ed. Nichols 1985, 309.

29) For discussions of the application of Mulvey's film theory to television, see, for example, Mary Ellen Brown, in ed. Mary Ellen Brown 1990, 11-22; Byars, in ed. Pribam 1988) 110-131; Kaplan, in ed. Robert Allen 1987, 211-253; Lewis, in ed. Newcomb 1994, 249-267.

30) Amory, *TV Guide* May 14, 1966, 1.

31) Program description, *TV Guide*, January 14, 1967, A-69 (Minnesota edition).

32) Musel, "En Garde!" *TV Guide* January 14, 1967, 19-22.

33) Musel, 20.

34) This subhead references the collection of feminist critical essays on the production and reception of television in Britain edited by Baehr and Dyer 1987.

35) May 1988, 3-14.

36) Spigel 1992, 73-98.

37) Chafe 1972, 218-219.

38) See Evans 1979, 8-9; also Chafe, 219-224.

39) See Evans 1979, 15-16.

40) See Friedan 1963, 282-309.

41) Much of May's book deals with the importance of social scientists and the mental health establishment in defining domestic containment. She also provides personal responses to Friedan's book from its readers; see May 1988, 209-217. For specific responses among social scientists to Friedan and feminism, see Chafe 1972, 228-230.

42) Friedan, *TV Guide* February 1, 1964, 6.

43) Friedan, *TV Guide* February 8, 1964, 22. Ironically, Friedan's words appeared on the page next to an ad for D-Con Mouseprufe that pictured a housewife standing on a chair screaming "Eek! A MOUSE!"; on the next page, "Poor Deborah" and "Gay Deborah" demonstrated the ability of Midol to relieve menstrual cramps. See also Altschuler and Grossvogel 1992, 137-138.

44) Again, Friedan's words were accompanied by a contradictory advertising message, in this case for Angel Face cosmetics.

45) See, for example, Chafe 1972, 230-232; Evans 1979, 19. For more on the split between Friedan's National Organization for Women and radical feminists, see Echols 1989, 167-169.

46) Spigel 1992, 82-83.

47) Evans 1979 details the ways in which young women formed a movement of liberation from their oppression as women out of their experiences in civil rights activism in the early 1960s as well as in nascent New Left campus organizations. See in particular Chapters 2 and 3, 24-82. See also Chafe 1972, 233; William O'Neill, 1971, 195-199.

48) Evans 1979, 16-17; May 1988, 219. Following Roosevelt's death shortly after the commission was formed, Esther Peterson assumed the chair.

49) For a detailed description of *A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy*, see Watson 1990, 139-144. Also see Douglas 1994, 38-41, who notes her own disappointment as a young viewer at Mrs. Kennedy's "whispery, little-girl voice," which seemed to undercut the qualities of Jackie as a role model.

50) Schemering 1985, 304-305.

51) I am here appropriating John Fiske's use of the term "exscription": "Exscription...is the process whereby a discourse writes out of itself topics that are ideologically or psychologically discomforting." Fiske 1989, 204. For a more quantitative analysis of the portrayal of women on television in the early 1960s, see Meehan 1983, 109-114.

52) Brooks and Marsh 1988, 576.

53) Watson 1990, 43-44.

54) Brooks and Marsh 1988, 312; 332-333.

55) Spigel 1992, 60-65; Meehan 1983, 110-111. Meehan argues that many of the fathers represented on standard domestic comedies were generally strong and competent husbands

and fathers; that strength and competence, however, varied from episode to episode in all but the most patriarchal of the genre, *Father Knows Best.*

56) Rogers and Hechlinger, however, had their apparently rewarding (in status and money) careers filled with a good bit of clerical work; Bradley's job was little different from that of a mother -- indeed, her three adult daughters still lived at home. All three women had no discernible social life or sexual pleasure; Sally's search for a man was a comic constant on *The Dick Van Dyke Show.* Success in a career for a woman on these programs came at the expense of happiness in every other aspect of life.

57) Douglas 1994, 126-138; also Meehan 1983, 96-98.

58) Marc 1989, 121-155.

59) Douglas 1994, 130-132; Marc 1989, 140-141.

60) Fiske 1989, 65-67. *Bewitched* ran from 1964 to 1971.

61) Douglas 1994, 134-137.

62) *Get Smart* also directly acknowledged the influence of *The Avengers* in an episode in which the protagonists go up against British evildoers "Sneed" and "Mrs. Neel." See Richardson 1989, 11.

63) As with Rigg and *The Avengers*, the narrative image established for *Get Smart* focused more on the "to-be-looked-at-ness" of its female star Barbara Feldon than it did her role in the series. A *Newsweek* profile from May 1965 begins with a reference to Feldon's work as pitchwoman for a Revlon hair care product for men: "Once upon a tiger skin, an unknown actress named Barbara Feldon lay down and purred, 'I want a word with all you tigers.'" The article goes on to describe Feldon's "tongue-in-cheek, wet-lipped, boudoir approach," which developed after her first major print ad, in which she was "sensually wrapped in a towel." Her *Get Smart* character, meanwhile, is referred to only as "a bumbling Bondette." See "Sic 'em, Tigers," *Newsweek* May 3, 1965, 92.

64) Brooks and Marsh 1988, 294-295.

65) Chafe 1972, 236-237; Evans 1979, 17-22; May 1988, 219-220; O'Neill 1981, 196.

66) Both David Marc and Susan Douglas see Endora's role in *Bewitched* as cumulatively "daring, witty and powerful," to use Marc's words. As Douglas notes, however, the liberatory potential of the character is limited not only by her containment in a patriarchal discourse but by the fact that she is, after all, a mother: Her attacks on male authority were fun to watch, Douglas writes, "even as we knew we did not want to be like her." See Marc 1988, 138-139; Douglas 1994, 132.

67) All dialogue and description in this section taken from "The Cybernauts," *The Avengers*; exec. prod. Julian Wintle, prod. Brian Clemens, Albert Fennell, writ. Philip Levene, dir. Sidney Hayers, perf. Patrick Macnee, Diana Rigg, ABC, March 28, 1966. See also Rogers 1989, 91-92.

68) The character of Dr. Armstrong takes the intertextuality of the series to another level, in its resemblance to the paraplegic, mad title character of the film *Dr. Strangelove.*

69) Brown, *Variety* February 23, 1966, 35.

70) Rogers 1989, 90. Clemens' comment was seconded by one of the show's regular writers, Dennis Spooner: "We showed England as the world thinks it is, and England as England would like to be. It's true. If you go to America, they think of London either as it's described by Charles Dickens or by *The Avengers*. It's the shorthand of this world." See Auty, *Sunday Times* (London) October 31, 1982, 62. For further comments from Clemens on the Britishness of the series, see Auty and de Bono, *Weekend Telegraph* (London) February 15, 1992, 27.

71) Buxton 1990, 101-104.

72) For comments on fears of nuclear holocaust, see, among others, Gitlin 1988, 20-24; Hodgson 1976, 315; May 1988, 22-23.

73) Rogers 1989, 105.

74) The *Variety* review of "The Cybernauts" displayed no recognition of Emma Peel as a potentialicon of liberation: "The Avengers are a man-woman team, the femme being a finely sculpted looker in the person of Diana Rigg.... the chick turns up in one scene in glorious leather -- toreadors, jacket, etc." Rev. of *The Avengers*, *Variety* March 30, 1966, 58.

75) Radway 1986, 108-109. See also Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 64.

76) The opening credit sequence of *Honey West* presents an extraordinary narrative in which elements of sexuality frame acts of violence. A fast-edited collage of still photographs, the sequence opens with a closeup of a parted set of lips (heavy lipstick) with a beauty mole to the side of the mouth. A number of still shots thacked by a man (signified by a second closeup of the mouth, this time open in a scream), whom she fends off with karate, apparently killing him in the process (the last photo in the series shows the man lying on the ground with his eyes open). A second series of still shots depicts a similar incident, with Honey using a gun to dispatch the bad guy. The sequence concludes with a photograph of Honey standing in a spotlight wearing a very tight, lowcut evening gown, followed by a photograph of her aide Sam Bolt wearing formal wear and standing against floral patterned wallpaper. Description taken from "In the Bag," *Honey West*, exec. prod. Aaron Spelling, prod. Richard Newton, writ. Gwen Bagni, Paul Dubov, dir. Seymour Robbie, perf. Anne Francis, John Erickson, ABC, September 17, 1965.

77) Roger Marshall speaks directly to the difference in the character as created in England and its reconstruction by young women in America:

> By definition, everyone who worked on *The Avengers*...had lived through the '39-'45 war. Most of us had grown up during it and memories of it were vivid. Bear in mind the essential difference between us and our American counterparts. The war...was 5,000 or so miles from the American home. For us, occupied France was 20 miles away. Apart from relatives going off to fight and some not returning, the impact of the war on most American families was, by comparison, slight. In the U.K. the war was vivid reality, from air raids to food rationing to total conscription. We all grew up in the midst of it. Most important, we all saw Women in Uniform, Women Doing Things. It was as much a part of our lives as the postman on the street. Women served in all three services, they formed the Women's Land Army and did practically all the farming. They built the tanks and airplanes. They drove all the buses and ambulances. A far cry from that period of 'domestic containment' you speak about. With this real experience behind us, it was a short step to creating a fictional Action Woman. I can't

> remember, but I don't imagine anybody involved thought that by creating Cathy Gale or Emma P. we were doing anything innovative or strange. 'Why not?' would have been the reaction.

Marshall, letter to the author, May 3, 1996.

78) "On the Scene:*The Avengers:* Jolly Good Show," *Playboy* March 1967, 143. While the prose text again captures Rigg/Peel in the male gaze, the accompanying photograph sends a different message entirely: Macnee/Steed and Rigg/Peel are shot from the waist up, Macnee/Steed standing slightly behind Rigg/Peel, who is seated on a stool, smiling. The only skin she displays is on her face and hands; indeed, the sexual presence in the photograph is the male's. The image is all the more remarkable, given that Hugh Hefner had told friends that *The Avengers* was one of his favorite shows. See Macnee 1988, 242.

79) Buxton 1990, 75-76; also 96-99.

80) Roland Barthes 1981, 28; see also 25-27.

81) Barthes 1981, 42-45.

82) Other photos from the beach sequence that did not become part of the narrative image in America treat the "look" quite differently. Rogers prints one photo which is much more clearly a fashion model shoot, with Rigg/Peel holding the gun in such a way that its immediate use would cause more injury to her than to anything at which she might be shooting. See Rogers 1989, 90. A second photo was used as the jacket shot for the British single release of *The Avengers*' theme music: In this shot, Macnee and Rigg are standing on a bear rug lying on the beach. Macnee poses with an expression similar to the "twit" character later defined by Monty Python and with his brolly handle snugly tucked in the top of Rigg's outfit; Rigg, for her part, looks directly at the camera in a typical model pose as if nothing at all out of the ordinary is happening. See Rogers 1989, 276.

83) Letters, *TV Guide*, May 21, 1966, A-2.

84) Letters, *TV Guide*, May 21, 1966, A-2.

85) Letters, *TV Guide*, July 16, 1966, A-2.

86) Letters, *'Teen*, December 1966, 6.

87) The fact that the magazine was *Mademoiselle* foregrounds the age and class elements of the show's demographics as much as it does gender. A survey of both younger teen magazines (*16*, *Tiger Beat*) and pulp fan magazines (*TV-Radio Mirror*), both of which were aimed at audiences outside the "ideal" spending audiences constructed by advertisers, shows no recognition that *The Avengers* even existed, much less had an active following. The journals chosen to publicize *The Avengers* act to demonstrate that Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital, in terms of British television imports, was linked intimately with economic capital -- a notion that would gain even greater currency in the creation of public television.

88) "The Lethal Look," *Mademoiselle*, July 1966, 82-83.

89) During the summer months of 1966, the end of the show's first season, *The Avengers* received a 12.3 rating, compared to an industry average of 12.1, and an audience share of 28.3, which was certainly competitive. See ratings chart, *Variety*, October 5, 1966, 43. This was all the more impressive given that, unlike most other shows during the traditional

repeat period, *The Avengers* was competing directly with a first-run American series: *The Dean Martin Summer Show*, hosted by Dan Rowan and Dick Martin. In their later competition with Rowan and Martin, *The Avengers* would come off much the worse. See Brooks and Marsh 1988, 190-191.

90) Because of the relative cheapness of *The Avengers*, it became an attractive buy to advertisers, as ad rates were scaled accordingly, and as a younger audience skewed toward women was an ideal buy. As a result, ABC-US announced in February 1967, just three weeks after the show's return, that it would be the first British series in the decade to be included as part of a network's fall lineup. A month later, the network had changed its mind, citing (as ever) economic concerns; it did, however, indicate that the show would be the first midyear replacement. See "Avengers Looms as First UK Series in Sept. Lineup," *Variety* February 22, 1967: 33; also "ABC Going Dark Thurs. at 10:30; F. Lee Bailey in 30-Min. Expendable Tapeshow Puts 'Avengers' On Shelf," *Variety* March 22, 1967, 33.

91) For the story of Rigg's resignation, see Rogers 1989, 124; also Macnee 1988, 245.

92) Rogers 1989, 158.

93) Rogers 1989, 158. The masking occurred in interviews with Clemens in *Variety* and *TV Guide*, both of which will be discussed at greater length presently. See also "ABC Spots Don Boyle in Brit. to Ride Herd on Trio of Entries," *Variety* June 5, 1968, 23.

94) Rogers 1989, 160-162; also Musel, *TV Guide* March 2, 1968, 12-15.

95) Rogers 1989, 160.

96) Douglas 1994, 139-140. As Douglas and Alice Echols note, while brassieres were flailed about and dumped into trash cans at the Miss America pageant protest, none were actually burned, despite news reports to the contrary. Echols suggests that the manufactured event was a fiction created by the protest organizers themselves to attract media attention. See Douglas 1994, 159-160; also Echols 1989, 92-94.

97) Curiously enough, the return of the brassiere as a signifier of containment helps mark the textual shift in the Bond girl for Bennett and Woollacott: A 1977 British tabloid feature on Bond girls being used to set the narrative image for *The Spy Who Loved Me*, they note, begins by reporting how the "liberated...russet-haired American beauty" Barbara Bach was told by the film's producers, when she arrived on the set, "'Go and buy a bra.'" See Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 245.

98) David Marc argues that Aaron Spelling, through his efforts to contain and resolve the "generation gap," comes to define the crime show of the late 1960s and early 1970s. In a sense, the Julie character on *The Mod Squad* is Spelling's Honey West, reconfigured to speak to social and cultural changes between 1964 and 1968. See Marc 1984, 84-86.

99) To further the gender jape, series writers introduced another agency poobah who filled in when "Mother " was out on business: "Father," a blind woman. See Rogers 1989, 163-164. Not only did the addition of "Mother" add another level of organizational structure (if not direct patriarchy) to *The Avengers*, it also added another element of intertextuality to its American reception: Raymond Burr's overweight, wheelchair-bound detective *Ironside* had become a hit series for NBC by the time Mother was introduced on *The Avengers*.

100) "Avengers Goes Spoof Happy on H'wood Classics," *Variety* October 30, 1968, 35.

101) Rev. of *The Avengers*, *Variety* March 27, 1968, 62.

102) Letters, *TV Guide* April 13, 1968, A-2.

103) Letters, *TV Guide* April 27, 1968, A-2.

104) Letters, *TV Guide* July 6, 1968, A-2.

105) Brown, *Variety* March 13, 1968, 33; also Brown, *Variety* March 27, 1968, 37; "'Avengers' as Yankee Boodle Dandy," *Variety* April 3, 1968, 39. In his first article, Brown also reports that ABC-US was looking to use Thorson as a "certain exploitation lift" when she replaced Rigg. In his second article, he reports that the cost to ABC for a single episode of *The Avengers* would be $110,000, compared to the $200,000 CBS had to pay for an episode of *Gunsmoke*.

106) Brown, *Variety* May 1, 1968, 31.

107) Musel, *TV Guide* August 10, 1968, 17. Musel notes that Rigg, at the height of the series' popularity, "drove around with sacks of unopened mail in her car."

108) Program description, *TV Guide* September 21, 1968, A-27 (Minnesota edition).

109) A *Variety* report as early as mid-October 1968 showed both *Laugh-In* and *Gunsmoke* getting audience shares in excess of 40, meaning that *The Avengers*, in the half-hour it competed with both, was attracting less than 20 percent of the available audience. See Les Brown, *Variety* October 16, 1968, 37. For the 1968-69 season, *Laugh-In* was the highest rated program on American television, with a 31.8 rating (close to 30 million viewers). *Gunsmoke* had the sixth highest rating for the year. See Brooks and Marsh 1988, 969.

110) Rogers 1989, 165.

111) A spinoff of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, *The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.* teamed the character of April Dancer, portrayed by American actress Stefanie Powers (born in Hollywood, CA) using a British accent, with British agent Mark Slate (Noel Harrison, son of Rex). The Britification of the characters, along with the efforts at humor and fantastic plots, were directly lifted from *The Avengers*, as were Ms. Dancer's mod outfits and her knowledge of martial arts and swordplay -- one still in the closing credits goes so far as to show Powers/Dancer in an Emma Peel jumpsuit holding an epee. As might be expected, the American clone lacked both the talents and the singularly British elements that made *The Avengers* popular in the States; NBC canceled the program after only one year. The later adaptations of *The Avengers* will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 7.

112) Raymond Williams 1977, 113.

## Chapter 4: Public Image Limited
## (*The Forsyte Saga*, Public Television and the Nixon Administration)

> Noncommercial television should address itself to the ideal of excellence, not the idea of acceptability -- which is what keeps commercial television from climbing the staircase. I think television should be the visual counterpart of the literary essay, should arouse our dreams, satisfy our hunger for beauty, take us on journeys, enable us to participate in events, present great drama and music, explore the sea and the sky and the woods and the hills. It should be our Lyceum, our Chatauqua, our Minsky's and our Camelot.
>
> --E.B. White[1]

With the departure of the secret agent imports from the commercial networks in 1969, a second wave of British programming came to American airwaves -- and with it, a shift in signification, following Bennett and Woollacott, from a mod sense of contemporary consumption to a historical and literary sensibility of aristocratic *noblesse oblige*.[2] The BBC-produced *The Forsyte Saga*, which arrived in 1969, was the first in a group of serialized costume dramas, frequently based on canonical works of fiction and reaching a conclusion within a limited number of episodes, that found their way primarily to the nascent noncommercial public broadcasting service. As had been the case with *The Prisoner* and *The Avengers*, American viewers of *The Forsyte Saga* found meanings in the differences represented in and by the program that read around those prescribed in its fixed narrative image. Thoe readings, however, soon received direct and purposive guidance from a source not previously encountered. In its systematic attacks on American media, the political administration of Richard Nixon paid particular attention to public broadcasting, the funding for which was dependent upon the government itself. *The Forsyte Saga* and other British imports distributed by public broadcasters became a secondary tool of that assault, less because of the meanings that could be constructed out of them than those that

could not: meanings critical of the government of the United States. The Nixon handling of public television and its British programming provides a clear example of the way in which the coercive power of the state, demanding fealty to a specific definition of "our-own-ness" and functionality of "otherness," twisted the process of assimilation into one of absorption and domestication.

Despite the eventual fall of the Nixon administration, the limitations it placed on assimilation and the construction of meaning, particularly as it applied to British imports, were reinforced in the goal stated for public television in the 1967 Carnegie Commission report that led to government sponsorship of its organization. E.B. White's dictum that American noncommercial television should "address itself to an ideal of excellence" embodied the new channel and its audience in an elitist discourse of quality – a discourse similar to that which had defined the British Broadcasting Corporation in Britain from its inception and that had enveloped British television since its first appearance on American shores in the 1950s.[3] The concepts of "public service" and the audience to be served that had defined the BBC, concepts rooted in a stratification of society and a transmissive view of culture, would be adopted by American noncommercial broadcasting during the Nixon years in a further circumscription of the dialogue between cultures represented in the American import of British television.

## It's Time To Get Things Started

If understandings of transnational communications based primarily on quantitative assumptions of economic domination held true, Lew Grade would have wielded considerable power over the United States during the early 1970s, given the numbers of programs he managed to get aired, both on networks and in syndication.[4] Economics, however, as has already been amply demonstrated, is never the entire story in the relationship between television producers, distributors and audiences. Whatever reception he may have enjoyed in sales was more than matched by the lack of reception given Grade

in his commercial products.[5] It was not until 1976 that Grade could claim a bona fide success in the American market, with a music hall variety show starring not a Briton but a group of fuzzy, made-in-America socks with pasted-on, googly eyes: *The Muppet Show*.[6] Created by puppeteer Jim Henson, *The Muppet Show* recalled on one level of intertextuality the earliest years of American television, when the primetime puppet show *Kukla, Fran and Ollie* became a critical and popular success, establishing a standard for children's programming that would rarely be met in the years following.[7] With its theatrical setting, proscenium and all, and its rapid fire sequence of parodic sketches, bad puns, slapstick and the occasional musical number, the Henson show also recalled the taped vaudeville series hosted by Milton Berle, Jackie Gleason and other comics that for many viewers defined the medium from the late 1940s to the late 1950s.[8] On yet another level of intertextuality, however, the popularity of *The Muppet Show* in the late 1970s spoke to the increasing public awareness and popularity of noncommercial American television, where Henson's Muppet troupe had established a major presence as feature performers on the children's educational program *Sesame Street.*

Introduced in fall 1969, *Sesame Street* could not have arrived at a more propitious time for noncommercial broadcasting in the United States. For years a whirling nebula of tiny individual local stations largely (and often barely) funded by schools or libraries with the assistance of audience donations, "educational broadcasting" became during the 1960s an increasingly important issue to groups concerned about the spread of Newton Minow's "wasteland" under the now-dominant commercial networks.[9] The Ford Foundation, the largest private funder for years of educational broadcasting, announced in 1966 that it would pay for the production of an hourlong program -- eventually called *Public Broadcasting Laboratory* (*PBL*) -- for the nation's some 170 educational television stations, as well as a linkup that would create, for the first time, a working interconnection between all those stations.[10] Only a month later, the Carnegie Commission report on the subject, *Public Television: A Program for Action*, was released. While criticized by some for

seeming to subordinate public television to the commercial network model and failing to create a definitive alternative to the networks, the Carnegie Report impressed then-President Lyndon Johnson enough for his administration to sponsor a bill establishing goals and funding for American noncommercial broadcasting.[11] The Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 established the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) as a funding organization to facilitate the creation and production of national programming as well as the support of local operations and programming.[12] The act was designed to give educational television stability and to support an alternative structure to that of the network-affiliate relationship of commercial television; money would come at least initially from the federal government.

Despite disappointments in programming -- the Ford Foundation-sponsored *Public Broadcasting Laboratory* was by most accounts a failure -- as well as operational problems and both internal and external pressures, American public broadcasting gradually took on an institutional form as it pulled its disparate parts together.[13] By November 1969, needs for some form of organized linkage were such that CPB formally incorporated the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), a private organization run by public station managers themselves, designed to connect those stations in something resembling a network.[14] With a distribution system in place, national programming to be distributed had to follow. Educational shows such as *Misterrogers' Neighborhood* had already established themselves during daytime hours in some homes; *Sesame Street*, however, which went on the air the same week that PBS was incorporated, gave educational and public broadcasting both new recognition and new audiences.[15] Primetime programming, however, was another matter. Despite presenting acclaimed productions of theatrical plays and filmed documentaries, educational television had little presence in most American homes after the dinner hour. That too would change, however, with the broadcast, also beginning in fall 1969, of a series from Britain that bore neither the mid-Atlantic trademarks of Lew Grade nor the cheeky "kinkiness" of *The Avengers*. *The Forsyte Saga*, presented both in Britain and America without commercials, was something very different from American primetime

series as well as the British shows that preceded it, attracting an audience to American public broadcasting as important in its way (if perhaps not as sizable) as the children and parents who made *Sesame Street* a daily habit. What sense those viewers might make of the new British text was in turn guided by factors initially having little to do with those guiding the reception of the secret agent series just a few years before.

## *Forsythia* in Bloom

The import of *The Forsyte Saga* to America in 1969 both reinforces the most basic economic arguments about transnational communications and reveals the ideological underpinnings of American noncommercial television.[16] A 26-episode adaptation of the novels of British Nobel Prize-winner John Galsworthy, mounted by the BBC in part as a celebration of the author's centenary in 1967, *The Forsyte Saga* depicted the rise and decline of an upper-middle-class British family during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. By the end of 1968, the serial had become a record-breaking phenomenon not only in Britain, where evening church services had to be rescheduled in order to accommodate parishioners more devoted to the agonies of Soames and Fleur Forsyte than to those of Christ and the prophets, but in dozens of countries around the world.[17] Those nations did not include the United States, where commercial networks would countenance neither a high-toned British historical drama nor a deliberately circumscribed series, or "miniseries," as it would come to be called.[18] And, as the ABC-US contract with ABC-UK for *The Avengers* indicated, commercial networks also had no interest in broadcasting black-and-white programs of any sort during the colorful hours of prime time. One American outlet, however, was interested in the program: National Educational Television (NET), the noncommercial programming service based in New York. With publicity about the show appearing already in trade journals, and with the BBC actively trying to follow its British commercial rivals into the American markets, NET purchased unlimited three-year broadcast rights to the entire series early in 1969 for $140,000 -- at a time when a single

episode of *The Avengers*, a bargain by commercial network standards, cost $110,000.[1]

With cost as the determinant factor in its arrival, and without the need for commercial product differentiation that spurred the deliberate development of narrative images for previous British imports, *The Forsyte Saga* began its broadcast history in the United States with little fanfare. *Variety* followed its path from London to New York at regular intervals, calling the series' arrival "a milestone, marking the first time an American web has purchased a series that was made for the British market and not with an eye on the Yanks."[20] *TV Guide*, however, which had previously introduced British programs to American audiences well in advance of their import, noted only in a brief July 1969 sidebar that the *Saga* was one of two programs that would replace *PBL* that fall.[21] Of all national media sources, only the *New York Times* offered an introduction to the series before its premiere -- one that focused more on the broadcast and export history of the show than it did on the stars, characters or plots thereof.[22] Whatever meanings American audiences might construct from the text of *The Forsyte Saga*, in other words, would not be shaped by pre-broadcast publicity to the degree those offered by commercial British imports had been.

Once NET began its weekly Sunday night broadcasts on October 5, 1969, however, messages circulating in other media about the *Saga* would follow three clearly marked lines toward the American assimilation of a new British program.[23] The first of those paths became evident on the morning of October 6, 1969, when Jack Gould wrote in the *New York Times* that NET would seem to be "the Sunday night home of upper-class soap opera.... If all goes well, as it so clearly did in its appeal in Britain, *The Forsyte Saga* might have a constructive influence on America's daytime deluge of serials."[24] The connections between the British import and the generic norms of American soap opera became a common thread in commentary on the *Saga*. British novelist Anthony Burgess, writing for the *New York Times Magazine*, called the program "...a great television triumph, since the Galsworthian conception has the near-coarseness, the near-melodramatic simplicity of superior soap opera."[25] American novelist James Michener, in a *TV Guide*

feature article, called the serial "soap opera -- at its glowing best."[26]

Significant in those comments is not just the genre identification each seeks to create for the show but the stated belief that *The Forsyte Saga* is better than contemporary examples of American soap opera. The notion of "British as better" will shortly be explored in greater depth; the "superiority" granted *The Forsyte Saga* in early commentary on the series, however, is as much the result of an unstated revulsion for an American cultural form traditionally dismissed as "women's fiction" as it is the show's national origin.[27] For males not merely steeped in the aesthetic traditions of high art but ascribing to themselves the professions of "author" and "critic," addressing a genre directed toward a female audience -- and one perceived as lacking in those aesthetic traditions -- engaged in the rhythms of domestic labor meant entering something of an intellectual Badlands.[28] Certainly the "superiority" of the British show had little to do with its production values. *The Forsyte Saga* visually employed the same techniques and rhetoric of its American cousins: Restricted camera movement; a large number of two-character scenes involving repeated use of close-ups; an almost exclusive reliance on interiors; careful attention to detail in props defining class status and/or plot action.[29] The first episode, in fact, included production accidents similar to those for which critics regularly mocked daytime serial drama in America.[30]

While those daytime dramas, their critics argued, seemed only to serve the fantasies of everyday housewives -- fantasies borne out of an ideology of domestic containment -- *The Forsyte Saga* supplemented the romance-centered storylines of American soap operas with Galsworthy's "realistic" forays into the male-defined worlds of business and politics.[31] While the form represented by the *Saga*, with what Robert Allen calls its "paradigmatic" structure removing viewers from linear cause-effect plots and placing them in a complex system of corresponding, differing and ever-changing relationships, was still that enjoyed daily by large groups of women, male viewers had potential referents in the text of the *Saga* not evidently present in daytime soap operas.[32] As a result, *The Forsyte*

*Saga* acquired a cultural significance, coded as "literacy," to its male critics that they would transmit to their readers in turn. As Michener, in the clearest example of the patriarchal upscaling of the *Saga*, described the program: "[I]n *The Forsyte Saga* the characters are differentiated, well-rounded and with universal application; the dialogue is literate; the problems dealt with are substantial; and over all there is high seriousness" (Michener 9).

The "literate" quality that Michener cites also constitutes the second line shaping the American construction of the *Saga*. The fact that the serial was based on fiction written by a British author was a prominent feature of all the commentary on its television adaptation; indeed, the series was enhanced, in the opinions of critics and reviewers, by the way it improved on the original work. Burgess presents Galsworthy as one of a group of English bourgeois writers "who liked society at least as well as they liked literature"; the "Galsworthian conception" of life portrayed in the nine novels of the *Saga*, he continued, "has been waiting all these years to slide into its true medium -- the leisurely, middlebrow television serial" (Burgess 64). Margot Hentoff, writing in *Vogue*, echoed Burgess' sentiments: "The *Forsyte* novels are good bad fiction at its best -- admirably suited to the reduction of television since there is little complexity to be lost.... In fact, the shrinking effect makes Galsworthy seem far leaner and more witty than he was."[33] Even Michener, allowing that "almost every good line in the series comes from Galsworthy, shortened sometimes but always with his stamp," goes on to call several of the novels "appallingly bad.... The brilliance of the series does not stem from the books" (Michener 6).

The conflation of the television version of *The Forsyte Saga* conducted in the American press at the expense of Galsworthy's reputation circumscribed meaning in two ways. First, it created for a television text a single authorial figure borne out of literature, whose intents and judgments, as both Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault argue, become the "final signified" from which viewers/readers can construct meaning.[34] Indeed, the decisions to employ novelists Burgess and Michener as appropriate authors/authorities in performing public exegeses of the *Saga* serve to illustrate directly the limiting functions of

the author in the process of creating meaning. Second, the authorial qualities Burgess, Michener and Hentoff created to direct the reading of the television *Forsyte Saga* were such that the possibilities for deriving meaning outside his intent were virtually negligible, regardless of the contestable nature of the term "author." All three critics comment on the ability of Galsworthy and "his" series to convey external "reality," as opposed to what Burgess calls "inner dreams" (Burgess 57). Michener in particular praises the show's "real places," "real characters," "real people," and sets and costumes that "lend authenticity" (Michener 6). The emphasis on the literary realism of the novels and the series speaks directly to Barthes' concept of the "readerly text," developed for televisual studies by John Fiske. The "readerly text," Fiske writes, "is one that approximates...a 'classic realist text,' that is, one which 'reads' easily, does not foreground its own nature as discourse, and appears to promote a singular meaning which is not that of the text, but of the real."[35] Accessible to many, with meaning confined to what the author presents as "real," Fiske's "readerly text" seems to be well exemplified by a program that Margot Hentoff would describe as "...the closest thing we have had to a 'good read' on television" (Hentoff 78).

Having first placed *The Forsyte Saga* into a familiar television genre and then addressing the text itself through the presence and qualities of its literary author, critics finally addressed its "singular meaning" in 1969 America as the third part of their effort to guide the program's assimilation. There was again unanimity in the belief that the *Saga* offered American audiences a somewhat wistful look at a time in which stability and order held sway in a society that could no longer exist. Hentoff, arguing as Michener and Jack Gould had, used an appropriate metaphor for her *Vogue* platform: "In our own time, we have more or less stopped believing in the continuity of anything.... As behavior becomes more generally erratic, our own erratic actions provoke fewer ripples on our society. What does one more rip mean to a tattered fabric? But in *The Forsyte Saga* rips matter" (Hentoff 78). In short, the critical view of the meaning of *The Forsyte Saga* was that ascribed later by John Caughie to all the "costume dramas of a simpler class hierarchy" exported by

Britain to the United States: "a mild nostalgia for a lost community."[36]

Though presenting a remarkably consistent front in shaping an American construction of *The Forsyte Saga*, the arguments offered by Hentoff, Burgess, Gould and Michener were followed only to a limited degree by the serial's viewers. One viewer cited in a *New Yorker* piece on the series' popularity offered gratitude for its bringing back "many happy hours of my youth," while a South Dakota woman spoke of how she used the series as a means of getting together with friends: "I introduced them to the Forsytes with tea-and-sherry parties, and they've shared my enthusiasm ever since," she told her local educational station.[37] Similarly, a Minnesota professor interviewed by Michener scheduled *Saga* gatherings with other regular watchers in his town. A family Michener talked to watched the show together, afterwards "discussing the Forsytes as if we knew them" (Michener 4). Only one viewer of those cited echoed the "meaning" voiced by critics, in sending a contribution to New York's Channel 13 with the note: "The Forsyte Saga' presentation makes [the enclosed check] imperative. What a wonderful thing to do for the country, especially at this unsettling time" (*New Yorker* 16). This is not to suggest that critics necessarily erred in their assessment of *The Forsyte Saga*. Though audiences for the *Saga* were smaller, they were also similar to those for the spy shows earlier in the decade in terms of their educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. They did differ, though, in one regard: age.[38] "The Forsyte phenomenon," as *The New Yorker* put it, "may be that rarest of twentieth-century phenomena, an *over*-thirty cult" (*New Yorker* 16). These were people who knew the time, if not the place, of the Forsytes and could perhaps look back on it with "mild nostalgia for a lost community."

What comes clear in the meanings circulated by the viewers of the *Saga* themselves, however, is not so much a nostalgia for a lost community as a building of a new community around the experiences of a family from Victorian England. The "Forsyte phenomenon" represents in essence what James Carey defines as the ritual paradigm of communication, the archetypal case of which is "the sacred ceremony that draws persons

together in fellowship and commonality" (Carey 18). (Given the British experience of *The Forsyte Saga* as sacred ceremony, it seems hardly a coincidence that NET chose to broadcast the show in America on Sunday nights.) Carey's ritual paradigm counters what he calls the transmission paradigm, which views communication as the imparting of information over space for the purpose of control. The development of community out of the ceremony of viewing *The Forsyte Saga*, and its presentation by American media as something different and vaguely threatening (an "over-thirty *cult*"), then, not only reveals the lost value of community but begins the dis-covering of the processes and products of communication in contemporary American life, running counter as it does to the messages transmitted by the show's critics about the messages they found transmitted in the show.[39] As such, it also serves as another moment in which Radway's "ideological seam" shows, a moment in which the shock of something new from a different place reveals the operations of ideology in American television. Taking meanings derived in this recouping of community from *The Forsyte Saga* in America as being liberatory in their own right would be a mistake: The ideological centrality of family in the "text of *Forsyte*" was little different from its centrality in American soap operas -- or in the "containing" sitcoms and cop shows of commercial prime time.[40] The differences evident in the time and place of the *Saga*, however, along with the formal qualities of serial drama and the fact that both were being distributed by a "service" not defined by commercial capitalism, made for another moment in which dialogue between British television and American audiences -- and the resultant dialogues among those audiences -- laid bare the processes that endeavored to control that discussion. It would only be a moment, however, as the meanings of British television in America were about to be redefined by utterances that made the industrial workings of hegemony seem as benign as a quiet Cotswold brook lapping its vernal shore.

## Agnewsticism

On Thursday, November 13, 1969, six weeks into *The Forsyte Saga*, all three commercial networks pre-empted their regular 7 p.m. programming for a speech from Des Moines, Iowa, by Vice-President Spiro Agnew. Agnew had attracted an increasing amount of attention in the previous few weeks for a series of fiery speeches in which he defended President Richard Nixon's conduct of the Vietnam War against a growing body of "pushy youngsters," "middle-aged malcontents" and "self-proclaimed saviors." His presentation that night, drafted by presidential speechwriter Patrick Buchanan and distributed to the networks early in the day, promised to focus his wrath on a new and even more visible target: the networks themselves.[41] Taking as his point of departure commentary by network newsmen following Nixon's November 3 televised address on Vietnam, Agnew lashed into the "instant analysis and querulous criticism" offered by "a small band of network commentators and self-appointed analysts" who controlled power that could not be measured "by the traditional democratic standards." Shaped by the "parochialism" and "provincialism" of New York and Washington and drawing their political and social views from the same sources, this "tiny, enclosed fraternity of men elected by no one" used their privilege to distort events and misrepresent the views of Americans.[42]

In retrospect, much of Agnew's speech went so far right it came out left. There was little in his thesis about the "tiny, enclosed fraternity" of newsmen that would have been out of place in C. Wright Mills' *The Power Elite*; indeed, as support for his argument he cited the views of Federal Communications Commissioner Nicholas Johnson, regarded by many as among the most vocal of the "radical liberals" Agnew was otherwise so fond of excoriating.[43] And Agnew's presentation of the nightly news as a socially constructed text representing the privileged class backgrounds and interests of its creators seemed to owe just a little to Karl Marx, if not Roland Barthes. Agnew, however, righted himself (in both senses of the term) when he asked "the people" to speak out against the suppression imposed by a "monopoly sanctioned and licensed by Government":

> I'm not asking for Government censorship or any other kind of censorship. I'm asking whether a form of censorship already exists when the news that 40 million Americans receive each night is determined by a handful of men responsible only to their corporate employers and is filtered through a handful of commentators who admit to their own set of biases (Porter 259).

Having turned the networks themselves into those who would suppress free speech, Agnew continued to eschew the role of "Government" in redressing the anti-democratic impulses of the broadcast cabal. It was up to "the people" to reform television news through protest -- and "the people" would not have to worry about constitutional boundaries, as the networks' "virtual monopoly of a whole medium of communication" meant that they did not qualify for First Amendment rights afforded to "the great newspapers of America" (Porter 259).

Agnew's rhetorical casting of television newscasters as a disreputable un-American power elite and his brandishing of the iron fist of governmental control cloaked in the velvet glove of populism was quickly followed by White House leaks that administration officials were calling individual stations to check on editorial responses to Nixon speeches and policies and were compiling statistical surveys to quantify the bias of the "little group of men."[44] The attention to local stations, given further visibility by the administration's assertion that those stations' licensure would be assured with closer care over the network news programming they chose to run, became another front in the government's public attacks on the commercial networks.[45] And the attacks worked: Coverage of antiwar demonstrations shifted to make them appear more threatening; commentaries offered after presidential speeches became shorter and more perfunctory.[46] FCC Commissioner Nicholas Johnson, previously summoned by Agnew as an ally, accused "big television" of not just buckling under to but actively working with the Nixon administration to stifle dissent. Even CBS news anchor Walter Cronkite complained that pressure brought by individual affiliates, "the local representatives of the Silent Majority," was beginning to shape and define news coverage.[47]

Because of the power that they genuinely did control, however, through their

presentation (in program and advertising structures) and representation (in the shows themselves) of the consumer capitalism that defined American political, social and cultural life, the commercial networks were able to resist the most coercive efforts of the Nixon administration. By mid-1971, CBS was able to fend off governmental efforts to discredit its documentary critical of the military's manipulation of public relations, *The Selling of the Pentagon.*[48] The mechanisms of coercion, as Gitlin would put it, had shifted back to the mechanisms of hegemony: The networks would allow for reasoned dissent but would at the same time establish the accepted limits of that criticism.[49] Such would not be the case, though, with the fledgling noncommercial television system.

## Public Enemy

The difficulties noncommercial broadcasting would come to face with the Nixon administration, and the role of British television in those difficulties, were set with the passage of the federal legislation that first began to organize what would soon be called "public television." The Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, for all it did in creating the institution of public television, did not create a source of funding outside the federal government itself.[50] In addition, the board created by the act to govern CPB consisted of 15 presidential appointees, insuring that public broadcasting would represent the interests of the political party with the power of appointment. As a guard against already-evident political pressure, Congress mandated that the corporation maintain "objectivity and balance in all programs or series of programs of a controversial nature," in essence requiring both CPB and local stations to maintain stricter standards than were required of any other broadcast or print media while leaving "controversial nature" an arbitrary and contestable term.[51] Though enacted to "insulate" public broadcasting from external controls, the Congressional provisions did far more to isolate it, making it all the more vulnerable to the political whims of the moment.

The arguments within and without public broadcasting as to the roles and limits

assigned it lasted through the election of 1968, when its patron, Lyndon Johnson, was replaced in office by Richard Nixon, a man with a longstanding distrust of media, particularly media based on the East Coast.[52] With other matters preoccupying it, however, the Nixon administration would not become concerned with what were little more than splotches of gruel on the broad tablecloth of American broadcasting until November 4, 1969, when, two days after Episode 5 of *The Forsyte Saga* and nine days before the Agnew speech, CPB formally incorporated PBS. The new "service," as previouly noted, represented the desire of local station managers to work together in determining the programming they wanted, while reducing the power of New York's NET, whose productions they often criticized as too "controversial," as the distributor of programs to their stations.[53] Designed, in short, as another layer of "insulation" to protect local public broadcasters from political controversy and pressure, PBS instead immediately brought the entirety of public television under political scrutiny, as it both assumed a centralized role similar to that of the commercial networks and took on the duty of defining what was and was not "controversial."[54] This scrutiny came just when the Nixon administration made clear its intent concerning the "controversial" news programming of the commercial networks, and just when public television was proving, through the daytime broadcast of *Sesame Street* and the Sunday evening showing of *The Forsyte Saga*, that it could attract a national audience of both size and status.

By the end of 1969, noncommercial broadcasting was beginning to feel the effects of the coercive Nixon-Agnew hand, as programs and program segments were apparently added and dropped from PBS programs depending upon how they addressed governmental concerns.[55] The strict constructionism evidently employed by CPB and PBS with the terms "objectivity" and "balance" in order to appease the Nixon administration was observed with some jaundice in the press: *Variety* regularly referred to the two entities as "the Corporation for Patsy Broadcasting" and "the Public Blushing Service," while *Newsweek* would come to call PBS "the Nixon network."[56] Though these reports were repetitive and at times

hyperbolic in their criticism of the new public television organizations, they were also accurate in their depiction of the fear of intimidation by the Nixon administration -- a fear particularly justifiable in that the Nixon administration still controlled public funding of CPB.[57] Though the administration seemed content to use the carrot of funding and the stick of "objectivity and balance," along with the internecine squabbling they provoked, as benign ways to keep public broadcasting at bay, two events in the late summer of 1971 served to make its hostility toward public television open and direct. First, CPB and PBS created the Washington-based National Public Affairs Center for Television (NPACT), an organization devoted to long-term comprehensive coverage of national politics: Something like the commercial network news bureaus, with greater "objectivity and balance." The consternation within the Nixon administration over the creation of such a bureau, with its potential for even more "instant analysis and querulous criticism," quickly turned to rage when Nixon ur-enemies Sander Vanocur and Robert MacNeil were named as NPACT anchors.[58] The political trouble for public broadcasting deepened further when NET's omnibus program *The Great American Dream Machine* presented a segment that purported to show undercover FBI agents provoking student groups into criminal acts of violence. PBS ordered the segment to be pulled from the show; NET in defiant response showed the piece in its entirety the following week with a panel discussion about its merits and about the censorial power of the "network."[59] The charges made in the segment, though in the end discredited, were humiliating enough to make the administration take public action.[60]

One week after the NET brouhaha, on October 20, 1971, Clay Whitehead, the director of the Office of Telecommunication Policy, addressed the annual gathering of public and educational broadcasters in Miami Beach.[61] He suggested to those in attendance that they were no longer local broadcasters but "affiliates of a centralized, national network" that was attempting to become the equal of its commercial kin" (Porter 104). CPB and PBS, he said, had betrayed their original function of breaking the NET "monopoly" of production and distribution and building "an effective counterforce to give appropriate

weight to local and regional views."[62] Their increasingly centralized organization, he continued, "...makes you visible politically and those who are prone to see ghosts can raise the specter of governmental pressure" (*Broadcasting*, Oct. 25, 1971, 16). Those ghosts, however, took on frightening clarity with his concluding comment: "Do any of you honestly know whether public broadcasting...can ever fulfill the promise envisioned for it or conform to the policy set for it? If it can't then permanent financing will always be somewhere off in the distant future" (Stone 105-106).[63]

Whitehead's words would be supported within the year by the administration's veto of the first congressional effort to establish a long-range funding plan. Though neither long-term -- it provided for only two years instead of the minimum three desired by public broadcasting -- nor free from political concerns, as funding was still a Congressional appropriation, the bill, which called for up to $155 million for fiscal 1972 and 1973, gave the new system some breathing room. It also incorporated some of the administration's most desired changes for public television: a 30 percent allotment to local stations, a salary limit for PBS employees, and a moratorium on political polling during campaigns.[64] Nixon nonetheless vetoed the bill, passed with wide margins in both houses of Congress, on June 30, 1972. After deciding not to override the veto, Congress approved a one-year, $45 million appropriation following an administration proposal placing most of the new funds into facilities and forbidding their use for production of any new national programs.[65]

The immediate effect of the Nixon administration's efforts to control both the form and content of public broadcasting was dramatic, with the resignations of the top three CPB officials submitted shortly after the veto and the majority of the CPB board becoming for the first time Republican. The long-term effect developed much less according to its design, however. Instead of uniting against a centralized network and funding agency, local broadcasters told the government that they both needed and supported PBS and CPB, in large part because the money denied in the Nixon veto would have provided the greatest and most immediate assistance to local stations.[66] Infighting between PBS and NET also

decreased as the result of a now-visible common enemy: The administration itself, effectively outed when Patrick Buchanan went on ABC's *Dick Cavett Show* early in 1973 and made his boss' dislike and distrust of public television a matter of public record.[67] The "public" to be served by the network began to respond as well, with local viewer subscriptions rising to record levels by spring 1973 and increasing even more as a result of its broadcast that summer of the Senate Watergate hearings.[68]

On one level, then, the Nixon administration's efforts to force public television into line with its political program failed, as its handling of the matter eventually led to resistance that could neither be ignored nor absorbed among those it had hoped most to win over: local broadcasters and viewers.[69] That resistance was recognized in Congress' approval in spring 1973 of a Republican-sponsored bill providing two years of funding totalling $175 million for public broadcasting; it was, following the movie catch phrase of the day, an offer that Nixon could not refuse.[70] On another level, however, the coercion of public broadcasting by the Nixon administration worked in ways that those responsible might not have imagined. In the first case, the mandate against centralization and in favor of localism was essentially carried out with the approval of the 1973 bill, which made PBS national programming dependent upon local stations' desire to pay for its production.[71] More significantly, the purpose of the rhetoric and funding threats aimed at public television constituted coercion in a special sense, as it never envisioned the appropriation of the system as a "propaganda machine" for President Nixon and his administration.[72] Rather, it sought to keep the negative use of the system to a minimum, to discourage the commissive sin of "querulous criticism" by rewarding the omissive sin of quietude. As such, it engaged in a public and political circumscription of meaning, keeping the boundaries of polyvalence, to return to Condit's term, as narrow as possible insofar as they might be seen with public television. And one of the key elements of that process became the small but significant success of an imported British series supposedly addressed to the contemporary lack of belief "in the continuity of anything," a series supposedly designed to

satisfy "a mild nostalgia for a lost community," a series supposedly celebrating bourgeois values of stability and order in a time long ago and a country far away. With *The Forsyte Saga* , public television and its "cultural programming" began to move away from the threat of politically sensitive contemporary dramas, to say nothing of public affairs programming, and closer to the Nixon administration's vision for it, a vision best represented in Nixon's 1971 encomium to the British Broadcasting Corporation on its 50th anniversary:

> As one of the world's oldest and most respected broadcasters both at home and abroad, the British Broadcasting Corporation has set an inspiring example of objective and dispassionate news reporting. It has earned the widest possible reputation for credibility and integrity. On its fiftieth anniversary, the citizens of the United States join with countless other men and women in recognition of of its public service. On their behalf, borrowing from the words of William Shakespeare, I want to say that BBC has in its work over the past half-century mirrored the times in which we live, and that all the world has truly been its stage.[73]

With the words of William Shakespeare barely dry on the page, Richard Nixon would veto longterm funding of American public broadcasting two days later.[74] That he would in so doing invoke the name of the best-known representative of British culture to define the desired qualities of American public television was no mere rhetorical flourish.

## Quality Time

> Greek art, again, Greek beauty, have their root in the same impulse to see things as they really are, inasmuch as Greek art and beauty rest on fidelity to nature -- the *best* nature -- and on a delicate discrimination of what this best nature is.
>
> --Matthew Arnold[75]

In her discussion of the status held by the MTM studio in American television during the 1970s and 1980s, Jane Feuer argues that MTM's image was one defined by its commitment to "quality TV," an ideological term with many facets and many possible readings. Suggesting a relationship with a "quality" audience -- one of upwardly mobile, professional, urban and primarily white viewers -- as well as the mass audience needed to win the ratings desired by both sponsor and network, quality TV on one level presents what she calls "a form of television...seen as more literate, more stylistically complex and

more psychologically 'deep' than ordinary TV fare." On another, she continues, MTM programs (*The Mary Tyler Moore Show, Lou Grant, Hill Street Blues,* etc.) contain a high degree of "self-reflexivity," an awareness of themselves as part of a television cosmos, that allows them to deconstruct the conventions of television to which they apparently adhere.[76]

Feuer's definition of quality TV in terms of a relationship between text and audience is highly relevant to the present discussion, and will become even more so with the addition of another economic vector, to be discussed in the following chapter, guiding the American assimilation of British programming. The notion of quality TV as applied to the text itself, however, long predates the arrival of MTM shows or the arrival of public television as envisioned by E.B. White and has a good deal more to do with its place of origin than any self-reflexive qualities it might offer. Indeed, the concept of a quality cultural artifact defined in America as one coming from Britain long predates the arrival of television, much less MTM or PBS. As Matthew Arnold would summon the Hellenic graces to bring "sweetness and light" to industrial 19th-century British culture, so Americans had turned to their linguistic forebearers in England to lift them up from the horrific world around them from the time of the Puritans to the moment of Nixon's BBC homage. The assumed superiority of British literary and cultural texts to those produced in the United States had been a contrary element of American culture since Walt Whitman defined it in an early form of the cultural imperialism argument:

> That huge English flow, so sweet, so undeniable, has done incalculable good here... Yet the price The States have had to lie under for the same has not been a small price. Payment prevails; a nation can never take the issues of the needs of other nations for nothing. America, grandest of lands... collapses quick as lightning at the repeated, admonishing, stern words, Where are any mental expressions from you, beyond what you have copied or stolen?[77]

Those same admonishing words would come to American television well before the advent of the Forsytes. As early as 1952, a British presence on American commercial television was being classified as both different and superior to that which surrounded it by messages circulating in other media. The "text" under discussion was that of Alistair

Cooke, journalist and nascent television star, first as political reporter and then as host of *Omnibus*, the "elevating" magazine show later dismissed by Dwight Macdonald as among the sorriest examples of American "middlebrow" culture.[78] Cooke, whose BBC broadcasts on America during World War II had earned him attention and praise on both sides of the Atlantic, had been an American citizen for more than a decade by the time he was asked to appear on *Omnibus*. Nonetheless, the narrative image created for "the text of Cooke" in his introduction to an American television audience foregrounded his Britishness in a discourse of difference that was both verbal and visual. A 1952 *Life* photo profile describes Cooke as "a witty, urbane ex-Englishman" whose "insight into the American scene has been so penetrating that he was recently given the Peabody Award." In the accompanying photos, Cooke is shown wearing a dapper Palm Beach suit looking at gravestones "for an essay on colonial history" and talking to a Manhattan newspaper stand proprietor to learn "the man-in-the-street view." The final, full-page photograph shows Cooke lounging on a raft in the ocean off his Long Island home reading the morning paper, an image so far removed from "the man in the street" that Cooke himself resorts to American colloquialisms in the caption: "What a horselaugh this will give the boys in the National Press Club."[79] Similarly, a 1953 *Newsweek* profile begins with an account of his BBC career and his accent, "which Britons consider American and Americans British." Not until the ninth and final paragraph of the story does it mention Cooke's decade-long American citizenship. Like the *Life* profile, *Newsweek* strives to present Cooke as an elegant paragon of Popeian wit, noting his "carefully dressed" style on *Omnibus* and quoting Robert Saudek, director of the Ford Foundation Television-Radio Workshop, as saying Cooke "has the intelligence, the urbanity and the curiosity that we want the show to have."[80]

The construction of this "text of Alistair Cooke" serves as another clear example of the processes of intertextuality, following Bennett and Woollacott's description of the same with Bond: "[a text] produced in the constantly changing relations between a wide range of texts brought into association with one another via the functioning of Bond as the

signifier[s] they have jointly constructed" (Bennett and Woollacott 45). The magazine articles on Cooke produce those figures out of specific historical and cultural signifiers -- Cooke's Cambridge and Ivy League education, his journalistic service in World War II -- placed within a specific historical and cultural context: the development of American commercial television. Among those texts brought into association with each other in the case of Cooke, however, are ones that point out and exaggerate their differences from American norms: physical appearance, verbal facility, and, most importantly, British origin. When considered with the other "texts" discussed, the construction of Cooke as an Englishman abroad becomes not simply different from those norms -- it becomes superior. Cooke is gifted with "wit," "urbanity" and "insight" that the "man-in-the-street" cannot possibly possess; he is the very model of a modern intellectual.

This configuration of "British-as-better" in terms of television would continue to be developed as one of the vectors through which British television would come to be a part of the American video landscape by another source new to the industry in 1952-53. Of seminal importance in introducing and setting the narrative image of the British secret agent imports in the 1960s, the magazine *TV Guide* in its formative years developed what Glenn Altschuler and David Grossvogel call "a vision of powerful and discerning viewers practicing dialsmanship" (Altschuler and Grossvogel 27). American television, *TV Guide* founder and publisher Walter Annenberg and editor Merrill Panitt believed, offered a variety of choices; viewers from this democratic vista had the ability to select the very best of what was available. Toward that end, however, their magazine championed the networks' "cultural" programming: plays, opera, concerts, as well as documentaries and educational programming -- and, of course, *Omnibus* -- often at the expense of the 1950s cultural critics who claimed that television was debasing and threatening. When viewers failed to employ "dialsmanship" in ignoring many of television's cultural offerings, *TV Guide* argued that time should be set aside on Sunday afternoons, so those offerings might still be available outside the hurly-burly of the competition for ratings.[81]

The magazine's attitude during its first decade toward British television per se was ambivalent. Annenberg and Panitt were highly suspicious of the "state-run" nature of the BBC, which denied the democratic potential of dialsmanship in its structure and its programming. A 1962 editorial on the Pilkington Report, an independent British study that attacked the vapid (and "American") programming of the British commercial network and argued for the establishment of a second BBC television outlet, concluded with a succinct argument for the development of an American system that offered more than the narrowly focused "uplift" that defined BBC programs:

> How can [American broadcasters], under our system of free enterprise, live up to their responsibilities to us: to give us what the majority of us want and still give us what we deserve, which is the very best in programs of all types. Not pure entertainment, not all pure uplift, but an intelligent, carefully planned balance that will brighten our lives and nourish our minds.[82]

Despite its concern over the BBC model of television, *TV Guide* immediately praised the products of the British commercial system when they first appeared in America in 1955.[83] Imported as part of CBS' effort to present a "children's hour" between 7:30 and 8 p.m. each weeknight, *The Adventures of Robin Hood,* with its stories of heroes, heroines and villains familiar to vast numbers of Americans, was a cheap buy for the American network and a needed source of income for its British exporter.[84] In *TV Guide*, *Robin Hood* came off as a blessing compared to standard kid's fare: "*Robin Hood*, as produced in England, could very well be the answer to a mother's prayer about Westerns, as produced in Hollywood. Appealing to both children and adults, this CBS show...comes as a welcome relief from the 'they-went-thataway' school of 'children's hour' programming." Even the costumes and castles of the import, the magazine concluded, "are intriguing to an audience sated with sagebrush."[85] Similarly, when NBC imported *The Adventures of Sir Lancelot* the following year, *TV Guide* praised it as a "fine combination of charm, swashbuckle and literacy." As with *Robin Hood*, the journal contextualized the British import by noting that "the stories are not very different from our own Western yarns -- good triumphs over evil."

In an almost comical version of a British-as-better commentary, however, it also praised the locution of the cast: "[I]t is such a relief to hear proper English properly spoken."[86]

Already by 1956, a discourse in which television programs "produced in England" were better than "standard fare...produced in Hollywood" was being conducted in the pages of the single national publication devoted to American television. That discourse would develop throughout the 1960s, as previously noted, through the features on popular British programming and profiles of British stars by Robert Musel, as well as through the reviews of Cleveland Amory, who seemed never to meet a British accent he didn't think was worthy of an Emmy.[87] The editorial stance of *TV Guide*, as reflected in its "As We See It" column, continued the pattern, with the skepticism of the 1950s and early '60s replaced by the middle of the decade with a respect for the secret agent imports, whose "invasion" was seen cheekily as comeuppance for the many and varied inferior American programs exported to Britain.[88] Even the early querulous criticism of the BBC was gone by the end of the 1960s: In the August 9, 1969 issue -- two months before the introduction of the Forsytes to their American audience, three months before the incorporation of PBS -- *TV Guide* praised British television in its entirety for everything from picture quality to performance. "[W]e should envy the British their prime time program balance," the editorial concluded. "It's what we need more than anything else."[89] Its reception of *The Forsyte Saga*, despite the lack of attention before the program's arrival, was equally glowing. In addition to the Michener feature, the magazine also profiled Susan Hampshire, Cleveland Amory offered typically hyperbolic praise, and an "As We See It" editorial, following the magazine's traditional support of democratic dialsmanship, suggested that the *Saga*'s "mini-series" format brought to America would offer viewers "fresher programs and, of course, more of a choice."[90] If British was better to *TV Guide*, then *The Forsyte Saga* was evidently "the *best* nature" of American viewing choices.

**To Serve Mankind**

However much the notion of the superiority of British television may have been circulated intertextually in other media, its most potent and important source culturally and politically once British programs found an American home in public television was their production source: the British Broadcasting Corporation. Granted its formal charter on January 1, 1927, the BBC was organized as a public corporation, supported financially by license fees on receivers instead of private commercial interests, and, as the recipient of a Royal Charter, operated outside of governmental influence by a board of governors acting as "trustees of the public interest in broadcasting."[91] Toward that end, the board worked to ensure the "great value" of broadcasting as a means of "disseminating information, education and entertainment" that maintained high standards of quality in content and that was both balanced and impartial in its news coverage.[92] While the concept of "public interest" was left as deliberately open-ended as it was when the Communications Act of 1934 made "public interest" the basis of station licensure in the United States, the BBC's first Director-General John Reith had a specific and Arnoldian definition of the term he intended to follow:

> So the responsibility as at the outset conceived, and despite all discouragements pursued, was to carry into the greatest number of homes everything that was best in every department of human knowledge, endeavour and achievement; and to avoid whatever was or might be hurtful (Paulu 154).

Reith believed that broadcasting solely for the purpose of entertainment was "an insult to the character and the intelligence of the people." Instead, the BBC would present "the best" of music, of drama, of debate and conversation, all of which would further the goal of education, which he defined as "a systematic and sustained endeavour to re-create, to build up knowledge, experience and character." The educated, he believed, formed an "elect" that broadcasting could greatly increase; toward that end, he vowed that "vulgarity" had no part in the mission of the BBC: "It is occasionally indicated to us that we are apparently setting out to give the public what we think they need -- and not what they want, but few know

what they want and very few what they need." Broadcasting, in the end, by serving the public became itself "a servant of culture."[93]

Though Reith's mandate for the public service the BBC would perform was modified greatly by the demands placed on it during World War II and the immediate postwar years, the core of his definition -- "to carry into the greatest number of homes everything that was best in every department of human knowledge, endeavour and achievement" -- would quickly and easily become the core of the American definition of public television.[94] Indeed, E.B. White's invocation to the Carnegie Commission, however "vigorously diverse" it might seem, reflected in its call for "excellence," its summoning of the "literary essay," and its nominal qualifications what "noncommercial television" should present -- not vaudeville (the Berle or Gleason of commercial television) but "Minsky's" -- the Arnoldian elitism that Reith's BBC cultivated in Britain.[95]

The name selected for the new system also followed a Reithian philosophy: It was not the Public Broadcasting *System* but the Public Broadcasting *Service*. Though chosen to suggest the relationship of the new noncommercial broadcasting interconnection to its local owner-operators and to avoid the already-evident political concerns roused by the terms "network" and "system," the "S" in PBS also spoke to the organization's relationship to its viewing audience, which John Macy, the first president of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, would later define as "to create and deliver a message for the public good."[96] As C.T. Dornan notes in his critical commentary on the public service ideal of the BBC, the rhetoric of the terms "public service" and "public good" masks the ideology and power structure behind noncommercial broadcasting, one that necessarily stratifies the "public" and "serves" the "good" of only those wielding power.[97] Macy's words unmask the similar function of CPB and PBS, regardless of the coercion of the Nixon administration, in their early years: The organizations would indeed act as "servants of culture," -- "culture," however, not as defined by a sharing of meaning but rather by the transmission of messages to "educate, enlighten and entertain."[98] Culture came down from on high to

elevate the low -- to achieve the public good, the public had to become better.[99]

Self-improvement -- and with it societal improvement -- indeed was the goal of at least primary education per se, and the specific function, carried out with remarkable success, of PBS programs such as *Misterrogers' Neighborhood* and *Sesame Street.* Whether it was the purpose of enlightenment or entertainment -- a term that, following Victor Turner, literally means "the holding between" and implies a levelling of social strata -- was another question, however.[100] That question would be answered by another apt phrase of John Macy's: "Hail to the BBC" (Macy 56). Though intended as a salute to British imports beginning with *The Forsyte Saga*, Macy's "hail" also takes on an Alterhusserian dimension, articulating the ideology of broadcasting and culture represented in the "public service" character of those BBC shows to the still vague and unformed purposes of a "public broadcasting service" in America.[101] That articulation also furthered the shift in signification of "British television" away from the ideological and cultural concerns of the Kennedy years that had shaped the reception of *Secret Agent* and *The Avengers* toward those represented by Nixon, Agnew and Buchanan. Already denoted as "better" than "standard Hollywood fare" in the discourse of the popular press, American public television programs, beginning with the *Saga*, were also supposed to make their audiences better, to develop an "elect" through what Bourdieu calls the "generalizing tendency" to link the canonic works learned in school (through transmission) to other related forms: The television series was, as its commentators repeatedly noted without irony, John Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga.*[102]

What was also clear in this generalization, however, was that the audience of the *Saga* -- the "quality" audience defined by Jane Feuer -- possessed educational and cultural capital that placed them, from the first episode, on a social stratum above many of the show's potential viewers, a fact visible in the location of intertextual messages about the show and about the network.[103] In addition to being made better by public television, these viewers were "better" to begin with. The meanings to be constructed by American

audiences from the new BBC imports were, then, inflected not only by political coercion and a philosophy of "public service" that played into that coercion by mandating the reduction of a field of dialogic utterances into a line of transmissive dicta, but by an ideological configuring inherent in those imports themselves of those doing the constructing: the "public" to be "served."

As was the case with "service" in Public Broadcasting Service, the term "public" received a great deal of scrutiny from the first discussions of a Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The Carnegie Commission report leading to the foundation of CPB, recognizing that noncommercial television in the United States had never and could never hope to equal the power of the commercial networks in drawing a mass audience, established that the goal of public television should be to "serve differentiated audiences" -- in other words, to program for special segments of the "public."[104] While the question of whether a specialized audience necessarily meant -- or should mean -- a small audience would be argued for years to come, the meaning shared within the American public television community was that public broadcasting should maintain a goal of creating and delivering messages for the public good of some of the people some of the time.[105] That concept of its relationship with viewers was indeed different from the one Ien Ang refers to as the "audience-as-market" paradigm defining commercial broadcasting, based as it is on profitmaking and the need to attract as many potential consumers to the product as possible.[106] Public television in America instead seemed in its inception to be devoted to the ideals of "cultural responsibility and social accountability" that Ang uses to define the "audience-as-public" paradigm -- and that defined the BBC model of public broadcasting with which it became articulated.[107]

As Patricia Aufderheide and William Hoynes suggest, however, an "audience" does not a "public" make. A public, they argue, comprises individual citizens organizing and actively engaging in social dialogue to democratically determine their present needs and future aims; culture (again following Bakhtin, Carey and Geertz) is that dialogue. An

audience in their definition, however, is a group of people passively watching or listening to a spectacle -- and in the case of commercial television, being manipulated to buy the products being advertised as part of that spectacle.[108] In calling viewers of its service an "audience" from the start, no matter how "differentiated" or "specialized," American public broadcasting in essence bought into the definition of viewership that the commercial networks had employed since the early days of radio. In so doing, Hoynes writes, it turned Ang's definition inside out: "In [American] public television, the more appropriate term is public-as-audience" (Hoynes 134). Aufderheide and Hoynes may stretch their point here: It is clear that those responsible for the creation of an American public television system hoped to define its relationship with its viewers as different from that of the commercial networks, regardless what those viewers were called.[109] The use of the word "audience" nonetheless suggested that American public television, developed under the poised bootheel of the Nixon administration and in the image of the BBC, regarded its viewers, as Ang puts it: "either from 'above' or from 'outside': from an institutional point of view which sees 'television audience' as an objectified category of others to be controlled" (Ang 1991, 32).

Ang's notion of the control of "an objectified category of others" inherent in the creation of American public television presents the vectors guiding the reception of *The Forsyte Saga* in the United States less as elements in a dialogue than as elements of the transmissive paradigm discussed by Carey. Nixon's criticism of the new system as well as his coercion of it, the application to television of a longstanding American comprehension of British texts as "the *best*" culture (if not nature), and the definition of "public service" employed by the noncommercial network shared a concept of communication in which meaning was embodied solely in the "messages" of texts delivered to an audience with the purpose of directing its behavior and/or beliefs. Utterances in the popular press concerning *The Forsyte Saga* also represented the transmissive paradigm, in their assignment of a specific author to the series and their derivation of a single "meaning" of the *Saga* to contemporary America: the search for a "lost community." While viewers of the show were

able to construct their own communities and meanings out of the text, reading beyond its transmissive qualities, those constructions were nonetheless circumscribed by the way those viewers themselves had been constructed as a specialized "public-as-audience" possessing an abundance of educational and cultural capital.

In short, while its American reception was linked to domestic events and social meanings unimaginable in its British production and reception, the saga of *Forsyte* in the United States was one representing a truncation of the dialogue between cultures. The negotiation of "otherness" and "our-own-ness" defining Bakhtinian assimilation was foreshortened in the understanding of television in general as a transmissive device, and of public television in specific as a transmissive device created by and for an audience of the elite. This changed, however, as the success of *The Forsyte Saga* led to the import of other BBC programs based on historical and literary sources. The final moment in the assimilation of these British costume dramas into American culture was, ironically, a moment in which an "audience-as-public" would revert to the "audience-as-market" as conceived by commercial television -- an audience pitched not the allegedly cheap knockoffs common to American television but the singular, the ideal: the masterpiece.

## Notes, Chapter Four

1) The Carnegie Commission on the Future of Public Television 1967, 13.

2) Bennett and Woollacott 1987, 42-43.

3) Newton Minow cites White's "wise words" in his introduction to a collection of lectures presented by the first president of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, John Macy. See Macy 1974, xi; also Stone 1985, xvii, and Hoynes 1994, 50. *TV Guide*, at the time of the report's issue, excerpted the quote for its own sidebar. See Doan, *TV Guide*, February 4, 1967, A-2.

4) This follows the precepts of the cultural imperialism argument as presented in Chapter 1. For a critique of this idea as it might be applied to Lew Grade, see Tracey 1988, 9-25.

5) Despite the 1969 demise of British secret agent series, Grade remained in the American market through his other stock in trade: mod mid-Atlantic variety series, featuring British singing stars and American guests. *This Is Tom Jones*, in fact, had become his greatest American success, receiving two fall pickups from ABC in 1969 and 1970. He then contracted with ABC, still looking for cheap programming, for a new international

adventure series starring Roger Moore and Tony Curtis, as well as a situation comedy, filmed in Britain, featuring American movie star Shirley MacLaine. In addition, Grade leapt into the syndication market with two half-hour spy adventures, starring erstwhile *Man from U.N.C.L.E.* Robert Vaughn and former *Amos Burke* star Gene Barry. By spring 1971, *Variety* was heralding Grade's record sales of series in America, as well as his work in setting up sales of international co-productions based out of his ATV-ITC conglomerate. None of Grade's network ventures after *Tom Jones* lasted more than a season in the United States, however. Though he might attract the attention of programmers with familiar American stars and concepts, Grade never seemed to grasp that it was the signifying differences in British shows that appealed to American viewers, not cultural similarity. See "Lew Grade Gives ATV An $8-Mil. Sales Wk. In U.S.," *Variety*, March 12, 1969, 35; "ITC's $30-Mil Gross For Fiscal Year Doubles Previous, Profits Up 130%," *Variety*, July 30, 1969, 46; Brown, *Variety*, April 29, 1970, 197; Les Brown, 1971, 130, 204-208, 232-236, 351-360; Musel, *TV Guide*, April 8, 1972: 13; Sterling and Kittross 1978, 384; Tinker 1980, 48-49; Brooks and Marsh 1988, 536-537; 618; 707; 730-731.

6) For more on the American histories of *Space 1999* and *The Muppet Show*, see Brooks and Marsh 1988, 536-537 and 730-731.

7) Brooks and Marsh 1988, 426-427. Ironically, *Kukla, Fran and Ollie* enjoyed a renaissance in the early 1970s on public television, thanks to a grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the production efforts of Chicago's WTTW. See "CPB Grant Puts 'KFO' Into PTV; Other Chi Series," *Variety*, July 1, 1970, 29.

8) On theater, vaudeville and early television, see Marc 1984, 21-29; also 99-106.

9) The vision articulated by Minow for American television during his tenure as FCC chair during the Kennedy administration exerts a remarkable influence over the development of public television later in the decade. His "vast wasteland" comment serves as the source of the title of John Macy's book, for which he wrote the introduction, noting that he and Macy were "old friends who served together in the Kennedy Administration (Macy 1974, ix). The Twentieth Century Fund's 1993 report on public television, *Quality Time?*, begins with the sentence: "Public television was created in the late 1960s as an alternative to the 'vast wasteland' of commercial television"; Minow's "vast wasteland" speech is quoted at length elsewhere in the document. See The Twentieth Century Fund Task Force on Public Television and Somerset-Ward 1993, 3; also 15-18. Minow's participation in the discourse surrounding the creation and mission of public broadcasting in the late 1960s is significant for two reasons. First, the ties he and Macy shared to the Kennedy administration would be anathema to the man defeated so narrowly by Kennedy in the 1960 presidential election, contributing to the difficulties faced by public broadcasting during the Nixon years. Second, the philosophy of communication and culture represented by Minow in his "vast wasteland" speech and discussed in Chapter 1 would also necessarily shape the system evolving as its alternative. See also Brown 1971, 326.

10) On the creation of *Public Broadcasting Laboratory*, see Stone 1985, 20-21; Barnouw 1990, 396-399; Brown, *Variety*, December 7, 1966, 29; "Ford Foundation To Link ETVs For Weekly Hour Next Fall," *Variety*, December 14, 1966, 27; "'Friendly Vision' Vexes NET -- Doesn't Seem To Be In Ford Plan," *Variety*, December 28, 1966, 23; "ETV Public B'cast Lab Rocked By Ford's Short Budget Allocation," *Variety*, April 26, 1967, 165; "Anxious Hour For Public TV -- Infighting Plus Political Slants," *Variety*, June 14, 1967, 29; Brown, *Variety*, October 18, 1967: 27.

11) In addition to the Carnegie Commission report itself, see Hoynes 1994, 47-52; Macy 1974, 21-27; Twentieth Century Fund and Somerset-Ward 1993, 82-85; Stone 1985, 8-

16. Also see Brown, *Variety*, February 8, 1967, 35; "Carnegie & Ford Clash Over Who Pays The Freight," *Variety*, February 8, 1967, 35; "NBC, ABC Mum On Carnegie Report; Stanton Vocal Re CBS' Blessings," *Variety*, February 8, 1967, 35. The Carnegie report was disseminated to the broad TV viewing audience in a long *TV Guide* "Doan Report": Doan, February 4, 1967, A1-2.

12) On the Public Broadcasting Act and its passage, see Barnouw 1990, 398; Macy 1974, 25-26; Twentieth Century Fund and Somerset-Ward 1993, 82-85; Stone 1985,19-20. Also see Michie, *Variety*, April 19, 1967, 69; *Variety*, May 3, 1967, 38; *Variety*, July 5, 1967, 25; "PTV Forces No Less Anxious Than Solons To Keep Gov't Hands Off," *Variety*, August 30, 1967, 32; "PTV Bill Heads For House Workout Under Hard Look By GOP-Dem Units," *Variety*, September 20, 1967, 29; "Public Broadcasting Act Emerging A Hybrid Of Senate, House Species," *Variety*, September 27, 1967, 29; "Happy Days For ETV Crowd," *Variety*, October 25, 1967, 37.

13) *Public Broadcasting Laboratory* ran into trouble with its very first broadcast, which included Douglas Turner Ward's play on race relations, *Day of Absence*, featuring black actors performing in whiteface. See "Prof. Friendly's Cool PBL Views; Students Debate," *Variety*, November 8, 1967, 30; also Barnouw 1990, 398. Continual funding problems, internecine struggles between producers and the academic representatives of educational television, and an unfriendly reception to the program by local public television station managers proved to be both the undoing of *PBL* and a harbinger of things to come for American public television as a whole. See Stone 1985, 21-22; also Greeley, *Variety*, April 24, 1968: 35; "See Friendly In Position As PBL Compromise On," *Variety*, June 5, 1968, 23; "Anderson Out In PBL Ruckus Over Deleted LBJ Seg," *Variety*, January 15, 1969, 43; Greeley, "PBL Looks Doomed, But Ford Yens Spinoff From DC For Bigtime ETV's," *Variety*, March 5, 1969, 39.

14) The full story of the machinations in the public television industry and government leading to the incorporation of PBS can be found in Pepper 1979. Until 1969, national program distribution for educational stations was handled by the Ford Foundation-funded National Educational Television (NET), also a leading producer of educational television programs. It was the New York-based NET that would be the initial importer of British programming for public television stations with its purchase of *The Forsyte Saga*, as well as the initial focal point of the Nixon attacks on public television. For more on NET's role as programmer and distributor, see Stone 1985, 6-7.

15) Sterling and Kittross 1978, 392-393; Barnouw 1990, 436-437. *Sesame Street* proved to be particularly important in bringing black and lower-class urban children to public broadcasting -- by 1971, over half the black households surveyed said they watched their local educational/public station, primarily for *Sesame Street*. See "Harris Poll Sez 33,000,000 Now View Public TV," *Variety*, October 27, 1971, 45; also Brown 1971, 60.

16) As a new television system, public broadcasting in the United States during its nascent years resembled more the broadcasting systems of the Third World described by Nordenstreng and Varis in their survey: Lacking in funds and experience, but possessing the requisite technology that was about to be massed together in a national system, American educational/public television was ripe for exploitation by experienced and wealthy foreign distributors. See Nordenstreng and Varis 1974, 31.

17) Figures on the number of countries familiar with *The Forsyte Saga* before it arrived in the United States varied from 42 to 55 to 80, depending upon the source. Its popularity, however, remained a constant in each of the reports: Times for public events in the Netherlands were changed when they conflicted with showings of the *Saga*; 60,000 people

came out to see series star Susan Hampshire (Fleur Forsyte) when she visited Oslo, Norway; even viewers in the Soviet Union were enthralled with the stories of the Forsyte family. See Ferretti, *New York Times*, October 4, 1969, 70; Michener, *TV Guide*, May 30, 1970, 4-9; "Talk of the Town: Saga," *The New Yorker*, January 10, 1970: 15-16.

18) Les Brown 1971, 270.

19) Ferretti, *New York Times*, October 29, 1969: 70.

20) Brown, *Variety*, April 16, 1969, 34. See also Richards, *Variety*, September 18, 1968, 42; "Forsyte No. 1 In UK," *Variety*, January 1, 1969, 28; "Educational Market In U.S. Wooed By British TV Webs," *Variety*, February 26, 1969, 42; "BBC-TV's $7-Mil Deal With H&W," *Variety*, March 19, 1969, 74; advertisement for Howard & Wyndham, *Variety*, March 19, 1969, 87; "NET's Dawn Of A New 'Day' -- But More Time Spent Up In The Air Than On It," *Variety*, September 10, 1969, 68.

21) Doan, *TV Guide*, July 26, 1969, A-1.

22) Ferretti, *New York Times*, October 29, 1969, 70.

23) Viewers of *The Forsyte Saga* itself also saw another contribution to assimilation in interviews conducted by NET president James Day with various cast members of the show. In his first interview, for example, with Kenneth More (Jolyon Forsyte), Day follows the line established by print critics in suggesting that both More's character and his nemesis Soames are "in some respects Galsworthy." He also directs viewers toward the popular reception of the program elsewhere through comments he elicits from More: "I get letters from Rumania, Yugoslavia.... It's stopped the countries everywhere it's been -- it was something that worked from the word go." Quotes are taken from James Day interview with Kenneth More following Episode 2, "A Family Scandal," *The Forsyte Saga*, NET, October 12, 1967.

24) Gould, *New York Times*, October 6, 1969, 94.

25) Burgess, *New York Times Magazine*, November 16, 1969, 64.

26) Michener, *TV Guide*, May 30, 1970, 9.

27) For more on the historical aspects of a cultural bias against soap operas and "women's fiction," particularly as promulgated by male academics, see Robert Allen 1985, 21-29; 140-150. *TV Guide* also regularly dismissed soap operas as bad television throughout its first three decades. See Altschuler and Grossvogel 1992, 20; 49; 56.

28) For more on the connection between the soap opera form and women's domestic labor, see Tania Modleski, in ed. Kaplan 1983, 67-75; also Spigel 1992, 75-78.

29) For more on the visual technique of soap opera production, see Timberg, in ed. Newcomb 1987, 164-178; also Newcomb 1974, 161-182. Description of the visual aspect of *The Forsyte Saga* is taken from "A Family Wedding" and "A Family Scandal," *The Forsyte Saga*, prod./writ. Donald Wilson, dir. David Giles, perf. Kenneth More, Eric Porter, Fay Compton, Margaret Tyzack, NET, October 5 and October 12, 1969.

30) In "A Family Wedding," the viewer can hear off-camera noises including coughs and bangs. *Dark Shadows*, among American soaps, was most frequently ridiculed for similar gaffes; see Schemering 1985, 62.

31) An excellent example of this type of soap opera criticism can be found in Porter, in ed. Newcomb 1979, 87-96; Modleski's essay in ed. Kaplan 1983 provides the best response.

32) Robert Allen, in ed. Newcomb 1987, 151-158.

33) Hentoff, *Vogue*, January 1, 1970, 78.
34) Quotation taken from Barthes 1977, 147; see also Foucault, in ed. Rabinow 1984, 118-119. Foucault's discussion of the question seeks to limit the meanings Barthes would let loose with the death of the Author, in much the same way that Condit's polyvalence limits polysemy. He agrees, however, with Barthes' assessment of the ideological function the imposition of an Author has upon a text and the meanings it makes available.

35) Fiske 1989, 94. See also Barthes 1974, 3-7.

36) Caughie, in ed. Newcomb 1994, 589.

37) "Talk of the Town: Saga," *The New Yorker*, January 10, 1970, 16.

38) Michener's article for *TV Guide* also suggested that viewers of the *Saga* were at the very least old enough to have raised families and in several cases, including the actress Helen Hayes, moving toward retirement years.

39) For more on the transmission and ritual paradigms, see Carey 1989, 15-21.

40) Allen's essay on*The Guiding Light* deals with family in soap opera. The literature on family as an aesthetic and ideological structure in primetime programs is vast and will be dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter; in most general terms, Horace Newcomb discusses the importance of family in primetime sitcoms, Westerns and professional series in *TV: The Most Popular Art*, while John Fiske offers a cogent discussion of family as a hegemonic device in the relationship between primetime programming and viewers in *Television Culture*. See Newcomb 1974, 42-59; 75-78; 117-126; Fiske 1989, 55-58.

41) For quotations from Agnew's early speeches, see Witcover 1972, 302-308. Buchanan's role in Agnew's November 13 speech is discussed by Lippmann 1974, 191-192, Porter 1976, 46, Stone 1985, xiv-xv, and Witcover 1972, 346.

42) Quotations from Agnew's address are taken from its reprinting in Porter 1976, 255-262. For further comment on the speech itself, see Barnouw 1990, 443-446; Les Brown 1971, 227-232; Lippmann 1974, 191-196; Porter 1976, 45-49; Stone 1985, xiv-xv; Witcover 1972, 310-316. As Porter notes, Agnew's charge against the networks' "instant analysis" was a canard: The text of Nixon's November 3 speech had been made available to journalists five hours before it was delivered. See Porter 1976, 44.

43) Agnew notes in his speech: "One Federal Communications Commissioner considers the powers of the networks equal to that of local, state and Federal Governments all combined. Certainly it represents a concentration of power over American public opinion unknown in history." (Porter 1976, 258) For more on Nicholas Johnson's role as an industry and administration gadfly, see Les Brown 1971, 167-170; 255-259.

44) See Porter 1976, 48; also Michie, *Variety*, March 18, 1970, 1; *Variety*, April 8, 1970: 31; Kroll, *Variety*, May 27, 1970, 1.

45) As Les Brown points out repeatedly, local station owners and operators were more conservative than the networks they represented. In avoiding any criticism of local stations in his comments about television news, Agnew used their biases as further leverage against the networks. This would become a major part of the Nixon administration's strategy against public television. See Brown 1971, 204-232.

46) Gitlin 1980, 219-230.

47) The Johnson and Cronkite quotations are from Michie, *Variety*, May 13, 1970, 31.

48) The controversy surrounding "The Selling of the Pentagon" was created by Democratic congressman Harley Staggers of West Virginia, who, as chair of the House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee, subpoenaed outtakes from the documentary to show how the editing process had twisted the comments and views of military spokesmen being interviewed. The network supplied the committee with the documentary and the verbal transcripts, but its president, Frank Stanton, refused on First Amendment grounds to turn over the outtakes. Staggers' decision to press forward with a contempt of Congress citation against Stanton was publicly renounced even by President Nixon, albeit in a statement criticizing network news organizations for their liberal bias. The House as a whole voted down the recommendation of Staggers and his committee; as William Porter points out, however, the vote (226-181) was unpredictable to the end, and the actions taken would have been unthinkable prior to Agnew's speech of 1969. See Porter 1976, 113-126; also Crater, *Broadcasting*, July 19, 1971, 20-22. Todd Gitlin also notes, as an afterword, that CBS' stand for First Amendment rights was offset by the fact that the network never again hired the producer of *Selling* for documentary work and did not air another program critical of the military until 1976, two years after Nixon's resignation. See Gitlin 1980, 262.

49) In his own words: "[T]he networks test the boundaries of the permissible; they carve out an ideological sphere in which they are free to move as they please. With documentaries especially... choices of subject and slant will depend most directly on the larger interests of the media elites. These interests, in turn, will of course take into account larger ideological currents in the society, and decisions will be made to amplify some and to dampen others." Gitlin 1980, 261-262.

50) Somerset-Ward 1993, 83-84; Stone 1985, 9-11; also "Hosannas," *Variety*, April 19, 1967, 84; "Happy Days," *Variety*, October 25, 1967, 37.

51) Somerset-Ward 1993, 84-85; also "Happy Days," *Variety*, October 25, 1967, 37.

52) For more on Nixon's history with the media, see Porter 1976, 1-23; and Stone 1985, xiii-xiv; 42-54. As Porter suggests, it is entirely too easy to focus on Nixon's personal and psychological animus toward the press at the expense of its social and professional sources and its effects on those at whom it was aimed.

53) The relationship between the local public stations united in PBS and NET was quite similar to that between local affiliates and the New York-based networks; as Les Brown (1971) points out, that relationship followed all too closely the structure of the commercial system to which public television was supposed to be an alternative. See Brown 1971, 318-322; also Somerset-Ward 1993, 86-87; Stone 1985, 15-24; "NET's Dawn Of A New 'Day' -- But More Time Spent Up In Air Than On It," *Variety*, September 10, 1969, 68; "NET To Be Programmer, Not Web, Under New Grants From Ford, CPB," *Variety*, November 5, 1969, 33; "Recent Moves By NET A Tipoff To Nervousness Re White House," *Variety*, December 31, 1969, 21; Greeley, *Variety*, March 18, 1970, 35.

54) Michie, *Variety*, October 1, 1969, 34; also Somerset-Ward 1993, 87; Stone 1985, 21-24; 33-41.

55) The visible signs of that effect included the charges of a San Francisco producer that an *NET Playhouse* segment featuring a Lawrence Ferlinghetti poetry performance had been cut because of "the Agnew climate in Washington." NET president James Day accused CPB of vetting and editing the copy for an NET special on the Agnew speech as well as spending $170,000 ($30,000 more than the entire *Saga* cost) for documentaries on the White House Conference on Hunger. To make matters worse for Day, an *NET Journal* documentary, "Who Invited US?", criticizing American military involvement in Third World conflicts, was pulled off the air at several public stations with no notice. Again, the assumption within NET was that political pressure had been applied. This was but the first in a series of skirmishes between NET and PBS over "controversial" programming, leading later in 1970 to PBS publicly criticizing NET for its documentary "Banks and the Poor." See "Poet's Nixon Rap In Upcoming Seg Trimmed By NET," *Variety*, December 31, 1969, 1; "Recent Moves By NET A Tipoff To Nervousness Re White House," *Variety*, December 31, 1969, 21; "Five NET Affils Kill 'Who Invited,' Pressure Hinted," *Variety*, February 18, 1970, 35; Greeley, *Variety*, November 18, 1970, 46; also Stone, 26-27.

56) See, among others, Greeley, *Variety*, March 4, 1970, 35; "CPB's Big Gifter: Guess Who?," *Variety*, October 21, 1970, 27; Greeley, *Variety*, February 10, 1971, 26; "The Nixon Network," *Newsweek*, January 1, 1973, 58-59.

57) Bill Greeley was particularly harsh in his criticism of the CPB-PBS organizations, arguing that it was "impossible to imagine the Congressionally funded Public Broadcasting Service having the guts to air CBS News' 'The Selling of the Pentagon'," offering a sarcastic "Right on" to a PBS series on drugs for a "balanced" presentation on "the pros and cons of drug abuse," and finally suggesting that the PBS logo, instead of the NBC peacock, should be a plucked chicken. See Greeley, *Variety*, April 14, 1970, 29; *Variety*, February 10, 1971, 26; *Variety*, October 27, 1970, 45. See also Stone 1985, 26, for other comments on Greeley's critical appraisal of the relationship between CPB-PBS and the Nixon administration.

58) According to David Stone, President Nixon sent a memo to White House officials asking about the possibility of immediately shutting off funds to public television the morning after Vanocur's hiring was announced. Nixon believed that Vanocur had openly supported Kennedy by the time of the 1960 debates, and as one of the questioners had deliberately tried to sandbag him. MacNeil provided less of a problem, but his associations with the Kennedy family (he also covered Robert Kennedy's assassination and funeral for the BBC) and his work as a news analyst for NBC did not make him a favorite in the Nixon White House. Administration bile rose even further when their salaries were announced in fall 1971: Vanocur would receive $85,000 per year -- twice as much as members of Congress -- while MacNeil would make $65,000. Those figures would figure in the later debated over a longterm funding bill for public television. Vanocur would leave NPACT at the end of his first contract in 1972; MacNeil stayed on, to be joined by Dallas newsman Jim Lehrer in 1974 in *The MacNeil-Lehrer Report*. See Stone 1985, 84-90; 210.

59) Stone 1985, 94-101; also Greeley, *Variety*, October 13, 1971, 30.

60) According to Stone 1985, while several members of the panel discussing the FBI segment felt it should have aired, none thought it particularly good; Jim Lehrer, moderator of the discussion, said later: "It was a piece of crap" (100-101).

61) The Office of Telecommunication Policy was a bureaucratic invention of the Nixon administration designed, according to Porter, both to take on some of the research into areas of telecommunication that the FCC did not have time or staff for, and to serve as an administration "platform" for "exerting more direct pressure on the way broadcasting goes in this country." (Porter, 77) Its initial concern with public broadcasting was to find some sort of longterm funding plan; after the early problems with NET documentaries, however, Whitehead's duties became more and more defined by the need to exercise control over the new system, first through political appointment and then through addressing CPB-PBS programming directly. See Stone 1985, 68-74; also Porter 1976, 73-79.

62) "Collision of Politics and Public Broadcasting," *Broadcasting*, October 25, 1971, 15.

63) Whitehead's criticism had some validity. Despite the nominal efforts to reduce the power of New York in the system as a whole, the location of CPB and PBS offices in Washington, the creation of NPACT and, as Patricia Aufderheide argues, the dispersal of foundation grants that favored the New York-Washington nexus created precisely the East Coast power structure so loathed by the Nixon administration. The development of PBS as a centralized programming authority also contradicted the sentiment of both the Carnegie Commission report and the Public Broadcasting Act that public television be defined in terms of local participation and distribution. The strongest comment along these lines came not from the Nixon administration but from Arthur Singer, president of the Sloan Foundation and one of the organizers of the Carnegie Commission, at a gathering of public broadcasters in summer 1971. Public television, he said, "...has cast itself in the mold of commercial television.... The networked programming is every bit as centralized and dehumanized as the network programming of CBS or NBC.... And this is exactly what the Carnegie Commission did *not* have in mind." Singer did praise *The Forsyte Saga* and its followers *Civilisation* and *The First Churchills* -- but said that their British point of origin revealed further the flaws with American public broadcasting. See "Public TV Didn't Turn Out The Way Carnegie Commission Hoped It Would," *Variety*, July 7, 1971: 33; also Stone 1985, 39. On foundation grants and their contribution to the Nixon attack on public broadcasting, see Aufderheide 1991, 173.

64) For more information on the passage and veto of the public broadcasting funding bill, see Stone 1985, 163-171; also Macy 1974, 98-107. For specifics on the bill as passed by the House and Senate, see Michie, *Variety*, June 7, 1972: 29; "Major Provisions In 'CPB Act,'" *Variety*, June 7, 1972, 29; Michie, *Variety*, June 28, 1972, 36.

65) Stone 1985, 169-171; 178-179; see also "Senate OK's CPB Fund Of $45-Mil But 1-Year Only," *Variety*, July 26, 1972, 34; "$45,000,000 CPB Funding Tied Into HEW Bundle; Solon Raps White House," August 9, 1972, 35.

66) Stone 1985, 163-165; also "PTV Stations Would Earmark Extra Income," *Variety*, May 17, 1972: 39. A poll conducted by PBS earlier in 1972 indicated that its local station members were generally satisfied with the job the networking service was doing, a note that the Nixon localism strategy was already foundering. See "PTV Stations OK Network Service In Poll; Lehrer Into Pubaffairs Post," *Variety*, March 15, 1972, 35.

67) Buchanan pronounced every PBS public affairs program, with the exception of William F. Buckley's *Firing Line*, as being "anti-administration." Buckley's situation with CPB-PBS highlighted further the Nixon animus toward public television. *Firing Line* came to PBS in 1971 through the efforts of a group of Southern public station managers. The conservative publisher was to be paid $500,000 over the next year for 46 half-hour shows, with $3,000 a week going to the host himself and $8,000 to pay for program expenses. This meant Buckley personally would receive an annual salary of $138,000 -- $50,000

more than Sander Vanocur. Further, the production costs for the show were to be assumed by his magazine, *The National Review*. A *Variety* estimate of actual cost vs. amount paid indicated that the magazine would receive some $150,000 free and clear of what was necessary to produce the show. Yet neither Buckley nor *The National Review* came under direct public criticism from the White House. See "Buckley Shifts To PTV Web," *Variety*, February 10, 1971, 26; "Buckley's Big PTV Paychecks," *Variety*, October 4, 1972, 34; also Stone 1985, 120. Buchanan's comments embarrassed others within the administration immediately, especially Clay Whitehead, who said he "wanted to go hide somewhere" (Stone 267). They also made the work of the now-Republican-controlled CPB board more difficult, as anything it might do would be seen in terms of the views expressed by Buchanan -- which Whitehead said did reflect accurately the opinions of their boss. None, however, would remember the comments more than Bill Moyers, the former Johnson press secretary who had become both a leading presence on PBS with his *Bill Moyers Reports* and a leading target of White House criticism. With the Watergate scandal, presented in full by PBS, Moyers' increasingly visible and outspoken criticism of the administration owed its heart and soul to Buchanan. "There's nothing more fun than beating a bully, and Buchanan is a bully," Moyers would later say. "I think in his secret dreams, Buchanan saw a thousand-year reich with Agnew as Führer and himself as Goebbels. And I loved being in that kind of fight" (Stone 295) For more on the ill feelings between Moyers and Buchanan in their public form, see Stone 1985, 296-300.

68) Stone, 293; 300-308.

69) Aufderheide 1991 also mentions several other groups, including the elite press in which news about *The Forsyte Saga* and other PBS offerings regularly appeared, as contributing to the downfall of Nixon's plans for public broadcasting (175). Much of the latter half of Stone's book traces responses to Nixon's veto of the CPB funding bill and his further attacks on public broadcasting.

70) Stone 1985, 286-287.

71) This plan, devised by PBS head Hartford Gunn and known as the Station Program Cooperative (SPC), was implemented in 1974. In building a local mandate into the structure of national public broadcasting, the SPC also resolved longstanding differences between CPB and PBS as to which body should act as the final judge on programming to be broadcast. See Porter 1976, 153-154; Somerset-Ward 1993, 88; Stone 1985, 303.

72) Porter 1976, 152-153; Stone 1985, xviii-xix.

73) "Nixon's BBC Salute," *Variety*, June 28, 1972, 34.

74) In an unsigned editorial, *Variety* directly linked Nixon's homage to British public broadcasting to his handling of its American equivalent: "Nixon also said that the BBC 'has set an inspiring example of objective and dispassionate news reporting,' but...it seems doubtful that he himself could live with such a system. Having the final power of funding over the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Nixon Administration has tempered Public TV's 'objectivity' over the past four years and has made it bend more and more to the philosophies and purposes of the Nixon White House.... Realizing it or not, he has said that Britain has a freer broadcast press than the United States, and his attitude toward the media in his own country is one of the reasons why that is so." "Nixon's Praise Of BBC," *Variety*, June 28, 1972, 34.

75) Arnold, in eds.Abrams, et al., 1979, 1430.

76) Feuer, in eds. Feuer, Kerr and Vahimagi 1984, 56-59.

77) Whitman, "Prefatory Letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1856," in eds. Bradley and Blodgett 1973, 732.

78) Macdonald cites *Omnibus* as midcult at its worst, appealing to the "average American" by "programming Gertrude Stein and Jack Benny, Chekhov and football strategy, Beethoven and champion ice skaters.... The level of television, however, was not raised, for some reason." See Dwight Macdonald 1962, 39.

79) "A Cooke's Look at America," *Life*, August 25, 1952, 120-123.

80) "Only One Cooke," *Newsweek*, January 5, 1953, 38-39.

81) For a further discussion of *TV Guide*'s presentation of "highbrow" programming in terms of its discourse of "dialsmanship" and the several contradictions it engendered, see Altschuler and Grossvogel 1992, 25-30.

82) "As We See It," *TV Guide*, August 18, 1962, Inside front. For more on the Pilkington Report and its influence on British broadcasting and society, see Sendall 1983, 85-134; also Paulu 1981, 82-83; Brooks 1985, 320-328.

83) Industrial developments on both sides of the Atlantic led to the arrival in September 1955 of *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, the first British series to be shown on American television and the first of a group of children's costume dramas to be imported during the mid-1950s. The Merry Men of Sherwood Forest made their American debut in the exact week that commercial television began to broadcast in Britain. The economic structure of the new British system mandated not just commercials, but the import of product to hold costs down, including 12 American series during the first year of broadcast, and the export of product to earn money that could go to new productions. CBS, meanwhile, wanted to experiment with bringing children into the flow of primetime television. See Myers, *Variety*, September 21, 1955, 1; also Caughie, in ed. Corner 1991, 39. For more on the foundation of the British commercial network, see Paulu 1981, 46-87.

84) As is the case with *The Forsyte Saga* in 1969, the arrivals of British television costume dramas in the mid-1950s can be explained neatly as a matter of economics: British producers and their commercial television system gained needed funds through export sales; American sponsors and networks saved money by purchasing pre-produced programming. Such sales, however, also provided economic validity to the new technology of video filming being employed by both broadcasting systems in the 1950s. Ironically, though Britain is the exporter in this case, these are precisely the elements of the argument made by Schiller to define and criticize the cultural imperialism he finds the United States exercising through its export of popular television programs: American distributors control the global market by dumping pre-produced programs into markets that can't afford to produce their own; in so doing, they also define the technology necessary in those markets to make their own television programs. See Schiller 1969, 110-115. Jeremy Tunstall and Erik Barnouw find elements of American cultural imperialism lurking even in the import of British programs, as the British commercial system itself, they argue, was the product of American influence. See Tunstall 1977, 101; also Barnouw 1990, 229-230. Paulu and Sendall to the contrary suggest that internal industry and political decisions had far more to do with the establishment of a commercial network in Britain than did any influence, direct or otherwise, from outside. See Paulu 1981, 58-60; Sendall, 1983, 17-18.

85) Rev. of *The Adventures of Robin Hood, TV Guide*, November 12, 1955, 21. Several other factors outside the text of the show worked to the benefit of the American reception of *Robin Hood*, which lasted three years in prime time. The title character was portrayed by Richard Greene, a British veteran of Hollywood who starred in a number of costume dramas in the 1940s and early 1950s (*Forever Amber, Lorna Doone, Captain Scarlett*). The producers of the series -- Sapphire Films, an offshoot of the Associated Broadcasting Company commercial TV franchise -- preceded Lew Grade in toning the characters down from the appropriate Midlands dialect to an acceptable mid-Atlantic accent not very different from the toning up of Errol Flynn for the Robin role in the 1938 Warner Brothers movie. The producers also hired an American, Dick James, to write and record the credit music, which became a hit in Britain. Finally, the sponsors (Wildroot hair cream) placed the show on Monday night, which already featured the Top 20 shows *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts* and *December Bride*, in addition to CBS' primetime juggernaut, *I Love Lucy*.

86) Rev. of *The Adventures of Sir Lancelot, TV Guide*, November 17, 1956: 23.

87) Amory's gushing over British imports ran counter to what Altschuler and Grossvogel refer to as his "Janus-faced approach" to reviewing: giving positive reviews a nasty shot of irony, or negative reviews a kind and clever puff. His approval of British television went along with the magazine's increasing equation of imports with the "quality programming" they hoped viewers would choose via dialsmanship. See Altschuler and Grossvogel 1992, 55-58. Amory's Anglophilia reached its high point with the Amorys for 1970, in which he named *The Forsyte Saga* best dramatic series, Eric Porter and Kenneth More best dramatic actors, Nyree Dawn Porter and Susan Hampshire best dramatic actresses, and David Frost's syndicated program as best talk show. British comedies obviously had not yet arrived. Amory, *TV Guide*, May 16, 1970: 52.

88) "As We See It," *TV Guide*, March 19, 1966, 2.

89) "As We See It," *TV Guide*, August 9, 1969, 2. The editorial and the magazine's renewed respect for British television drew a mixed response from readers, with Frank Meredith of Montreal asking "Why are you always boosting British TV?" and Anne Allen of Houston writing: "If there is one thing I have learned from corresponding with my British friends over the years, it is that they would gladly trade their British programming for ours." Cathy Lynn Becker of Illinois offered her own Arnoldian take on the *TV Guide* position: "All you have to do is watch *Secret Agent* or *The Avengers* or a British movie and you will see the better acting and the better script material." See Letters, *TV Guide*, September 6, 1969: A-2.

90) "As We See It," *TV Guide*, April 14, 1970, 1. Amory's review is unparalleled in its effort to direct the show to the viewers of American commercial television: "This show comes to you via Britain over the educational network, but it is entertainment -- prime, rare, rib-roast, Kansas City-cut entertainment. To say it is great is an understatement. It would be hard to imagine how it could be any better." See Amory, *TV Guide*, December 13, 1969, 52. Robert Musel's Susan Hampshire profile, "A Most Villainous Villainess Whom Everybody Loves," appears in the June 13, 1970 issue of *TV Guide:* 38-42.

91) Prosser 1992, 176.

92) Paulu 1981, 31; also see Prosser 1992, 176, for a more recent wording.

93) For a full description of Reith's vision of the BBC, see Brooks 1985, 53-56.

94) Paulu 1981, 155-156.

95) The "vigorously diverse" modifier is applied to White's benediction by Aufderheide 1991, 173. While Aufderheide says White mixes "highbrow and populist images," the "populist images" of nature seem to present it in the "sweetness and light" of Arnold's vision. Most telling in White's comment is his assertion that "public television should be the visual counterpart of the literary essay": a form which by the mid-1960s spoke of education and privilege, and the form at which White himself was a master. In the end, rather than presenting a "vigorously diverse definition of excellence" in broadcasting, White presents a singular and unitary one: It's what he -- the author -- wants and does.

96) The phrase is the title of Chapter Two of *To Irrigate a Wasteland.* Macy 1974, 40.

97) Dornan, unpublished manuscript:, 6-8.

98) The "educate, enlighten and entertain" quotation comes from Macy 1974, 40.

99) As Aufderheide points out, the notion of "better television" leading to a "better public" is particularly open to charges of elitism in a society that is fragmented and stratified along race, gender, class and age lines. See Aufderheide 1991, 173.

100) Turner 1977, 73.

101) Althusser 1972, 162-163.

102) Macy 1974, 56.

103) Bourdieu 1984, 26.

104) As was the case with *The Avengers*, the magazines and newspapers -- New York *Times*, *The New Yorker*, *Vogue*, *The New York Times Magazine* --in which stories about *The Forsyte Saga* appeared were directed at an upscale audience. Les Brown points out that advertising for the *Saga* and other PBS programs in 1970 appeared on a daily basis in the New York *Times* while showing up only on a "nominal" basis in the city's tabloid dailies, the *Daily News and* the *Post.* (Brown 1971, 317). Hoynes argues that the *Times* "symbolizes the abstract ideal of the realm in which public television seeks approval," as it is "the elite circles" the newspaper embodies that "public television pursues and both readers and supporters" (Hoynes 1994, 128).

105) Cited in Millard, in eds. Cater and Nyman 1976, 191.

106) Millard, for example, argued that a specialized audience need not mean an audience that was kept deliberately small, in opposition to arguments made by Lloyd Morrisett, head of the Markle Foundation and a major benefactor of public broadcasting, who wanted public television to appeal to "specific interests and specific tastes." See Millard, in Cater and Nyman 1976, 192-194; also Morrisett, in Cater and Nyman 1976, 172-178.

107) For a full discussion of the "audience-as-market" and "audience-as-public" paradigms, see Ang 1991, 26-32.

108) Ang 1991, 28.

109) For their views in full, see Aufderheide 1991, 168-183; Hoynes 1994, 115-135.

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# SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT: BRITISH TELEVISION AND AMERICAN CULTURE, 1960-1980

VOLUME II

By

Jeffrey S. Miller

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## Chapter 5: Down the Up Staircase
## (*Masterpiece Theatre* and the Petroleum Broadcasting System)

> My dying words -- like those of, I hope, millions of Americans -- will request that the hearse bearing my remains to burial be powered by Mobil gasoline, as thanks for Mobil's support of *Masterpiece Theatre* on public television.
>
> --George Will[1]

By the early 1970s, the "ideal of excellence" that E.B. White had hoped would help American public broadcasting climb the staircase out of the dank clutter of commercial television had taken hold, through the import of British programming that denoted and connoted quality in both the shows themselves and the audience that watched. The economic and cultural ramifications of this "quality television," however, were inflected by the coercive utterances the Nixon administration aimed toward public broadcasting. With federal funding being used both sparingly and manipulatively, the new public television service had to turn to private sources for the money it needed to build its Camelot. Corporations such as Xerox and Exxon, looking at public television demographics, saw that they could perform a valuable "public service" for that audience while enhancing their own reputations by paying for quality programming, even if direct product advertising was not an available option.[2]

It was Mobil Oil, however, that identified itself most specifically with British programming in serving not only a public but its own corporate image. Mobil's sponsorship of *Masterpiece Theatre*, an anthology of British historical-literary serial dramas introduced on PBS in January 1971, was a major part of an intense public relations campaign to convince Americans that oil companies in general and Mobil in specific were a good and important part of national politics, society and culture. In its use of *Masterpiece Theatre* in that campaign, and particularly in the success it achieved with the promotion of

the series *Upstairs, Downstairs* as part of *Masterpiece Theatre*, Mobil reshaped the reception of British programming on public television back toward parameters established by the commercial networks while bringing into its own service the Nixon administration's strategy of using British series to preempt criticism of its deeds and works. The relationship between American culture and British television represented in the reception of *Upstairs, Downstairs* most nearly approached, of any example presented here, the hegemonic processes of absorption and domestication. But while some members of the *Masterpiece Theatre* audience -- George Will, for one -- accepted its message as Mobil wished, others read around that message, following the formal qualities of the program to create meanings and pleasures outside the boundaries established by political and economic institutions. Once again, British programming would demonstrate the limits of both hegemony and the transmissive paradigm in understanding transnational communication.

## Mobil Signifiers

Whatever meaning may have been intended for *The Forsyte Saga* by its creators and distributors or that may have been derived by its media commentators, the program's influence on the American television industry, both commercial and noncommercial, was enormous. As Horace Newcomb has noted, the *Saga* was the first program, with the earlier exception of ABC's *Peyton Place*, to bring the soap conventions of memory, consequence and change into a television cosmos based on weekly replications of plot, character and production standards.[3] The "realistic," or mimetic, characteristics of *The Forsyte Saga* were precisely those that Jane Feuer, among others, would use to identify the basis of quality television in the 1970s; the willingness of American producers to bring them into their own contemporary works stands as an early and vital example of the influence British television would come to have in the creation of American programming in the 1970s.[4]

That influence was further illuminated by the way in which the *Saga* handled what many critics regard as the *sine qua non* of American television programming: the family. As

Ella Taylor argues in her study of family structures in primetime American television, the 1960s norm was that of "One Big Happy," whether in the domestic confines of suburbia or, increasingly, in the workplace. Generational and gender-rational differences were smoothed over -- or contained, to return to May's term -- in the interest of maintaining a seemingly happy and well-ordered consensus.[5] In *The Forsyte Saga*, however, that consensus did not exist: The Forsytes' saga was one in which physical, emotional and financial betrayal and manipulation time and again shattered the ideal order of the family, part of the order that American audiences of the series were supposed to crave. As the reviewers who defined that need suggested, many viewers of the *Saga* may not have seen the dysfunction of its core family as being central to its meaning; certainly such a reading would not have found favor with the political and ideological forces shaping the reception of the show.[6] Yet for an audience of American producers and programmers, the Forsytes and all their woes opened new and marketable vistas in entertainment for the coming decade.[7] And for an audience composed of the creators of American noncommercial television, the family represented in *The Forsyte Saga* in both its ideal and "real" forms would become as central to its concept of programming as the blessed ties that bound parents to children and workers to each other had been in network shows.

While the conventional content elements developed in and out of *The Forsyte Saga* revealed the evolving connections between American commercial and noncommercial television, an even more significant link was being forged in the consideration of viewers as audience each employed. The goal articulated by public broadcasting of "serving differentiated audiences" was developed at the same moment that commercial networks were themselves beginning to consider specialized audiences. As noted previously, with various groups calling for change in American ideological and social structures that had kept them in their place for far too long, commercial television absorbed and domesticated their concerns by making places for them in the workplace families of its programming -- all the better for sponsors in search of new consumers. The Nielsen ratings system that

defined the relationship between networks and their advertisers also began in 1970 to reflect a shift toward what Ien Ang would call "streamlined" audiences, breaking down their previous age group data into smaller, more specific groups and then refocusing ratings analysis away from the largest possible total audience to the best possible demographic audience as the decade proceeded.[8] The definition public television ascribed to its relationship with its viewers, in other words, was one that, if not actually adopted by the commercial networks, was remarkably similar to the direction those networks were starting to take at the time. Conversely, ratings, which had apparently little place in the Lyceum and Chatauqua E.B. White found in public television, began to increase in importance to CPB and PBS, particularly given the response to *The Forsyte Saga*. While publicly denying that ratings as compiled by the Nielsen service were of any concern, CPB released a "survey" showing that 3 percent of the homes using televisions (the Nielsen measuring standard) in four major markets were tuned to the November 9, 1969 episode of the *Saga* -- a small, "specialized" number, to be sure, but one which was now being placed in the context of the mass commercial market.[9] The differences between the relationships commercial and public networks engaged in with their viewers were gradually disappearing, a process that would accelerate markedly in the fall of 1970.

On October 21 of that year, almost exactly a year after public television had introduced American audiences to *The Forsyte Saga*, Toots Shor's celebrated Manhattan restaurant played host to a press conference involving executives from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Children's Television Workshop, the British Broadcasting Corporation -- and Mobil Oil. The oil company called the gathering in order to announce its grant of $1 million to public television, with some $600,000 to go to CTW to fund the production and distribution of material based on its *Sesame Street* to poor and inner-city neighborhoods, and some $400,000 to Boston station WGBH, via CPB, to fund a new series of imported British serial dramas, following the success of *The Forsyte Saga*, to be called *Masterpiece Theatre.*[10] In accepting the grant from Mobil for both his organization

and WGBH, CPB president John Macy praised the oil company profusely, saying that American audiences were "...the beneficiary of this splendid contribution of the Mobil Oil Corporation.... The leadership of Mobil is to be commended for its decision, which allows public broadcasting to dramatically increase its effectiveness."[11] Macy's words are important: The Mobil grant did not dramatically increase the *quality* of public broadcasting but its "effectiveness," a quantifiable term suggesting a directive relationship between the network and the public it was supposed to serve. Through its acceptance of the Mobil grant, American public television became, *de facto*, a network with commercial sponsors, while at the same time narrowing the gap between an ideal of "serving" a public and a praxis of following rating and demographic numbers.

Mobil itself, meanwhile, was able to use the grant as part of a new corporate program to employ culture -- in both its Geertzian and its Arnoldian sense -- in a campaign its public relations director Herbert Schmertz devised to reposition both the company and the oil industry as a whole within what it viewed as an increasingly adverse industrial and political climate.[12] Recounted at length in Laurence Jarvik's thorough account of the Mobil-*Masterpiece Theatre* connection, Schmertz's strategy involved using strong issue-oriented newspaper advertising and television commercials outlining the company's positions on controversial energy and environmental issues as a sort of public relations "bad cop," while using the corporate underwriting of "quality" entertainment as the concomitant "good cop."[13] Central to the Mobil philosophy was the understanding of audience Schmertz brought to his strategy -- an understanding that exemplifies the shift from "audience-as-public" to "public-as-audience" that William Hoynes identifies.[14] Both the advocacy ads, positioned on the op-ed pages of major newspapers, and *Masterpiece Theatre* would appeal to what Schmertz defined as the first of several audiences the Mobil campaign was meant to address: opinion leaders, or those, to use Bourdieu's terms, who possessed an abundance of educational and social capital.[15] As did the decision to use the term "theatre" (as opposed to the ignoble "television") as well as its British spelling in the title of its show, Mobil

rhetoric about the "cultural excellence" and "quality" of *Masterpiece Theatre* merely employed terms already signifying a British superiority in entertainment to Americans in attracting the desired viewers to its program. First demographically segmenting and then differentiating the "public" that would view the series it would sponsor, Mobil then turned that public into the "objectified category of others to be controlled" that Ang defines as "audience."[16] In this case, however, the message transmitted by Mobil was not necessarily directing the audience to purchase a given product (though the company's research indicated that that might be a good side effect) but to buy instead the notion that Mobil was a good corporate citizen, interested in "uplifting" the society in which it worked.[17] As Rawleigh Warner, then-chairman of Mobil, would explain it:

> [Schmerz] was able to sell me...on [*Masterpiece Theatre*] because he was producing quality TV at a cost that was so low and so attractive and which we'd have had trouble in not buying.... I think there was a very valid rationale for his suggestion that we do. Since we were going with our op-ed ads to a very sophisticated and reasonably small audience, it was felt that if we could show the audience we were willing to produce for their benefit good entertainment and at the same time reach them on the op-ed page, they would be a more receptive audience because these two things are fairly compatible and conceivably synergistic (Jarvik, 259).

To make their desired audience even more receptive, Mobil and WGBH brought yet another signifier equating quality television ("good entertainment") with British origin into the picture. As NET's experience with *The Forsyte Saga* had shown, the 50-55-minute length of noncommercial BBC shows did not fit into the regimented 60-minute slots mandated by American television, including its noncommercial sector. Some appropriate filler, ideally providing historical and/or biographical background for the series and its production, was needed. James Day's London interviews had filled that purpose for the *Saga*, and WGBH producers and their corporate benefactor believed that, with whole series of historical dramas involving settings and characters unfamiliar to American viewers on the way, a program host would be necessary to set up and comment on what those viewers were seeing. One name headed the list: Alistair Cooke, the transplanted Briton who had been central in the construction of "quality television" and its association with Britain in the

1950s. Indeed, Bennett and Woollacott's concept of intertextuality is given visible practice in the reasons Jarvik cites Mobil's Schmertz as invoking for inviting Cooke to host *Masterpiece Theatre*: his success as host of *Omnibus*, his credibility as an Englishman; his authority as a cultural observer and critic; and his ability to help viewers through difficult material.[18] WGBH producer Christopher Sarton also wanted Cooke's participation because of his status as an Englishman living in America, again referencing the image Cooke had helped develop for "quality television" 15 years before.[19]

That first installment in Mobil's public broadcasting investment and the market it offered provides another sterling example of the importance of intertextuality in the reception of transnational television programs. *The First Churchills*, a 12-part serial based on *Marlborough*, Winston Churchill's biographical account of the 17th-century lives and times of his ancestors John and Sarah Churchill, was broadcast in Britain in 1969.[20] Though previewed favorably in the States, where *TV Guide*'s Robert Musel called it "spectacular and absorbing," the program failed to gain the popularity of *The Forsyte Saga* in its native land, to some degree because of its showing on the relatively new BBC-2 channel.[21] The show was also criticized for technical problems of costume and design, as well as what were perceived as simplistic peregrinations through British military and diplomatic history.[22] Alistair Cooke himself would later refer to the series as "probably the worst [*Masterpiece Theatre*] has done.... You never knew if you were in Holland unless they had a tulip on the table."[23]

These problems, however, were of little concern to the WGBH producers and corporate benefactors responsible for *Masterpiece Theatre*. Whatever difficulties *The First Churchills* might present for an American audience in terms of accent, costume or history were more than offset by signifiers that directly addressed its desired PBS viewers. The show's title (it was not, after all, called *Marlborough*) spoke to its desired audience of a World War II leader more beloved in the States than in his own country; in addition, it established the series as one telling the stories of a family, like the Forsytes who preceded

it. Its serialized form and historical-literary content also followed that of the *Saga*, in part because it had the same producer (Donald Wilson) and director (David Giles). Most important, however, was the fact that Sarah Churchill was being played by Susan Hampshire, the same actress who had made American reviewers dizzy in their search for superlatives to describe her performance as Fleur in *The Forsyte Saga.* [24] Indeed, it was Hampshire who would serve as the focus of the construction of the narrative image for *The First Churchills* in America. The *Los Angeles Times* announced the arrival of both *Masterpiece Theatre* and *The First Churchills* simply with a photograph of Hampshire in its January 9 edition.[25] The *Boston Globe*'s *TV Week* for January 10, 1971, featured on its cover another photograph of Hampshire in Sarah Churchill costume, with the caption: "A new saga brings that Forsyte girl back." An accompanying interview, "Fleur Returns," by the paper's Elizabeth Sullivan, further reminded viewers of the connection: "'You were a pert, saucy and independent creature in the *Saga*,' we reminded Susan Hampshire when she was in the Hub last spring. 'Wait until you see me in *The First Churchills*,' she chuckled. 'I'm worse!'"[26] While not using her picture, the *Washington Post* referred to Hampshire, as well as Wilson and Giles, in establishing the new show's ties to the *Saga* -- as well as the ways in which the publicity for the show sought to do the same.[27]

While the narrative image constructed by Mobil and WGBH for *Masterpiece Theatre* and *The First Churchills* was largely built on meanings already in circulation from the success of *The Forsyte Saga*, that image took on a design not readily visible in the public reception of the latter. Just as the visual focus on Diana Rigg in the narrative image created for *The Avengers* five years before was enveloped in a male-defined discourse of sexuality, so did Susan Hampshire quickly become not merely a signifier of the British *Forsyte* heritage but of sexual content that went beyond what American television programs were offering at the time.[28] The syndicated UPI review of the first episode, run in the *Chicago Tribune* under the headline "Susan Hampshire, Forsyte's Fleur, in New TV Series," begins: "Susan Hampshire, aptly labeled the first sex symbol of educational

television for her performance in *The Forsyte Saga*, returned Sunday in a colorful new series on the noncommercial network.... Miss Hampshire, of course, brings out the best in any man, and if you tune in Sunday or Wednesday nights, you will see why."[29] Similarly, Cecil Smith, writing in the *Los Angeles Times* of Hampshire's performance as "a fiery maid in the court," tells viewers: "If you lost your Sundays last year completely to Susan Hampshire as Fleur Forsyte in *The Forsyte Saga*, be advised that you may well lose them again -- for Sarah is played by Susan Hampshire, this time gloriously in color."[30]

Unlike the publicity for *The Avengers*, however, sexuality in *The First Churchills* was not represented simply as the fetishizing vision of a leering male gaze. In part, that decision can be attributed to the quality audience Mobil hoped to attract; in part, it can be attributed to the large numbers of women in the viewership of American serialized drama and the "feminine aesthetic" that relationship cultivated.[31] Indeed, the narrative image created for *The First Churchills* represented women as willing and powerful participants in the program's representation of sexuality: As the *Boston Globe* interview indicates, Hampshire herself was complicitous in exploiting the sexuality of her character. The costumes necessary to the historical drama conversely meant that the female body could not be visually consumed by a male audience in the same way that photographs of Rigg/Peel were with *The Avengers*. Instead of the "kinkiness" used to construct Rigg/Peel as an object of male desire, the narrative image established for *The First Churchills* was developed on its "bawdiness," an utterance that added a non-gendered element of ribald sexuality to the serial that both distinguished it from American commercial programs and helped it appeal to American viewers uninterested in the machinations -- political, at least -- of the court of Charles II. The *New York Times* brought this "bawdiness" immediately into line with already familiar signifiers of British television in the lead for its morning-after review, appearing under the headline "Bawdy 'First Churchills' Bows": "Even if *The First Churchills* weren't coming at us with humor, bawdiness and taste...the return of Alistair Cooke as a weekly TV visitor would be enough reason to rejoice at the British

Broadcasting Corporation's latest export."[32] Both its reviewer, Fred Ferretti, and Cecil Smith of the *Los Angeles Times* presented lengthy descriptions of the first scene of the serial, depicting John Churchill and the Duchess of Cleveland frolicking in bed, until the return of her husband forces John to make his escape out the window.[33] A second *New York Times* commentary, two weeks later, added another British referent to its "bawdy" construction of the show: "[*The First Churchills*] is centered on sexual intrigue of the court of Charles II and seemed intent on being true to the bawdy spirit of the time, a la *Tom Jones*."[34] *Time*, for its part, chose a slight variation on the theme in calling the show as "a lusty historical chronicle of Restoration England."[35]

This focus on "bawdiness" was accompanied by a secondary focus of commentary on the series that sought to link it inseparably with *The Forsyte Saga* in their mutual employment of the serial form. The *Washington Post* preview, written by William Woods, told its readers: "[T]he overall air of high-class soap opera is the same [as the *Saga*].... In true daytime TV fashion, complications abound, nothing is resolved, and we end on a note of tension" (Woods C1). Molly Haskell, writing for *Vogue*, commented: "Proportions may vary, but the ingredients for the television serial remain constant, whether the subject is the Churchills or *One Man's Family*. The difference between a culturally ambitious project like *The Forsyte Saga* and a routine soap opera is one of degree -- superior acting and dialogue -- rather than kind."[36] Like the critical responses to *The Forsyte Saga*, these invocations of the soap opera continued the discourse of British superiority over American forms; even William Woods' commentary on the articulation of the *Churchills* to American soap opera -- "[It] is not meant as a negative criticism -- it was often an open opinion of the Forsyte series, and said with a smile" -- is at best patronizing (Woods C1). Haskell's response in turn suggests that a revulsion of soap opera and by implication its audience may be as much a function of class as it is of gender: The quality -- class -- inherent in British television productions made them worthy of attention, even if they were inevitably soiled by their immersion into the soap genre. As Haskell writes: "With such classics as *The Forsyte*

*Saga*, the medium has stretched itself; but often it seems that God and Galsworthy's work have been shrunk to accommodate rigidly mediocre demands" (Haskell 158).

To Mobil Oil, however, the linkage of sex and soap to what were already circulating as signifiers of "quality" around its new program was a marketing godsend. Public broadcasting and Mobil had created an unprecedented promotional campaign for *Masterpiece Theatre* and *The First Churchills*; when overnight ratings in New York indicated that the first two segments of the series had attracted more viewers than two of the city's independent commercial stations and as many as the third, Mobil paid to publicize the fact.[37] It also paid for a half-page ad in the Sunday *New York Times* of January 31, 1971, that brought together every element of the narrative image for *The First Churchills.* Titled "Who's Who in The First Churchills?," the ad visually featured photographs of individual characters arranged in a stairstep fashion down the page, employing the physical closeup central to the soap opera form, accompanied verbally by text that presented the "bawdiness" of the show and parodied the plot intricacies that defined its genre as well:

> John Churchill definitely loves the temperamental Sarah.
> But what was his relationship with Barbara, the seductive mistress of the bawdy, astute Charles II, King of England?
> And what is Sarah's relationship with Princess Anne, daughter of the intolerant James, Duke of York?
> Why did John fight Charles' illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth?
> Was it because of the unscrupulous Lord Shaftesbury?...
> How could the devious Robert Harley engineer John's downfall even though Sarah's best friend was Queen?
> Can no one help poor Sarah? Not even the honest Sidney Godolphin?

After requesting viewers not to miss a single episode, the ad reminds them that "Host Alistair Cooke gives a brief run-down of previous episodes before each new one."[38] In one space, then, Mobil Oil unites every utterance, visual or verbal, shaping an American reception of the series -- the Churchill name, Susan Hampshire's face, the program's British historical background, its sexual content, its connection to soaps, even Alistair Cooke. And to conclude the ad, it introduced a final utterance it hoped would be as important in shaping that reception as anything the producers or broadcasters might have suggested: printed in the largest typeface on the page, the single word "Mobil."[39]

Schmertz, Warner and company had succeeded in linking the lowest form of American television culture to the "quality" of unfamiliar British imports at the same time that they completed the reconfiguring of an audience-as-public into an audience-as-market.[40]

**The Masterpiece Builders**

With *The First Churchills* completing its run late in March 1970 a success, both for public television and for Mobil Oil, *Masterpiece Theatre* turned to what Christopher Sarton would later say the series was "supposed to do...serialized dramas of classic books."[41] BBC's serialized versions of Henry James' *The Spoils of Poynton*, Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* and Honore de Balzac's *Pere Goriot*, each of which was steered toward American consumption first by the prominent inclusion of the author's name in publicity and reviews and then by the introductions and benedictions of Alistair Cooke, filled out the first season. Even *TV Guide*, once skeptical of such "uplifting" BBC programming, joined in the creation of narrative image with a series of "Background" articles written by experts dealing with imported dramas (and some domestic documentaries) designed to "add to [the viewer's] enjoyment and understanding of the program."[42] The first "Background," by social critic and historian Irving Howe on *The Possessed*, recalled similar efforts by those commenting on *The Forsyte Saga* to find special meaning in the literary/television text that might apply to contemporary American life. Howe would write of Dostoevsky's novel:

> ...this book of another era and and an utterly different society reads almost as if it had been written with an eye toward present-day America. Rebellious idealism and nihilist destruction among the young, a loss of moral confidence in the upper classes, widespread social rot...ideological debate at once brilliant and deranged -- these are the materials of *The Possessed.* Open an American newspaper, read accounts of the Weathermen, Panthers and Crazies, and you can find glaring parallels (Howe 20).

Howe's employment of contemporary American referents to explicate the British television adaptation of a 19th-century Russian novel directly exemplifies how domestic utterances may be used in the assimilation of texts representing different societies and cultures. The specific referents he chooses, however, and the discourse in which he uses

them speak just as clearly to the political import of the British program. Howe's invocation of the most revolutionary elements of the American New Left (specious at best given the status of those organizations in May 1971) in rhetoric of "nihilist destruction," "social rot" and "deranged" debate makes the BBC's *The Possessed* a vessel of political criticism fit to sail with Nixon-Agnew-Buchanan railings against "radical liberals" and "hard-core dissidents."[43] As such, his article merely restates the point made by reviewers of *The Forsyte Saga*: Contemporary America had lost all sense of continuity and order. The decision by *TV Guide* to run Howe's essay also revealed the magazine's growing political agenda -- one that, like the stance of the Nixon White House, saw public broadcasting as an ideal forum for quality drama imported from Britain that might represent contemporary concerns to a specific and high-profile audience but that would do nothing to criticize the institutional sources of those concerns.[44] The involvement of a major oil company in bringing those dramas to that audience made them all the more safe.[45]

The cultural elevation and political safety afforded by the import of British programming was, after the success of both*The Forsyte Saga* and the initial run of Mobil-funded *Masterpiece Theatre* episodes, finally something that American commercial networks could not ignore. In late March 1971, CBS announced that it had purchased the six-episode BBC series *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* for summer broadcast.[46] Network publicity, perhaps reacting to a fear that such a presentation on CBS prime time might be perceived merely as *Search for Tudor's Morrow*, stressed that the program was not, strictly speaking, a serialized drama: While the king would indeed age, each episode was self-contained and dealt with the story of a specific wife.[47] Nonetheless, the generic ties to *The Forsyte Saga* and *Masterpiece Theatre* provided a ready frame for the commercial networks and their audiences, and were exploited in publicity including a *TV Guide* note quoting a BBC official who found *Six Wives* "far superior" to *The First Churchills*.[48]

To enhance the "quality" of its presentation, CBS followed exactly the frame WGBH and Mobil had given *Masterpiece Theatre* by employing an interlocutor -- British

actor Anthony Quayle -- who would preview each program and provide necessary historical and cultural background.[49] While public broadcasting might provide the production model, as well as the cultural and political *raisons d'etre* for CBS' broadcast of *Six Wives*, it would not, however, provide the financial model. The commercial network, after announcing the procurement of *Six Wives*, could not find a sole corporate backer to pay off the reported $800,000 investment the network had made; instead, it relied on selling spot advertisements as it might for *Hee Haw*.[50] That backing would come for a different distributor, however, when CPB and PBS, which had already received in the summer a well-publicized new Mobil grant of $1.12 million for two more seasons of *Masterpiece Theatre*, would announce 10 days after CBS began its broadcast that *Six Wives* and its sequel, *Elizabeth R*, would be added to the series' 1971-72 schedule.[51]

Despite its disappointment at not being able to find an equivalent to Mobil to sponsor *Six Wives*, CBS was able to use a narrative image developed largely from *The Forsyte Saga* and *Masterpiece Theatre*, as well as the relative familiarity of the story of Henry VIII, to promote the series with considerable skill and resources. Reviews praised the commercial network for taking on "quality" material that seemed to be the province only of noncommercial television; as John Leonard would write (with no apparent irony) in his *Life* review: "[T]his time American commercial television hasn't been caught with its sitcoms down around its knees; why let public television give away for free what the networks can get sponsored?"[52] The attention and praise heaped on CBS, which proved a blessed distraction from the embarrassing and just-completed Congressional hearings on *The Selling of the Pentagon*, so interested NBC that it followed suit with its own six-part historical BBC import in February 1972: *The Search for the Nile*, a not-quite-serial, not-quite-episodic recounting of the efforts of 19th-century British adventurers to find the origin of the Nile.[53] NBC repeated that venture into "quality" with one it hoped would resonate even deeper with the *Masterpiece Theatre* audience: *America*, Alistair Cooke's 13-part "personal history" of the United States and the project that almost kept him from

assuming the host's chair on the Mobil-PBS series.[54] However deep the resonance may have been with that audience, however, it did not travel much more widely. Ratings for *America* were dismal, and the show eventually rejoined its creator on PBS.[55]

The failure of British serial dramas and documentary series to attract large ratings on American commercial networks and their subsequent return to public television did indicate that a gap still existed between the two systems' constructions of audience. The commercial networks and their advertisers remained tethered to the notion of quantity, even though the strategy of streamlining was taking hold; public television, meanwhile, with its ordained transmissive function, seemed a more plausible home for "entertainment" programming structured (with Alistair Cooke as lecturer) as educative. Nonetheless, the fact that programs such as *Six Wives* and *America* could travel back and forth between the two systems demonstrated that the gap was narrowing, a situation that served the commercial purposes of Mobil Oil well. With Mobil providing and marketing the quality in *Masterpiece Theatre* from which the quantity-based commercial networks shied away, viewers who cared about that quality would turn from those networks, it hoped, thereby reducing their all-important ratings, and with that, their power. In the end, Mobil believed, public broadcasting would gain viewers and support, *Masterpiece Theatre* would gain public attention, and Mobil would gain the philanthropic prestige it needed on the one hand to carry forth its political mission with the other. Central to that plan was Mobil's own understanding, developed out of commercial media, of its PBS audience as a market.[56]

*Masterpiece Theatre*, as a result, survived and grew during the bleakest period in the relationship between the Public Broadcasting Service and the federal government it relied on. Mobil and WGBH attempted to ensure its future by choosing BBC serials whose narrative image might easily be established for an American audience. Within two years, each of the authors serialized in the first season of the show (except Churchill) was represented by a second masterpiece (*The Golden Bowl*, *The Gambler*, *Cousin Bette*). Susan Hampshire made another return to American public broadcasting with her starring

role as Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair*; other actors and actresses began to become familiar faces as they moved from one story to the next.[57] The "masterpiece" designation, already stretched by the inclusion of *The First Churchills*, was allowed to bend further to give American viewers familiar adventures (*The Last of the Mohicans*) and mysteries (Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone*; Dorothy Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey novels) in addition to canonized literary classics.[58] And the *Masterpiece Theatre* broadcast of *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* was followed immediately by its showing of *Elizabeth R*, creating what critic Katie Kelly would call "a sort of Tudor *One Man's Family*, elegant television viewing and a painless way to learn some history."[59]

While Mobil's plans for *Masterpiece Theatre* and public television were well-conceived and charted, however, they did not come to fruition with quite the ripeness the oil company had imagined. Despite its efforts, with WGBH, to build the popularity of the series by using an accumulation of signifiers representing quality television intertextually, the audience for *Masterpiece Theatre* declined rapidly after its showing of *Six Wives* and *Elizabeth R* in the late winter of 1972. By the time *Vanity Fair* made its American debut in November of that year, what had been an 8 rating in New York was down to a 1; similar drops in viewership across the entirety of the PBS primetime schedule were noted in other major public broadcasting markets including Washington, Minneapolis and Los Angeles.[60] *Variety*, as a matter of course, attributed the decline to the unadventurous programming PBS had to present in order to appease the Nixon administration.[61] What also seems evident in the case of *Masterpiece Theatre*, however, is a rhetorical limit to intertextuality and the creation of narrative image. The title *Vanity Fair* represented a text with which many of the likely viewers of *Masterpiece Theatre* had some familiarity; that familiarity, however, may well have worked against its acceptance by an American audience that either believed it knew the literary text well enough from high school or college or had no desire for any further contact with it. As John Ellis notes, narrative image is "a series of enigmas, of questions whose answers can (usually) be found in the film itself."[62] By itself, the title

*Vanity Fair*, even with whatever "enigmas" the presence of Susan Hampshire raised, answered more questions than many viewers evidently wished to have addressed.[63]

More importantly, given the role Mobil wished to play in larger cultural and political arenas, the first seasons of *Masterpiece Theatre* coincided with ever-louder criticism of Mobil and other oil companies for their part in the growing American energy crisis. A post-World War II strategy to shift production from North America to the Middle East in order to decrease costs and increase profits began to backfire in 1971 with the establishment of OPEC and its institution of price hikes on crude oil. As a result, American oil corporations found themselves having to explain why their profits were skyrocketing while gasoline and oil seemed to be getting more and more expensive and less and less available.[64] When Arab nations imposed an embargo on shipments of oil to the United States and Western Europe following their war with Israel in October 1973, the response against oil companies seen already as complicitous in the high prices and low supply of petroleum products was so negative that Mobil sources themselves referred to it as causing "permanent damage to the credibility of the entire industry" (Jarvik 265). Mobil, Exxon and others had hoped that their patronage of programming on PBS would convince the public of their worth to American society and culture. Instead, events had increased both a general public loathing and a specific desire on the part of many major opinion leaders, including Congressional representatives, to rein them in, much as President Nixon had hoped to rein in network news and public television organizations.[65] The drop in viewership on the service it funded so heavily may have been yet another symptom of the oil industry's rapid decline in trust and prestige; in any case, the need was greater than ever for Mobil to find a way to polish its public image, at least among the "opinion leaders" it most hoped to attract. It found what it was looking for in a British import introduced on *Masterpiece Theatre* in the middle of the embargo, a serial drama without literary antecedent that would come to stand as the crowning achievement of Mobil's vision and the ultimate moment in the domestication of quality BBC imports to the commercial model of American television.

**For Whom the Bellamys Toil**

As had been the case with the commercial British imports of the 1960s and the first *Masterpiece Theatre* presentations, news of *Upstairs, Downstairs* arrived in America well in advance of the show itself. *Variety* ran a review of the program, which followed the lives of the upper-class Bellamy family and their domestic staff in Edwardian London, in December 1972, calling it "class merchandise, produced and played with style, conviction and sustained dramatic intent" and noting a "reported American pickup interest" in the show.[66] Leading British television critic Clive James, in a March 1973 article for *TV Guide* on current British programming, referred to *Upstairs, Downstairs* as a "soap opera that rises above itself...[the show], about a grand family of the untroubled pre-1914 period and the servants who serve loyally through all manner of functions, should have no trouble running for the next century."[67] As James' article pointed out, however, there was a significant difference between *Upstairs, Downstairs* and other serialized costume dramas imported under the *Masterpiece Theatre* aegis: *Upstairs, Downstairs* was a product of British commercial television, not the BBC. According to Richard Price, chairman of London Weekend Television, the producers and British distributors of the show, its commercial background was anathema to executives of CPB, PBS and WGBH, who, aside from the prestige associated with the "otherness" of the BBC, were concerned about the abbreviated length (52 minutes) of the show. That was not a concern, however, of one other interested party; as Price reports: "Then Herb Schmertz of Mobil saw it and liked it.... The problems were solved when Herb convinced the US public broadcasters that it really was a brilliant series...."[68] Given the Mobil imprimatur, CPB and WGBH purchased 13 of the first 26 episodes produced by LWT for broadcast on *Masterpiece Theatre* beginning in January 1974.[69]

Anxious to re-establish the franchise upon which its public image effort was based, Mobil increased publicity for its new *Masterpiece Theatre* presentation and was rewarded with several preview articles in major daily newspapers. Those previews again focused on

the ties between the new *Upstairs, Downstairs* and previous serial dramas. Robert McLean, writing in the *Boston Globe*, said that the "comedy-drama series of manners and morals...may rival, if not outstrip, *The Forsyte Saga* in American television popularity."[70] John Carmody of the *Washington Post* cited Alistair Cooke's reference to the series as "'a *Forsyte Saga* done upside down,' an apparent reference to the unusual 'downstairs' view of 'upstairs' codes and the periodic breaking thereof."[71] The *New York Times*, using a two-column photo, introduced the new drama in its cutline: "Thanks to the BBC, via public TV's *Masterpiece Theatre*, we've met the early Churchills, Henry VIII, Elizabeth I and the famed Forsytes, among others. Starting tonight...we'll be spending 13 class-structured weeks *Upstairs, Downstairs*, a comedy-drama set in an Edwardian household."[72]

Again, the American reception of a new British historical serial drama was directed by references to those that had preceded it -- including *The Forsyte Saga.* Indeed, the New York *Times* preview went to far as to make the erroneous implication -- soon to become a commonplace -- that *Upstairs, Downstairs* was a BBC show, thereby revealing the naturalized connection between American public broadcasting and its British predecessor. The references to American soap operas returned as well, with Carmody calling the program "one of those high-grade soap operas the British seem to do so well," and McLean assuring his readers (much as CBS assured the viewers of *Six Wives*) that each "chapter" will be "a self-contained story, without close episodic ties."[73] Mobil, in its own newspaper promotion of the new series, also drew from an assumed knowledge of *Masterpiece Theatre* predecessors and comparisons to soap operas, but with a very different frame from that used by reviewers. In an ad published the day of the first *Upstairs, Downstairs* broadcast and perfectly representing the audience-as-market paradigm discussed by Ang, a formal photograph of a couple seated before a group of men and women wearing high collars, aprons and bonnets sat atop the sentence, printed in large type: "Behind these sober faces lurk 13 weeks of sex, intrigue, jealousy -- and just plain fun." The ad goes on to identify Richard and Marjorie Bellamy as the "elegant" couple and their eight servants -- the

"downstairs staff" -- as the people in the photograph. "Everyone looks so starchy and prim," the ad continues, "you'd never expect the goings-on upstairs and down. And especially between 'upstairs' and 'downstairs.'" Having peddled the show on the one hand as at least "lusty," if not "bawdy," Mobil's publicity then moved its British drama upstairs from the lubricious banality of American soap opera while peddling its own mission by telling viewers: "Each episode of the 13-week series is a complete play (and, often as not, a complete scandal)."[74] With utterances thus arranged to signify finally a quality British program and a quality audience to match -- an audience interested in "complete plays," not TV shows -- *Upstairs, Downstairs* began its three-year American run on January 6, 1974.

What American viewers saw in "On Trial," the first "complete play" of *Upstairs, Downstairs*, however, had very little to do with what was described in Mobil's ad. The most overt discussion of sex or scandal came in Alistair Cooke's opening remarks about King Edward VII, "...the big bearded monarch, with an enormous appetite for bed and board, nonetheless known as Edward the Peacemaker."[75] Aside from the opening scene, depicting the arrival of a young woman at a London household from the exterior, the entire show was taped using interior sets, repeating the visual motif of both the BBC imports that had preceded it on *Masterpiece Theatre* and American daytime soap operas. The slow camera movement, lack of quick cuts and reliance upon close-ups and two-shots also replicated the visual rhetoric of American daytime serials, just as the segmentation of its various storylines (suggested in the title of the series) replicated their structure.[76] The "goings-on" between upstairs and down, meanwhile, were limited to exactly what one might expect from a master-servant relationship: courteous command on the one hand; courteous deference on the other. The plot of "On Trial," rather than considering some salacious morals charge against Lord Bellamy for his assault on a staff member, dealt instead with the "trial," first existential and then mock-judicial, faced by a new maid unwilling to accept the rigid class distinctions that defined her place in the house and in society, and that other members of the domestic service not only accepted but proudly

upheld. The moment of greatest "intrigue" in the show occurred in the final scene, when the new maid, Sarah, has her hair brushed by Rose, the house parlor maid and the person with whom she shares a bed. Whatever readings are possible from the setting, however, the scene exists primarily for Rose to tell Sarah how she came to work in service, and to allow Sarah to tell Rose that being a maid "...is not so bad -- it's safe. You know where you are and you know what's going to happen next. The world outside is dangerous."[77]

Whether they saw the program as frothy sexual intrigue, a realistic portrait of British class hierarchy, or simply an evening's entertainment, viewers responded to *Upstairs, Downstairs* in numbers that vindicated Mobil's belief in and promotion of the program. Overnight ratings in New York indicated that the show had attracted a larger audience than two of the three independent stations, and had done almost as well as the third.[78] *TV Guide*, while not presenting a "Background" feature on the show, addressed its success quickly. Cleveland Amory's review of the program began with yet another invocation to John Galsworthy: "Ever since the BBC's *The Forsyte Saga* made such a smash, PBS has been casting about for another hit. And where better to look than good old England?... If *Upstairs, Downstairs* is good -- and it is very, very good -- it's because it's about old times but is not old hat."[79] More importantly, the magazine presented, even before the Amory review, a profile of Jean Marsh, the actress who played Rose and, as the profile revealed, was co-creator of the show. As she told the magazine, Marsh and fellow actress Eileen Atkins were regaling each other with stories of their parents' work in domestic service when the idea dawned on them to turn those stories into a television series.[80] Marsh's anecdote quickly became incorporated into the continuing publicity effort for the series, presenting the character of Jean/Rose as a metonymic figure for women had advanced from domestic servitude (whether to the Bellamys in *Upstairs, Downstairs* or to all the Darrin Stephenses in *Bewitched* and countless other home-based situation comedies) to important work outside the home -- in the case of Jean/Rose, creating mass entertainment spectacles.[81] John Fiske considers such conflation of actor and character as presented in

the popular press as a playful "conspiracy" between viewers and journalists that demonstrates the multivocal nature of both the representational and the "real."[82] Mobil's use of that conflation, however, would prove less playful than directive, as its publicity effort employed Jean/Rose in a clear attempt to attract similar "quality" women to its *Masterpiece Theatre* audience. Indeed, Jean/Rose became so central to the public image of *Upstairs, Downstairs* in America that Mobil's ads for the serial in its next three runs merely featured a line-drawing caricature of the character with the announcement that the show was back for its second/third/ fourth season.[83]

The end of the serial's first 13-episode sequence on *Masterpiece Theatre* coincided almost exactly with the end of the OPEC oil embargo.[84] Mobil had survived its darkest hours in recent history, and the corporation saw its support of the PBS series in general and *Upstairs, Downstairs* in particular as central to its ability to fend off public and political criticism. "On the cultural front," an internal history later reported, "the highlight of this period was Mobil's introduction in January 1974 of the Bellamy family to the American public on *Upstairs, Downstairs*, perhaps the best remembered of all Mobil's television productions" (Jarvik 265). The wording employed by Mobil in its history, however, is revealing of both the company's consideration of audience and the conflicts present in how that audience was being guided to appreciate and understand the show. As Alistair Cooke would note in his introduction to "On Trial," *Upstairs, Downstairs* was as much about the servant staff, "a little, complete society of its own -- a downstairs society intended by God, so its betters said, to minister for life to upstairs society," as it was the patricians who employed them.[85] Yet in Mobil's own understanding of the series, even with its public dependence on the figure of Jean/Rose, the downstairs society mattered little: It was "the Bellamy family" upon which that understanding focused, just as it was the contemporary American version of the Bellamys -- societal leaders blessed with educational and cultural capital -- that Mobil wanted to watch its program. This did not mean that an increase in ratings was something to be avoided; indeed, the more viewers who would buy Mobil's

presentation of its corporate decency, the better. As Mobil's Rawleigh Warner would note in 1975: "[I]t was not enough just to say the things we felt worthwhile, but to win a big enough audience that would read what we were saying" (Jarvik 265). But, as Jane Feuer argues, quality television requires quality viewers -- the modern equivalent of the Bellamys.[86] That *Upstairs, Downstairs* could attract those quality viewers in the numbers it did meant to Mobil that its campaign to improve its public image by defining a particular public as an audience to be controlled -- and market to be sold -- was working.

*Upstairs, Downstairs*, then, served as a representation not merely of the class divisions of Edwardian England but of the class divisions of Nixonian America made visible in constructions of "public" and "audience" for television based on demographics and made possible by the government's animus toward public broadcasting. Sander Vanocur, by the end of Nixon's presidency shed of his controversial public television duties and working as a controversial television columnist for the *Washington Post*, argued in a commentary on *Upstairs, Downstairs* that the mass orientation of television rendered class an invisible, if not archaic, element of American life, replaced by the phenomenon of demographics.[87] Yet the rationale employed by Mobil for the presentation of both the specific serial he was addressing and the series of which it was a part was one based overtly on class distinction, defined by Bourdieu's criteria of educational and cultural capital in addition to economic capital, just as was the BBC model employed by the Corporation of Public Broadcasting in establishing the American public television system that presented *Upstairs, Downstairs* and *Masterpiece Theatre*.[88] Alistair Cooke recognized the class distinction immediately, as he would report later: "I loved *Upstairs, Downstairs*. When I first saw it, my reaction was, 'I'll be amazed if this thing doesn't really hit the headlines. It's marvelous. It allows you to identify with the downstairs people while vicariously enjoying the life of the upstairs people'" (O'Flaherty 13). Cooke's comment on the serial, however, diametrically opposes the view offered from the Mobil perspective: Rather than allowing the viewer to identify with the servants and vicariously enjoy the lives

of the Bellamys, *Upstairs, Downstairs* invited its ideal American viewer to identify with the Bellamys (as did Mobil) and vicariously enjoy the scandalous "goings-on" downstairs.

Readings of the success of *Upstairs, Downstairs* exemplified by those of Cooke and Mobil both err in their narrowness, however, because of the way the series functioned on a third level: as a representation of distinctions in televisual forms. Not since the first Mobil ad for *The First Churchills* had the divide between the "upstairs" of "quality" British historical drama and the "downstairs" of soap opera been exhibited so explicitly in a *Masterpiece Theatre* program. The lack of a literary antecedent made the split all the more visible, as did the show's origins in British commercial television.[89] The task facing the viewer of *Upstairs, Downstairs* was therefore one of negotiating that particularly evident divide -- a negotiation, to put the problem into terms established by Stuart Hall, between readings preferred both separately and jointly by Mobil and a public broadcasting service operating under Nixonian constraints, and one rejecting the parameters of quality and public service in favor of the oft-benighted pleasures of serial drama.[90]

The processes of that negotiation might appear to be truncated in the instance of *Upstairs, Downstairs*, as the audience Mobil and PBS had attracted was as defined by quality, in terms of cultural capital, as *Masterpiece Theatre* was itself. Certainly many of the commentators discussing the program in American quality media followed the Mobil-PBS lines, echoing film critic Richard Schickel's appraisal for *Time*: "*Upstairs, Downstairs* holds an elegantly framed mirror up to a perenially fascinating historical moment."[91] The audience sought by Mobil and PBS was as well-served by the "elegant" quality of a "fascinating" time and place (long ago and far away, of course) as they were by the writers they read in the *Times*, the *Post* and other journals of record. An essay by Nora Ephron in another "quality" publication indicated, though, how that dominant framework might be restructured, and how the split between quality British drama and tawdry American soap opera could be negotiated quite creatively. Written by an "upstairs" woman -- as a popular essayist and journalist, Ephron was among Mobil's prized "opinion leadership" -- for the

"gentleman's monthly" *Esquire* , "Missing Hazel" presents a discussion of *Upstairs, Downstairs* involving three friends, written in the discourse of soap opera conversation:

> My friend Kenny does not feel as bad about the death of Hazel as I do. My friend Ann has been upset about it for days. My friend Martha is actually glad Hazel is dead. I cried when Hazel died, but only for a few seconds, partly because I wasn't surprised. About three months ago, someone told me she was going to die, and since then I have watched every show expecting it to be her last.[92]

Kenny, Ann, Martha and Nora run through many of the plot twists of the past season of the series, pausing to offer their comments on many of the characters: James Bellamy is "a big baby"; Hudson the butler has become "a mealy-mouthed hypocrite"; but Rose, well, "Even Martha loves Rose." They also acknowledge the role that Alistair Cooke has played in their viewing of the series and allow as to how they already know that Hudson and Mrs. Bridges are going to get married because it "was mentioned in the obituary of the actress who played Mrs. Bridges."[93] In the end, the four devotees finally agree on a few matters: Rose needs to find a man; Lady Marjorie is missed; it's dangerous to know too much in advance; most of all, "we all wish *Upstairs, Downstairs* would last forever" (Ephron 33).

Ephron's humorous essay offers a good deal more insight about the appeal of *Upstairs, Downstairs* than do serious analyses such as those of Vanocur or Schickel. It demonstrates, first and foremost, the importance of the most basic conventions of soap opera to at least some members of the "quality" audience of *Masterpiece Theatre*: the multiple characters and stories (and the multiple readings/meanings they allow); the centrality of women characters; the recognition of the power of emotion, here tempered with its class constraints. It also points out the significance of what Fiske terms "secondary" and "tertiary" intertextuality (respectively, the obituary for Angela Baddeley and the knowledge gained from conversation with other viewers) in shaping expectations for the show, as well as the significance -- or lack thereof -- of the deliberate framing messages presented by Alistair Cooke.[94] In its presentation of the series as dialogue, however, as a collection of utterances concerning *Upstairs, Downstairs* that bounce back

and forth between the conversants both reflecting and shaping their perceptions of the program, Ephron's essay notably lacks one significant utterance: Mobil Oil.

It is possible to view this lacuna as a sort of strategic absence, representing a naturalized knowledge of the sponsor.[95] The whole thrust of Mobil's promotion of *Masterpiece Theatre* and *Upstairs, Downstairs* though, was *not* to be recognized merely as a aponsor but to achieve a growing level of public awareness of its role as cultural provider -- in other words, to become a naturalized element of the new marketplace of public television. Ephron's article shows that while Mobil's choice of vehicle for its campaign may well have worked as an example of the seductive process of hegemony -- Kenny, Ann, Martha and Nora were, after all, consenting with glee to be part of the audience that Mobil wished to create -- recognition of the corporation itself as patron, at least to some of its audience, was less important than recognition of the wine Hudson was serving with the evening meal. As such, Ephron's essay suggests that the construction of an audience as market, particularly a construction employing signifiers as radically opposing in terms of class, gender and national origin as did Mobil's promotion of *Upstairs, Downstairs*, creates a space for negotiation with or around the transmissive message. To argue that the conversation created by Ephron represents actual resistance to the meanings Mobil and PBS were transmitting to their viewers stretches the point further than it will bear: That sort of resistance could best be found in the comments of those criticizing PBS as "the Petroleum Broadcasting Service" for its increasing reliance on the corporate sponsorships of oil companies.[96] But Ephron's essay does represent, following Mary Ellen Brown's arguments concerning the ideological import of soap opera conversation, the activity of an audience in creating meaning not circumscribed by the designs of those transmitting a message, and that may in fact work to some degree against those designs.[97]

As *Upstairs, Downstairs* entered its final series in January-May 1977, however, commentary like Ephron's was replaced by more serious recapitulations of the show, similar to those visited upon *The Forsyte Saga*, frequently given a *fin de siecle* cast. Judith

Martin of the *Washington Post* wrote: "[A]s a modern viewer, you know you are being pulled toward a society in which great staffed houses can no longer exist. It is with a sinking feeling that we watch as every sign of what we used to call progress...."[98] John J. O'Connor, echoing the words written about *The Forsyte Saga* seven years before by his predecessor at the *New York Times*, Jack Gould, noted that the appeal of *Upstairs, Downstairs* lay finally in "the security of order" that it presented: "[T]his concept of order may fascinate a good many Americans precisely because so much of our own history seems to be marked by disorder and chaos."[99] Anthony Lewis, on the op-ed page of the *Times* and other newspapers to which his column was syndicated, argued that the quality of the series lay not just in its presentation of the romance of an ordered class structure but in its evocation of the "realities" of World War I, the character of the English and the hostilities inherent in the class system, as opposed to what familiar American genres offered.[100] Even Jean Marsh joined the discussion, noting in a guest feature for the *Washington Post*: "The class structure in England is supported by all the classes...I think this is partly what appeals to viewers in *Upstairs, Downstairs*. The sense of order and unquestioned authority has disappeared, and people adrift in today's world hanker for a discipline imposed on them whether by God or man."[101] Ephron's *Esquire* article had demonstrated, however, that it was not just a hypothesized yearning for order, fascination with class or appreciation of historical mimetics that drew viewers to *Upstairs, Downstairs*. It was also and instead the pleasures inherent in the serial form -- the apparently mundane concerns of character and plot, the intimacy with which they are presented, and the communal sharing of those concerns outside the text itself -- that kept viewers interested in the show. John O'Connor's farewell column, in addition to his analysis of the show's popularity, noted that his own viewer mail about *Upstairs, Downstairs* had been unprecedented. The mail he cites, however, dealt not with the sociological aspects he divined in the drama but with the effect of Hudson's heart attack on the Bellamy household and viewers' anger at having the plotline of the final episode revealed in a newspaper article

(perhaps the Angela Baddeley obituary Ephron referred to).[102]

More significant than any of this, however, and almost completely elided in the final commentaries on the series, in attracting viewers to *Upstairs, Downstairs* was the work of Mobil Oil in publicizing the serial and *Masterpiece Theatre*.[103] With the failure of the Nixon administration to support public broadcasting financially and the restructurings of the terms "public" and "service" embodied in the definition of PBS establishing the groundwork for their effort, Mobil succeeded, with *Masterpiece Theatre* as a whole and *Upstairs, Downstairs* in particular, in shifting American noncommercial broadcasting back to the paradigms defining commercial television. Nowhere was this more visible than in a two-page ad Mobil placed in the Sunday New York *Times* announcing the final season of the serial. The familiar drawing of Rose, this time headed with "*Masterpiece Theatre* presents the final, 'Roaring 20s' season of *Upstairs, Downstairs*," occupied the left page; the right page consisted of what varied only in subject matter from one of Mobil's op-ed advocacy advertisements. Titled "A World Series Champion, 1974-1977," thereby redefining a British import in terms of the great American pastime, the ad brought together every element of the show's assimilation under Mobil's corporate logo. There were the references to what made the show "literate television" -- "its sure evocation of Edwardian London, its superb cast and its rich story-telling" -- as well as the familiar assertion that its success demonstrates "that there is an appetite among American television viewers for television drama of quality and intelligence." There were the examples of mail Mobil received from those viewers -- mail that grieved over the loss of Marjorie Bellamy in the sinking of the *Titanic*, and mail that was furious that Mobil had allowed such a plot development to occur. There were the requisite quotes from the "opinion leaders" who, aided substantially by Mobil's public relations department, wrote favorably about the show for quality newspapers and magazines, many of which ordinarily opposed the actions of oil companies.[104] There was a hearty clap on the back for Mobil itself, both for underwriting *Masterpiece Theatre* and for recognizing the merit of *Upstairs, Downstairs* when "many

people claimed it would, as they say in broadcasting, bomb." There was a congratulatory plug for London Weekend Television, with a final reminder that *Upstairs, Dowstairs* had not been produced by the BBC. Finally, and most significantly, there was the assertion that American commercial networks had, in their own broadcasts of serialized dramas, come to "acknowledge the appeal of serialized television drama in prime time." *Upstairs, Downstairs*, of course, was still the best of the lot.[105]

Mobil's ad, in short, represented *Upstairs, Downstairs* not as a triumph of a public broadcasting service but as a pinnacle of achivement both for itself and for commercial television and its genres.[106] The viewer involvement for which American daytime soap opera had so long been mocked was here presented as proof of the quality of *Upstairs, Downstairs* and the literacy of its viewers. The fact that the commercial networks, against which Mobil's longstanding animus was still strong, were now trying to copy the serial's success merely indicated the degree to which Mobil and London Weekend Television had beaten them at their own game.[107] *Upstairs, Downstairs* was no longer something very different, a tributary that trickled in from some distant and foggy peak -- it had not only joined the mainstream, Mobil argued, but redirected the course of the river. The corporation's sponsorship of *Masterpiece Theatre* had used the differences inherent in British television imports to foreground the shortcomings, at least as seen by the audience Mobil hoped to speak to, of American commercial networks. With *Upstairs, Downstairs*, it further achieved the proof of the superiority of its British programs by foregrounding its success according to the criteria set by those commercial networks: time on air; (comparative) ratings power; viewer response, both direct and indirect; commercial production base -- and, finally, its use as a commodifiable product. While toy shelves were not occupied by Rose and Hudson dolls or scale models of 165 Eaton Place and the Bellamys' automobile as they had been by similar products following the Bond films and spy series of the 1960s, *Upstairs, Downstairs* did give rise to a thriving book industry, befitting the nature of its audience: novelizations of the show, cookbooks featuring Mrs.

Bridges' recipes, Mr. Hudson's purported secret diaries.[108] As those books indicated, the most easily commodified elements of the show were the characters themselves -- Rose, after all, had served as Mobil's print image for the series in each of its last three seasons. PBS, with the conclusion of the series' run as part of *Masterpiece Theatre*, decided to capitalize on the familiarity of those characters by flying eight of the *Upstairs, Downstairs* cast members to Boston to take part in a special national fund drive for the network following the final episode. Featuring Jean Marsh and hosted by Alistair Cooke, the program included conversation with each of the actors and clips from the series while viewers phoned in pledges. To stimulate the donations, however, WGBH producers decided to rely upon American television's most blatant representation of the spectacle of commodity -- the game show -- as it pitted the cast members representing "upstairs" against those representing "downstairs" in a contest to see which could bring in the most money.[109] It became, like many game shows in John Fiske's analysis of the genre, an opportunity for those endowed with educational and cultural capital to show their superiority, both to the hoi polloi and to each other -- only this time, in an ironic twist, the display required actual financial capital.[110] Though the actors, now the assumed "prizes" of the competition, were evidently flummoxed by the turn of events, their effectiveness as fetishized commodity was unprecedented, at least for PBS: The network received pledges for more than $1.7 million dollars in the hour.[111]

**Orders of the Day**

Two weeks before the premiere of the final season of *Upstairs, Downstairs*, WETA-TV in Washington, DC, began presenting reruns of *The Forsyte Saga* on both a daily and weekly basis. "[A] lot has happened to television saga-telling in those 6 1/2 years," wrote the *Washington Post*'s Judith Martin in her appreciation of the series, but to judge from the tenor of her article -- accompanied by a Forsyte family portrait very similar to those of the Bellamys and staff Mobil and WGBH circulated with each new series of

*Upstairs, Downstairs* episodes -- very little had changed.[112] The comparisons with the invidious American daytime soap form were still notable; the realistic and detailed presentation of British social and political history was still laudable. The technology was different, as she acknowledged -- one was black-and-white, one color -- and while the *Saga* had the authorial presences of John Galsworthy and the BBC, *Upstairs, Downstairs* had the mythically common origin of two women sharing dreams in a swimming pool and the commonly denigrated origin of a commercial television studio. Otherwise, as two dramas about English families facing problems with the class and cultural distinctions that defined their society, as well as problems with "sex, intrigue and jealousy," in the visual rhetoric of the television serial, not much had happened between *The Forsyte Saga* and *Upstairs, Downstairs* at all.

Though the texts themselves exhibited little change, much had gone on with the contexts in which they were presented. *The Forsyte Saga* came to the United States almost literally on a wing and a prayer, with next to no notice. *Upstairs, Downstairs* arrived as part of an established series, paid for and heavily promoted by one of the country's largest corporations at a time when that corporation was facing governmental and public approbation. The person most responsible for that development had left his job in disgrace two and a half years earlier. *Upstairs, Downstairs* was as much a legacy to Richard Nixon's quest for an order in broadcasting that would suit his needs and desires as it was the efforts of Mobil Oil: Without the former, expressed in the privation he visited upon public broadcasting, the latter would not have been necessary -- or, to address it from Mobil's perspective, the opportunity would not have presented itself. Nixon is almost a forgotten man in the commentary on *Upstairs, Downstairs*. Only Michael Arlen, in a 1974 appreciation of *Upstairs, Downstairs* for *The New Yorker*, cites the Nixon administration's meanness as the cause of an American public broadcasting system forced to rely on British imports instead of being able to develop its own programming.[113] And Anthony Lewis, in his retrospective piece on the Bellamy household saga, gives Nixon a backhanded salute:

> More than anything else, it simply demonstrated how much better British television is than American. This was not some elevated BBC special but a serial produced by a commercial company. And it managed to avoid violence, gross vulgarity and the mawkishness of such American soap operas as 'Richard Nixon, Richard Nixon'(Lewis, 19).

Lewis' summoning of the Watergate hearings (via the Norman Lear soap opera satire *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*), televised in full by the public broadcasting service Nixon so feared and loathed, serves as a reminder of the limits to the president's quest: By the time of Lewis' encomium, Gerald Ford had already signed one long-term federal funding arrangement for public broadcasting; a second was in the works.[114] However much a victory that funding might have seemed to those favoring a freer voice for public television, it merely masked the permanent changes Nixon's policies had wrought with the medium. PBS was now institutionally beholden to its individual local stations for approval of programming, a development that in fact accorded with the Carnegie Commission's design for public broadcasting but which, under the guidance of the Nixon administration, had made the network much less a threat to its federal funding source.[115] And while the Public Broadcasting Act of 1975 guaranteed federal funding at a greater level than any approved by the Nixon administration, it masked the fact that increased federal funding was only replacing relative losses in state and local funding that had occurred since the beginning of the decade. In the meantime, corporate financial support for public broadcasting increased by more than 900 percent from 1971, when Mobil introduced *Masterpiece Theatre*, to 1976, just before the conclusion of *Upstairs, Downstairs.*[116]

British television became an inherent element of the Nixon plan to order public television in his image. Its significance as quality television in America meant that public television, with its Arnoldian mission to provide the best in culture, was its proper home; that quality in turn kept it safe from criticism while at the same time limiting the ability of public broadcasting to criticize. While British programs were thus guided one way toward American assimilation by the Nixon administration, corporations, including first and foremost Mobil Oil, saw the viewers who watched PBS British programming as a quality

audience -- as opposed to an active public -- that could be targeted for messages representing those corporations as valuable political and cultural entities in American society. In so doing, corporations further truncated the varying utterances of otherness represented in that British programming as it brought the whole of public television into the "our-own-ness" of commercial American television -- a deal that was sealed, as Anthony Lewis notes, with the success of quality commercial import *Upstairs, Downstairs*.[117]

Whether or not Mobil "sold" the quality audience of *Upstairs, Downstairs* its message of corporate worth was still a matter of debate, however: Studies done by Mobil indicated both that the groups of opinion leaders it sought to attract had softened their attitudes toward the corporation during the first decade of its sponsorship of *Masterpiece Theatre*, and that the general public had developed a greater recognition of the company as a leader in both oil production and cultural beneficence.[118] As the conversations about the series as typified by Nora Ephron and the mail cited by critics and Mobil itself suggest, however, viewers of *Upstairs, Downstairs* themselves were far more interested in the fates of Rose, Hudson and the Bellamys than they were in the public standing of their corporate underwriter. The communal conversations about the serial, in other words, acted as a counterpoint to the message Mobil hoped to send, just as the ritual paradigm defined by Carey serves as a necessary counterpoint to the paradigm of transmission.

Readings that viewers actually made of *Upstairs, Downstairs* indicated that the political and economic orders being transmitted were far less directive than imagined by their institutional sources. The pleasures derived by audiences from the formal elements of the serial dramas, as well as their conversations about those dramas, represented very different utterances from those issued by the Nixon administration, public broadcasting and Mobil, as they showed the importance of ritual in communication, of creating a shared meaning through conversation and dialogue as opposed to absorbing and following a given message. Indeed, those pleasures ran counter even to the critics and columnists attempting to guide responses to British programming through their own directive utterances. Whether

such responses can be considered as deliberately "resistant" is another matter; the argument can quite plausibly be made, particularly by those operating from the assumptions guiding Theodore Adorno and other 1950s cultural critics, that by keeping their audiences talking about the treachery of Soames and Fleur Forsyte or the humble humanity of Hudson and Rose, political and economic institutions effectively assume the control of social forces that those audiences relinquish.[119] Yet it can equally plausibly be argued, following the logic of Bakhtin, Williams and Carey, that by conducting ritual dialogue that at least limits and potentially excludes those sources of power, American audiences of quality British serial drama acted, literally, out of order: Kenny and Ann and Martha and Nora were not making a counter-hegemonic political statement in their discussions of Hazel and Lady Marjorie, but in not making such a political statement, they were also not taking part in the prescibed agenda of powerful corporate and state interests. The formal qualities of a separate genre of British television would also allow a somewhat different American audience to read between the lines of institutional order evident in the medium, however, as signifiers of "quality" and the directive function of transmission would be met by the comic anarchy of *Monty Python's Flying Circus.*

## Notes, Chapter 5

1) Will is quoted as an epigraph to Jarvik 1992, 253.

2) According to FCC rules in existence at the time, corporate underwriters could only identify themselves at the beginning and end of a program, and could only use their full name and/or corporate logo, with no mention of specific products or services. No restrictions were made, however, on how corporations themselves could use such identification for their own purposes or in other media: Mobil Oil referred to announcements preceding and following *Masterpiece Theatre* as "commercials" and bought time under its name and logo to promote *Upstairs, Downstairs* on NBC. See Branscomb, in eds. Cater and Nyman 1976, 13-15. Also see "Is Public TV Going Commercial?" *Media Decisions*, October 1976, 76-112; Barnouw 1980, 65-68. The first major contribution of Xerox to public television was the acclaimed BBC documentary series *Civilisation*, a 13-part Arnoldian tour de force of the "best" of Western cultures presented by Sir Kenneth Clark and shown for the first time in America in fall 1970. Alistair Cooke, introducting American audiences to the series in a *TV Guide* article, referred to the program as "a pleasure which...is available to anyone who will sit back and pay close attention and let himself be 'ravished'"; the magazine's Cleveland Amory followed a less profane and more sacred route in his commentary on the series: "[T]his new offering of public television is so

terrific that to review it at all seems almost sacrilegious." As a *TV Guide* editorial noted, *Civilisation* owed at least some of its reception in the States to the success of *The Forsyte Saga* before it; in turn, it very likely played some part in the interest public broadcasting viewers had in *Masterpiece Theatre*. See Cooke, *TV Guide* October 3, 1970, 23; Amory, *TV Guide* December 12, 1970, 7; "As We See It," *TV Guide* September 12, 1970, 2.

3) Newcomb 1974, 232-233. According to Les Brown, ABC's version of *Peyton Place* (1965-1971) owed its existence in part to the success of evening serials, particularly *Coronation Street*, on commercial British TV. See Brown, *Variety* June 30, 1965, 1.

4) See Feuer, in eds. Feuer, Kerr and Vahimagi 1984, 56; also Newcomb 1974, 211-242.

5) Taylor 1989, 17-41.

6) The failure of critics to comment on the problems with the ideal of family evident in *The Forsyte Saga* further indicates the rigidity of the ideological framework within which American television, both commercial and noncommercial, was working at the end of the 1960s. While commentators on *The Avengers* foregrounded the "text of Diana Rigg/Emma Peel" as "kinky" sex object over that of Rigg/Peel as avatar of liberation, they noted the difference the character brought to the show and the genre -- as well as acknowledged the possibility of the second "text" (usually in Rigg's own definition of the character). The difference visible in the handling of family in the *Saga*, however, was too problematic, given the generational revolt of the period, to be discussed in the late 1960s.

7) Taylor's (1989) otherwise excellent presentation of the way in which the relationship between changes in the American television industry itself and shifts in society as a whole reconfigures the ideal of family as represented in the 1970s fails to take into account the influence British shows had on American producers and programmers in that restructuring.

8) "Streamlining," in Ang's definition, refers to the post-1970 practice of using behavioral research techniques to define demographically specialized audiences whose individual variances in viewing habits can be smoothed over (streamlined) to present a usable "profile" to the networks. While her discussion deals specifically with its use in commercial television, the public television goal of seeking differentiated audiences, particularly the audience it and Mobil would seek for *Masterpiece Theatre* is merely streamlining by another name. See Ang 1991, 60-67. On the historical aspects of the shift to demographics in American ratings, see Barnouw 1980, 70-73; also Les Brown 1971, 52-60, 289-313.

9) "CPB Survey On Who Watches PTV Found 'Surprising,'" *Variety* April 1, 1970, 27.

10) "CPB's Big Gifter: Guess Who?" *Variety* October 21, 1970, 27; also Jarvik 1992, 253; 263. The Mobil grant came under immediate scrutiny by *Variety*, as WGBH had two weeks earlier pulled the first installment of its consumer-oriented *Nader Report* from broadcast because of a segment alleging that Mobil had dishonestly advertised its products as being good for the environment. As Bill Greeley reported: "Word came down to the [WGBH] production line that it was absolutely coincidental that Mobil was reportedly on the verge of granting WGBH something like $750,000 for a network production -- 'Like coincidence in a Russian novel,' quipped one insider." See Greeley, *Variety* October 7, 1970: 25; also Greeley, *Variety* November 18, 1970, 46; Les Brown 1971, 336-337. For background on the creation of *Masterpiece Theatre*, see O'Flaherty 1996, 7-8.

11) Macy 1974, 59.

12) As Laurence Jarvik recounts in his article, Mobil was concerned within the oil industry about revamping an old image of being a quiet, complacent, conservative company that was increasingly out of step with the activity in the market. Externally, the corporation wanted to address what it perceived as a bias not only against the oil industry but against capitalistic business as a whole given increasing voice during the 1960s, including bomb detonations at Mobil's corporate offices in New York. See Jarvik 1992, 254-257.

13) Schmertz believed that the aggressive tone of the ads -- for offshore drilling and nuclear power, against environmental regulation -- unprecedented in their day, did nothing to harm Mobil's image, as the image of the oil industry as a whole at the beginning of the 1970s was so bad that nothing could make it worse. *Masterpiece Theatre*, however, would round off the pointed commentary of those ads and demonstrate -- at least to the elite audience in which he was interested -- the good that Mobil could do. See Jarvik 1992, 256-257.

14) Hoynes 1994, 134.

15) Jarvik 1992, 258.

16) Ang 1991, 32.

17) According to a 1982 public opinion poll, Mobil was named by 31 percent of "upscale" respondents as the gasoline most often purchased. Mobil chairman Rawleigh Warner interpreted the high figure as proof that Mobil's public relations campaign, especially the sponsorship of *Masterpiece Theatre*, had won over the demographic segment it addressed not just to its program but to its product at point of sale. See Jarvik 1992, 258.

18) Jarvik 1992, 253.

19) O'Flaherty 1996, 8. Ironically enough, when approached for the job, Cooke was working on the BBC historical travelogue *America* and didn't want to do anything to detract from either the production of or the publicity for the series, which had been sold to NBC for broadcast in the States. However, after some consideration, Cooke agreed in late November 1970 to accept their offer, and immediately started writing and performing introductory remarks for the first *Masterpiece Theatre* offering, airing in just six weeks.

20) In a historical coincidence that might have acted as part of the assimilation of *The First Churchills* for a very few, *Marlborough* was one of the books, along with Ian Fleming's *From Russia With Love*, that John F. Kennedy listed as his favorites in Hugh Sidey's 1961 interview. That fact was never exploited in Mobil's American publicity for the show -- a tacit acknowledgement of the mobility of the signification of "British television" in America after the years of Bond. See Sidey, *Life* March 17, 1961, 58.

21) Musel, *TV Guide* February 7, 1970: 38.

22) Julian Critchley of the *Times* of London dismissed the serial in one paragraph: "*The First Churchills* is *The Forsyte Saga* without Galsworthy. It is school's television of the most extravagant sort. Only James Villiers playing Lord Kilbannock playing Charles II is really good. A pox on the rest." See Critchley, *Times* (London) October 6, 1969, 13; also Leonard, *Life* March 5, 1971, 18.

23) O'Flaherty, 11.

24) Christopher Sarton, executive producer of *Masterpiece Theatre*, acknowledged that the Churchill name and Hampshire's presence made *The First Churchills* an almost necessary

choice, despite its weaknesses: "[A]nyone who thought we should open the series with *The First Churchills* was really out of his mind.... So why did we do it? Well, Susan Hampshire had just finished *The Forsyte Saga,* so everybody knew her. Then the name Churchill was in the title, and that was another reason they were going to watch." See O'Flaherty 1996, 9.

25) Photograph, *Los Angeles Times*, January 9, 1971, 2B.

26) Sullivan, *Boston Globe TV Week* January 10, 1971, 11. See also cover.

27) Woods, *Washington Post* January 9, 1971, sec. C1. Woods cites press releases claiming that the series "'won raves in England when it was shown there, where it became as much an addiction as *The Forsyte Saga.*'"

28) At the time *The First Churchills* was broadcast, the top-rated American shows were the medical drama *Marcus Welby, M.D.*, the variety hour *The Flip Wilson Show*, and *Here's Lucy*. The male-oriented and sexless Westerns *Gunsmoke* and *Bonanza* also occupied Top Ten slots, as did the cop series *Ironside* and *Hawaii Five-O*. Such was the "bawdiness" of the time. See Brooks and Marsh 1988, 970; also Alley and Brown 1989, 4-6.

29) DuBrow, *Chicago Tribune* January 11, 1971, sec. III, 13.

30) Smith, *Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 1971, sec. IV, 18.

31) See, among others, Mary Ellen Brown 1994, 42-48; Fiske 1989, 179-197; Modleski, in ed. Kaplan 1983, 67-75.

32) Ferretti, *New York Times*, January 11, 1971, 91.

33) As Smith presents the scene in his lead: "'Jack, Jack, flat on my back. What do I lack? Only my Jack!" recites the lusty duchess of Cleveland. The Jack in question is John Churchill...of [whom] they said: 'When he wasn't fighting the Dutch, he was sleeping with a duchess.'" See Smith, January 11, 1971, sec. IV, 18; also Ferretti, January 11, 1971, 91.

34) Harrington, *New York Times* January 24, 1971, sec. II, 18.

35) Burgheim, *Time* February 8, 1971, 66. Burgheim also referred to the series as "the BBC's successor to *The Forsyte Saga.*"

36) Haskell, *Vogue* April 1, 1971, 158.

37) "Push Ratings For PTV Masterpiece Via Mobil," *Variety* January 27, 1971, 28.

38) Mobil advertisement, *New York Times* January 31, 1971, sec.II, 22.

39) If the first American reviews of *The First Churchills* were any indication, Mobil had already succeeded in that part of its campaign, as its sponsorship of *Masterpiece Theatre* was mentioned in *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* articles.

40) See Aufderheide 1991, 168-183; Hoynes 1994, 115-135. Ien Ang defines the audience-as-market paradigm thusly: "[T[he imperative of conquering the audience ensues from the positioning of the audience as a market in which audience members are defined as potential consumers in a dual sense: not only of TV programmes, but also of the products

being advertised through those programmes." Ang 1991, 27-28. As previously noted, the "product" Mobil wished to advertise was its own sense of corporate responsibility.

41) O'Flaherty 1992, 9.

42) Editor's note to Howe, *TV Guide* May 1, 1971, 20. Other "Background" features on British dramas over the next year would include Cambridge professor J.H. Plumb writing on *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, Clifton Fadiman on *Jude the Obscure*, Harvard historian Robert I. Rotberg on *The Search for the Nile* and Isaac Asimov on *Elizabeth R.*

43) By the time Howe's piece appeared in *TV Guide*, only the (Black) Panthers retained any sort of public visibility. The Weathermen, which had by then changed its name to the Weather Underground, had ended its efforts to kill off representatives of police and military service following the March 1970 explosion of its bomb factory in Greenwich Village, which killed three of its members. The Panthers' violent activity was confined primarily to prisons, where many of the group's leaders had been incarcerated following police action late in the 1960s. See Gitlin 1987, 400-404; also Carroll 1990, 50-55. For more on Howe's own politics, see Gitlin 1987, 171-175; also Pells 1985, 346-392. For Agnew quotations, see Witcover 1972, 302-308.

44) *TV Guide*, as noted in the previous chapter, paid attention beyond what ratings merited to the cultural offerings of public broadcasting as part of its campaign for informed "dialsmanship," though it was at times querulous about the service's apparent catering to what would come to be called a cultural elite. See Doan, *TV Guide* August 21, 1971, 5-7. At the same time, however, the magazine followed an increasingly conservative line when it came to public affairs and news programming on both the commercial and public networks, due in large part to the friendship between publisher Walter Annenberg and President Nixon, who had appointed Annenberg ambassador to Great Britain in 1969. For more on the magazine's politics, see Altschuler and Grossvogel 1992, 58-59; 177-189.

45) Mobil had its own animus toward the commercial networks, which refused to allow the oil company to run issue-oriented advertising; as CBS would explain, it was the network's "general policy to...to sell time only for the promotion of goods and services, not for the presentation of points of view on controversial issues of public importance." Such policy led Mobil chairman Rawleigh Warner to denounce, in Agnew-esque rhetoric, the networks as a "monopoly" composed of "highly articulate elitists" who were out to undermine the American economic system. The "quality" programming Mobil was bringing to public television audiences would reduce the power of that monopoly while at the same time enhancing Mobil's own image. See Jarvik 1992, 261-262.

46) "CBS Buys Prestige Brit. Drama Series For Summer Play," *Variety* March 24, 1971, 35; also "'6 Wives Of Henry 8th' Leads Brit TV Awards; BBC Sweeps ITV, 17-6," *Variety* March 17, 1971, 60.

47) "CBS Buys Prestige," *Variety*, 35.

48) Doan, *TV Guide* July 17, 1971, A-1. *TV Guide* publicity also included a viewer letter from a transplanted Briton, who told readers: "[J]ust a few months ago...I watched this marvelous series on BBC. I'm sure American viewers will enjoy it as much as I did." See M. Hull, "Letters," *TV Guide* May 1, 1971, A-2.

49) Quayle's Shakespearean background and roles in classical and historical epics had already been well-publicized earlier in 1971, when he starred on NBC in a short-lived Lew Grade import, *The Strange Report*. See Drake, *TV Guide* April 3, 1971, 20-25.

50) Doan, July 17, 1971, A-1. Again, Mobil's wrath against CBS for withholding its advocacy ads can be seen as playing a role in the network's inability to find a single backer. It is also worth noting that at $800,000 for six episodes, the price of a single installment of *Six Wives* to CBS was just $7,000 less than the cost of the entire 26-episode *Forsyte Saga* to NET just two years earlier.

51) "Mobil Renews PBS 'Masterpiece,'" *Variety* July 14, 1971, 40; "Mobil Oil Backs Public TV Series," *New York Times* July 14, 1971, 71; "PBS Tudor Twin: '6 Wives,' 'Eliz. R' In 'Masterpiece,'" *Variety* August 11, 1971, 37. This news was particularly galling to CBS, as it had itself been negotiating with BBC to pick up *Elizabeth R.* See Kelly, *Time* August 9, 1971, 51.

52) Leonard, *Life* August 6, 1971, 14. The title given his review indicates the degree to which the discourse on the place of women in American culture had changed since the days of Emma Peel and her "kinkiness."

53) "NBC Buys BBC 'Nile' Six-Parter For Tues. Nights," *Variety* December 8, 1971, 25. In the same week that CBS announced its purchase of *Six Wives*, Spiro Agnew attacked the network for what he called its "subtle but vicious broadside against the nation's defense establishment" in *The Selling of the Pentagon.* See Michie, *Variety* March 24, 1971, 47.

54) "TV Syndication: Alistair Cooke's 'America," *Variety* December 22, 1971, 40; also "Did NBC Make A Tactical Error With Tues. Slot?" *Variety* March 29, 1972, 47.

55) Brooks and Marsh 1988, 32.

56) For more on Mobil's strategy to use *Masterpiece Theatre* against the commercial networks, see Jarvik 1992, 261-262.

57) The showing of *Vanity Fair* in 1972 is another particularly appropriate instance of the importance of the intertextual worth of Susan Hampshire. The serial, the first major all-color production presented on BBC, was actually five years old by the time *Masterpiece Theatre* acquired it. Again, however, the name recognition of the title and the presence of Hampshire made *Vanity Fair* an almost necessary purchase for *Masterpiece Theatre.* See rev. of *Vanity Fair*, *Variety* October 4, 1972, 39.

58) The success in particular of the *Masterpiece Theatre* presentations of Sayers' work (*Clouds of Witness*, *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club*, *Murder Must Advertise*, *The Nine Tailors*, *Five Red Herrings*) led Mobil to assume the sponsorship of another PBS series of British serial dramas, *Mystery!*, in the 1980s. See Jarvik, 268.

59) Kelly, 51. *One Man's Family* was the same soap mentioned by Molly Haskell earlier in the year, in her review of *The First Churchills*, to suggest that there was nothing elegant or painless about serialized dramas.

60) Greeley, *Variety*, November 29, 1972, 41; "PTV Audience Drop Pointed Up In Early Rating Books For November." *Variety*, December 20, 1972, 36.

61) Greeley, "Floppo Season," November 29, 1972, 41.

62) Ellis 1982, 31.

63) One of the great ironies of a program based upon adaptations of literary "masterpieces" is that its most public successes in the United States have been serial dramas that have *not*

been based on classic literary texts. Of the 15 examples selected by O'Flaherty (1996) from the first 10 years of the show for inclusion in *Masterpiece Theatre: A Celebration of the First 25 Years*, from 50 serials presented, only three -- *Vanity Fair*, *Anna Karenina*, *Pride and Prejudice* -- represented adaptations from canonical sources. O'Flaherty's work speaks to the importance of difference and unfamiliarity in an American appreciation of imported cultural artifacts.

64) Carroll 1990, 119-123.

65) Jarvik 1992, 263-265.

66) Rev. of *Upstairs, Downstairs*, *Variety*, December 20, 1972, 38.

67) James, *TV Guide* March 10, 1973, 9. In his article, James, the regular television critic for the *Observer*, criticized the BBC for its many distribution deals with Time-Life and several of its most recent serial dramas, including *War and Peace* and *Elizabeth R* (both of which appeared on PBS), as "essentially unimaginative project(s) with bigness as [their] only reason for being."

68) Price, *Televisual* May 1986, 13.

69) The episodes purchased did not fall in any sort of order. In a restatement of a technological concern from the previous decade, WGBH did not purchase five episodes that had been produced in black-and-white due to a technician's strike during the first six weeks of broadcast; indeed, the first episode of the series had to be reshot in color in order for LWT to put together an export package. Richard Price would later note: [W]ithout that first episode in colour I doubt if it would ever have sold in the US." See Price, 13.

70) McLean, *Boston Globe* January 5, 1974, 19.

71) Carmody, *Washington Post* January 5, 1974: D1. Carmody was citing Cooke from his introduction to the first episode: "What the series does is to show the interplay of that quartet that lies upstairs with the servants who work downstairs. You could call it an Edwardian soap opera, or *The Forsyte Saga* done upside down." Cooke, introduction to "On Trial," *Upstairs, Downstairs*, PBS, January 6, 1974.

72) "England, Their England," *New York Times* January 6, 1974, II, 15.

73) Carmody, D1; McLean, 19. McLean was correct in asserting that each *Upstairs, Downstairs* episode was close-ended; however, events of one show would color the events of a later one, so that the series did acquire the cumulative effect of a soap opera. The connections between episodes would grow stronger in future seasons, making McLean's caveat virtually meaningless by the end of the program's American run.

74) Advertisement for *Masterpiece Theatre*, *New York Times* January 6, 1974, sec. II, 16.

75) Cooke, introduction to "On Trial," January 6, 1974.

76) See Timberg, in ed. Newcomb 1987, 164-178.

77) Dialogue taken from "On Trial," *Upstairs, Downstairs*, prod. John Hawkesworth, writ. Fay Weldon, dir. Raymond Menmuir, perf. Angela Baddeley, Pauline Collins, Gordon Jackson, Jean Marsh, PBS, January 6, 1974. Later shows in the season did in fact revolve around an affair between the Bellamys' son James and Sarah; intercourse

between the classes, however, was far less a component of the series than Mobil's ad suggested.

78) "Rating Is 'Upstairs,'" *Variety* January 16, 1970, 70.

79) Amory, *TV Guide* February 23, 1974: 20.

80) Jordan, *TV Guide* February 16, 1974, 16-17.

81) See, for example, O'Connor, *New York Times* November 4, 1974, 30; Smith, *Los Angeles Times TV Week*, November 4, 1974: 2; Musel, *TV Guide*, December 28, 1974, 24-26; de Groot, *Esquire*, January 1975, 109.

82) Fiske 1989, 121-122.

83) See, for the first example, Mobil advertisement, *New York Times* November 3, 1974, sec. II, 30.

84) The oil embargo ended March 18, 1974; the first season of *Upstairs, Downstairs* ended March 29, 1974. See Carroll 1990, 117; O'Flaherty 1996, 16.

85) Cooke, introduction to "On Trial," PBS, January 6, 1974.

86) Feuer, in eds. Feuer, Kerr and Vahimagi 1984, 56.

87) Vanocur, *Washington Post* January 11, 1976, sec. G1.

88) The final season of *Upstairs, Downstairs*, covering the 1920s, takes place during the same time period as the creation of the BBC, foregrounding further the class distinctions at the core of the Corporation's mission.

89) The first words of Cooke's introduction to *Upstairs, Downstairs* were: "Tonight, *Masterpiece Theatre* makes a radical departure from its habit of taking a work of fiction and dramatizing it." Cooke, introduction to "On Trial," January 6, 1974.

90) Hall, in Curran, Gurevitch and Woollacott 1979, 344-345.

91) Schickel, *Time*, February 4, 1974, 65. Schickel also noted the importance of family in British imports and the whole of public broadcasting programming: "If the family ever dies, as radical social psychologists keep predicting, Public Broadcasting may go out of business as well.... First there were the Forsytes, then the Louds [of *An American Family*]. Now there are the Bellamys."

92) Ephron, *Esquire* July 1976, 32.

93) Ephron's comment on Cooke: "I was sorry that Alistair Cooke had so much more to say about the plague than he did about the death of Hazel, but perhaps he has become wary of commenting on the show itself after everyone (including me) took offense at some of the things he had to say about George Sand." Ephron, 32.

94) Fiske 1989, 117-126.

95) See, for example, Hall, in Curran, Gurevitch and Woollacott, 1979, 344-345; also Barthes 1973, 142-148; Fiske 1989, 41-44.

96) See, for instance, Gitlin 1985, 265; also Jarvik 1992, 253-254.

97) Mary Ellen Brown 1994, 67-93.

98) Martin, *Washington Post* January 15, 1977, C6.

99) O'Connor, *New York Times* May 1, 1977, sec. II, 25.

100)Lewis, *New York Times*, May 9, 1977, 31.

101) Marsh, *Washington Post*, May 1, 1977, L1.

102) O'Connor described his mail in general as that in which "friends and total strangers offer their opinions on new characters and developing story lines." O'Connor, May 1, 1977, sec. II, 25.

103) O'Connor notes that the series' "unusually committed audience" of "opinion makers" gave Mobil "top value for its dollar." O'Connor, May 1, 1977, sec. II: 25. Sander Vanocur, meanwhile, mentions Mobil in his farewell column to note that they are the hosts of the program's final celebration at Sardi's restaurant, to which he has been invited -- an ironic stance for a reporter once deemed so liberal that the network for which he worked should be cut off from federal funding. See Vanocur, *Washington Post* May 1, 1977, L3.

104) See Jarvik 1992, 269. Those opinion leaders included Nora Ephron and her "long, long love letter" to *Upstairs, Downstairs.*

105) All quotations taken from Mobil advertisement, *New York Times* January 16, 1977, sec. II, 27. The ad featuring Rose ran on the previous page. It is worth noting the way in which Mobil separates itself from the broadcasting industry in accepting its own credit for bringing *Upstairs, Downstairs* to an American public. The way in which Mobil's presentation of serialized historical dramas was acknowledged by the commercial networks will be considered at greater length in Chapter 7.

106) PBS is mentioned twice in the ad as the network on which the program is shown, and once in connection with WGBH, in noting its role as producer of *Masterpiece Theatre.* At no point is the network represented as anything more than the carrier of the show.

107) Mobil ad, *New York Times*January 16, 1977, sec. II, 27.

108) Titles available in the States by the time the series ended in 1977 included three novelizations of the program: *Upstairs, Downstairs; In My Lady's Chamber* and *The Years of Change.* Readers could also get more personal information from the biographical *Mr. Hudson's Diaries* and *Rose: My Life in Service*, as well as the finest in British cooking from *Mrs. Bridges'* Upstairs, Downstairs *Cookery Book.* The present author received *The Years of Change* and *Mr. Hudson's Diaries* as gifts for a pledge to the Louisville, KY, public television station in 1977.

109) Winfrey, *New York Times* May 2, 1977, 35. Unfortunately, Winfrey's report does not say which side attracted more money.

110) Fiske 1989, 265-272.

111) Lewis, May 9, 1977, 31.

112) Martin, *Washington Post* January 3, 1977, sec. B1.

113) Arlen, *The New Yorker* November 25, 1974, 149-155. Arlen's article, which presented another favorable review of *Upstairs, Downstairs*, was also notable in that it was the only discussion of British imports to the States in the popular "quality" press to consider them in terms of the just-released Varis and Nordenstreng "one-way street" study. Critical both of the lack of imports on American commercial television and the dominance of foreign airwaves by those broadcasters that the UNESCO survey appeared to catalog, Arlen praised public television for presenting programming such as *Masterpiece Theatre*. He then, however, damned those who denied it funds (the Nixon administration) and used their funding as part of a "self-serving" publicity campaign (Mobil) -- for not developing similar programming that dealt with America's past and present.

114) Somerset-Ward 1993, 89; Stone 1985, 317.

115) Stone 1985, 317.

116) The 1971 CPB budget was $141.4 million, out of which the federal government was responsible for 16.8 percent, or $23.7 million. By the time CPB's 1976 budget, for $361.4 million, was approved, the federal government was footing 27.1 percent of the bill, or $97.9 million. During the same period, however, while the total dollar values contributed by state and local governments increased, the percentage of total funding they paid for decreased -- in the case of state government, from 46.4 percent to 24.5 percent. Total government backing for CPB dropped from 64 percent in 1971 to 59.7 percent in 1976 -- a difference only slightly less than the difference in the increase in corporate funding during those years: from 2.2 percent ($3 million) to 7.8 percent ($28.2 million). Mobil could rightfully argue that it had played a leading role in the increased attention corporations were giving public broadcasting. For 1971 data, see Macy 1974, 81; for 1976 data, see "Is Public TV Going Commercial?," 106.

117) Mobil had enlisted independent commercial stations as well as public broadcasting in its cold war against the networks: In 1974, the oil company began sponsoring a series of specials on indepedent stations under the rubric of "The Mobil Showcase Network," including the *Masterpiece Theatre*-oriented *Edward the King* and *Edward and Mrs. Simpson*. See Jarvik 1992, 267; also Greeley, *Variety* April 7, 1976, 1.

118) An internal Mobil document cited by Jarvik indicated that the synergy of *Masterpiece Theatre* and op-ed advocacy ads had resulted in "changed...perceptions of national needs" in each of the four groups of "opinion leaders" it tracked: political leaders, media, academics, and business and social groups. The report, however, seemed to follow the line of "bad publicity is better than no publicity at all," as it cited negative cartoons, both in newspapers and *The New Yorker*, as proof that its message was reaching the proper audience. The company also tracked the general public through regular polls of *Parade* magazine readers. See Jarvik 1992, 268-270.

119) For such criticism, see, for example, Budd, Entman and Steinman 1990 and Seaman 1992.

## Chapter 6: Ministries of Silly Walks (*TW3*, *Monty Python*, and the Logic of Televisual Absurdity)

> *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, a far-out comedy show, has received high praise from those who believe that anything we can do, the British can do better. We agree -- in one way: Certainly they can do better than this show. And so, we presume, can the Ugandans.
>
> --Cleveland Amory[1]

> There was only one thing that we ever all agreed on, and that was that the show would never work in America.
>
> --Eric Idle[2]

The relationship between British television texts and American audiences in the 1960s and early 1970s developed primarily along one line: Whether action-adventure or serialized historical, the programs that made their way into circulation in the States were hour-long dramas. Little in the way of "British wit," save for the clever and bitchy asides shared by Peel and Steed in *The Avengers*, made its way to American screens. Some of that lack was addressed in the early 1960s by the American re-production of the British series *That Was the Week That Was*, a topical satiric revue that included among its performers and writers the British co-creator of the program, David Frost. After the demise of that series in 1965, however, it would be another 10 years before *Monty Python's Flying Circus* would claim a fanatically devoted audience in the States with sketches that avoided the topicality of the earlier Frost series in favor of multilayered attacks on all manner of institutional authority, most specifically the institution of television itself. Though representing distinctive styles of British humor, each of those shows would speak with an American audience through revealing and criticizing the social and cultural processes in which they were created, distributed and appreciated, and through eventually reaffirming those processes. Their success in the American market came as a result of this

limited multivocality, which in turn addresses how they functioned as television and as comedy -- functions at least somewhat different than those filled by British dramas.

**Comedy Doesn't Travel(?)**

That well-worn show business maxim is borne out to some degree by the history of comedy in transnational television trade, even when examined from the traditional aspect of the United States as exporter. As William Read has pointed out, situation comedies provided much of the traffic on the "one-way street" of programming flowing from America to the rest of the world in the early 1960s. The half-hour format of the sitcom meant that prices were relatively low, and nations building television technology and distribution systems could fill newly available broadcast time with shows such as *I Love Lucy* and *The Flintstones.*[3] The fact that those programs were sold to foreign markets, however, did not at all mean that audiences in those countries watched them; instead, developing television industries by the 1970s were creating, manufacturing and even marketing their own comedy programs for both economic and cultural reasons. On the one hand, production costs for half-hour comedies were significantly lower than those for the hour-long dramatic series of the type imported from the United States (and Britain). As a result, the American programs that foreign distributors bought and that overseas viewers watched increasingly became either action-adventure series and/or soap operas that were too expensive to produce domestically -- just as the British programming presented by PBS in the early 1970s represented a genre that American commercial television at the time found too costly to bear.[4] On the other hand, action series and soaps also were heavily dependent on visual representations of violence and sex that needed to cross far fewer cultural barriers than did the content of American situation comedies. It was often easier to develop domestic comedy programs that spoke to meanings circulating within the culture itself than to attempt to decode the meanings available in an American situation comedy.[5]

One need but consider a single episode of a typical American situation comedy to

observe the way in which the cultural construction of meaning also serves to limit that meaning -- the humor of the comedy -- to those viewing from a different cultural perspective. The "Chuckles Bites the Dust" episode of the "quality" sitcom *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, for example, bases its humor on the responses of its characters, employed at a Minneapolis television station, to the sudden death of their colleague Chuckles, a clown who has the life squeezed out of him by a rogue elephant in a circus parade. The episode is one of the most popular in the seven-year history of the show; finding its humor, however, requires a native familiarity with a wide assortment of cultural codes. Within the narrative itself, "getting it" means understanding conventions of behavior regarding death, the traditional role of woman as protector of such cultural convention, and the norms of show business and television within which Chuckles' death takes place (lines such as "Born in a trunk, died in a trunk" have little comic value without knowing the vaudeville roots of the term on which the pun is based).[6] Lacking the ability to decode any of that material, to say nothing of other, less foregrounded codings -- the significance of professional labor, the place of single women in that job force, the conventional visual (three-camera medium shot) and aural (laugh track) codes of American situation comedy -- leaves a viewer wondering how or why anyone might find this particular cultural artifact funny.[7] The "situation" of situation comedy, in other words, is the unstated common sense of a given culture (in this case American), which is revealed in the moments of surprise that comprise the "comedy." Without the common sense, there can be no comedy.[8]

Yet some American television comedies -- *I Love Lucy* and *The Flintstones* being good cases in point -- have traveled well, just as *Monty Python's Flying Circus* would travel well from Britain to America during the 1970s.[9] The question becomes, then: How is the common sense of one culture, in some instances, apprehended by an audience reading from a different set of codes and assumptions so as to "get" the comic surprises that derive from that common sense? Jerry Palmer provides a useful answer to that question in his *The Logic of the Absurd* by employing the same theory of utterances that Bakhtin articulates in

his work. Film and television comedy, Palmer argues, are based first of all on the *peripeteia*, the moment of visual or verbal surprise that deviates from the naturalized norm. Because those norms, however, are not universal but defined by the specific "webs of meaning" spun by individual cultures, the *peripateia* is dependent upon its context -- context meaning both that of the comic performer, the audience and the "butt" of the humor and that of the linguistic, social and historical referents within which the humor occurs. The "meaning" of film and television comedy, in Palmer's words, arises from "the circuit of utterance," in which specific meanings are activated while others are ignored, depending upon the context(s) in which the comedy occurs.[10]

To give his "logic of the absurd" a schematic grounding, Palmer uses the term "plausibility" to define an audience's participation in a comedic dialogue. If a comic utterance is implausible -- if the norms being addressed by the *peripeteia* are still uncertain -- the humor will not work. Conversely, if such an utterance is *too* plausible -- if the norms present "reality" -- the audience will also not "get it." "Chuckles Bites the Dust" offers clear examples of each situation: Audiences who have no understanding of the solemnity afforded death in American culture would fail to understand the significance of the jokes unleashed with the clown's unfortunate demise; an audience of people who had recently experienced the death of a loved one would very likely find the jokes offensive and identify with the horror expressed at them by the show's protagonist. Palmer further refines his "logic" by suggesting that plausibility both influences and is influenced by the level of surprise involved in the comic utterance. Both too much and too little surprise -- overwhelming the norms and letting the norms stand untouched -- can help render comic utterances meaningless. Again, the *Mary Tyler Moore* episode illustrates his ideas: Had everyone involved found Chuckles' passing the subject of hilarity, the comic point of violating accepted behavior regarding death would have been obliterated; had no one found it amusing, there would be no surprise and no comedy.[11]

While Palmer employs his plausibility-*peripeteia* schema to examine how individual

examples of film and television comedy function, both the theory of utterances on which he bases it and the terms he employs are clearly useful in addressing the ways in which comedy can travel in transnational communication. The "circuit of utterance" is dependent upon the norms of a given culture that give rise to the surprises defining the comedy. Comedy can indeed travel when the norms of the culture producing the comedic text are recognizable to the culture receiving it -- or when those norms can be translated into terms addressing the social and historical utterances of that culture. It would be the latter circumstance that would guide the initial arrival of British television comedy to American homes -- a circumstance itself defined in each nation by a new generation of educated youth and the development of a form of comic utterance that spoke to the concerns of that generation by ridiculing the quotidian assumptions of its predecessors.

**That Was The Week That Was, In a Way**

One of the most visible responses within what was being called the "mass culture" of America in the 1950s to that culture itself was the rise of a new socially oriented, satiric style of comedy. Stand-up comics such as Lenny Bruce and Mort Sahl, publications such as *Mad* magazine and theater troupes such as Chicago's Second City built careers and reputations out of poking fun at "common sense" codes of politics, capitalism and culture. While rarely as directive in their criticism as their often comedic cousins in the Beat movement (Lenny Bruce being a major exception), the new satirists did help, as Todd Gitlin would later put it, to "pry open a cultural territory which became available for radical transmutation" by the young people growing up as part of their audience.[12] American television in its prime time form played a minimal role in the development of this satirical humor. Its foremost (and, in many respects, earliest) proponents, Sid Caesar and Ernie Kovacs, were banished by the middle of the 1950s, while situation comedies and even the more formally radical programs starring Jack Benny and Burns and Allen were about the business of containing the tensions of the time within representations of happy domestic

life.[13] In NBC's *Tonight*, a 90-minute late night variety-interview program that went on the air in 1954 hosted first by Steve Allen (briefly with Kovacs) and then by Jack Paar, parody and satire, albeit in a kinder and gentler form than one would find in nightclubs, began to find a home.[14] Those performers drew an extra benefit when Paar took over *Tonight*, as David Marc points out: Paar's interviews allowed the comedians to plug their upcoming club gigs, thereby also allowing them to use the advertising and exploit the consumption they criticized in their acts.[15] Nonetheless, Allen and Paar's welcoming of satiric material, even in a so-called "fringe" time period, gave that material increased visibility and its performers increased fame on into the Kennedy years.[16]

While big-city clubs, small improvisatory theaters and late-night television were the breeding grounds for a new type of American comedy during the 1950s and early 1960s, British comedy was adding a new dimension from two old sources: the BBC and the theatre clubs of Cambridge and Oxford. The former was the site of *The Goon Show*, a radio comedy program running throughout the 1950s that de- and re-constructed the staid music hall sketches and formulaic situation comedies of John Reith's pre-war BBC into a pastiche of parody, satire and violent nonsense that shocked, for better and worse, millions of listeners every week.[17] Among those most electrified by the antics of the Goons were a group of students coming of age in the most elite bastions of British higher education. The Cambridge Footlights Club and similar, less institutionalized groups at Oxford had for a number of years presented comedic revues for audiences around the country. By the end of the 1950s, the influence of *The Goon Show*, as well as the changing sensibilities of those growing up in postwar, post-Empire Britain were beginning to evidence themselves in the university revues. Four veterans of those revues -- Alan Bennett, Peter Cook, Jonathan Miller and Dudley Moore – joined forces in 1960 to present their best material in a revue at the Edinburgh Festival. Their show, *Beyond the Fringe*, included parodies of Shakespeare, Benjamin Britten and war films, jests at the upper class and its perception of issues ranging from capital punishment to apartheid, and a wicked imitation of Prime Minister Harold

Macmillan, all presented on a bare stage with no costumes. The troupe was immediately lauded as the harbingers of a new form of British satire that was, in critic Bernard Levin's terms, "real, barbed, deeply planted and aimed at things and people that need it."[18]

The reviews, as Alan Bennett would later explain, "got the show a name for being topical and satirical in a mode at that time associated with American stand-up comedians -- Lenny Bruce, Mort Sahl, and Nichols and May" (Wilmut, 11). Bennett's comment make clear a knowledge of, if not a debt to, American comic utterances; with that kind of transatlantic connection being made one way and with an established audience and market for satire in the United States, it would not be long before *Beyond the Fringe* crossed the Atlantic. The show, with nothing changed from its British incarnation, opened in New York on Saturday, October 27, 1962; by Monday, October 29, it was a smash hit. Comedy might indeed travel, it appeared, even with what Alistair Cooke (this time in his guise of expatriate commentator for the *Guardian*) cited as "the quartet's decision not to adapt their material to American themes, or their strangulated tripthongs to the ears of a people to whom a vowel is a vowel is a vowel" (Wilmut, 24). Cooke himself argued that the American success of *Beyond the Fringe* was due to the performers' open and accepted superiority to and pity for their audience. Peter Cook, meanwhile, suggested that the cultural differences presented in the show provided a sort of "snob merit" for American audiences; Jonathan Miller, again pointing out the significance of difference in transnational communication and culture, said: "There were things which the Americans liked because they *were* English, and they were getting a sort of ethnic 'buzz' out of little bits of Limey eccentricity" (Wilmut, 25). While both arguments contain elements of truth, Jerry Palmer's scheme for understanding comedy in terms of utterance sheds a much brighter light on the success of *Beyond the Fringe*: The plausibility of comic utterances that ridicule a British politician or a socially determined aristocratic point of view on capital punishment is greatly enhanced when the culture into which they are introduced itself is rife with comic utterances lampooning its own president and, as Vaughan Meader's hit comedy album called them,

"The First Family," as well as socially determined points of view on any number of issues.[19] Similarly, the "strangulated tripthongs" and references to historic Britain featured in the revue provide moments of *peripeteia* -- comic surprise that would not be present in an American version of the material. The comedy of perhaps the most widely cited sketch in the *Fringe* revue -- its parody of Shakespeare's history plays ("So That's The Way You Like It") -- lies neither in recognizing the locations of the sites named nor in any specific meanings evoked by those names within a British context, but in the ludicrous sounds and finally meaningless content of those names -- an understanding the parody itself acknowledges and validates.[20]

With *Beyond the Fringe* establishing British collegiate humor as a marketable theatrical commodity on both sides of the Atlantic, television seemed to be the next logical outlet for the satire and parodies of the Oxbridge revues. The medium offered a particularly ripe opportunity for Cambridge graduate David Frost, who hoped to turn his experience as a self-styled "new Peter Cook" during his time in the Footlights Revue into a theatrical career. Though his credentials were less than stellar, Frost's Cambridge degree and the topical material he was writing and performing brought him to the attention of BBC producer Ned Sherrin, who was mounting a new satirical comedy show to help rejuvenate the public image of a doddering "Auntie Beeb." Sherrin was impressed enough with Frost to hire him as the moderator of his revue-styled program, *That Was the Week That Was*, which made its first regular BBC appearance in November, 1962 -- just a month after *Beyond the Fringe* opened in New York. Sherrin, Frost and the show's other writers and performers brought the insouciance of the Oxbridge revues to bear on the most controversial issues and personages of the day.[21] The parodies and musical numbers that were at the heart of the theatrical revues were used to mock politicians and entertainers for a national television audience, while monologues and improvisatory interviews brought television techniques to the theatrical form of the revue. To give the show's "behind-the-facade" verbal cheekiness a visual counterpart, as well as to accommodate its fast pace,

Sherrin produced *TW3*, as it quickly came to be called, in a bare-bones open studio that allowed viewers to see the technical machinations of the production as it was going on.

*That Was the Week That Was* quickly gained a large and vociferous British following in its initial run of 23 episodes -- a following that did not necessarily include representatives of the Conservative government who were regular targets of the show's jests.[22] Almost as quickly, it gained attention from the television industry in the United States. In a December 5, 1962 review, *Variety* called the show "hardhitting, witty, pungent and brilliantly conceived...with cameras in full view, [it] established an appropriate clinical atmosphere, as of devilish work in progress."[23] The trade journal was so impressed, in fact, that it followed its review with a feature article two weeks later about the controversy the show had already engendered in its home market. The "small band of young offbeats led by actor David Frost," *Variety* noted, was pleasing the BBC if not the governmental powers that were with their satirical commentary: "The BBC's attitude is now quite clear: That Was the Week That Was' is adult, if controversial and provocative, and because it is performed by highly talented performers, it is being done without unnecessary pure insult."[24] Given the acclaim accorded to the imported *Beyond the Fringe* and the still-opening market for domestic satirists and parodists ranging from Mort Sahl and Nichols and May to Vaughan Meader and Allen Sherman, NBC contacted the BBC and obtained permission to produce its own American version of *TW3*.[25]

The initial result of the arrangement was broadcast on November 10, 1963. Featuring the same "open studio" of its British progenitor, the hour-long pilot episode of the American *That Was the Week That Was* began with the same musical device: a song featuring comical lyrics mocking and linking the particularly ridiculous events of the previous week. Structurally, the show followed the revue style of the BBC version as well -- a series of sketches and songs dealing with topical issues and personalities including civil rights, Republican presidential candidates, Nikita Khrushchev and the "God is dead" debate. Mike Nichols and Elaine May were also on hand, performing their routine, "The

High Cost of Dying," about contemporary funeral practices. But while NBC had aped the formal elements of the BBC series remarkably well, the content of the show was at least somewhat, if not completely, different. Most visibly, the moderators of the American version were not brash young representatives of a new style of humor, but veteran movie star Henry Fonda and equally veteran radio comedian/game show raconteur Henry Morgan. The other performers seemed to have little or nothing to do with the sketches in which they were acting; those sketches in turn seemed largely to strain for the satiric effect they hoped to achieve, frequently falling back on techniques and tone perfected by Steve Allen years before.[26] Nonetheless, public and critical response was strongly positive, and NBC put the series into production for a January debut.[27] That debut, however, was reshaped dramatically by the assassination of John F. Kennedy less than two weeks later.

While American television ceased broadcasting its regular program schedule to follow the events of the assassination, the BBC moved up its regular Sunday night presentation of *That Was the Week That Was* to Saturday, November 23. The show, still presented in the open studio format, began with David Frost saying: "It was the least likely thing to happen in the whole world...[T]hat Kennedy should go, well, we just didn't believe in assassination anymore, at least not in the civilized world." What followed was a somber tribute to the slain American leader, written primarily by Christopher Booker, with the show's performers reminiscing and discussing his family, his trip to Britain, his successor. Singer Millicent Martin performed a funereal spiritual, "His Soul Goes Riding On." Dame Sybil Thorndike read a poem, "To Jackie." Cast member David Kernan, with tears in his eyes, called Kennedy "much more than a father figure, and much more than Ike ever, ever was"; fellow performer Lance Percival continued: "He was simply and superlatively a man of his age...who put all of his own energy and the best brains of his country into solving its problems -- by doing the right thing at the right time because he'd gone about it in the right way." Frost concluded the abbreviated 22-minute program with what turned out to be, given the events of the following decade, a prescient benediction:

"The tragedy of John Kennedy's death is not that the liberal movements of history that he led would cease; it is that their focus would become blurred and that the gathering momentum may be lost. That is the aftermath of Dallas, November 22. It is a time for private thoughts."[28] As hagiographic as anything constructed by domestic media in the same time span, the BBC's *That Was the Week That Was* for November 23, 1963 was all the more of interest to an American audience as a text representing the grief of a different culture. NBC flew a tape of the program to the States to run on Sunday, November 24. Some 1,000 calls came into the network's New York switchboard at the program's conclusion praising the show and NBC for airing it. Following its coverage of the funeral march and the president's burial at Arlington National Cemetery on Monday, NBC presented a repeat broadcast of the BBC program. The network eventually received thousands of requests for excerpts from the show, including one from Senator Hubert Humphrey requesting that its entire transcript be reprinted in the *Congressional Record.*[29]

Whether or not NBC obliged those requests directly, it addressed the outpouring of praise for the British show when its own version of *TW3* began its run in January 1964: Gone was Henry Fonda, and in his place were Broadway performer Elliot Reid -- and David Frost, appearing as "Our London Correspondent...by special arrangement with the British Broadcasting Corporation."[30] Though his role on the American program was not as substantial as it was in his native production, Frost's presence on the new *TW3*, made possible in large part due to the BBC's cancellation of the British original at the end of 1963, was perhaps the final connection between British and American culture made directly as a result of John Kennedy's presidency.[31] In articulating a British grief over Kennedy's assassination, Frost also became articulated to the popular image of Kennedy -- young, bright and glib, with a bent for attacking the musty doctrines of an established order not to bring down that order but to make it responsive to a new group of participants. As was the case with the "text of James Bond," the "text of David Frost" in America acquired a level of signification that was defined by and inseparable from the fallen president: Jack Gould,

after all, had used the most Kennedy-esque of labels in citing the "vigor and compassion" Frost and his cohort had shown in their BBC memorial.[32] David Frost, in short, acquired meaning in America as the product of what Frederic Jameson would refer to as the Utopian elements of the "text of Kennedy" and utterances concerning comedy in American culture that asserted the importance of challenging the status quo through ridicule. The fact that the person/text in question was British made that challenge all the more evident.[33]

As was true with Kennedy, however, while David Frost and the comedy he and *TW3* presented and represented might challenge the status quo, it never threatened to eliminate that status quo. The comic genre, as Steve Neale and Frank Krutnik point out, is one that can be considered as neither inherently subversive nor even inherently progressive, particularly when that comedy considers and tries to replicate familiar constructions of everyday life.[34] If comedy seeks to destroy those norms, the plausibility and surprise necessary for Palmer's "logic of the absurd" to work vanish with them. Only in the rigid formula of the domestic situation comedy is the maintenance of the status quo more significant, then, than in the topical satire presented by Frost and his troupe on *TW3*. Satire and parody, whatever their differences, both require familiar constructions of language, ideology, culture and aesthetics in order to exist, much less be effective; in a sense, then, the form of comedy Frost and *TW3* offered was one that was framed by the "real" -- the utterances defining, refining and confining culture.[35]

In the case of the American version of *That Was the Week That Was*, the most significant of those utterances were the ones defining the system of commercial television. While the British version, as noted, had had run-ins with political officials and BBC authorities, it never had to face the need of satisfying sponsors who were supposed to pay for its existence. That, however, was a major problem for the American version, as the cigarette, cosmetic and car companies that might sponsor *The Lucy Show* or *The Flintstones* were reticent of spending money on a program that might at any moment turn around and make fun of their products.[36] While the premiere broadcast of *TW3* had had no

difficulty in attracting sponsors, NBC found selling the final version a difficult process. By the time the first episode of the series was broadcast on January 10, the network had arranged sponsorship deals with Brown & Williamson (a subsidiary of British-American Tobacco), Clairol and Speidel, but the sales effort went far beyond what NBC had anticipated; one network official indicated that the *TW3* matter was the final proof that the old definition of product sponsorship had ended.[37]

Whether the result of the concern over commercial sponsorship, the sudden adjustment of an established roster of writers and performers to a new colleague with a proprietary interest in their work, or both, the first show in the regular series of *TW3* failed to live up to the expectations created by either the pilot episode or the British version. Though it retained, in its 30-minute form, the always-reworked title song, the open studio format and the parodies and sardonic one-liners about people in the news, much of the material was flat and poorly received by the studio audience. The most memorable "sketch" in the show had nothing to do with comedy, instead featuring puppeteer Burr Tillstrom (of *Kukla, Fran and Ollie*) using his hands as puppets to portray the emotions of Berliners able for the first brief time to cross the recently constructed Wall. Frost himself did a brief monologue including the line getting the best response of any in the show, a play on the pronunciation of new Prime Minister Alec Douglas-Home's final name foregrounding the "Limey eccentricity" with its own language: "Lord Home [Hume] was in bed with flu, or, if you prefer, Lord Home [Home] was in bed with Flo. Unlikely, but they say he's improving all the time."[38]

Critical reaction to the new *TW3* was merciful only in its swiftness. *Time*, comparing the show to its British progenitor, called it "bland and unfunny.... Instead of savage young malcontents, the American program is largely staffed with familiar commercial personalities...flinging around nightclub material that would be tossed out of the thinnest of topical revues."[39] *Variety*'s reviewer noted that the episode "was as humdrum and pedestrian as the 'sneak preview' was delightfully impudent," blaming the

problems on bad writing and "the mistaken impression that just because you're gagging up the political scene it comes out satire."[40] In Palmer's terms, the norms the show purported to attack were left unscathed, as it failed to deliver the surprises it promised, even with the presence of David Frost. Cleveland Amory, in his *TV Guide* review, cited the Briton by name: "Even David Frost's performances, often with dreary material, merely serve to point up that what was obviously a fast and funny show on the other side has become, over here, a labored succession of smart-alecky collegiate skits."[41] Indeed, a *TV Guide* article on the series in its first season suggested that the show's problems reflected a cultural clash between the "London Correspondent" and his colleagues. Frost, then-journalist Peter Bogdanovich reported, was at odds with the rest of the staff throughout the week's writing sessions and rehearsals over targets that seemed inappropriate, jokes that seemed too rude or racy, and sketches that seemed too British for the American writers and performers.[42]

Still, as the article pointed out, *TW3* was drawing a devoted following in its Friday night time slot, with ratings approaching those of competing shows on ABC and CBS, and later reviews suggested that the program was improving in quality.[43] With that in mind, NBC renewed the show for the 1964-65 season, moving it to Tuesday night, where it no longer had any relation to a calendar week that was but a very strong relation to its lead-in show: the equally British-inflected *Man from U.N.C.L.E.*[44] And however battles between Frost and the Americans on staff may have transpired the previous year, Frost was clearly the winner, assuming his familiar role as host from the British *TW3* as Elliot Reid and Henry Morgan departed. Frost's increased visibility and the other moves, including the hiring of younger cast members, made to give the program a greater appeal to an audience of his age group, however, came to nought, thanks to an intrusion of electoral politics similar to the one that had brought an early end to *TW3* in its homeland. 1964 was an election year in the States as well as in Britain, which meant the purchase of network time by the major political parties to present their points of view. The first show of *TW3*'s second season was to have been presented on September 22; the show's writers and

performers, however, that evening found themselves watching a paid political program from the Republican National Committee. The program did air the following week, to mixed reviews, but more messages from the Republicans pre-empted the program for three of the next four weeks, with election coverage itself wiping out yet another Tuesday broadcast.[45] Many involved with the show felt that the pre-emptions were the Republicans' revenge for material that they felt (probably rightly) struck at them more than at their Democratic opponents; Frost himself was skeptical of NBC's assertion that *TW3* was the only half-hour time slot available to the Republicans.[46] By the time the show returned for its second broadcast, a week after the presidential election, its opposition on ABC, *Peyton Place*, had become the most popular new show on the air. The final American *That Was the Week That Was* aired on May 4, 1965.[47]

The history of *That Was the Week That Was* in both countries exemplifies the multiplicity of meanings available in a text relying upon the "logic of the absurd." The comic utterances expressed by David Frost and the other writers and performers of both *TW3* editions, based upon constructions of "reality" that recognize established social institutions and cultural codes as a status quo to be ridiculed, were necessarily apprehended in different ways by different segments of the audience. Individuals identifying with those institutions and codes were angered by what they perceived as unwarranted attacks; individuals looking for a change in the status quo enjoyed the ridicule. The context of the jokes themselves, and the contexts in which the audience receives them, as Palmer points out, determine the effectiveness of the comedy. The letters, telegrams and phone calls sent by those viewers, both in support of the program and in angry opposition, also provide measurable evidence of the activity of audience members in deriving their own meanings from the text -- and then acting in a literal fashion to respond, to conduct a dialogue.

While *TW3* does on the one hand seem to offer support to the contentions of John Fiske, Ien Ang and others working out of the active audience paradigm, the fate of the program on the other hand convincingly demonstrates the limitations of that "activeness,"

both on an institutional level and on a textual one. In the former case, the actions taken by the BBC in Britain and NBC in America to cancel the program and their relation to the complaints of political partisans about the show suggest the same gradation of hegemony to coercion visible in the Nixon administration's treatment of public broadcasting in America in its early years. Both networks would allow criticism of organized ideologies to a point -- a fairly surprising point, given NBC's allowing the American program to present a sketch that knowingly attacked a sponsor's product. Once powerful political interests made known their organized opposition to the program's satire, however, each network took the ultimate coercive measure: It eliminated the problem, much as public broadcasting eliminated programming that provoked the Nixon White House and potential corporate sponsors. This construction of *TW3* as a threat to the established order was a particularly curious one, however, given the conservative nature of the show's humor. As Neale and Krutnik point out, film and television comedy based on representations of a recognizable reality necessarily validate the existence of that reality: To eliminate the norms upon which that verisimilitude is based is to eliminate the source of the comedy. Despite their complaints, then, the British Tories and American Republicans were actually well-served by *That Was the Week That Was*, as the show's gibes merely validated and reinforced their central positions in each culture -- just as the show validated and reinforced the norms of the Cold War through its gibes at Castro, Khrushchev, Mao and other Communist figures.[48]

The relative safety the humor of *TW3* afforded its targets was also evident in the relationship the show established between its creators and viewers -- a relationship again similar to that established by American public broadcasting some years later. Those responsible for the original British version of the show were primary possessors of cultural capital: from at least upper-middle class backgrounds, and educated at the nation's finest public schools and universities. As Bernard Hollowood, editor of the British humor magazine *Punch*, put it in an explication of both *TW3*s for the *New York Times*: "It was rather like a family game of charades. Dad's leg was pulled, but the right people were

pulling it."[49] While the American version may not have had quite the Oxbridge pedigree of the British original, it did have a redoubtable amount of cultural capital behind it, to the point that the early shows seemed almost too representative of the Eastern establishment. The addition of David Frost, moreover, added an Oxbridge patina to the program and with it the "snob merit" Peter Cook and Jonathan Miller found in the American reception of their *Beyond the Fringe* revue. Both programs in turn made a point of showing off their wit through political and cultural references that only those who were well-read, in current events and in English lit, might understand.[50] In short, the audience the program's creators had in mind in both countries was an elite one that, like themselves, had accrued the most benefits from the institutions and codes they were supposedly threatening.[51]

*That Was the Week That Was*, then, was for all its reputation as groundbreaking television comedy in both Britain and the United States a quite conservative form of that comedy, upholding the norms it supposedly skewered and presenting a dialogue between its creators and its audience based on utterances that represented the privilege both enjoyed within those norms. Its conservative nature was the primary reason that *TW3* could so easily be adapted from one culture to the next, just as the conservative nature of the sitcom would result (as will be seen in Chapter 7) in the assimilation-though-adaptation of British representatives of that genre in the 1970s: Simply substitute norms, and find the people with the appropriate cultural capital to ridicule them.[52] The presentation of *TW3* on organized television networks augmented its conservatism: As delimitors of meanings through their own systems of rules and codes, as well as through the power of controlling access, the BBC and NBC could and did keep the program within what each considered proper cultural boundaries. For television comedy to become something truly threatening in a national or transnational context, it would have to examine the "real" norms from which its textual deviations and *peripeteia* developed, the social and cultural contexts of its creators and audiences, and the ways in which it was distributed. British comedy in America would soon address all of that, in large part through the offices of David Frost.

**From Frost to Flying Circus**

The conservative vision of the comic presented by Neale and Krutnik and, implicitly, by Palmer in his construction of the "logic of the absurd" has its counterpart in Robert Stam's analysis of film and television comedy in his *Subversive Pleasures.* Working off of the theory of the carnival developed by Bakhtin in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* and *Rabelais and His World*, Stam argues that much in film and television comedy presents and represents much of the ritual and oppositional culture Bakhtin finds present in medieval and Renaissance carnival festivities.[53] In Stam's own words, the "carnivalesque" in film and television comedy

> ...offers a view of the official world as seen from below...a symbolic, anticipatory overthrow of oppressive social structures. On the positive side, it is ecstatic collectivity, the joyful affirmation of change, a dress rehearsal for utopia. On the negative, critical side, it is a demystificatory instrument for everything in the social formation which renders collectivity impossible: class hierarchy, sexual repression, patriarchy, dogmatism and paranoia.[54]

Stam goes on to criticize Umberto Eco pointedly for his (Eco's) analysis of the carnival as a conservative rite, created by ruling elites in order to keep the lower classes happy and to disperse any energies that might be gathering toward rebellion or revolution -- an analysis not distant from that of Neale and Krutnik.[55]

Stam's comments on Eco are instructive in that they essentially reconstruct, within the framework of carnival and the comic, both Carey's ritual/transmissive communication paradigm clash and the active audience/cultural imperialism clash that informs this study. Indeed, the concept of liminal space used by Carey in his definition of a ritual paradigm is used by Stam as well to help exemplify the Bakhtinian "carnivalesque."[56] As such, Stam's position aligns him with those arguing for the resonance of many voices and meanings in a given text or cultural artifact. He in fact contends that an understanding of Bakhtin's notion of carnival is meaningless without a consideration of his philosophy of translinguistics, one based on the notion of the many voices available in an utterance and the "interpretive grid" through which one makes meaning of those voices.[57] Curiously, however, his analysis of film comedy in particular avoids any discussion of the place of the audience in making

meaning of this multivocal, carnivalesque humor, or of the circumscribing roles of the film industry and the culture at large in containing those meanings. In his discussion of the documentary *Monty Python Live at the Hollywood Bowl*, for example (to bring his concerns in line with the present ones), Stam presents several of the sketches performed by the troupe as thematic and/or literary examples of the carnivalesque without considering their original site of performance on television, the industrial means through which those sketches become available for paying audiences at both the Hollywood Bowl and movie theatres, or the very ritualistic and communal relationship those sketches establish between the performers and their audiences. In short, he fails both to respond to the criticisms Eco might raise concerning the supposedly liberatory values of Python comedy and to buttress his own arguments about the importance of ritual and participation in the carnival.[58]

Stam's brief consideration of the television medium, outside of comedy, in a Bakhtinian light, however, is much more aware of the need to consider the ways in which given utterances are shaped for and by specific audiences. A proper understanding of television, he suggests, "eschews both the elitist pessimism of manipulation theory and the naive affirmative celebrations of the uncritical apologists for mass-mediated culture" (Stam 220). The goal of that understanding, he continues in language reminiscent of Jameson's consideration of popular culture, should be "...to discern the often distorted undertones of utopia in mass media, while pointing to the real structual obstacles that make utopia less realizable and at times even less imaginable" (Stam 221). Stam's willingness to consider television as a polyvalent medium, in which many meanings may be called but few can be chosen, reflects a much more synthetic stance toward the paradigms he defines here than he presents in his discussion of the comic genre. More to the point, however, is that Bakhtin himself presents the comedy of the carnival as "ambivalent" and "dualistic," addressing both birth and death, destruction and renewal, the flesh and the spirit.[59] Given that, it becomes a good deal more plausible than in Stam's initial account of the genre to see television comedy working in an ambivalent fashion, functioning both to reinforce the

norms upon which it is based and to liberate its participants (the viewers) from those norms.[60] Todd Gitlin's comments concerning the importance of those who "spoke through the boob tube about its own boobery" to young radicals of the 1960s stand as a clear example of that ambivalence: "In a world that adult ideologies had defined as black and white -- America versus totalitarianism...obedience versus delinquency, affluence versus barbarism --they did help establish the possibility of gray" (Gitlin, 36).

Using the analyses offered by Stam and Bakhtin, an understanding of the ultimate failure of *That Was the Week That Was* in both Britain and America takes on a shading not provided simply by Neale and Krutnik's definition of the comic. The elite origin of the satire and parody involved, however circumscribed that satire and parody might have been by the networks through which it was disseminated, created a condition in which the satirists, whether their laughter was mocking or friendly, were above the objects of their jests -- and much of the audience that might have laughed with them. Those objects in turn, as specific representatives of the "real" norms of the time, both embodied a verisimilitude that, as Stam and Neale and Krutnik suggest, further limited the liberatory function of the comedy and revealed the show's elitism: To get the joke, one has to get the reference.[61] Given that, following the "logic of the absurd," a certain amount of verisimilitude is necessary in order for comedy to work, and that elitism -- whether in the writers' and performers' background, the historical mandate of a distributor (as with the BBC or PBS) or the narrowness of public access to broadcast media -- is a necessary part of television comedy, the question faced by the satirists of the early 1960s became one of finding the proper proportions of each to ensure the participatory laughter of millions.

That was certainly the question facing David Frost when he returned to Britain after the American *TW3* closed shop in 1965. Already, during the second season of that show, he had returned, along with Ned Sherrin, to the BBC in a new show, *Not So Much a Programme, More a Way of Life*, a satirical outing that failed on both popular and critical levels.[62] With the public limitations of satire now evident, Frost decided for his next

project to modify at least the specificity of the targets of its comedy. *The Frost Report*, which was broadcast by the BBC in 1966 and 1967, used a specific topic -- "Youth," "Crime," "Class" -- as the theme for each show; two long sketches and several short ones on that theme, along with appropriate music from American singers Tom Lehrer and Julie Felix, would be linked by Frost's "Continuous Developing Monologue": the "report," in other words. With a theme to consider each week, *The Frost Report* broadened its appeal and masked its elitist origins by becoming much less dependent upon specific topical references than its predecessors and much more reliant on archetypal representations of the norm being addressed. The show also made communal participation an inherent part of the show, as it welcomed and used comments from its viewers as the basis of material from week to week. While Frost's presence as the television face of British satire and its presence on BBC may have provided a defined narrative image for *The Frost Report*, the program itself provided a pleasant surprise: Viewers and critics both praised the show, as did the jury at the 1967 International Television Festival in Montreux, Switzerland, which awarded it the Golden Rose as best program of the year.[63]

*The Frost Report* did not make a transatlantic jump, though it did give its star his first practice in the talk show format he would employ with great success into the 1990s in both Britain and America.[64] Its importance in this narrative comes from the talent Frost brought in to write and perform the program. *The Frost Report* introduced American humorist and songwriter Tom Lehrer, who had been a regular during the second season of the U.S. version of *TW3*, to British audiences, who found much to admire in his deft wordplay and music hall tunes.[65] It also gave comedian and writer Marty Feldman a new forum for his talents, which he would quickly parlay into an American television series and global film success as part of Mel Brooks' Hollywood film repertory company.[66] Most importantly, however, *The Frost Report* marked the first meeting of five veterans of the Oxbridge comedy revues: Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Eric Idle, Terry Jones and Michael Palin. Chapman and Cleese had written and performed in shows at Cambridge

together just after Peter Cook and his colleagues had left; they were part of a touring show including the best work in their revues that played in New York in the fall of 1964.[67] Idle had followed them to Cambridge, and with the connections he established in the Footlights Club got his first job as a writer on *The Frost Report*. Jones and Palin were concurrently getting their degrees from Oxford, writing and performing together in various revues that swung more to "zany," absurdist humor than to the satire coming out of Cambridge.[68]

Of the five, Cleese was the only one regularly featured as a performer on *The Frost Report* -- though while that show was being broadcast on BBC-TV, he and Chapman were working as regular performers, along with fellow *Cambridge Circus* performers Tim Brooke-Taylor, David Hatch, Jo Kendall and Bill Oddie, on a BBC radio sketch comedy program, *I'm Sorry, I'll Read That Again*, another program that had a measure of success in America late in the 1970s.[69] All five, however, quickly went on to achieve greater success as performers as well as writers in other sketch programs: Cleese and Chapman on an absurdist revue produced by David Frost for the commercial television network, *At Last the 1948 Show*(1967), and Palin, Jones and Idle on the BBC's *Do Not Adjust Your Set* (1968), a show supposedly designed and programmed for children but whose fantastic humor quickly attracted an adult audience as well.[70] In addition to the three Oxbridge performers, *Do Not Adjust Your Set* also featured contributions from American-born artist Terry Gilliam (whom Cleese had introduced to producer Humphrey Barclay) and musician Neil Innes, whose Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band performed silly rock tunes that appealed more to children age 20 than children age 2. It would not be the last of their collaborations.

Like *The Frost Report*, neither *At Last the 1948 Show* nor *Do Not Adjust Your Set* was ever exported to America. They are, however, key moments, in Bennett and Woollacott's schema, in the mobility of signifiers surrounding and defining "British comedy," particularly the comedy created by "the Oxbridge Mafia" seen from an American point of view.[71] The text of "British comedy" early in the 1960s was defined by the topical satire of *That Was the Week That Was*, a form which, as previously noted, foregrounded

the elite backgrounds and cultural capital possessed by its writers and performers. In each of the later programs, though, topicality and specific cultural references came to have less and less significance. Instead, the sketches come to present absurd surprises in quotidian events: a madman doing ant imitations in a bus queue, the trial of a sheepdog; a visit to a psychiatrist who turns out to be sadistically cruel. While the comedy again follows Palmer's "logic of the absurd," with *peripeteia* coming out of cultural norms, the norms are no longer given specific names and/or newsworthy situations, and the *peripeteia* as a result are all the more surprising.[72] Even when using names and directly speaking of the capital of knowledge, sketches more and more rely upon the absurdity of the surprise -- a *Do Not Adjust Your Set* sketch called "James Watt Discovers The Steam-Engine From The Simple Kettle," for example, rather than dealing with James Watt or the modern ramifications of his discovery, turns Mr. and Mrs. Watt into visionaries imagining giant kettles ferrying people around the world.[73] In addition, the comedy of these later shows increasingly represents as part of the quotidian the mass media of which it was part. *TW3* was groundbreaking in this sense, in its device of deliberately showing the home audience the means through which it was produced; it did not, however, make fun of those means in and of themselves. *At Last the 1948 Show* was devised as an early TV variety show to make fun of BBC executives' predilections for letting shows they had produced sit on the shelves until they could find an appropriate time for it; *Do Not Adjust Your Set* regularly mocked other television forms, including old superhero serials.[74]

At one and the same time, then, following Stam's argument, while the post-*TW3* programs became in a sense more conventional, dealing with the everyday in a sketch form that had by this time on British television become a formula, they also became more liberatory, shedding to some degree the superior attitude of the earlier satire shows and welcoming more viewers -- including children -- into sharing their absurdist and irreverent attitudes. This is not to suggest that an elitist attitude had been completely eliminated, however. The verbal wit displayed in many of the sketches, along with the *peripeteia*

introduced to the everyday world those sketches represented, still conveyed something of the cultural capital the jesters enjoyed -- as did the way in which a network built on connections made at Oxford and Cambridge defined the form and controlled access to it. But by the end of the decade, when Chapman, Cleese, Idle, Jones and Palin would reunite, that elitism and the topicality it originally spoke to and for had mutated into something that for Americans would indeed be quite different from what had preceded it..

**And Now, It's...**

*Monty Python's Flying Circus* was introduced to British audiences by the BBC in October 1969, the same week that *The Forsyte Saga* was introduced to American audiences and five years prior to its own travel across the Atlantic. This contextualization is significant in that it demonstrates the lack of concern those responsible for the show at the institutional level had for an American audience. *The Forsyte Saga* was the first BBC television series to achieve any measure of popularity in the United States, and that reception came more than two years after its original British production and broadcast. It was not until the *Saga* became the *succes d'estime* that it did in the States -- after *Monty Python* began its British broadcast career -- that the BBC began to consider in a serious way an American audience as an export market for its entertainment programming.[76] The willful obliviousness toward a possible American audience was shared, at least initially, by the creators and performers of *Monty Python*, despite the fact that one of them was American by birth. Indeed, when Minneapolis native Terry Gilliam said in a later interview that one of his primary influences had been the television work of Ernie Kovacs, Eric Idle responded that Britons had never seen Ernie Kovacs and that their primary influence had been Spike Milligan and his work on *The Goon Show*. [77]

This is not to suggest, however, that the British members of the Monty Python troupe were ignorant of an American audience, nor is it to suggest that they were unknown quantities to that audience before the arrival of their show in 1974-75.[78] As previously

noted, John Cleese and Graham Chapman had briefly appeared in New York as part of a touring Cambridge production; Cleese stayed on for a year after it closed, performing on Broadway and working for *Newsweek*.[78] He and Chapman would return together to the States in 1969, via a special produced by David Frost for syndication by Westinghouse, *How to Irritate People*. A satirical counterpoint to Dale Carnegie-esque literature popular on both sides of the Atlantic, *How to Irritate People* was a collection of one-liners and short sketches, briefly introduced by Frost but featuring Cleese in the main, with co-writer Chapman as his usual foil. The *Variety* review noted: "Cleese was versatile and convincing in his numerous roles.... The show, taped in London, had lines obviously aimed at a British audience, but most of the humor survived the trans-Atlantic crossing."[79] And while they would not be seen on camera, Cleese and Chapman also played a role in the successful (running from 1970 to 1973) syndicated sitcom import *Doctor in the House*, writing the premiere episode and then returning, during a Monty Python hiatus, to write several episodes later in the series.[80]

Though Michael Palin, Terry Jones and Eric Idle had not had the early experience of the others in America, it would be but a short time after the BBC reunited them with Chapman, Cleese and Gilliam in *Monty Python's Flying Circus* that they would begin to become familiar to an audience in the States, starting to raise the questions involved in the establishment of a narrative image that would indeed be answered by the series.[81] Broadcast late on Saturday evening -- "fringe time" -- the first group of 13 *Python* episodes shown in Britain nonetheless attracted a substantial audience, strong critical praise and a firm commitment for more shows from the BBC.[82] The troupe turned a number of sketches from the first series into an eponymous record album; it would proceed to do the same with sketches from its other series (*Another Monty Python Record*[1971], *Monty Python's Previous Record* [1972], *Monty Python's Matching Tie and Handkerchief* [1973]). Copies of the albums began to make their way to the States via tourists and import shops, as did collections of humorous essays, scripts and drawings(*Monty Python's Big*

*Red Book* [1971], *Monty Python's Brand New Bok/Papperbok* [1973/ 74]).[83] While those products began to trickle in, a more substantial familiarity with *Python* was developing elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere, as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation began to run the program in 1970, making it available to Americans living close to the Canadian border. The popularity of the show in Canada led the troupe to make a live tour of the provinces in 1973, stopping off at the end for a brief visit in the States to perform on *The Tonight Show* -- an appearance that, though less than wildly successful, further validated the troupe to an American audience.[84]

The most significant introduction of Python comedy to an American audience, however, came in 1972, with the release of the theatrical film *And Now, For Something Completely Different*. A collection of sketches from the first two series of *Monty Python* programs, reproduced for the film medium, *And Now...* was the idea of Victor Lownes, manager of the London Playboy Club, who believed that Monty Python would be immensely popular to a young American audience. He would turn out to be right, but *And Now...* was not the vehicle through which that popularity would be gained: The movie failed to recover even its advertising costs in America, while becoming a moderate hit in England, where audiences had already seen the skits at least once on television.[85] The critical response in the United States to *And Now...*, however, sheds light on both the immediate lack of response to the film and the relationship between the series and an American audience that would soon come to assume ritualistic proportions. Again, the "clawing back," to use the Fiske and Hartley's term, of the new imported artifact to texts familiar to an American audience is prevalent throughout the reviews.[86] *Variety* noted, in a mostly positive commentary, that the title alone "...is indication that [the film] belongs, hopefully, to the Laugh-In genre. And it almost makes it.... Sometimes brilliant, generally funny, they're to be encouraged, in both comedy writing and playing. Perhaps one Peter Sellers or Marty Feldman may yet emerge."[87] Howard Thompson, panning the film in the *New York Times*, referred to another American television text: "The film's promoters are

boasting that the television program has no equivalent in this country. Granted. But compared to this, 'The Beverly Hillbillies' seems downright Shakespeare."[88] John Simon, refuting Thompson's contentions, although mirroring his own elitism, went back to British theatrical antecedents of the previous decade in casting the film as superior to the American entries in the "movie satire field" for the fall, calling Python a "somewhat less pungent and purposive version of the inimitable 'Beyond the Fringe' quartet."[89]

More intriguing, however, than the narrative image created in the reviews, which foregrounded the group's Britishness in reference to familiar American or Americanized texts, are the ways in which the reviewers construct the comedy of the picture from its represented norms and *peripeteia*, constructions that reveal the many utterances shaping the film's reception. *Variety*, for example, notes that "the laughs came fairly consistently with the exception of one anti-American item that left the screening room audience sitting on its hands" (*Variety*, August 16, 1972: 15). The writer's own opinion -- that the implausibility of the attack on an "American" norm makes it unfunny -- is embedded within an observation of what the audience, the prime concern of producers, distributors and exhibitors, does. Thompson, on the other hand, writing for the readers of the *New York Times*, finds the attack perfectly plausible: "The sharpest bit is a cartoon comparison of American foreign policy to a toothpaste ad." The other sketch he mentions positively similarly attacks a specific institutional norm: "The sliest [bit] is a take off on an audience-riveted television series called 'Blackmail'" (Thompson, 33). Addressing readers endowed with educational and cultural capital, Thompson is safe in marking Nixon's foreign policy (during the height of the Vietnam War) and television as worthy of being addressed by comic surprise. Moreover, the more specific, a la *That Was The Week That Was*, the better -- an idea addressed at once more directly and convolutedly by Simon in his review:

> This English import does not merely lampoon institutions and other near-abstractions; its comic vitriol becomes highly specific. It boldly and funnily affirms accountants to be boring, tough lumberjacks or policemen prone to homosexuality, great explorers possibly half mad, sweet old ladies a social menace, and so on. It reeks with what might be prejudice, but resounds

> with what is certainly laughter. It dares to offend in pursuit of comic truth (Simon, II, 1).

While Simon evidently confuses the use of comic archetypes with "high specificity," his paean to the "comic truth" offered in *And Now...* on the one hand claws itself back to the satire of *Beyond the Fringe* and the British comics of the 1960s that he previously acknowledges as brilliant while on the other reveals precisely the comic structure of norm and *peripeteia* outlined by Palmer in the film's daring to offend. Again, though, those norms and surprises are themselves circumscribed by the audience for whom Simon writes: a wealthy, educated audience for whom the "comic truth" in laughing at the norms of accountancy, working class *machismo* and/or sweet sextuagenarity affirms its own social and cultural dominance.

Perhaps the largest surprise, then, when Dallas' KERA and other American public television stations began to broadcast *Monty Python's Flying Circus* in 1974 and 1975 was the way in which it attracted viewers at least somewhat different from the audience addressed by Thompson or Simon in the *New York Times* -- or by the stations to which it was syndicated. This is not to suggest that the American *Monty Python* audience was one bereft of the status befitting those possessing the benefits of knowledge or wealth. But while the program's audience in urban, urbane New York grew threefold in the first four months it was broadcast there, moving WNET ahead of the three commercial independent stations in ratings, *Monty Python* was also extremely popular in Iowa, where a two-week period without a *Python* broadcast resulted in flooded switchboards, bags of mail and a petition drive demanding its return.[90] This response was not, however, coming from the little old ladies in Dubuque who, while they may not have subscribed to *The New Yorker*, were evidently a significant part of the audience for *Masterpiece Theatre* serials. *Monty Python*, as Victor Lownes had predicted two years earlier, appealed most specifically to young, college-age viewers -- an audience that, in acquiring educational capital, might have some appeal for public television stations already defining themselves, through their relationships with Mobil and other "sponsors," in terms of just such an elite audience.[91]

Several utterances of "our-own-ness" outside the text of *Monty Python's Flying Circus* present themselves as explanations for the show's American assimilation, following the group's initial lack of success in the States. Distribution is assuredly one element in the growth of the show's audience, though not as significant in terms of numbers as it might have been had *Monty Python* been presented on a commercial network. Nonetheless, the fact that it was available for "free" in its original form in markets where audiences had to pay to see *And Now, For Something Completely Different* -- or never received the film at all -- played a necessary part in the development of the relationship between the program and its American audience. Some measure of intertextuality also plays an organizing role, given the appearance in the United States of Monty Python artifacts and commentary thereon in small but significant amounts prior to 1974. Contributing to that intertextuality was the domestic development of a new style of comedy, descended from the topical satire of the early 1960s but speaking even more directly to domestic political and cultural issues. Individual comics such as Richard Pryor and George Carlin turned out chart-topping albums in the early 1970s featuring material on political figures, race relations, drugs and sex in a form and with language that was not acceptable at any hour on American television of the time.[92] Meanwhile, various groups of comedic writers and performers, similar to the Python troupe, were making renewed marks in nightclubs and college halls (Second City, the Committee), records (the Firesign Theatre), film (*The Groove Tube*) and publishing (*The National Lampoon*) employing the same style of topical comic dislocation.[93]

The growth of this form of comedy also spoke to the growth, in pure numbers, of its intended audience -- the audience that would in turn appear to comprise the major part of the viewership for *Monty Python.* In the fall of 1965 -- just after *TW3* left the air and just before *The Avengers* arrived -- American colleges and universities enrolled slightly fewer than 6 million students. By the fall of 1969, when *Monty Python* was first broadcast in Britain, the number had risen to slightly more than 8 million. Five years later, when *Monty Python* arrived on American television, some 10.3 million students were enrolled, an

increase of 73 percent in less than 10 years.[94] The products of the peak years of the postwar baby boom, in short, reached college during the years that *Monty Python* was becoming a hit in Britain and that was marked in America by the climax and eventual denouement of what Jim Heath calls "the decade of disillusionment": the continuing tragedy of Vietnam, the violence and dissipation that overcame the civil rights movement and the New Left, the election and downfall of Richard Nixon.[95] That generation, as Gitlin suggests, developed through the events of their youth a rude, raucous comic sensibility that embodied the communal, liberatory and carnivalesque functions of humor directed at ruling classes and institutions presented by Bakhtin and discussed by Stam.[96] At the same time, however, that baby boom sensibility also filled the conservative function of maintaining those classes and institutions -- of which they were becoming a part through attending college -- by affirming them as cultural norms, both within the comedy itself and in the commodified products through which the comedy was available.

It is this last dichotomy that begins to explain the appeal the British series *Monty Python's Flying Circus* had to an American audience on a textual level. As was the case with other imported shows from *The Avengers* to *Upstairs, Downstairs*, difference itself -- or the varying utterances of otherness -- was attractive, especially to an audience angry with or weary of the cultural norms that were the sources of American comedy. That attraction was heightened by the fact that the program appeared on television stations operating outside the norm of commercial American broadcasting. As previously noted, however, public broadcasting in the United States was a system becoming defined by the eliteness of its audience -- an eliteness as visible in the educational credentials of that audience as it was in the wealth it might possess. The *Monty Python* viewers working their way through the American educational system were precisely the viewers who would ensure the future of PBS -- something that became clear during the system's semiannual drives for viewer donations.[97] That the writers and performers of the show were themselves Oxbridge products, a fact evident in sketches ranging from a quiz show requiring participants to

name all seven titles in Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* to a laundromat discussion on Sartre, also contributed to the elitism of the cultural dialogue. Getting the joke (the irruption of high culture and philosophy into the commonplace norm) meant knowing the references, which in turn meant owning the appropriate educational capital.[98] Again, liberatory and communal laughter becomes laughter that reinforces a hierarchic status quo.

Sketches that specific in required knowledge, however, were more the exception than the rule to *Monty Python*, a rule that helped develop the dialogue between the British show and its American audience. As both Wilmut and Neale and Krutnik note in their analyses of *Monty Python*, the comedy in the program, following the antecedents its creators had developed in Britain, largely stayed away from topical satire that named specific names and/or issues, instead focusing on the comic archetypes noted by John Simon or, more specifically, on institutions of authority familiar to both national cultures: the church, the military/police, the legal system, governmental bureaucracy, etc.[99] This is not to say that the members of Monty Python shunned specific comic attacks; indeed, one of the most vicious came against their former employer, David Frost, portrayed (by Eric Idle) as unctuous celebrity "Timmy Williams," who is too preoccupied with the "super" acquaintances walking by and the interviews and photos for the *Mail* and *TV Times* ("They syndicate these photographs to America") to help out a desperate old friend.[100] Even in that sketch, however, the ways in which the comic *peripeteia* address the norm of "Unctuous Celebrity" are funny regardless of whether one knows the specific identity of that celebrity, just as sketches on lecherous vicars, upper-class twits and Ministries of Silly Walks have the potential to be funny regardless of what one knows of the Church of England, the landed gentry or the workings of the British government.[101]

While the appeal of *Monty Python's Flying Circus* to an American audience, particularly a young American audience in the 1970s, may well have been due to its willingness to make the norms of institutional authority the source of its comedy, that appeal was enhanced further, as Wilmut and Neale and Krutnik argue, by the institutional

authority most constantly and reflexively referred to throughout the series: television itself.[102] As had been the case with sketch comedy shows since the 1950s, *Monty Python* made parodies of game shows, talk shows, beauty pageants and the like a regular part of its comic repertoire. American audiences who had grown up with and thus had a trained knowledge of the forms, if not necessarily the specific referents, being mocked could find the comic surprises in their treatment both appropriate and plausible, following Palmer's logic of the absurd.[103] This standard sort of mocking the medium, however, was surpassed in the Python treatment of it, which directly addressed not just generic forms but the way in which television as a whole was constructed as a transmissive and authoritative device. Several devices regularly used by the troupe -- the intrusion of opening and closing credits at inappropriate places in the show; the use of captions and other graphic material; the foreshortening of sketches by characters in those sketches who decide that they are not funny and so should end -- are discussed at some length by both Wilmut and Neale and Krutnik.[104] What is significant in each instance is the way in which the comic surprise develops not out of an unexpected twist given to a specific genre but out of the audience's expectations and knowledge of the way television is "naturally" supposed to be and work. Indeed, the ultimate humor of "Timmy Williams' Coffee Time" works in much the same way, as the sketch reveals, through off-screen voices, camera pullbacks and a credit roll, that what appears to be an everyday meeting in the life of the Unctuous Celebrity is in fact a constructed part of his/the viewer's television universe: Television, not life, is natural.

The foregrounding of television itself in the Python comic strategy helps explain its appeal to its American audience, even with the presence of specific cultural signifiers evidently meaning little outside the context of television to that audience. One such signifier specifically demonstrates the way in which the gap between cultures could be closed. The BBC "spinning globe" logo of the time, used as a visual cue along with a verbal message announcing upcoming programs on the network, became one of the favorite self-referential devices of *Monty Python*. In the Python use of the symbol, the logo would appear

accompanied by a voiceover that might provide the sudden end of a sketch, apologize for what the viewer had just seen, or simply stall for time. In and of itself, the BBC logo is meaningless to an American audience unfamiliar with British broadcasting; as *Monty Python* used the device, though, the significance of the globe was quite comprehensible to an American audience that had grown up with the NBC peacock or CBS "eye" announcing that something different (and sometimes terribly so) was about to happen.

The depth to which *Monty Python's Flying Circus* took its demystification of the authority of television and the ways in which that became significant not just to an American audience but to the specific American audience that followed the program avidly become clearer in a close examination of a specific episode. The first show in the third season of *Monty Python* (the 27th of the 45 produced in the series as a whole) begins with a camera pan of a rocky, wind-blasted heath; a sudden loud orchestral chord is accompanied by the caption, in old Norse lettering, "Njorl's Saga." The camera continues to pan, as the music fades in the background, to a bearded Viking, who attempts to stammer out an introduction; however, the camera keeps on panning past him, stopping finally at a naked man who plays a fanfare on an electric organ. The scene cuts to a newscaster sitting at a desk, who says "And now"; a second cut introduces a haggard hermit, who says "It's..."; the *Monty Python* theme music (Sousa's *Liberty Bell*) and opening animation sequence begin.[105] In the first minute of the program, then, Monty Python lays bare for ridicule not just the film/television epic itself but the conventions defining that epic, through the deliberate failure to stop the camera pan where it is "naturally" supposed to stop (on the Viking) and instead bringing it to rest on a figure -- a naked organist -- who not only has nothing to do with the "story" at hand but who is completely out of place for the medium in which he appears.[106] The denaturalization continues as the naked man plays a triumphant closing chord, before the story has ever begun, and is immediately followed by a newscaster, for whom "Njorl's Saga" appears to be but one more event in the progressive narrative of the day.

"Njorl's Saga" becomes a recurring sketch throughout the episode, in each instance of its appearance mocking the conventions of the television historical epic by revealing and then shattering those conventions. In the sketch's first recurrence, the voice-over introduction of hero Erik Njorl is interrupted visually by the fact that Njorl is incapable of getting on his horse and aurally by a second voiceover correcting mistakes in the backstory that are being made by the first narrator. The voice of a BBC official (played by John Cleese) finally stops the whole thing to ask for help from anyone with knowledge of Icelandic sagas. The official -- revealed as the head of drama -- then appears on screen to announce that help and funding have been provided by the North Malden Icelandic Society, and that "Njorl's Saga" can now proceed. Which it does, with the 12th-century hero Njorl mounting his steed and setting off in search of adventure...only to arrive in the 20th-century town of North Malden, where he is greeted by the mayor, who then ignores him to face the camera in direct address and tell his audience about the benefits North Malden can offer business and industry. The BBC head of drama again stops the story to tell the audience that he has spoken with the North Malden Icelandic Society to ensure that all inappropriate references to the town will be removed, and that the saga can again proceed. The third incarnaation of the sketch begins with a shot of the hero riding away from the camera, with the narrator explaining that he is leaving "this happy land to return to the harsh uneconomic realities of life in the land of Ljosa waters" -- a structured concluding scene and narration. The story, however, then continues with Njorl stopping at a stream, where he is confronted by a band of knights who, as the letters on their breastplates reveal, represent Malden. A battle ensues, during which the knights from Malden brandish signs and banners reading "Malden: Gateway to Industry," "Invest in Malden" and "ICI Thanks Malden"; the battle is interrupted visually by flashed insertions of a card also reading "Invest in Malden." As the fighting progresses, the voice of the BBC head of drama again intrudes, this time in a telephone conversation with the head of the North Malden Icelandic Society protesting the inclusion of elements that "don't ring quite true to the spirit of the

original text." The film and the sketch end with a final full-screen "Invest in Malden" card.

In each recurrence of "Njorl's Saga," the norm -- the televisual production of a fictional story -- gives rise to comic *peripeteia* that reveal and mock the conventions which structure that norm. On one level, Monty Python ridicules the conventions of the fiction itself, through devices such as the corrected introduction, the arrival of Njorl in North Malden and the battle against the knights of Malden. On a second level, the troupe addresses the televisual production of the story: the continuing pan opening the show; the frightening music accompanying each appearance of the "Njorl's Saga" logo; the quick zooms, fast cutting and flash frame intrusions of the battle scene. Most telling in this regard are the sudden comic shifts in both Njorl's meeting with the mayor and the battle sequence from a representational mode, in which the camera acts as a hidden voyeur, recording the action "realistically" for the audience's later pleasure, to a presentational mode, in which the camera and its audience are addressed directly -- shifts that uncover the construction of all television "fiction" and hold it up on ludic display.[107] Finally, the Python sketch(es) attack the industrial and institutional forces behind all the "Njorl's Sagas" by involving on air the "BBC head of drama" in its proper presentation, and the commercial-minded citizens of North Malden, who simply want to use the saga to promote their town.

The ridicule of television established in "Njorl's Saga" continues throughout the episode, as the saga becomes something of a "metasketch," enveloping and/or referencing almost every other element in the show. Njorl's story continues immediately after the apparent conclusion of what has turned out to be the "Malden Saga," in fact, as the theme music and logo again appear (following a numbered countdown such as that which precedes a film), this time over the courtroom, judge, jury and barristers featured in an earlier sketch about a loquacious mass murderer. The saga here begins with the trial of another television executive, charged with being ratings conscious and "transmitting bland garbage." After he is hauled off with a five-year sentence, a figure wrapped in bandages from head to toe is brought in; it is indeed Erik Njorl, charged with conspiring to publicize

a North London borough in a BBC saga, being a foreigner, and conspiring "to do things not normally considered illegal." When Njorl refuses to testify, as he is incapable of moving or speaking, the court orders his bandages removed, whereupon it discovers that the only thing inside are police characters from an earlier Terry Gilliam animation, in search of a murderer from within the suspect's own body. At that point, the BBC production of "Njorl's Saga" appears to be concluded...only to reappear, with logo and music, as the rubric under which two old women -- "Pepperpots," as the troupe would call them -- decide to settle a laudromat argument about the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre by going to Paris -- via Iceland -- to visit him. Throughout, the mocking of television narrative, production technique and institutional structures continues apace, with the referencing and cross-referencing between sketches deliberately making *Monty Python's Flying Circus* simply another television text to be mocked: When Sartre settles the Pepperpot argument, the end of "Njorl's Saga" and, evidently, the *Monty Python* episode is noted with the on-screen graphic, "The End" -- which is immediately followed by another sketch.

Each of the levels of comic intent present in both the initial installments of "Njorl's Saga" and its transmogrification throughout the episode includes references that have meaning only to a British audience: The significance of "Malden" -- if any -- for example, is lost on an American audience for whom a reference to "Queens," "Iowa" or "the Valley" would have clear meanings.[108] And each level of comic intent contains surprises that can be enjoyed on their own regardless of any connection to television: the slapstick of Njorl attempting to get on his horse, the subliminal insertion of "Invest in Malden" frames, the utterly ineffectual authority of the BBC head of drama or the television executive hauled off to jail. But in making the conventions of television as a whole the target of their humor, Monty Python succeeds in creating a comedy that not only could travel to America but that could thrive there. Indeed, the battle between the BBC and the commercial interests of North Malden had a particular resonance for American audiences who in the 1970s were viewing *Monty Python* on a noncommercial television system that was becoming a feeding

ground for corporations looking to improve their images and attract new consumers through program sponsorship.[109]

The last sketch in the "Njorl's Saga" episode provides a final example of the way in which Python comedy could be assimilated into American culture. One of two parodies of specific television forms in the episode, "Whicker's World" takes both the name of the travelogue show that it targets and the program's opening credit shot (a plane landing).[110] The comic surprise that fuels the narrative is that the tropical paradise of the week is Whicker's Island, a beautiful Caribbean resort that is home to countless hosts of travelogue shows who have no place else to go. Having immediately denaturalized the show and its genre, the troupe then addresses the presentational nature of its production by having each member dress up as and adopt the nasal, herky-jerky intonation of Alan Whicker, the host of the "real" *Whicker's World,* and trade off thelines of Whicker's monologue one after the other while crossing through the camera frame at dizzying angles. Their poly/monologue directly addresses the literary conventions of the script ("Well, there you have it, a crumbling/empire in the sun-drenched/Caribbean, where the cliches sparkle on the waters/ like the music of repeat fees"), the conventions of its presentation ("...where gin and tonic jingle in a gyroscopic jubilee of something beginning with 'j'"), and the institutional conventions of the travelogue as a whole ("The practiced voice of the seasoned campaigner/ cannot hide the basic tragedy here./There just aren't enough rich people left to interview").[111] These forms of *peripeteia*, though specifically borne out of the norms of *Whicker's World* and Alan Whicker, also explicitly address the norms of the medium -- generically, technically and institutionally -- through which Whicker and his world seem to come to natural life. Again, there is comedy in the sketch that has nothing necessarily to do with the norms of television -- the physical movements of the Whickers, or a fully clothed Whicker reporting from middle of the swimming pool. And again, there is comedy to a knowing audience in seeing the specifics of *Whicker's World* being mocked. But also again, there is comedy for audiences who would not know Alan Whicker from Alan

Thicke, Allen Ludden or Steve Allen, in seeing the norms that define the construction of Whickers and their *Worlds* whereever being unmasked and ridiculed.

All these utterances, to return to the terminology of Bakhtin, concerning the mechanisms of television helped shape the response that *Monty Python* received in an American audience familiar with the medium from birth, as did other comic utterances of a slapstick variety that did not require specific knowledge of the culture from which they came. Other knowledge, however, also helped shape that response for an audience that had already or was in the process of acquiring educational capital. As previously noted, the sketch concerning Sartre is meaningless without some basic knowledge of who Sartre is and what he produced; the sketch includes several references to Sartre's work in French ("*Le Capitalisme et La Bourgeoisie ils sont la meme chose...*") and bases one of its jokes on the difference between Marxism and Revisionism. The names of the two Pepperpot women -- Mrs. Premise and Mrs. Conclusion -- also set up the final joke of the sketch, one based on the elementary principles of logic: When Sartre confirms Mrs. Premise's premise that "*Rues a Liberté* is an allegory of man's search for commitment," Mrs. Conclusion concludes the sketch, "Oh, coitus." "Njorl's Saga" itself, in addition to its mocking of its medium, also mocks the literary style of Icelandic sagas themselves: "Erik Njorl, son of Frothgar, leaves his home to seek Hangar the Elder at the home of Thorvald Nlodvisson, the son of Gudlief, helf brother of Thorgier, the priest of Ljosa water, who took to wife Thurunn, the mother of Thorkel Braggart...." As is the case throughout the episode, the absurdity of the names used and the relations described ("Gudreed, daughter of Thorkel Long, son of Kettle-Trout, the half-son of Harviyoun Half-Troll") function as comic surprises independent of the norm being addressed. Recognizing the norm of the Icelandic saga, however, as well as the norm of Sartrean existentialism, requires knowledge obtained only by a discriminating few and contributes to the "snob merit" Peter Cook cited in the appreciation of an American audience for British humor a decade earlier.

This "snob merit" and the education brandished by the troupe in their show did not

go unnoticed by those in America who were critical of the enterprise. Cleveland Amory, in his pan of the program for the mass-circulated *TV Guide*, noted that the program was being seen on the East Coast through a consortium of public broadcasters called the Eastern Educational Network. "Exactly how it comes under the head of education," he continued, "we don't know, except that it has been described as containing overgraduate humor.... [O]ne thing is certain: Nothing is done over lightly here. Everything is done at least twice -- and heavily" (Amory 32). Meanwhile, popular journals that were aimed at an educated audience and that already had publicized other British imports shown on PBS were praising the series: *The New Yorker*, in its "Talk of the Town" blurb, described how a viewer of *And Now, For Something Completely Different* fell out of his seat and then rolled to the front of the theater laughing.[112] Humorist Thomas Meehan presented a three-page appreciation for the *New York Times Magazine* that rewrote Amory's previous complaint for his audience: "'Undergraduate humor,' scornfully say the Pythons' critics, but there is such off-the-wall originality and intelligence in most of what they do that it might better be called 'overgraduate humor.'"[113] *Time*, occupying the middle ground both in tone and in demographics, presented the success of the comedy group and their show as something "bordering on a cult, that is now sweeping the U.S."; its mostly informative article, however, is accompanied by a sidebar review of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, which critic Richard Schickel calls "...as funny as a movie can get, but also a tough-minded picture -- as outraged about the human propensity for violence as it is outrageous in its attack on that propensity."[114]

This clear division in the critical commentary on *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, as well as the measured demographic support it and later shows created by its individual members received in the States, speaks again to the dichotomy of comedy addressed earlier.[115] The program's comic deconstruction of the norms of institutional authority, most particularly television, made it accessible on one level to an American audience who had grown up with those norms -- and who had, in the end of the Vietnam conflict and the

Watergate scandal, witnessed an anything-but-comic deconstruction of the ideals, if not the norms, of American policy and politics. The many levels of humor and the diverse types of *peripeteia* employed by the comedians, as exemplified in "Njorl's Saga," added to both the width (in terms of accessibility) and depth of their relationship with that American audience. To characterize that relationship in terms of the "absorption and domestication" Gitlin associates with hegemony and assimilation willfully erases the anti-institutional utterances, both American and British, defining the dialogue; indeed, ABC's failed efforts to bring *Monty Python* to an American audience defined by the constructs of commercial network broadcasting demonstrate how "domestication" can be directly resisted.

Laughter engendered through all those utterances, however, was liberatory only in that it came at the sense of seeing the authority it addressed exposed; it could do nothing to change the nature of that authority. The very audience, in fact, that could laugh at the recognition of the emperor disrobed was precisely the audience gaining the training and the resources to sew the emperor's new raiments. For those, meanwhile, who found themselves embodied in the norms addressed by *Monty Python's Flying Circus* -- women, in particular -- the Oxbridge-trained comics established themselves as but another elite authority continuing a tradition of hierarchical (or patriarchal) disrespect.[116] Once again, an opened ideological seam was sewn back up as the limits of comic subversion exerted themselves in the American reception of a British text.

Still, the reception of *Monty Python* in the States, like that of *The Forsyte Saga* and *Upstairs, Downstairs*, transcended that of a passive audience absorbing whatever comic messages might be found in the program. Indeed, the participatory involvement of live audiences at Monty Python's stage performances in New York in 1976 and Los Angeles in 1980 represent both the ritual aspect of communication as defined by James Carey and the ritual aspect of carnival as defined by Bakhtin and Stam.[117] However ritualistic the responses of those audiences might have been, though, and however desirable their demographics were to public broadcasting and local independent stations, the fact remained

that British programming per se had not since *The Avengers* successfully found its way to the mass American audience shared by the three major commercial networks. But just as *Monty Python* was becoming a critical and popular success in Britain, and just as *The Forsyte Saga* and *Masterpiece Theatre* were beginning to attract viewers well-off in both education and finance in the States, another small but most influential American audience was paying a great deal of attention to British programming. It would be American television producers themselves who would provide the ultimate assimilation of British television into American culture.

## Notes, Chapter Six

1) Amory, May 17, 1975, 32.

2) *Life of Python*, exec. prod., Charles Brand, prod.-dir. Mark Redhead, BBC/Devillier Donegan Enterprises, 1989 (videotape, Paramount, 1990).

3) Read also points out that those filmed sitcoms, representing American middle class life, frequently entered cultures in which owning a television meant being part of the upper class. The reception, then, of *I Love Lucy* and *The Flintstones* in those cultures was similar to that of the PBS British imports a decade later in America, with meanings of a given text being shaped by utterances defining a small audience gifted in cultural, educational and/or economic capital. See Read 1976, 77-95; also Straubhaar 1992, 16-18.

4) Read 1976, 91-92; Straubhaar, 1992, 17-18.

5) The relative popularity of the specific Ameican genres of action-adventure and soap opera overseas can be seen as another example of the cultural discount described by Hoskins and Mirus and Straubhaar at work. See Hoskins and Mirus 1988, 500-501; also Straubhaar, 1992, 13-18. See also Straubhaar 1991, 47-58.

6) The quoted line is taken from "Chuckles Bites the Dust," *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, prod. James L. Brooks, Allan Burns, David Davis, writ. David Lloyd, dir. Joan Darling, perf. Mary Tyler Moore, Edward Asner, Ted Knight, et al., CBS, October 18, 1975.

7) On ideology and codings, see Hall, in ed. During 1994, 90-103; also Fiske 1989, 1-20.

8) Steve Neale and Frank Krutnik's discussion of verisimilitude in comedy draws heavily upon this argument and definition. See Neale and Krutnik 1990, 83-94.

9) *The Flintstones*, for instance, was an immediate success in Sweden, where the theme song quickly became a jazz band standard. See Franzen, et al. 1974, 212-213.

10) For the full explication of the importance of utterance in the "logic of the absurd," see Palmer 1987, 75-95.

11) See Palmer 1987, 115-140.

12) Gitlin 1987, 36.

13) Gitlin says of Caesar and Kovacs (as well as Steve Allen): "They spoke through the boob tube about its own boobery." See Gitlin 1987, 35-36. For more on the Benny and Burns and Allen shows, see Marc 1984, 80.

14) For a brief history of *Tonight* and the roles of Allen and Paar in its success, see Marc 1984, 141-148. Allen, who believed that "the humorist is a social critic," offered especially vital support to the new satirists, giving Lenny Bruce several shots in his primetime show and remaining a close friend until the time of the comedian's death in 1966. See Miller and Nowak 1977, 364; also Thomas 1989, 139.

15) Marc 1984, 144-145.

16) Sahl, in fact, became acceptable enough to the mainstream to serve as one of a group of guest hosts filling the gap between Paar's departure and Johnny Carson's arrival as host of *The Tonight Show* in 1962. See Brooks and Marsh 1988, 892.

17) For the history of *The Goon Show*, as well as brief analyses of some of their sketches, see Wilmut and Grafton 1976. The influence of the Goons in America was much less visible in television than film, the medium in which Goon writer/performer Peter Sellers became a major Hollybrit star during the 1960s. Fellow Goon Spike Milligan, who was the radio series' chief writer and public presence, also had some transatlantic and international film success, in addition to appearing for a summer on American television as a regular in *The Marty Feldman Comedy Machine*.

18) For the complete story of the creation and production of *Beyond the Fringe*, see Wilmut 1980, 16-27. Levin's quote can be found in Wilmut 1980, 18.

19) On the success of Meader, and his less-than-grateful reception by members of the First Family, see Watson 1990, 54-55.

20) The passage referred to, spoken on stage by Jonathan Miller (as Worcester), is as follows:

> Get thee to Gloucester, Essex. Do thee to Wessex, Exeter.
> Fair Albany to Somerset must eke his route.
> And Scroop, do you to Westmoreland, where shall bold York
> Enrouted now for Lancaster, with forces of our Uncle Rutland,
> Enjoin his standard with sweet Norfolk's host.
> Fair Sussex, get thee to Warwicksbourne,
> And there, with frowning purpose, tell our plan
> To Bedford's tilted ear, that he shall press
> With most insensate speed
> And join his warlike effort to bold Dorset's side.
> I most royally shall now to bed,
> To sleep off all the nonsense I've just said.

For the sketch in its verbal entirety, see Wilmut 1980, 12-14.

21) The show's performers included singer Millicent Martin (who performed the title tune, with topically adjusted lyrics each week), Timothy Birdsall, Kenneth Cope, David Kernan, Roy Kinnear, Al Mancini, Lance Percival and Frost's Cambridge crony, and co-founder of the satirical monthly *Private Eye*, William Rushton. Another Cambridge friend and *Private*

*Eye* founder, Christopher Booker, was signed on as head writer (with Frost) for the television revue; critic Bernard Levin was hired to present sardonic editorial essays, as well as to conduct usually querulous interviews. See Wilmut 1980, 59-66. For a collection of material, verbal and visual, from the British *TW3*, see Frost and Sherrin 1963.

22) The show's regular lampooning of Prime Minister Macmillan -- a Macmillan imitation was apparently a required element of Cambridge examinations -- led to numerous protests from Conservative party officials and, finally, a BBC edict that forbade the edited usage of its news footage for anything other than documentary purposes. An attack on Macmillan's successor, Lord Alec Douglas-Home, led to an unheard-of number of complaints from viewers and led, at least indirectly, to the show's cancellation in the last week of 1963. See Wilmut 1980, 64-71.

23) Rev. of *That Was the Week That Was*, *Variety*, December 5, 1962, 28.

24) "The BBC's 'TWTWTW'," *Variety*, December 19, 1962, 26.

25) The significance of American satirists and comics who based their work on the reshaping of incidents from "real," everyday life in establishing a narrative image for *TW3* is evident in *TV Guide*'s half-page "Closeup" feature on the premiere episode:

> It's only a few years since people were complaining, 'What this country really needs is some good satire.' Well, we got it. Most of it started in the coffee house and smaller nightclubs, and a good deal of it wound up on TV. Sahl, Newhart, Berman and Gregory are nationally known.... But it was in England, and on TV, that the most savage -- and most popular -- revue originated. *TWTWTW* carried irreverence to an extreme that shook the Government....

The last sentiment, in addition to establishing the British show as something at least purer, if not better, than American satire, was also one that the magazine's editors would, at least until the Nixon years, wholeheartedly endorse. See "Closeup: *That Was the Week That Was*," *TV Guide* November 9, 1963, A-22 (Michigan edition).

26) Description from premiere episode, *That Was the Week That Was* (American version), prod. Leland Hayward, writ. Earl Doud, Robert Emmett, Gerald Gardner, dir. Hal Gurnee, Marshall Jamison, perf. Nancy Ames, Henry Fonda, Henry Morgan, NBC, November 10, 1963. Among the performers on the premiere was a young Gene Hackman, portraying a Harvard student and a priest.

27) *Variety*, for instance, called the premiere "a 60-minute barb-tinged romp that, over most of the course, proved delightful in its freshness and impishness." See rev. of *That Was the Week That Was*, *Variety*, November 13, 1963, 35. *TV Guide* referred to the show in a quasi-editorial sidebar as "a refreshing blast of cool and invigorating impudence," also noting that the NBC had received almost 2,000 calls and telegrams to the five stations it owned (in New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Chicago and Los Angeles), of which 1,600 (80 percent) were favorable. See "For the Record," *TV Guide*, November 23, 1963, A-3; also Doan, *New York Herald Tribune*, November 12, 1963, 21. Its own correspondence about the show, the magazine reported, ran 7-1 in favor of *TW3*, with viewer Mary Taylor calling it "the freshest, most enlightening show we have ever seen," and viewer Larry Arnold, summoning the words of Newton Minow, praising it as "a blossoming cactus on the vast wasteland." The one negative letter printed by the magazine, from Harold Van Wyke, spoke to the political problems the show would soon encounter: "This show must have been conceived the same week that true Americanism was banned from our school systems. If [it] must be aired on American TV, let's drop our antennas in shame." See Letters, *TV Guide*, November 30, 1963, A-2.

28) Quotations are taken from *That Was the Week That Was* (British version), prod. Ned Sherrin, writ. Christopher Booker, Caryl Brahms, David Frost, Herbert Kretzmer, David Lee, Bernard Levin, perf. David Frost, Roy Kinnear, Millicent Martin, Dame Sybil Thorndike, et al., NBC, November 24, 1963. See also Watson 1990, 221-224; Frost 1993, 104-109.

29) Jack Gould of the *New York Times* noted that the *TW3* broadcast had received the greatest public response of any single network presentation concerning the assassination, with NBC callers praising "the vigor and compassion displayed in the imported presentation's incisive portrayal of President Kennedy and its estimate of the potential of President Johnson." See Gould, *New York Times* November 27, 1963, 75; also Frost 1993, 108-109; Watson 1990, 221-222.

30) It was a "special arrangement" in more ways than one, as the AFTRA (American Federation of Television and Radio Artists) union had tried to block Frost's work visa, charging that he was taking a job that could and should have been held by an American performer. Producer Leland Hayward and NBC argued that Frost's work as creator and host of the British version of the show made his participation in the American production fitting. The U.S. Immigration Service sided with Hayward and the network. See "David Frost OK'd For 'TW3,'" *Variety* January 15, 1964, 38; also Frost 1993, 114-115.

31) The British *TW3* fell afoul of its BBC bosses in the fall of 1963, when the resignation of Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan and his controversial appointment of Sir Alec Douglas-Home to replace him led to some of the show's most scabrous attacks on the Tory hierarchy. The resultant public outcry aggrieved members of the BBC's Board of Governors, who were responsible for maintaining the political balance mandated by the corporation's charter. With a general election due in 1964, the board decided in November to end the second series of *TW3* programs at the end of the 1963 calendar year -- although, as those associated with the show pointed out, the BBC had known that the country would have an election before it began running the second series. See Wilmut 1980, 70-71; Frost 1993, 98-104; also Gardner, *New York Times* January 3, 1964, 49.

32) Gould, Nov. 27, 1963, 75. See also Bennett and Woollacott 1987 on the creation and reading of "the texts of Bond" (44-60).

33) Jameson 1979, 130-148.

34) Neale and Krutnik 1990, 93-94.

35) Neale and Krutnik 1990, 19-21.

36) That problem became a public one almost immediately for the new program: When it discovered that *TW3* was presenting a sketch, borrowed from the British edition of the show, on the health hazards of smoking (set to the tune "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes"), Brown and Williamson told NBC that if the show did not drop the sketch, it would pull out its one-minute ad for the evening. Although *TW3* producers indicated that it might be dropped, in the end the sketch stayed and the commercial was replaced. "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," as it came to be known, became one of the show's most popular and praised pieces. See "TW3' Smoking Spoof Gets in Sponsor's Eye," *New York Times* January 24, 1964, 57; Gould, *New York Times* January 25, 1964, 49; Adams, *New York Times* May 4, 1965, 87.

37) See Rosen, *Variety* December 11, 1963, 21.

38) Quotes and descriptions taken from *That Was the Week That Was*, exec. prod. Leland Hayward, prod. Marshall Jamison, writ. Earl Doud, Robert Emmett, David Frost, Gerald Gardner, dir. Kirk Alexander, Marshall Jamison, perf. Elliot Reid, Henry Morgan, David Frost, Nancy Ames, et al., NBC, January 10, 1964.

39) "That Was Weak, That Was," *Time* January 17, 1964, 76.

40) Rev. of *That Was the Week That Was*, *Variety* January 15, 1964, 35.

41) Amory, *TV Guide* March 21, 1964, 3.

42) See Bogdanovich, *TV Guide* April 4, 1964, 24-28.

43) See Bogdanovich, 24; also Gould, *New York Times*, January 25, 1964, 49; "As We See It," *TV Guide*, April 4, 1964, 1; "Follow Up Comment: *That Was the Week That Was*," *Variety*, May 13, 1964, 39.

44) According to *TV Guide*, much of the reason for NBC's decision to move *TW3* came as part of its settlement of a dispute with former *Tonight* host Jack Paar, who wanted a more established show -- Jack Benny's, as it turned out -- as the lead-in for his Friday night primetime effort. See "As We See It," *TV Guide*, April 4, 1964, 1.

45) *Variety*'s review of the *TW3* second season debut, while still offering reservations about the writing, also praised the show's "new set of muscles owing to some prominent cast changes and format revisions." Jack Gould of the *New York Times*, however, panned the show as "neither witty nor funny, only embarrassing in its persistent clumsiness and poor taste." See rev. of *That Was the Week That Was*, *Variety*, October 7, 1964, 26; also Gould, *New York Times*, September 30, 1964, 87. On the show's pre-emptions, see rev. of *That Was the Week That Was*, *Variety*, October 7, 1964, 26; "Lament of TW3 Writer: 'Save Us From Friends,'" *Variety*, December 23, 1964, 20; also Barnouw 1990, 363.

46) Head writer Gerald Gardner told *Variety* that the Republican pre-emptions of *TW3* made it appear as though the party was "out to get" the show. See "Lament Of TW3 Writer," December 23, 1964, 20. Frost, for his part, cites an NBC representative who claimed that the only half-hour slots available for purchase by political parties were those occupied by *TW3*, *Hazel* and *The Jack Benny Show*; "Tell that to the Marines!" was Frost's response. He also notes that the only reason the network did not give the September 29 timeslot to the Republicans as well was the fact that the Democrats had already bought a minute of commercial time for that broadcast. See Frost 1993, 133-134.

47) ABC ran *Peyton Place* on Tuesdays and Thursdays in 1964-65; the Tuesday show finished 20th in the Nielsen ratings for the season, while the Thursday show was ninth. Only *Bewitched* did better among programs in their first season. The CBS competition on Tuesday night, *Petticoat Junction*, finished 15th in the ratings for the season, only a slight drop from the previous season. With five of its first six shows for the year pre-empted, *TW3* had little chance to reclaim its old audience, much less develop any new viewership.

48) In many ways, the logic of the absurd employed by the topical satirists of *TW3* inverts the ideological conventions John Fiske presents, tellingly, as "strategies of containment" that structure the television news programs from which they drew both their style and their content. See Fiske 1989, 283-296.

49) Hollowood, *New York Times Magazine*, January 24, 1964, 17.

50) Hollowood cites the "with-it-ness" of *TW3*'s cultural literacy as proof that the claim that Britain was becoming a classless society was sheer "idiocy." See Hollowood, 17.
51) NBC was evidently was aware of the very specific nature of the relationship between the show's creators and audience from its inception, as one network spokesperson made clear at the time of its cancellation: "It was presented for a limited audience, but it hasn't rung the bell enough to keep even that audience interested." See Adams, May 4, 1975, 87.

52) In addition to the United States, a national version of *TW3* operating under the same title began in France in 1964. See Hollowood, 71.

53) See, in particular, Bakhtin 1984a, 122-137; also Bakhtin 1984b, 1-58.

54) Stam 1989, 95.

55) Stam 1989, 91-92. He refers to Eco's criticism as "Eurocentric, elitist and undialectic."

56) Stam 1989, 93-94. Among the concepts he cites as elements of the carnivalesque are mythic representations of regeneration and ritual sacrifice, bisexuality, a celebration of genital and excretory functions, the overthrow of established order, communality, vulgarity and anticlassicism.

57) Stam 1989, 89; also his chapter on "Translinguistics and Semiotics," 26-56.

58) Stam 1989, 111-112. One might indeed argue with the whole of Stam's application of Bakhtin's theory of the carnival to 20th-century film and television comedy, given the progressive devolution Bakhtin himself sees in the concept from the Renaissance to modern times. He writes:

> [T]he people's festive laughter...is also directed at those who laugh.... This is one of the essential differences of [that] laughter from the pure satire of modern times. The satirist whose laughter is negative places himself above the object of his mockery, he is opposed to it. The wholeness of the world's comic aspect is destroyed, and that which appears comic becomes a private reaction.

In many respects, Stam's treatment of the comic in film, in failing to consider the participation of the audience in laughing, becomes the private reaction Bakhtin describes as destroying the comic. See Bakhtin 1984b, 12.

59) See Bakhtin 1984a, 126-130.

60) Palmer's "logic of the absurd," as previously noted, allows for this ambivalence: The *peripeteia* he discusses can be read as a moment of liberation from the norm. It should also be noted, following his logic, that those who are not socially positioned in such a way as to "get" the comedy would not find anything liberating about it; thus the actions of the Conservative Party in Britain and the Republican Party in America.

61) On the role of verisimilitude in film and television comedy, see Neale and Krutnik 1990, 83-94; Stam 1989, 236-239.

62) See Wilmut 1980, 75-79; Frost 1993, 137-154.

63) See Wilmut 1980, 136-143; Frost 1993, 161-187.

64) On Frost's career as a talk show host and interviewer. See Brooks and Marsh 1988, 187-188; Frost 1993, 362-530; also Erickson 1989, 159-160.

65) Frost 1993, 167-168; 180-181.
66) On the career of Marty Feldman, see Brooks and Marsh 1988, 190, 491; Wilmut 1980, 137-152.

67) Wilmut 1980, 46-51.

68) Wilmut 1980, 38-40.

69) Wilmut 1980, 120-134. Chapman stepped aside as a performer early on in the series, to be replaced by yet another Cambridge graduate, Graeme Garden; the show was produced by yet another central figure in the Oxbridge comedy network, Humphrey Barclay. The author was a regular listener to the program in its broadcasts on public radio stations in Iowa and California in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

70) See Wilmut 1980, 144-150; 181-186.

71) The term "Oxbridge Mafia" is used throughout Wilmut's book, as well as in its preface by another one of its dons, Bamber Gascoigne.

72) Wilmut 1980, 146-149.

73) Wilmut 1980, 183.

74) Wilmut 1980, 144; 183.

75) Though the BBC had made deals in the late 1960s with distributors who had entré into the American market, it was not until early 1970 that it reorganized to allow programming heads of individual departments negotiate export deals, rather than having to run decisions through a labyrinthine bureaucracy -- a change suggested by an American management consultant. As Jack Pitman would note in *Variety*: "[BBC] product isn't angled to hook the Nielsen sample. BBC shows are styled, and always have been, first and foremost for domestic consumption --- there never has been any effort to shape a series with a 'mid-Atlantic' accent...." Pitman also cited the BBC's continuing production of programs in black-and-white as another deliberate hindrance to transatlantic trade, making the American success of *The Forsyte Saga* all the more a surprise. See Pitman, *Variety* January 14, 1970, 45; also "BBC-TV's $7-Mil Deal With H&W," *Variety* March 19, 1969, 74.

76) Kaufman, *New York Times* April 26, 1975, 29.

77) As had been the case with previous imports, American audiences received some knowledge about *Monty Python* in advance from *TV Guide*. Robert Musel gave the show a positive mention in a 1970 article about the state of British television, while *Observer* critic Clive James, writing of the third season of *Python* shows at home, complained that the comics seemed to be running out of ideas. "I should add," he added, "I wouldn't dream of missing their act -- a larger confession than it looks, since I front a taped show on the commercial channel at the same time." See Musel, *TV Guide* February 7, 1970, 26; James, *TV Guide* March 10, 1973, 7-8.

78) Wilmut 1980, 121; also Perry, 1983, 93-94.

79) Rev. of *How to Irritate People*, *Variety* January 29, 1969, 50; also Frost 1993, 445.

80) Wilmut 1980, 187-188. The sitcom, based on a series of novels about London medical students by Richard Gordon, was produced by their *I'm Sorry I'll Read That Again* colleague Humphrey Barclay. As Chapman himself was a licensed M.D., the team seemed a particularly apt choice for the assignment; when they left to work on *Python*, their replacements were fellow *I'm Sorry* performer/writers Bill Oddie and Graeme Garden (who was himself a doctor). One of Cleese's later scripts for the show, involving a trip to a resort hotel on the south coast, proved to be the inspiration for his series *Fawlty Towers*. *Variety* said of the premiere episode: "Working against it is the ancient bugaboo of limited acceptance of the British accent and product by American viewers. But based on the opening show...'Doctor' seems to have better prospects than most previous importations." See rev. of *Doctor in the House*, *Variety* September 22, 1971, 34.

81) Gilliam for his part had worked for the humor magazine *Help!*, published by *Mad* magazine founder Harvey Kurtzman in New York, before finally relocating to London. One of his photo caption comics for the magazine featured John Cleese as a man with an unseemly yearning for a Barbie doll. See Perry 1983, 78; 94-95.

82) Estimated audience for the 1969-1970 *Python* series was three million viewers, according to Perry 1983 (131-133). One problem with building and maintaining a British audience was the BBC programming schedule, which made its time of broadcast dependent upon whatever else the network might be showing that night: A late soccer game might push it back to 11:30, while an early movie might see it running at 10:40.

83) According to a 1975 *New Yorker* piece, the records "sold surprisingly well, creating a fanatical cult"; however, none of the albums tracked on any *Billboard* Top 200 album chart prior to 1975. See "Talk of the Town," *The New Yorker*, May 12, 1975, 35.

84) Perry 1983, 161.

85) Perry 1983, 136-138; Wilmut 1980, 214. It should be noted that while *And Now, For Something Completely Different* preceded the American import of *Monty Python's Flying Circus* by two years, the group's second film, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* , which was released in spring 1975, also preceded the arrival of the television series in a number of markets, with a much broader band of publicity.

86) Fiske and Hartley, in ed. Newcomb 1987, 601-602.

87) Rev. of *And Now, For Something Completely Different*, *Variety* August 16, 1972, 15. By this time, Marty Feldman had made two series broadcast on American TV (one of which had its final episode on the date of this review) and so was a familiar reference point.

88) Thompson, *New York Times*, August 23, 1972: 33.

89) Simon, *New York Times*, September 10, 1972, II, 1. The films that were less than truly funny were Woody Allen's *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex* and Robert Downey's *Greaser's Palace*.

90) "TV Syndication: 'Python' Captures 64 Pub TV Outlets," *Variety* April 23, 1975, 33; also Brown, *New York Times*, March 15, 1975, 55. Iowa and New York were among the first markets in the country to pick up *Monty Python* (both via state and regional public television networks) after Dallas' KERA-TV did so in November 1974; among others to purchase the show early were such relatively unsophisticated markets as Omaha, Sacramento and Scranton. See Littlejohn, *New York Times*, December 29, 1974, II, 1.

91) Brown, March 15, 1975, 55.

92) Carlin, a discovery and protege of Lenny Bruce, and Pryor had both earned national reputations as rising young comics during the 1960s, with numerous variety and late-night show appearances. Their middlebrow comedy routines underwent a metamorphosis at the turn of the decade, with Carlin emerging in the 1970s affecting a radical counterculture look and attitude, and Pryor developing a persona of a hypersexed black militant. Carlin's 1972 album *AM & FM* sold more than 500,000 units (making it a "gold" record) and received the Grammy Award for best comedy album of the year; later albums including *Class Clown* (1973) and *Toledo Window Box* (1974) also went gold. Pryor's *That Nigger's Crazy* (1974) and *Is It Something I Said?* (1975) both won Grammys, with the former gaining "gold" certification and the latter reaching "platinum" status (more than one million copies sold). See Smith 1988, 118-122; 505-508; also Whitburn 1995, 54; 349.

93) Of particular interest here is the *Lampoon*, founded in 1970 by a group of writers and editors with the *Harvard Lampoon* in Cambridge, MA -- much as Britain's *Private Eye* had been founded a decade earlier by a group of writers and editors (and performers) from its Cambridge University. Indeed, one of the editors of the early *Lampoon* was Tony Hendra, a colleague of Chapman and Cleese's in the Cambridge Footlights Club. The *Lampoon* went on to produce a series of radio programs, stage shows and top-selling comedy albums (most notably the 1972 *Radio Dinner*, featuring Hendra's vicious impersonation of John Lennon, and the 1973 Woodstock parody *Lemmings*, produced by Hendra); those reviews, along with Chicago and Toronto's Second City troupes, provided much of the writing and performing talent for NBC's *Saturday Night Live* in the mid-1970s. See Smith 1988, 463-464; also Wilmut 1980, 33-34.

94) Figures taken from American Council on Education, ed. Ottinger 1987, 59.

95) See Heath 1975.

96) In his sour recapitulation of paths followed by those who left political activism after the 1960s, Gitlin 1987 cites the popularity of *Saturday Night Live*, the American cousin of *Monty Python* (as will be discussed in Chapter 7) as proof of the "normalization" of a "loose antiauthoritarianism" that spoke to the ideals of cultural plurality and participatory democracy that motivated the activists of the 1960s (431).

97) New York's WNET brought Chapman, Gilliam, Jones and Palin to its studios in April 1975 to assist in taking viewer pledges, part of an ongoing plan to utilize the show to attract a younger audience to the station. See O'Connor, *New York Times* April 6, 1975, 25; also Brown, *New York Times*, November 3, 1975, 70. Public television stations throughout the 1970s regularly used Python paraphernalia as premium gifts for specified amounts of donation; as recently as 1994, WKAR-TV in East Lansing, MI, offered the videotape *Life of Python* as one such premium.

98) This elitism was not lost upon some of those responsible for bringing the show to America: The vice president for programming at WNET told the *New York Times* that his initial impression of the show was that it was "a highly stylized program, dealing in humor that is typically British undergraduate." Brown, March 15, 1975, 55. See also Neale and Krutnik 1990, 206-207.

99) For complete discussions of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, see Wilmut 1980, 195-232; Neale and Krutnik 1990, 196-208. Their analyses are supported by Python member Terry Gilliam: "We were conscious of not trying to be satirical and topical aside from using funny names of politicians. The stuff holds up because of that." See *Life of Python* 1990.

100) The sketch ends with the friend committing suicide and "Timmy Williams" (Frost) asking the reporters: "I think it shows I'm human, don't you?...Super, super." At the same time, the camera pulls back, revealing the coffee shop to be a studio set, a Frost visual trademark from *TW3* on. The credits for "Timmy Williams' Coffee Time" then roll, with "Theme Script By" and "Entirely Written By" followed by TIMMY WILLIAMS (in huge letters), after which the credit "Additional Material By" appears, followed by some 60 quickly scrolled names in tiny letters -- an element of *The Frost Report* that irked even Cleese, who regarded Frost as largely responsible for his career: "At the end of the show, before this huge list of names, the credits always used to say 'Written by David Frost,' which was really a bit naughty. *Chosen* by David Frost, fair enough!" See Wilmut 1980, 138. Quotes taken from Episode 19, *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, prod.-dir. Ian MacNaughton, writ.-perf. Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam et al., BBC-TV, October 20, 1970; see also Chapman et al. 1989, vol. 1, 255-257.

101) On this point, see also Hertzberg, *The New Yorker*, March 29, 1976, 69-70.

102) Wilmut 1980, 198-199; Neale and Krutnik 1990, 201-202.

103) Game show parodies were particularly accessible to American audiences, given the way in which British networks took the formats of popular American game shows and simply remade them as British: The American *Match Game* became the British *Blankety Blank*; *Hollywood Squares* became *Celebrity Squares*, etc.

104) Wilmut 1980, 198-199; Neale and Krutnik 1990, 200-202.

105) All quotations here and in following paragraphs, unless otherwise noted, are from Episode 27, *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, prod.-dir. Ian McNaughton, writ.-perf. Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, et al., BBC-TV, October 19, 1972.

106) The visual denaturalization is helped by the music, which diminuendoes and ends as the Viking figure enters the screen, an encoded cue that the character is going to speak.

107) For a further discussion of the representational and presentational modes and their role in constructing televisual narratives as "realism," see Fiske 1989, 21-47.

108) Again, this is not to suggest that there is a single "meaning" of Queens, Iowa or the Valley coursing through the whole of American culture, as each of those "utterances" will itself be inflected by countless others in a cultural dialogue. Still, meanings of Queens as representing the urban working class, Iowa as representing the farming heartland and the Valley as representing the lifestyle of the rich and vapid assume a dominance in a hierarchy of meaning. See Hall, in ed. During 1994, 96-100; Fiske 1989, 25-26; 64-65.

109) *Monty Python* itself never received national corporate sponsorship -- one reason it arrived as late and as sporadically as it did.

110) Chapman, et al. 1989, vol. 2, 57. This sketch, too, rises out of the "Njorl's Saga" metasketch: The first Whicker is introduced on the coast of Iceland, when the Pepperpots arrive in search of Sartre. Whicker's monologue there quickly turns into another promotion for North Malden; the scene then cuts back to the BBC head of drama, telling someone on the phone that they would be better off "sticking with the Caribbean islands." The other parody in the show is of a stock market report, in which the reporter's business jargon turns first into pornographic descriptions and then childish sing-song gobbledygook. Like every sketch in the show, it ends suddenly -- in this case, when a bucket of water is dumped on his head; unlike every other sketch, it is not subsumed into "Njorl's Saga."

111) Slashes indicate where trade-offs are made between Whickers in each line.

112) "Talk of the Town," May 12, 1975, 35.

113) Thomas Meehan, *New York Times Magazine*, April 18, 1976, 35.

114) "Killer Joke Triumphs," *Time*, May 26, 1975, 58; also Schickel, *Time*, May 26, 1975, 58.

115) Most of the "women" in *Monty Python* sketches, like Mrs. Premise and Mrs. Conclusion, were portrayed by the men in drag; the "real" women (usually actresses Carol Cleveland and Connie Booth – Cleese's wife) usually appeared as busty sex objects (the only woman in the "Njorl's Saga" show is the secretary for the BBC executive, who is seen spraying deodorant on her ample bust). Complaints by women about their portrayal in the show were taken seriously by members of the group, who looked back upon their Pepperpot sketches with some chagrin: "The problem with Python about women was that I don't think we knew very much about women," John Cleese would say in the documentary *Life with Python* (1990).

116) The American popularity of *Monty Python*, along with the concomitant success of the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* and their earlier recordings and books, established a narrative image in America for programs made by individual members of the troupe. John Cleese's situation comedy *Fawlty Towers* inherited an American Python audience, thanks to Cleese's choleric portrayal of yet another incompetent authority figure. Michael Palin's anthology series *Ripping Yarns* also received several showings on public television outlets late in the 1970s, while Eric Idle and Neil Innes' mock Beatles documentary, *All You Need Is Cash*, which began as an episode of their BBC series *Rutland Weekend Television*, was run as an NBC special in 1978. For a lengthy analysis of *Fawlty Towers* in terms of the "logic of the absurd," see Palmer 1987, 115-140; see also Wilmut 1980, 237-247.

117) The response of American audiences to the Python stage performances in New York was more similar to a pop concert than a comedy gig, according to John Cleese: "Almost every performance you got applause at the start of the sketch, when they recognized it; during the sketch you got very few laughs because people knew it so well; and then at the end you'd get an enormous amount of applause." See Wilmut 1980, 228.

## Chapter 7: All in the Anglo-American Family (Hollywood and Its Reproductions of British Originals)

> "They're all bleedin' foreigners anyway...there's not an Englishman in sight except for the poor devils that work for 'em. Go anywhere in London and ask your way today, they won't know what you're talkin' about. 'Me no speaka the English, me wog.' Well, I don't like wogs!"
> Albert Steptoe, "Crossed Swords," *Steptoe and Son*[1]

> "Ain't nothin' on earth uglier than a 90-year-old white woman."
> Fred Sanford, "Crossed Swords," *Sanford and Son*[2]

This project has, to this point, considered almost exclusively the import from Britain of television programs to be broadcast in the United States; in so doing, it has treated the historical and social currents, the institutional pressures and the generic, formal and technological conventions that guided those texts from their producers in one culture to their audiences in another. There remains, however, one set of utterances yet to be explored in this assimilation that assumes primary significance in the relationship between British television and American culture in the 1970s: the "our-own-ness" provided by producers of American programming as they encountered and worked with the "otherness" of imported British shows and genres. As Horace Newcomb and Paul Hirsch observe, the television producer, as one constructing a representation of social reality, is "seeking and creating new meaning in the combination of cultural elements with embedded significance... respond[ing] to real events, changes in social structure and organization, and to shifts in attitude and value."[3] That meaning, they continue, is sought and created within an economic framework impelling those producers "to build on audience familiarity with generic patterns and instill novelty into those generically based presentations" (Newcomb and Hirsch 463). With the critical, popular and/or demographic success of British programs such as *The Avengers*, *The Forsyte Saga* and *Monty Python's Flying Circus*,

American producers had just such a source of novelty to reconstitute the conventions of the genres within which they worked and a new set of "cultural elements with embedded significance" with which to work -- a set, however, that required translation as well as combination. While the import of British programs per se throughout the 1970s was limited either to the demographically desirable greenbelt of public television or the hardscrabble backstreets of syndication, British television became an important constituting element, thanks to the efforts of American producers, in each of the genres considered thus far: adventure, historical drama and sketch comedy. More significantly, through the work of Norman Lear and his production company, British programming was translated and reconstituted for American audiences in the most basic genre of network television, a genre not previously addressed by British imports: situation comedy.

## Sitcomic Visions

That American television would begin to adapt successful British shows and formats to its own audiences might have been predicted, given the experience of less developed nations that began producing their own versions of imported American programming once funding and technology became available.[4] Indeed, the American production of *That Was the Week That Was* and the influence of *The Avengers* visible in several late 1960s American crime dramas, as well as the brief vogue earlier in the decade for pop music showcases (*Hullabaloo, Shindig*) and primetime versions of domestic daytime dramas (*Peyton Place*) based on British models, spoke well by 1970 to the commercial and cultural possibilities for such adaptations.[5] That the situation comedy, a genre as defining of American television as the Western was of American film, would be the locus of the most significant adaptations of British programming was not something that could have been foreseen: No British situation comedy had been broadcast in series form on American television by 1970.[6] Some of the reason for that lack of trade was economically determined -- the supply of and demand for domestically produced situation

comedies was, if anything, heavier on the supply side than the demand, given the relatively low production costs. Meanwhile, British broadcasters, particularly the BBC, had just begun to investigate the American market as a source of revenue as major as that available through geographic (Europe) and cultural (Commonwealth) proximity.[7]

As important, however, in the refusal of American networks to import British situation comedies in the 1960s is the cultural nature of comedy, as presented by Palmer and Neale and Krutnik and discussed in the previous chapter. Comic utterances, as both point out, are dependent upon norms of a given culture that give rise to the surprises defining the comedy. The sketch comedy of the British *That Was the Week That Was* could be adapted to an American format because the specificity of its jokes and short sketches could be easily translated from the norms of one "web of meaning" to those of another. The situation comedy, however, demands that those jokes be placed into a narrative format involving continuing characters, both of which added depth and breadth to the normative function of the genre. The sitcom, as Barry Curtis explains it, is a text based on a social construction of "reality"; the disruptions and/or exaggerations of that "reality," whether they come out of narrative (the "situation") or character, provide the comedy.[8] This does not mean, as both Curtis and Terry Lovell point out, that all sitcoms can be regarded as "realistic" texts on the order of those written by Dickens, Flaubert or Chopin. To suggest (taking American examples from the 1960s) that a series about a small-town sheriff in North Carolina and the slightly daffy locals he encounters in his day-to-day work functions at the same level of realism or comedy as a series about a New York attorney and his Hungarian wife who move to a small town with agricultural agents who know nothing of farming, telephones located at the top of telephone poles, and talking pigs flattens the genre into a flat, static form.[9] But while *The Andy Griffith Show* and *Green Acres* address cultural norms in quite different ways, the particular norm both address -- the norm presented as the status quo at the beginning and end of each program in both series -- is the same: a common sense "reality" of the value of rural life and small-town community in an

increasingly urban and massified American society.[10]

This realism -- which of course acts as an utterance of a dominant ideology of the time (particularly, in the case above, to the network presenting both shows -- CBS -- as will presently be seen) -- and the order and disorder it contains is further encoded by such signifiers as dress, speech and physical surroundings, which serve either as naturalized reinforcers of the norm or as comic exceptions revealing and, within the discourse of the show, legitimizing that norm. Given that depth of coding and ideological structuring, the presence of a situation comedy based on a very different set of signifiers is always a dicey proposition, even when, as Neale and Krutnik present the case with American and British sitcoms, the norm in question -- the importance of family -- is a shared norm.[11] Indeed, as opposed to their appearance in the secret agent genre, where they provided an authoritarian function, British characters on American situation comedies in the 1960s served almost without exception as comic Others, whose coded inability to fit in provided the mean for norms to be re-established.[12]

There was no small irony, then, in the fact that at the end of the decade, it would be the notion of "realism" that would give the British situation comedy entre into American culture. That understanding of "realism," however, was shaped by three significant vectors external to the sitcom form itself: a new understanding on the part of American television networks about the makeup of its audience according to demographics; social changes that, while evident in demographic numbers, went far beyond what those numbers themselves might indicate; and an individual producer who sought to address both those developments and to give birth to a new form of television author.

## Norman, Is That Us?

An article in the January 24, 1968 issue of *Variety* described the outcry in Britain over the third-series return to the air of the top-rated BBC situation comedy, *Till Death Us Do Part*. The series, which made its debut in 1966 and featured the verbal battles between

Cockney working-class bigot Alf Garnett and the rest of his family, particularly his leftist son-in-law, had previously occasioned public and Parliamentary criticism from the left over Alf's no-slur-barred assaults on immigrants and British minorities, and from the right over his profanity, his irreverent attitude toward the clergy and the royal family, and his attacks on Conservative political "twits."[13] This time, the *Variety* report noted, the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association was pursuing governmental action against the show for Alf's comments about organ transplants and blood transfusions between people of different religion or race, particularly with the Queen drawn into the monologue: "Supposing, for example, that the Queen was ill and needed a blood transfusion. I mean, they wouldn't bung any old rubbish into her."[14]

*Variety* coverage of the series, which had also included favorable reviews in its first two runs on the BBC, piqued the interest of American producer Norman Lear.[15] A gagwriter for Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis who had gone on to some considerable success, with partner Bud Yorkin, as a movie producer and writer (*Come Blow Your Horn*, *Divorce American Style*, *The Night They Raided Minsky's*), Lear had been profiled in a 1967 *Variety* article as a champion of original screenplays, one who "sees no good reason why the screen should not further its own dramatic literature, and inventiveness."[16] Despite that persona, Lear decided less than a year later to obtain the rights to *Till Death Us Do Part* so that his and Yorkin's Tandem Productions could adapt it for an American audience. At the time, Lear told *Variety* that the purchase was motivated by the social and political ferment of the day: "I became convinced that the American public is in the mood to have its social problems and shortcomings analyzed and in comedy such probing comes over less harshly than in other TV ways."[17] Later, however, he would say that the family conflicts at the heart of the British show were the elements that most appealed to him: "What inspired me was simply reading that somebody had done a show in which a father and son-in-law were arguing, were totally apart -- not just a generation gap, but were divided on every issue.... That was all I needed to excite me, because I had lived that with my father."[18]

Evident in Lear's comments is the potential for multiple meanings in the text of *Till Death Us Do Part* -- meanings that drew from a nexus of political and social issues on the one hand and a rubric of "family values" on the other. Indeed, the family structure, the ideological center of the American situation comedy and, increasingly, every other genre of representational television, would provide a layer of meaning in Lear's adaptation of *Till Death* that would make perceived political meanings palatable, at least to some degree, among Americans unused to such "messages" in a sitcom.[19] More significant, however, is the reliance placed by Lear in each of his constructions of meaning on the relationship of the show to the "real world" -- or, to use Neale and Krutnik's term, the program's verisimilitude. The source of comic disruptions in *Till Death*, as Lear perceived them, was not the equivalent of Jethro Bodine's desire to become a double-nought spy on *The Beverly Hillbillies* or Endora giving Darrin Stephens a little girl's voice on *Bewitched*, nor was it the absurdity of life in a world defined by television as portrayed by *Monty Python*. The richness of the British show to Lear lay in the reactions of its protagonist to contemporary social events, political figures and cultural trends he encountered in the course of his day. As such, in his apprehension of it, the comedy of *Till Death Us Do Part* veered closer to the satiric turf occupied previously by *That Was the Week That Was* than American situation comedies had dared; indeed, when *All in the Family* went on the air in 1971, *TV Guide* described the show as an "adult social satire" (McCrohan 32). At the same time, though, with the program locating Alf Garnett and his foils -- wife Else, daughter Rita, son-in-law Michael -- in a domestic family unit that argued about those events, figures and trends, Lear could construct the show as one that, while maintaining the family structure so central to the American sitcom, made that structure much more "real" -- so real, in fact, that he could claim he had lived it himself.[20]

With utterances borne out of his own history of family conflict and social conscience guiding him -- along with the fact that *Till Death Us Do Part* was both controversial and popular in its own land (again speaking to its observable multiple

meanings) – Norman Lear in 1968 undertook the task of turning the most-watched British situation comedy of its day into something somehow different for American audiences. His first two efforts, called *Justice for All* and *Those Were the Days*, failed to impress programmers at ABC, where were concerned about the aggressiveness of protagonist Archie Justice and the disastrous experience the network had already had with "relevant" programming.[21] Lear's agents quickly took the show across the street to CBS, where president Robert Wood was beginning a plan to redefine the network and its audiences along demographic lines. Throughout the 1960s, CBS, which had the largest number of affilitate stations of the three networks, had retained its position as the greatest among equals by featuring programming that appealed to a spectrum of viewers as broad as the net itself: rural situation comedies (*The Andy Griffith Show*, *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *Green Acres*), formulaic sitcoms with known stars (Lucille Ball, Doris Day, Fred MacMurray), formulaic comedy-variety shows with known stars (Jackie Gleason, Red Skelton, Ed Sullivan) and westerns (*Gunsmoke*). What few glimpses of contemporary urban life visible on CBS by the end of the 1960s either came from the safety of high-rise apartments on New York's upper East Side (*Family Affair*) or the mean streets walked (or driven) by Jack Lord in *Hawaii Five-O* and Mike Connors in *Mannix*; children and teenagers, meanwhile, were seen only to be cute and heard only to obey willingly, even cheerfully, every parental edict. Its success with these formulas meant that CBS could, on occasion, take a chance with risky material like the politically charged *Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* or *The Prisoner*. Even those shows, however, were constructed along traditional CBS lines – the old-fashioned variety show format in the former case, the employment of proven stars in the narrative image of both. When that network tradition was directly challenged, CBS acted to bring the offending programs into line, pre-empting and then cancelling the Smothers Brothers' show and, as noted previously, tinkering with McGoohan's existential excursions to make them more acceptable to audiences used to the patriarchal figures of Matt Dillon and Andy Taylor prevailing in the end.[22]

While CBS in the 1960s had entrenched its position at the top of the ratings following a strategy of farm, family and familiarity, what Robert Wood saw on his network in 1970 were shows with aging stars, aging storylines and aging audiences that were becoming less and less valuable to advertisers, particularly as the baby boom generation was becoming a major market force. When the ABC pilot for *Those Were the Days* crossed his desk in March 1970, then, with its attention to social issues and its fractured family, Wood took notice. He ordered a third pilot for the series, with new actors Rob Reiner and Sally Struthers as the "kids," joining original cast members Carroll O'Connor and Jean Stapleton; the reaction in the CBS programming suite was close to ecstatic.[23] While audience tests showed that potential viewers still found the Archie character too abrasive, bigoted and cruel, the results on the whole were more positive than those for ABC had been, according to Les Brown, as the ideological arguments and the tenor with which they were voiced in the show had become, by the spring of Richard Nixon's bombing of Cambodia and the Kent State and Jackson State shootings, utterances defining in part an American "web of meaning."[24] With the final approval of network owner William Paley, Wood and his programmers scheduled Lear's version of *Till Death Us Do Part* to go on the air in January 1971 -- the same week in which PBS and Mobil would introduce *Masterpiece Theatre* in their own use of British programming for demographic purposes.[25]

The show broadcast by CBS on January 12, 1971, however, was called neither *Justice For All* nor *Those Were the Days*.26 The title *All in the Family* not only recast the marital and familial connections suggested by *Till Death Us Do Part* in a far sunnier, advertiser-friendly way but situated the comedy exactly within genre and ideological conventions of American commercial television. Whatever conflict the show might represent and whatever controversy it might engender, it was still, after all, to be contained within the familiar confines of a home occupied by a father, a mother and two children. For CBS, the title both reflected its own traditions and served as damage control before the fact;

for Lear, it restated his own construction of the British show as something borne out of his childhood experience; for the viewer, it was an assurance that what followed was not going to be something too terribly different from what had come before.[27] Similarly, Lear changed the last name of Archie and wife Edith from "Justice" to "Bunker," a revision that stripped one layer of meaning and added several others: Was it "Bunker" connoting the ur-American Battle of Bunker Hill (won, of course, by the British)? Or "Bunker" connoting the place where one takes cover while under/making an attack? Or Bunker connoting one who spews a load of bunk? All of the above? Or none? The choice was left up to the viewer.[28]

The final formal change effected between the first pilot and the CBS version of the show, however, was a more radical one that again spoke to the relationship between *All in the Family* and its progenitor, as well as the relationship between American and British television in general. Following the established technical standards of the day, Lear had shot the ABC pilots for the series on film. When it came time to put down a final product for CBS, though, Lear decided to shoot the show using several cameras as a live continuous performance on videotape. The tape medium was cheaper by half than using film, which gave Lear a financial bargaining chip in dealing with the network; it also recalled the producer's early days working in television variety shows, which used videotape and were shot "live," in sequence.[29] But while soap operas, news broadcasts and some variety series on American television used videotape, the notion that a primetime representational comedy or drama program could or would be shot on videotape had faded with the decline of the anthology dramas of the 1950s. It was the primetime requirement for film that gave the technology-rich Lew Grade his first access to the American market, and that ABC held in front of the producers of *The Avengers* as the barrier through which they would have to break before their show could make it to the States. Because of the cost factor, however, most BBC programs, including *Till Death Us Do Part*, *The Forsyte Saga* and the various other serials that would soon be presented in America as *Masterpiece*

*Theatre*, were recorded on videotape.[30] With his initial production of *All in the Family*, Norman Lear had, in essence, reclaimed British video technology standards as viable for American primetime productions, at the same moment in which he reclaimed the live, multicamera shooting that had defined the most classic of American situation comedies: *I Love Lucy* and *The Honeymooners*.

These final formal adaptations of the British *Till Death Us Do Part* to the American *All in the Family* merely reflected those in content that Norman Lear had made in his treatments of the show. Lear, in articles and publicity about the series, seemed to go out of his way to downplay the role that Johnny Speight and his BBC series played in the creation of *All in the Family*, instead attempting to establish the American version as an intensely personal remembrance of things past, citing individual lines spoken by Archie ("You're the laziest white man I've ever seen"; "Stifle yourself!") as having issued from his father's own lips.[31] *Till Death Us Do Part*, in those public pronouncements, merely served as proof that a program dealing with social issues and family conflict could actually be produced and broadcast to a national audience. Yet a close comparison of the two programs reveals the degree to which the British show shaped Lear's vision of an American family situation comedy, and the degree to which utterances from American culture outside the Lear household played a role in the assimilation of *Till Death Us Do Part*.

Those inflections become immediately evident in an examination of the families at the heart of both series. The Garnetts in Speight's series were aitch-dropping, slang-rhyming Cockneys who lived in the rough working-class neighborhoods of London's East End; the opening credit sequence of the show aerially took the viewer over London into the neighborhood, a visual device copied (using New York) closely for *All in the Family*.[32] In Lear's version, the Bunkers were loud, fast-talking New Yawkers residing in the working-class borough of Queens, allowing the producer/writer the ability to create the same comic equation of class and dialect in America that was visible and audible in the British show.[33] As the opening sequences indicated, however, the class being considered was considerably

different in each: The Garnetts lived, apparently, in an industrial backwater, with warehouses and dock cranes as much a part of the landscape as any dwelling. The Bunkers, however, resided in a single-family household surrounded by other single-family households. The closeness of the residences, and their evident lack of lawn space, signified that this was not upper-middle class suburbia; still, the Bunkers lived in a fashion that, as David Marc points out, was enviable to a good number of Americans whom they were supposed to represent, to say nothing of the Britons on whom they were modeled.[34]

Class, however, could not and would not be defined quite so rigidly in the American version, as the character of the son-in-law made clear. Michael in *Till Death Us Do Part*, while every bit the mod young Labourite, was also a mad young laborer whose confinement in the working class was as frustrating to him as the decline of the Empire and all it stood for was to Alf. Michael Stivic in Lear's show, however, was a college student, working his way through school as the first step in his, and his wife's, upward mobility. Given the autobiographical connection he found with *Till Death Us Do Part*, Lear's adaptation of the British character to address both an American cultural norm and his own rise to fortune and now fame can again be read as both an ideological and a personal decision. Such was not the case, however, with the other change in the character: the addition of ethnicity. Merely another Cockney in *Till Death*, and played as Irish in *Those Were the Days*, Michael of *All in the Family* was Polish, a perfect foil for Archie's indecorous ethnic jokes and slurs.[35] On one level, the decision created a level of tension between the characters of the father and son-in-law that was not present in the British version; on another level, it gave Lear the opportunity to employ the standard American "Polack joke" as frequently as he wished. On a third level, however, the presence of Michael's ethnic heritage revealed the absence of same in the Bunkers. Lear was himself Jewish, and the childhood memories that so spurred his interest in *Till Death* were those of a Jewish household. In his reconstruction of that background, however, for an American commercial television audience in 1970, Archie, Edith and Gloria became white Anglo-

Saxon Protestants. Here again, an ideological concession to the naturalized norm of the American sitcom family (just as the Garnetts' lack of ethnicity reflected the common sense of the 1960s British sitcom) also served to open up the comedic possibilities of the show, as Archie was left with a clear field of differences to attack.[36]

Those attacks were foregrounded much more directly in the first episode of *All in the Family* than they were in Johnny Speight's first script for *Till Death Us Do Part.* Despite Lear's declarations of independence from the British show and assertive authorship of the first season's episodes for CBS, his first script for *All in the Family*, "Meet the Bunkers," borrowed its central plotline directly from Speight's first *Till Death*, "A House With Love in It": When Archie/Alf forgets his wedding anniversary, the children attempt to make amends by purchasing a card and gift for Edith/Else as if they were from her husband, and plan a dinner at which the moment of good feeling collapses into insult and argument. In the British original, while Alf does disparage the prime minister, the insults are kept largely within the family. When Michael comes down for dinner wearing a hopelessly groovy ruffled shirt and Roy Orbison-style Ray-Bans, with Rita accompanying him in a see-through blouse, Alf tells his son-in-law that he looks like "a fake Peruvian ponce" and his daughter that her outfit is "disgusting -- you can see right through to your bellybutton!" The appearance of his wife -- a "silly moo," a phrase that in Britain achieved the noxious ubiquity of Archie's "dingbat" reference to Edith in the States-- occasions Alf's comment that she looks like "mutton dressed up as lamb." The most direct slurs Alf ventures come at the posh West End French restaurant to which Michael and Rita take her parents, consisting of a relatively mild comment about the menu being "all in foreign" and a reference to having "served in Froggyland for four years" during World War II.

In Lear's version, the French are virtually the only nationality or ethnic group left unscathed in Archie's diatribes: "If your spics and your spades want their rightful piece of the American dream, let them get out there and hustle for it, just like I did"; "Feinstein, Feinberg -- it all comes to the same thing, and I know that tribe"; "I never said your black

beauties was lazy -- it's just that their systems is geared a little slower than the rest of us"; "We got a couple of Hebes working down at the building...I ain't no yid"; "What do you know about it, you dumb Polack?" As that last line indicates, the children are also drawn into Archie's line of fire -- "I didn't think you was gonna go to college and learn how to be a subversive"; "I knew we had a couple of pinkos in this house, but I didn't know we had atheists!" -- but the father's rants, as opposed to the personal direction taken in *Till Death*, address Mike and Gloria primarily as representatives of social causes (and again, in Mike's case, an ethnic group) of which he does not approve. This adaptive strategy allowed Lear to augment the controversial "adult social satire" he hoped to create and sell while reinforcing the naturalized assumption that the American family, whatever trials and problems it might endure, was, in its function as the basic social organization of American life, a good thing. The home in Lear's world, to borrow from Christopher Lasch, might not have been a haven, but underneath the bluster it was far less heartless than it seemed, and far less heartless than the world outside.[37] The ending of "Meet the Bunkers," in which Edith is moved to tears by Archie's "gift" -- lace handkerchiefs -- and the poem on the greeting card, exemplifies the degree to which Lear was able to retain the stability of the cultural (and televisual) norm of the family while developing what seemed to be a radical new form of sitcomic political discourse.

Such, however, could not be said of the "House With Love in It" episode of *Till Death Us Do Part*; indeed, what is truly radical by American standards in Speight's show is not the violent political or social commentary voiced by Alf but the violence it does to a common sense norm of the nuclear family. Part of that dislocation is evident in the settings used for each show. In "Meet the Bunkers," Lear limits the action to the living room, dining room and kitchen (and the stairs leading up to the bedrooms) of the Bunker household, a decision mandated by the economic and production benefits of using a single set as well as by dramatic and ideological concerns.[38] No such form of domestic containment, however, is present in "A House With Love in It." While the downstairs area

of the Garnetts' row house provides the setting for much of the action, Speight also takes the audience up to the bedrooms, out to the neighborhood pub and over to the fancy West End restaurant. The episode, then, visually reveals the irony of its title by getting the characters out of the house as much as possible.

Much more significant in defining the radical nature of *Till Death Us Do Part*, though, and perhaps the key point of departure for Norman Lear's American adaptation of the series is the character of Alf's wife, Else. In Lear's reconstruction of the series' central family, Edith Bunker is a genteel household saint devoted to her husband and her children yet realizing the flaws in each, and forever trying to be the peacemaker between the two. The first image the viewer has of Edith in "Meet the Bunkers" is her arrival home from church wearing her Sunday best; the last image of her is of rushing from the living room with her lace hankie to cry over the beauty of Archie's anniversary card. The first image the viewer has of Else Garnett in "A House With Love in It" is of a frowzy woman, sitting in a chair with curlers in her hair and smoking a cigarette, who immediately launches into an accusatory yawp at her husband for forgetting their anniversary; when he responds in kind, she calls him "nothing but an ill-mannered drunken pig." She recants a bit when Alf gives her a brooch (again purchased by the children) as an anniversary present, but when Alf makes his displeasure known about the celebratory dinner, she shouts: "We're better off without you, you miserable old git, you!" She is revealed to be a closet gambler who places bets with the neighborhood milkman, and in the restaurant scene, it is she, not Alf, who makes the rudest comments about the French: When reading about a dish called "silver sole *meneures*," she says, mistaking the French word for its English phonetic cognate: "I always heard them Frenchers was dirty -- I never thought they was as dirty as that!" In the closing scene, when she discovers at the restaurant that Michael had purchased Alf's gift -- a plot turn the Lear show scrupulously avoids -- instead of running from the room weeping, she bursts out bawling: "You didn't buy it -- you didn't remember me anniversary at all...and I give you me breakfast!" (To which Alf responds, in a brutal final

deflection: "If I had remembered, I would have bought you a better present than that load of crap what he bought you!")

The character of Else Garnett, particularly familiar to 1960s British audiences from the post-D.H. Lawrence stereotype employed in "kitchen sink" drama and films, would also not have been a complete stranger to American television culture.[39] In the earlier working-class sitcoms *The Honeymooners* and *The Flintstones* , Alice Kramden and Wilma Flintstone were not above letting their loudmouth spouses know in no uncertain terms when the grandiosity and/or stupidity of their thoughts, words and deeds had passed a point of no return. The loudness and grandiosity of Else's manner, if not her class background, could also be seen in the mother-in-law stereotype embodied in the Endora character on *Bewitched.* Yet in Lear's adaptation of *Till Death Us Do Part*, while at least vestigial elements remain of Alf, Michael and Rita, Else's character virtually disappears, to be replaced by a kind but somewhat befuddled representative of the era of domestic containment, who tends to her husband's every need while tolerating endlessly his verbal abuse. In David Marc's formalist analysis of *All in the Family*, Edith is the organic altruistic complement to Archie, the word "LOVE" tattooed on the knuckles of Lear's right hand next to Archie's "HATE" tattooed on the left.[40] Similarly, Donna McCrohan refers to Edith's "transcendent humanity" and "radiant soul" (McCrohan, 66). Those descriptions would be impossible to apply to Else Garnett, as Edith Bunker drains the irony from Johnny Speight's creation and makes 704 Howser Street, Queens, New York, truly a house with love in it.

Whether borne out of his family background -- significantly, his references to his family deal exclusively with his father -- or out of his concern with "realism," Edith Bunker represents an acknowledgement by Norman Lear that the American domestic situation comedy, no matter how topically relevant or formally radical, in 1970 could not countenance the "unruliness" of a housewife giving as good as she got from her husband, particularly at the class level of the Bunkers.[41] The notion that the Noble American

Housewife could call the breadwinner "an ill-mannered drunken pig" or a "miserable old git" was unthinkable, and Lear's script for the first episode of *All in the Family* eliminates the plot moment -- the revelation that Archie had nothing to do with the hankies and card -- in which such an outburst would be plausible. This clear ideological reframing of *Till Death Us Do Part* was made to seem the natural order of things by those involved with the show through the persistent discourse of "realism"; as Jean Stapleton herself would say of her character in 1974: "[W]e can't hide the kind of woman who is restricted by her domestic life. She exists. And I think that by showing Edith *as she really is* [italics the author's], we are doing more good than an instant out-of-character liberationist would accomplish" (McCrohan, 67). This despite the fact that Else Garnett, the character out-of-which Edith was created, was anything but a liberationist, and within the British comedy created by Johnny Speight, was anything but out of character.

The almost immediate public success of *All in the Family*, however, was indicative in business terms of CBS' wisdom in pursuing its new strategy of upscale urban demographics, and in creative terms of Lear's skill in cloaking the most traditional generic and ideological elements of the American situation comedy in a political topicality that seemed completely different from what the genre had previously provided. Having successfully decoded and recoded *Till Death Us Do Part* into an American series deep enough in potential meanings yet accessible enough in form to make it Number One in the annual Nielsen ratings for five years (1971-76), Lear turned his attention to another British situation comedy that had been just as controversial and perhaps even more revered in its native land than the weekly diatribes of Alf Garnett. *Steptoe and Son* made its debut in 1962 as part of a series of one-off comedy playlets by former sketch comedy writers Ray Galton and Alan Simpson.[42] The first *Steptoe*, entitled "The Offer," introduced Britain to nasty, whiny junk dealer Albert Steptoe and his son Harry, who desperately wants to leave home to start a life of his own but who is, through his father's scheming (fake heart attacks, repeated assertions of the imminence of his own death) and his own weakness,

unable to do so. Shot on a single cluttered, grimy set, which included an outhouse, and relying as much on the pathetic relationship between father and son as it did on jokes and visual gags (Albert cleaning the outhouse privy and then blowing his nose on the rag), "The Offer" led to a series of five episodes of *Steptoe and Son* later in the year, which were hailed as a "breakthrough" for British television comedy.[43]

Unlike *Till Death Us Do Part*, *Steptoe and Son* made the transatlantic crossing well before Norman Lear decided to adapt it for an American audience: Jack Paar presented an episode of the show on his NBC primetime show in 1964, proclaiming it "the greatest comedy series I have ever seen" -- a comment more barbed than it seemed, given that his show immediately followed the network's version of the British *That Was the Week That Was*. With Paar's gushing providing the rationale, Embassy Pictures purchased the American rights to *Steptoe* for some $250,000, arranging for Galton and Simpson to adapt their own scripts for an American cast and setting up a broadcast deal with NBC for the new series.[44] The deal, however, died with only a pilot episode being produced; Alan Simpson blamed the failure of the venture on his perception that Americans only liked television shows "to be about affluent people living in nice homes."[45] Given the commercial basis of American networks and the apotheosis of the family sitcom, inflected upward by the style and professionalism of the Kennedy years, Simpson's comment had more than a grain of truth to it: It was hard to sell household cleansers or sporty new cars in a program about a bitter father and son living in a filthy junkyard. With nothing but a failed pilot to show for their investment, Embassy sold the rights to the Screen Gems studio, where *Steptoe and Son* languished on the shelf while still, with *Till Death Us Do Part*, sparking controversy as one of the most watched programs in Britain. It was from Screen Gems that Lear and Bud Yorkin obtained the rights to the series; their first pilot, however, unlike *All in the Family* , attempted to make *Steptoe* an overtly ethnic comedy by casting the father as Irish and the son as Italian. The networks rejected that hoary premise, forcing Lear and Yorkin to follow another direction in their adaptation of *Steptoe and Son.*

One of the liberties Lear had taken with the adaptation of *All in the Family* from *Till Death Us Do Part*, like that of Michael's Polish heritage, was the addition of an African-American family living next door to the Bunkers, all the better to provide another target for Archie within the story, and to speak "realistically" to the divide between the races outside. *All in the Family* as a result stood as an example of the limited way in which the civil rights movement of the 1960s, like the women's movement, had come to shape representational television comedy and drama. Seen regularly only in servant roles since the early 1950s, African-Americans began to return to American television in the mid- to late 1960s. Almost without exception, however, black characters were constructed either as underlings (often with criminal backgrounds) to a white boss, as inconveniently colored residents of an otherwise totally white, middle-class suburbia, or, in the case of popular comedian Flip Wilson, as a complex combination of signifiers that allowed him to be read as a "coon show" stereotype mocking black society and culture as easily as he could be read as performing and celebrating that society and culture.[46] The Jeffersons that Lear created for *All in the Family*, though, differed from the other black characters in prime time in that they recognized and commented on what W.E.B. Dubois referred to as the African-American's "twoness -- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts; two unreconciled strivings": In "Meet the Bunkers," Lionel Jefferson (the son) tells Mike and Gloria about Archie asking about his college career: "He likes to hear me say, 'Ahm gwiner be a 'lec-tical in-gineer!'" When Mike asks if he actually says that, Lionel responds: "Give the people what they want, man -- how else do I get to become an electrical engineer?"[47]

Just as *Till Death Us Do Part*, then, allowed Lear to revive and reconstruct the long-dormant contemporary blue-collar American sitcom along lines he imagined to be his own, so would *Steptoe and Son* allow him -- and Bud Yorkin and Aaron Ruben, who assumed the day-to-day production and writing duties while Lear worked on *All in the Family* -- to do the same with the black family sitcom, again under the thematic rubric of a generational father-son conflict. Redd Foxx, whose X-rated routines and record albums had made him a

top draw on both black and white comedy circuits, was signed to play the father; Demond Wilson, whose most notable national exposure was in a guest shot on *All in the Family*, got the part of the son. Foxx, whose sense of the autobiographical was almost as strong as Lear's, decided to give his character the name of his brother, Fred Sanford; so it was, then, that the British *Steptoe and Son* became the American *Sanford and Son* -- at least in title.[48] As had been the case with *Till Death Us Do Part*, however, it would be necessary to make other changes in *Steptoe and Son* to help it engage in dialogue with an American audience. The junkyard was set in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles, an important move not only ideologically, in placing the show in an actual black neighborhood -- and a neighborhood that signified blackness to audience members with memories of its 1965 riots -- but technically, in that the Southern California setting allowed for brighter lighting and a less visually depressing background for the action than that of *Steptoe*.[49] The set itself was cleaner, with open spaces in the living room and a staircase to an unseen part of the house, which helped limit the downstairs clutter; the plumbing facilities were also all contained inside. Instead of the Steptoes' decrepit old horse Hercules living in a stable outside the house, the Sanfords kept their pickup truck in the driveway-- not a pretty new pickup truck by any means, but a motorized vehicle far more "realistic" in the LA megautopolis than an equine-drawn junkwagon. As the Bunker household in Queens was a notable step up from both the Garnett household in London and the means of many "middle-Americans" the characters were supposed to represent, so the sunny single-family dwelling and business of the Sanfords was a move on up from the status of their British progenitors and many of the urban black families they were supposed to signify.

These shifts in production technique and the visual style of the show were representative of what Newcomb and Hirsch refer to as "seeking and creating new meaning in the combination of cultural elements with embedded significance" as producers respond to social, political and technological changes -- and, in the case of the Lear sitcoms, changes in cultural norms occasioned by the transfer of texts from Britain to America

(Newcomb and Hirsch 457). Those changes, as was the case with the first episodes of *All in the Family* and *Till Death Us Do Part,* become particularly evident in an examination of the first episode of *Sanford and Son* and the 1965 episode of *Steptoe* on which it was based. One difference in those adaptations is quickly evident: While Lear was familiar with Johnny Speight's scripts for *Till Death Us Do Part* and used plots from the British show, his scripts, particularly for the early episodes, both followed his personal vision for the show much more than they did any structure imposed by Speight and kept the action confined to the Bunker household. For *Sanford and Son*, however, Lear, Yorkin and Ruben used the actual scripts written by Galton and Simpson for *Steptoe and Son.* As a result, *Sanford* was much closer (at least in its early episodes) in plot, setting, and structure of dialogue to its British progenitor than *All in the Family* was to its.[50]

The first episode of *Sanford*, "Crossed Swords," for example, presents its action not only in the Sanford business/household but in an antique store and at a fancy auction, just as the 1965 "Crossed Swords" episode of *Steptoe* does.[51] The plot of the episode in each case involves a valuable piece of porcelain, identified by the "crossed swords" mark on the bottom, that Lamont/Harry obtains by chance from a wealthy household. The two men take the porcelain to an antique dealer, who offers them a fair amount of money for the piece; Lamont/Harry, however, envisioning his freedom from his father and the junk business, decides to take it to auction, figuring that he can get a higher price there. In attempting to bid up the piece, they get stuck with the high bid, more than twice what they had been offered by the antique dealer. When the Sanfords/Steptoes return home, Fred/Albert attacks Lamont/Harry for taking the piece to auction; the son responds by blaming his father for ruining his life; the father then accuses the son of wanting him dead. The guilty silence that follows ends with Fred/Albert picking up the porcelain piece in admiration, only to drop and shatter it, blaming his arthritis for the accident.

The only significant difference between the two episodes in terms of plot structure is the first scene of *Sanford and Son*: an initial encounter between the two lead characters,

with Lamont voicing both his frustration at his father and their lot in life and his desire to "go on to something bigger," and Fred responding by announcing that he's going to be dying soon and then faking a heart attack. An introduction to the characters and the setting of the show that recognizes an audience unfamiliar with each, the *Sanford* scene is actually drawn from the first scene of the *Steptoe* pilot, "The Offer," using similar dialogue; once the porcelain figure is introduced the "Crossed Swords" episodes follow parallel lines. In terms of dialogue and character, however, Albert's political diatribes about the good old days -- "If that had happened to me in my day it would have been worth a kick up the Khyber at least. That's the trouble with this country today. Nobody takes offense no more. In my day an Englishman's word was his bond..." -- are gone, as is his ridicule of "bleedin' foreigners" and "wogs." Fred offers instead his relatively tame comment that there's "nothin' on earth uglier than a 90-year-old white woman," a comment made not from the top down, as was the case with the Tory Briton's putdowns of immigrants, but from the bottom up. The closing father-son quarrel and the tragicomic breaking of the figurine is similar in intensity and dialogue ("You can't wait to hear the first shovelful of dirt hit the coffin, can you? I won't be mourned, I know that -- you'll be dancin' on me grave...") in the British and American versions, but *Sanford and Son* does not include the final *Steptoe* tag: As Albert assumes his usual perch on the loo, Harry rams old swords through the door and walls of the outhouse at his wailing father.

For all the similarities between the shows, what becomes clear in the British and American versions of "Crossed Swords" is the degree to which Lear and his cohort focused on the lead character in making the show speak to an American audience. Albert Steptoe was no less a Tory reactionary in *Steptoe and Son* than Alf Garnett was in *Till Death Us Do Part*, and was no less oblique in his slurs and criticism of the "wogs" and other foreigners who had turned London into a "vast stinkin' metropolis." *Sanford* writer/producer Aaron Ruben said of the character: "In the English version, the father is very caustic, almost vicious. For a lot of reasons, we didn't feel that attitude was right for

Redd, so we made him gentler" (Adler 29). But making Fred Sanford a kinder, gentler, American Albert Steptoe was facilitated as much by the initial decision to cast the character as a black man as it was any overt script changes made by Lear, Yorkin or Ruben. Indeed, many of Steptoe's most annoying characteristics remained in Redd Foxx's portrayal of Sanford -- the phony heart attacks, convenient bouts with arthritis that got him out of work or explained away mishaps around the home, blaming his son for everything that went wrong with the business.

The politics of the character, however, necessarily changed dramatically: Having Steptoe's paeans to the glorious days of Churchill, king and empire issue from the lips of an elderly black man in Watts in no way addressed the social realism central to Lear's vision of the sitcom. And while Fred Sanford retained elements of the racism voiced by Albert Steptoe, referring readily to "honkies" and ugly white women, and telling son Lamont to keep his Latino friend from "gettin' Puerto Rican all over our truck," it was the response both of a querulous old man and of a character who could not be presented on American television until 1972 because of his own race and class background.[52] Bud Yorkin's facile assertion that Fred Sanford "isn't bigoted -- he's just honest" could be and was debated, just as the Sanford character, like Cosby and Flip Wilson before him, could be seen as both a stereotyped putdown of lazy black men and a realistic recognition, if not a celebration, of black life in the United States (Adler, 30). What Lear, Yorkin and Ruben accomplished, however, in their assimilation of Albert Steptoe was the creation of a character embodying a number of meanings and built from cultural elements with embedded significance specific to America. The show could be read on the one hand as one that simply repeated standard white racist watermelon jokes, or on the other, as David Marc does, as one that makes jokes about standard white racist watermelon jokes in their telling by African-Americans.[53] In either case, the jokes draw from a "web of meaning" constructed out of the historical experience of blacks and whites in America, and placed the meanings circulating in that web into Newcomb and Hirsch's "cultural forum," in which

those meanings and questions about them are brought into public discussion.[54]

Norman Lear's success in "creating" *All in the Family* and *Sanford and Son* and bringing them into that American cultural forum provides a clear look at the complex ways in which cultural utterances shape the assimilation of transnational televisual texts. Lear's personal interest in shows about a father-son conflict, based on his childhood experience in New York, created the initial vector guiding *Till Death Us Do Part* and *Steptoe and Son* to American audiences. Without a growing recognition and discussion of the "generation gap" those shows represented to him, as well as an increased public dialogue on issues of racism, ethnicity, religion and other social concerns that dug the chasm, however, Lear's personal vision might never have seen the light of millions of Zeniths, Sonys and RCAs across America. And even with those utterances shaping the production and reception of his shows, had Lear not been able to adapt the British programs into the familiar conventions of American situation comedy, and had the networks distributing those shows not decided to redefine their economic base along demographic lines, *All in the Family* and *Sanford and Son* might today be a few reels of videotape fading away in a Hollywood studio warehouse. The popularity of Lear's sitcoms in America exemplifies the inextricable connections between personal, political, social, aesthetic and economic utterances as they worked in the assimilation of the British texts of *Till Death Us Do Part* and *Steptoe and Son* into American culture. With their presence in the American cultural forum, and the growing space in that forum being occupied by British programs being shown directly on PBS, the influence of British television on American culture was set to expand exponentially.

**From Lear to Leer**

The work of the American television producer on a cultural level, as Newcomb and Hirsch point out, is to create new meaning out of combinations of familiar signifiers. On an economic level, both they and Todd Gitlin argue, that familiarity has to be augmented by something novel in order to assure the programs success in attracting advertisers and

viewer -- in Gitlin's tripartite scheme, by placing familiar characters in new settings (the spinoff), by placing new characters in familiar settings (the copy/clone), or by recombining signifiers that have proven successful/become familiar elsewhere into a new show (the recombitant).[55] Norman Lear, in his translation of British situation comedies into top-rated American shows, achieved his success by combining some of the novelties (utterances of otherness) of those British shows -- the generational and social conflict they represented, as well as the way in which they were produced -- with the utterances of "our-own-ness" represented in the most basic form of American television: the domestic family comedy. With the acclaim afforded this combination by the American viewing public, producers, including Lear himself, could continue the assimilation of *Till Death Us Do Part* and *Steptoe and Son* into American culture.

Lear himself led the way, recreating the conflicts of *All in the Family* and *Sanford and Son* in two spinoffs of the former. *Maude* recast Archie Bunker as Edith's cousin Maude Findlay, a loud, Long Island protofeminist married to a reasonable appliance store owner and stuck with a 27-year-old divorced daughter at home. The generational and social conflicts that played themselves out in a working-class environment on *All in the Family* were played out in similar fashion in limousine-liberal society on *Maude*, with the title character often proving herself just as bound to prejudice and doctrinaire thinking as Archie was. If *Maude* was *All in the Family* played out in an alternate class and gender universe, then *The Jeffersons* took the Bunkers to an alternate universe of class and race. Archie's former neighbor George Jefferson, now a wealthy proprietor of a chain of laundries, took his sensible wife and college-student son to the Upper East Side, where the loud African-American bigot took out his frustrations on his interracial neighbors, whose daughter eventually married his son. A third spinoff from *All in the Family* owed as much to *Sanford and Son* as it did to its direct progenitors. *Good Times* moved Maude Findlay's maid Florida Evans out of Long Island to the projects of Chicago's South Side. For the first time in a Lear series, the Archie character was placed on the youth side of the

generation gap, in the form of her loud, jive-talking son J.J.; the comedy was in turn more based on generational than social differences. It retained, however, its domestic base and, like *Sanford and Son*, represented that base in an African-American community.

Each of those programs was a ratings success, demonstrating both the perspicacity of Lear's own tele-vision and the generative power of *Till Death Us Do Part* and *Steptoe and Son*. As Lear continued with his own recombinations of his first hits -- *One Day at Time*, which set the generational and working-class conflict in a single-mother family in Indianapolis -- other producers and shows followed. Garry Marshall, whose sitcoms tended structurally to recreate the organic-genteel tensions of his first hit, *The Odd Couple*, borrowed the working-class element of *All in the Family* to make *Happy Days* and *Laverne and Shirley* top-rated successes in the mid-1970s. As David Marc points out, the acceptance of a black domestic sitcom in *Sanford and Son*, along with the nasty humor it employed, created a form of black television comedy that would become surprisingly popular.[56] It also led to recreations of those generational, racial and class issues by producer James Komack, best known for an earlier, traditional foray into domestic comedy with a trace of ethnicity, *The Courtship of Eddie's Father*. In Komack's *Chico and the Man*, Albert/Fred became an old white garage owner and Harry/Lamont became his young Latino partner; there was even a sour old black garbageman and a battered truck to make the connection complete. Komack, in another permutation of the *Steptoe* formula, moved the "family" out of the home and into the classroom, placing the father figure-teacher Gabe Kotter up against a multiheaded, multiethnic (Italian, Puerto Rican, Jewish, African-American) representative of poor youth in *Welcome Back, Kotter*. Meanwhile, other British shows that featured the same kind of conflict as *Till Death* and *Steptoe* began to interest American producers. A popular BBC interethnic comedy set in a British prison, *Porridge*, became the ABC 1975 sitcom *On the Rocks*. Don Taffner, a New York-based producer with ties to the British commercial television industry, adapted two other shows -- *Love Thy Neighbor*, a British version of the Bunker-Jefferson relationship, and *For the*

*Love of Ada*, which closely resembled *Maude* -- for ABC, as *Love Thy Neighbor* and *A Touch of Grace*. Both, however, seemed pale copies of Lear's work, and lasted only half a season. (See Appendix.)

While the issues of race, generation and class introduced in *Steptoe* and *Till Death* percolated their way through the American television industry, a separate controversial facet of the Lear sitcoms led to another American adaptation of a successful British program. Sex, as much as generational feuding or working-class bigotry, had been openly treated as the subject of comedy in *All in the Family* just as it had in its British progenitor. The viewer actually meets Archie and Edith in the first scene of "Meet the Bunkers" when they walk in on Michael and Gloria passionately making out on their way up to the bedroom.[57] Episodes dealing with the themes of impotence, homosexuality, infidelity, miscarriage and rape would follow; a number of episodes made reference, visually and verbally, to Gloria's tight blouses and miniskirts or tight jeans; Mike's allegedly insatiable sex drive was a frequent target for Archie's insults. With *All in the Family* again in the vanguard, sex and sexuality became central elements of American television in the early 1970s -- so much so that in the fall of 1975, the networks declared that prime time until 9 pm on the coasts (8 pm in the midwest) would be set aside as "Family Viewing Hours." The decision, while offering *prima facie* a safe zone for parents worried about the effects of sex and violence on their children, also served to legitimize producers' increasing use of sex and violence in the "Adult Viewing Hours" as ways of hooking viewers.[58] With the legal downfall of "family hours" the following year, the means of (pro)creating a family became almost as central an element of primetime programming as the family itself.

The new openness about sexuality on early 1970s primetime American television was, as Lear's visual treatment of Gloria on *All in the Family* exemplifies, part and parcel of a continuing retrograde shift in the presentation of women on American television similar to that Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott found working in the "Bond girl" at roughly the same time.[59] Every genre of American television had, in the decade since Emma Peel first

kicked off her shoes and took down a karate grandmaster, made some effort to represent women outside the parameters of the ideology of domestic containment -- even if it meant, as Bonnie Dow argues in the case of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, recreating the workplace as a contained scene of patriarchal domestic life.[60] What those programs seemed to lose, as they evidently addressed an audience of maturing women for whom a life outside the home was now much more a reality -- or a necessity -- than a fantasy, was something to address the male audience as well: a renewed hail to the patriarchy and the power of the male gaze. That hail would begin in the police and detective series inflected by the success of *The Avengers* in the 1960s. The female characters included in the corporate crimefighting units of *Mission: Impossible*, *Ironside* and *The Mod Squad*, while clearly work partners whose social and sexual life played little if any role in the cases they were supposed to help solve, were also attractive blonde women whose presence was designed to be as pleasing to the male eye as it was empowering to the "modern woman of today."

The beautiful blonde crimefighter was elevated to lead status in the Lear-era 1974 crime show hit *Police Woman.*[61] Played by Hollywood starlet (and long-rumored John F. Kennedy paramour) Angie Dickinson, the title character, Sgt. Pepper Anderson, was sent into "undercover" action each week, almost always in a guise -- stripper, prostitute, cocktail waitress -- that required she use the lure of sex as part of the way to catch her man, and that not accidentally allowed for maximal use of minimal costumes. Even the show's opening credit sequence, as described by Susan Douglas, harked back directly to the fragmented, "killer bimbo" image of *Honey West* : "[It] juxtaposes shots of her legs descending a staircase, action shots of her with gun in hand, images of her face frozen with fear as she's being attacked, and close-ups of her breasts...."[62] Whatever skill Pepper might have exhibited as a cop was mitigated by the fact that most episodes ended with her being rescued by male detectives -- usually the ones who ordered her into the situation to begin with. And, as Douglas also notes, the crimes she is asked to solve often involve rape or some other form of violence against women -- violence that seems naturally and even

rightfully visited upon those women (the strippers, prostitutes and cocktail waitresses among whom she moves undercover) and to which she herself is about to be subjected before her rescue.[63]

The delicate balance between a feminist representation of women as having escaped domestic containment and playing an active role in the world and what Susan Douglas calls an "antifeminist" representation of women as being defined both physically and in their work by male desire (and being punished when they fail to meet the expectations of that desire) reached its post-*Avengers* apotheosis in the 1976 ABC show *Charlie's Angels*. Producer Aaron Spelling recombined his *Honey West* and *Mod Squad* with *Police Woman* to give audiences three young, attractive females using their attractive and well-displayed bodies to fight crime for a private agency headed by the unseen patriarchal "Charlie." As both Douglas and John Fiske point out, *Charlie's Angels* was nothing if not multivocal, as a young middle-class female audience to whom Emma Peel would have appealed a decade before was equally taken with the strength, courage, wiles and styles of the Angels (who, unlike Pepper Anderson, usually worked out of their own scrapes).[64] Again, however, as was the case with the "Bond girl" in the 1970s, that power was only beneficial when exercised on behalf of patriarchal authority and presented in a form -- the "jiggle," as it would come to be called -- that directly addressed the male gaze.

This emphasis on the female body to signify a heterosexual male-defined construction of sex reached a similar apotheosis in the sitcom genre in another program first presented by ABC in the 1976-77 season -- a program that, like Norman Lear's *All in the Family* and *Sanford and Son*, was an American adaptation of a British show. Indeed, the producers and writers of *Three's Company* -- Don Nicholl, Michael Ross and Bernie West -- had served as story editors and writers for the first four seasons of *All in the Family*.[65] Unlike Lear, however, their first production came with a text not from the BBC but from commercial British television. Those commercial producers and distributors, looking with some envy upon the success BBC imports were having in the States, whether on PBS or in

their adapted commercial forms, began to search for ways into the American market that did not involve (as the BBC shows did not) the "mid-Atlantic" effect sought by Lew Grade. One of those producer-distributors, Thames Television, employing utterances concerning the "special relationship" between Britain and America that were rampant in the latter's national bicentennial celebration, arranged a unique deal with New York independent station WOR-TV for September 1976. For one week, the American station's primetime and late-night schedules consisted of nothing but Thames shows.[66] By almost every standard, the programming gimmick was a success: Ratings for the week met Thames' hopes and exceeded WOR's norm; more importantly, American producers and distributors began purchasing the shows they had seen for presentation in the States.[67]

Among those programs was a situation comedy called *Man About the House*, written by the team of Johnnie Mortimer and Brian Cooke. The show presented the misadventures of a heterosexual single man in need of a place to live and two attractive young women who decide to offer him the third room in their London flat. The sexual tension inherent in that situation is compounded by the women's landlord, who doesn't approve of sex outside of marriage (and who, according to his wife, doesn't approve of it in marriage as well) and refuses to allow unmarried men and women to live together under his roof -- until the women convince him that their potential new roommate is gay. Also built into the situation is a further apparent gender role-reversal: The women both work outside the home, while the man is, at the start of the series, an unemployed chef; his skill in the kitchen is part of the persona concocted to fool the landlord. Don Taffner, previously responsible for the adaptations *Love Thy Neighbor* and *A Touch of Grace*, bought the format and syndication rights to *Man About the House*, and brought in the Lear veterans to craft it into an American hit.[68] What crafting Nicholl, Ross and West may have done early in their creation of *Three's Company* out of *Man About the House*, however, had little to do with either the verbal or visual element of the program, as even the title of each series' first episode suggests: *Man About the House* made its premiere with "Three's a Crowd,"

while *Three's Company* offered "A Man About the House."[69] A comparison of those episodes reveals that the American version, with minor exceptions, is almost a line-by-line remake of the British version.[70] And while the sets are slightly different -- the American version seems more suburban than the British -- lighting, camera angles and editing are remarkably similar, aided by the videotaping technique used with each.

As was the case with *All in the Family*, the primary change the producers/writers brought to the American adaptation from the British original lay in their presentation of the women in the episode. While Chrissy (the brunette) and Jo (the blonde) in *Man About the House* were both attractive, neither was a glamour queen on the order of Pepper Anderson or Charlie's "angels"; while neither was particularly bright, both were certainly competent enough to hold down jobs and run a household -- and quick enough to think of a way to fool their nosy landlord when he threatened their household stability. That, however, changed when Chrissy and Jo became Janet (the brunette) and Chrissy (the blonde) of *Three's Company*. Instead of two women of moderate talents and beauty, the American series presented female leads that, in the terms used in the *Variety* review of the show, were "childish" and unfortunately notable for their "naivete."[71] This was particularly true of the Chrissy character, who embodied the comic "dumb blonde" stereotype employed by American television and film industries from Sally Struthers back to Thelma Todd. Moreover, as had been the case when the Americanized Tara King replaced Emma Peel as the female component of *The Avengers*, the American women of *Three's Company* had much more amply endowed figures than their predecessors, and were dressed to accent and reveal that amplitude, both fore and aft. The correlation could hardly be more clear: The bigger the "tits and ass," to use the colloquialism given shows such as *Three's Company* and *Charlie's Angels*, the smaller the brains -- an inflection of the original British show made possible again by the mid-1970s effort to re-contain women, if not in the patriarchal home and castle, than at least in the purview of the male gaze.[72] Indeed, the male gaze, in the exaggerated leering performed by new roommate Jack Tripper -- what connotations

were available in *that* name! -- at Chrissy's cleavages, became an integral part of the comic construction of *Three's Company.*[73]

By visually representing the male gaze, of course, Nicholl, Ross and West made it available for comment and denaturalization, particularly as Jack's ogling often led to some comic deflation of his attitude (if nothing else) in a pratfall. There is little evidence, however, that audiences did either. Sex on *Three's Company* was not an issue to be placed under Norman Lear's apparently avant garde lens of social realism; sex -- or the concupiscent promise thereof -- as defined by Tex Averyesque cartoon stereotypes of a drooling Priapus and a busty, dimwitted blonde was the *only* issue for the characters in what David Marc refers to as the "*derriere garde* " American adaptation of *Man About the House* (Marc, *Visions*, 213). While *All in the Family* remained a primary text of sitcom social realism, *Three's Company* veered much closer to the fantastic exaggerations Terry Lovell defines as farcical non-realist comedy.[74] As Marc suggests, however, *Three's Company* as a comedy of "Lifestyle" was still rooted in the realist tradition of comedy that Lear had exploited so well: No other "American" show, even by 1977, had dared to introduce the mainstream plausibility of homosexuality or living together without being married, even if those topics were used as sources of comic exaggeration instead of dramatic conflict.[75] Indeed, *Three's Company* was as clearly a child of Lear's vision as his own creations were. Without the comic treatment of sex and sexuality in *All in the Family*, including the focus on the female physique as source and butt (in both senses) of the humor -- Chrissy was hardly less developed intellectually or more developed physically than Gloria Bunker Stivic was -- any adaptation of *Man About the House*, much less the one produced by Nicholl, Ross and West, would have been unlikely. And without Lear's attention to British television as a source for American programming, and his skill in assimilating the differences it offered into the most sturdy conventions of the American situation comedy (skills learned by Nicholl, Ross and West), *Three's Company* would have been inconceivable.[76] The prurience of *Three's Company* would be exceeded by the

end of the decade in a truly farcical syndicated import from Thames Television, *The Benny Hill Show.*[77] By that time, the social consciousness that had informed the most notable of Lear's programs, as well as the connections to their British sources, was gone. The "adult social satire" *All in the Family* represented had returned to a presentational, non-situational mode in its old late-night home -- and to other British roots as well.

**Live, from New York, It's...**

However controversial it may have been in its own day, *That Was the Week That Was* directly left a tiny but distinct legacy on American culture. The topical satire of *TW3* vanished from TV screens with the show in 1965; it was not until 1967 that some form of that satire would re-emerge, first on CBS' *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* and then on NBC's *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In.* While the former seemed to adopt the irreverence of its British-based predecessor to a greater degree, with "anti-Establishment" sketches and pop music acts which eventually led to enough "Establishment" complaints that the network suddenly cancelled it in 1969, it was *Laugh-In* on which the *TW3* influence was more directly visible.[78] Though less directly political than the *Smothers Brothers* show, *Laugh-In* employed the short topical sketches, blackouts and one-liners that marked the *TW3* style of humor, including a weekly collection of gags, headed "*Laugh-In* Looks at the News," that seemed almost lifted from the British format.[79]

Among the writers for *Laugh-In* was a young Canadian, Lorne Michaels, who had come to Hollywood after unhappily leaving a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation radio comedy show, *Five Nights a Week at This Time.* Michaels found working for the NBC hit no less trying, so when the CBC in 1969 offered him and his old partnet Hart Pomerantz the chance to produce their own television comedy specials, they moved back north to become masters of their own fates. While the specials, which began airing in 1969, seemed to occupy a middle ground between American variety shows, with stars, sketches and musical acts, and the British repertory company comedy shows spawned out of *Beyond the*

*Fringe* and *TW3*, more and more they began to follow a third direction. *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, as previously noted, began to run in Canada in 1970, long before its appearance in the States and just after the "Hart and Lorne" shows started to be produced for CBC. "It was miraculous to me, a revelation," Michaels would later say of *Monty Python*. "It seemed that once again the winds of change were blowing from England."[80] Those winds of change eventually blew Michaels back to Hollywood, where he co-wrote and co-produced three award-winning comedy specials for another veteran of *Laugh-In*, Lily Tomlin.[81] Those shows were considered radically different from typical network comedy specials; they weren't different enough, however, for Michaels, who used clips from his CBC shows and *Monty Python* to indicate in job interviews what he wanted to do with the television medium. It was just as he was about to leave television for a screenwriting career that Michaels received a request for a meeting from NBC late-night programming executive Dick Ebersol.

Ebersol needed to find a producer for a new late-night comedy/variety program on Saturdays that would appeal to an audience younger than that attracted by Johnny Carson's *Tonight Show* on weeknights; Michaels, with his experience and his desire, as he put it, "to do a show for the generation that grew up on television," was willing and able to take on the task (Hill and Weingrad, 18). By this time -- early 1975 -- the British show for the generation that grew up on television had become the object of national attention; Michaels' references to *Monty Python* as his own touchstone no longer fell upon ears innocent of any knowledge.[82] When NBC first broadcast *Saturday Night Live* in fall 1975, however, the Python influence was not boldly foregrounded: Like network variety shows (and Carson's *Tonight*), the show began with a standup monologue by the week's celebrity "host"; the series' repertory company, drawn from similar groups around the country, played only a minor role in the first few episodes; the topical "Weekend Update" feature owed more to *TW3* and *Laugh-In* topicality than to Python absurdity; many of the sketches were little more than standard, albeit hip, parodies. Perhaps most importantly, the fact that *Saturday*

*Night* was truly live, seen in Cedar Rapids as it was being performed in New York, meant that the televisual production elements so central to the Python attack on the medium could not be used.[83]

While the conventions of American variety shows were more visible than any specific element of *Monty Python* in the early *Saturday Night Live*, Lorne Michaels' model for what television should be became more and more visible as the show progressed: in the development of a repertory group that would become the core of the program; in absurd commercial parodies filmed so as to be indistinguishable from commercials themselves; in sketches, such as those representing the Samurai warrior from Kurosawa films as the counterman at a delicatessen, or having a commercial pitchman jam a fish into a blender and attempt to sell the machine as a "Bass-o-matic," that took film, television and other forms of popular culture beyond simple parody into something that ridiculed the basis of the way in which those forms were produced and received. As *Saturday Night Live* star Dan Aykroyd (who was responsible for the "Bass-o-matic" sketch) would explain the *Python* influence, as well as the difference between situation comedy and his own show, later: "A lot of American humor in television is based on real social situations and real relationships, and Python just takes that humor and explodes it" (*Life of Python*, 1989). Eventually, Eric Idle and Michael Palin would both serve as "guest hosts" of *Saturday Night Live* on multiple occasions; Michaels also instigated and co-produced Idle's Beatles documentary parody *All You Need Is Cash* for NBC.[84]

As had been the case with Norman Lear, Lorne Michaels sculpted his career as an American television producer out of British marble. *Saturday Night Live* was by no means the autobiographical document Lear intended with *All in the Family*, and that the generational sitcoms he produced afterward de facto turned out to be. Yet the vision of what each hoped to accomplish was shaped by and focused on what had been possible on the BBC with situation and sketch comedy. That vision was in turn reshaped and refocused by utterances from within American society and culture -- a growing discourse and conflict

on issues such as race, gender and economic inequality; the development of a baby boom generation with resources of educational and cultural capital previously unseen; the lasting influence of the 1960s counterculture in music, media, fashion and drugs. Those utterances were themselves inflected by utterances, both economic and aesthetic, from within an American television industry that followed the siren call of demographics toward that younger generation while trying to preserve conventional elements of the texts and genres that had defined their existence for 25 years. No one who saw both could argue that *All in the Family* was *Till Death Us Do Part*, or that *Saturday Night Live* was *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Yet one could see the lasting influence of the latter upon the former in each case, just as one could identify the differences that separated the two -- and the two cultures in which each was produced. Such would also be the case in the use by American producers of an entire genre of British programming: the serialized historical drama.

## Rich Roots, Poor Roots

Producers such as Lear, Taffner and Michaels found themselves able to accomplish so much during the early and mid-1970s because of a redefinition of the producer's role in the television industry made possible by governmental utterances. A series of rulings passed by the Federal Communications Commission -- the Financial Interest Rule, the Syndication Rule and the Prime Time Access Rule -- in 1970 had the intent of slashing network control over American television. The rulings, which ended network involvement in ownership of independently produced programs and syndicated properties, as well as cut back the amount of time network programming would be allotted in the evening hours, seemed to represent a liberal consensus on the perceived monopolistic power of ABC, CBS and NBC. However, they came in large part as a result of pressure applied by the Nixon Department of Justice, following the Nixon-Agnew-Buchanan agenda that sought to reduce for its own purposes the power it saw possessed by the networks and that was more than willing to use arguments by the left to do so. Both Les Brown and Paul Kerr argue that the

FCC edicts achieved only a small portion of what they set out to do, and may well have backfired. Nonetheless, independent producers who had large enough operations not to rely solely upon the networks and/or who were able to take advantage of new "combinations of cultural elements" that "instilled novelty into generically based presentations" found themselves in new positions of financial and political power with network distributors.[85]

One genre, however, was left untouched for several years by those producers -- ironically enough, the genre itself most shaped by the policies of the Nixon administration. There were several reasons why American producers would not countenance serial dramas like *The Forsyte Saga* in the early 1970s. Cost was of course a primary concern -- hourlong programs with large casts were expensive, particularly when they had to be shot on film instead of videotape. And they would have to be shot on film: While sitcoms, which were contained by interior sets and focused on character dialogue, apparently suffered little from videotaping, dramas, which required outdoor shooting and (preferably) some amount of physical action, would lose too much detail and texture when recorded on the bright, flat medium of video. The serial form itself also gave primetime producers pause -- *Peyton Place* had been a two-season hit in the mid-1960s, but interest and ratings declined rapidly when favorite stars left the show; other attempts at primetime serials, most notably the expensive 1969 program *The Survivors*, failed badly. Finally, there was the historical content of the *Forsyte/Masterpiece* narratives as well. America's historical drama in film and on TV had always been the Western, which represented debates about nature and culture, the individual and society, race and family that were central to the development of the republic, and did so in photogenic surroundings with plenty of action. As television Westerns domesticated those concerns in the 1950s, following the ideology of the day, and as an audience that had grown up on those texts wished, following the movements of the 1960s, to see those concerns addressed in a more "relevant" forum, the Western went into decline: It was part of the "old TV" that the new demographics would not forbear.[86] And if

Americans were no longer willing to revisit their own history in an episodic form, then it seemed highly unlikely that they would do so in a form that required them to stay attuned to the story week after week.

Nonetheless, the demographic success of *The Forsyte Saga*, *Masterpiece Theatre* and particularly *Upstairs, Downstairs*, and the need for newly "empowered" producers to create new work from what has already proven itself, did result in two American efforts to recreate the glories of the British serialized historical drama for domestic audiences. *Beacon Hill* was produced by Briton Beryl Vertue, who had acted as the middlewoman between the BBC and Norman Lear in the latter's acquisition of rights to *Till Death Us Do Part* and *Steptoe and Son*. Given what had come of those negotiations and her concomitant knowledge of both British television and the American market, CBS asked her to develop a series based on *Upstairs, Downstairs* -- a series that, like the Mobil presentation on PBS, would attract an audience wealthy in educational, cultural and financial capital. In Vertue's reframing of the British show, London between 1900 and 1930 became 1920s Boston, the Bellamys became the Lassiters, and the downstairs workers, instead of signifying the lower classes of Scotland, the Midlands and Cockney London, represented the lower classes of American immigrants -- blacks, Italians, Irish. Lavish period sets and costumes were built; expensive props were purchased. Little was left to chance in the recreation of both Boston society and the British serial -- Vertue even dared to use the videotape technique of her show's predecessor and that Norman Lear had successfully brought to the sitcom. The premiere episode of *Beacon Hill*, broadcast before the official network season premiere week, attracted 42 percent of the audience watching. That, however, would be the apex of *Beacon Hill*'s popularity: Ratings declined swiftly, and the network announced the cancellation of the show at the end of October.[87]

Many plausible reasons for the failure of this initial commercial foray into genre adaptation can be advanced -- the lack of a personal vision such as that of Norman Lear, the lack of a "sponsor" such as Mobil who saw the show itself as part of an ideological

campaign, the addition of plot elements (primarily the Catholic-Protestant conflict) that seemed unfaithful to *Upstairs, Downstairs.* Most persuasive, perhaps, particularly to those involved with the project, was the simple argument that *Beacon Hill* was poorly written and poorly performed.[88] What could not be assumed, however, was that an American audience would out of hand reject a serialized historical drama based on the British model. An effort by PBS itself, following the model of *Masterpiece Theatre* dramas and the cries of American critics that public television owed its audience as much allegiance to American history and culture as it did Britain's, proved that the British genre could indeed be assimilated into American television culture -- at some cost. *The Adams Chronicles,* conceived in 1971 and brought to the PBS airwaves as a Bicentennial feature in 1976, presented the story of the first America dynasty -- the Adams family of Massachusetts, beginning with Founding Parents John and Abigail and ending with the education of Henry and the financial ruin of Charles. Funded in part by money from Atlantic Richfield Oil (which followed the Mobil example in promoting the series), the 13 episodes of *The Adams Chronicles* replicated the historic sweep and detailed attention to period of the most noted BBC imports, thanks in no small part to producer Virginia Kassel, who had been responsible a few years earlier for WNET's purchase of *The Forsyte Saga.* As John Hawkesworth had done with *Upstairs, Downstairs,* Kassel hired noted writers -- awardwinning playwrights Tad Mosel and Millard Lampell, among others -- to write scripts for the serial; her directorial hires included James Cellan-Jones, a regular director of the *Saga.* By all viewership measures, Kassel's efforts paid off magnificently: PBS drew its highest ratings ever -- four times its average audience -- in major markets, with ratings in New York, Boston and San Francisco on the level of commercial networks in those cities.[89] By all economic measures, however, her work, which included mandating the construction of 240 sets and thousands of costumes, in addition to hiring hundreds of extras, was a fiasco: At a cost of $5.2 million, *The Adams Chronicles* was $1.5 million over budget, even using the cheap medium of videotape, and forced WNET to suspend

production of several of its local shows.[90]

The financial fate of *The Adams Chronicles* -- precisely the type of show that the original producers of *Masterpiece Theatre* for PBS hoped to create under its auspices -- demonstrated once and for all to PBS and its corporate sponsors the economic wisdom of importing lengthy historical serialized dramas. Public broadcasting has not attempted to produce anything on its scale since. And the fate of *Beacon Hill* seemed to indicate that adaptations of the British model were doomed to failure on the commercial networks as well. Some small signs, however, that serial television productions based on literary works might attract a significant American audience, in both raw numbers and demographics, had appeared by the time *Beacon Hill* and *The Adams Chronicles* were broadcast. A production of Leon Uris' novel *QB VII*, made as a two-part "movie of the week" presentation for ABC in 1974, drew a 38 percent share of the audience and led to the network's production the following year of a similar two-part "movie" based on the Joseph Lash biography of the Roosevelts, *Eleanor and Franklin.*[91]

Those, however, were mere warmups for what ABC executives and producers were readying in their television adaptation of Irwin Shaw's novel *Rich Man, Poor Man.* Published in 1970, Shaw's book presented the story of two brothers, sons of immigrant parents, who took separate paths to the status designated by the title, and to the corruption and death that followed. It was centered on a family; it had historical sweep (from the 1940s to the 1960s); it dealt with cultural delineations of class; in short, it contained every element, *sans* the Nobel Prize, that had made *The Forsyte Saga* a public broadcasting *cause celebre* --except in this case, the signifiers represented American life and culture. ABC bought the rights to the novel in 1971, and started playing with how it might be presented: First, as four two-hour movies (on film, not videotape) throughout the season; then as six two-hour movies. When Fred Silverman -- the CBS programmer who had voiced the loudest approval of Norman Lear's pilot episode of *All in the Family* -- came to ABC in 1975, however, he mandated that the show be produced as a filmed "miniseries," with a

two-hour opening and conclusion, and the remaining eight episodes at a length of one hour. To assure audiences that this was the British model but not a British show, executive producer Harve Bennett stacked the cast with familiar faces from American television and film; to assure sponsors that he was quite possibly insane, Silverman scheduled the first part of his saga against the most popular program on American television: *All in the Family.*[92] Silverman's rationalization of that decision, however, reveals the debt he owed to British television: "[W]hat we really want to prove is not that Archie can be had for one night but that in the long run there is an audience for this kind of drama.... The big, novelistic kind that breaks down all walls and sets new standards. I think the show is a TV landmark. It will be what *Beacon Hill* should have been" (Whitney, 30).[93]

If by that remark Silverman meant that *Rich Man, Poor Man* -- the title of which coincidentally bore no small resemblance to PBS' *Upstairs, Downstairs* -- would be a popular and critical success, he would be right: For the 1975-76 season, the American rendition of the *Masterpiece Theatre* genre would finish second in the Nielsen ratings for all series, mini- or otherwise, behind only Norman Lear's adaptation of *Till Death Us Do Part.*[94] In addition, *Rich Man, Poor Man* received three Emmy awards for the season -- a noteworthy achievement in and of itself, made all the more noteworthy by the other dramatic programs receiving multiple awards -- *Eleanor and Franklin* with four; *Upstairs, Downstairs* and *The Adams Chronicles* with two each. Out of 21 dramatic categories, programs that were either British in origin or represented a direct adaptation of the British serialized drama genre won 11 awards.[95] In the bicentennial year of the United States' declaration of independence from Great Britain, the most popular and the most honored programs on American television were shows that either were direct imports from England or that owed their existence to British predecessors.[96]

Though the Bicentennial itself and its heightened reminders of the "special relationship" between the United States and Great Britain acted as a late vector in the American acceptance of British programming, the most significant new utterance shaping

that dialogue was the position successful producers had gained in the television industry over the course of the decade.[97] On the one hand, those producers had gained a self-awareness of their role as, to borrow Marshall Sahlins' characterization of the "huckster of the symbol," those putting together "latent correspondences in the cultural order whose conjunction in a product-symbol may spell mercantile success."[98] As Horace Newcomb and Robert Alley suggest of the subjects of their study *The Producer's Medium*, that self-awareness foregrounded individual vision in finding and (re)constructing those "latent correspondences," while lamenting the need to clone and recombine what had already been done.[99] Each of the producers interviewed by Newcomb and Alley had come to see himself in the way David Marc would later describe his status: as one who "dreams a world and builds it with scripts and actors and cameras and political constrictions and audience market tests and network transmission lines" -- among many other utterances.[100]

On the other hand, endowed with cultural capital (to say nothing of financial capital) as a result of their place in the American "culture industry," those producers were socially positioned as part of the American elite that would engage with, through utterances previously addressed, British series such as *The Forsyte Saga*, *Upstairs, Downstairs*, *Monty Python's Flying Circus* and *Till Death Us Do Part*. As such, those British programs became elements of a "cultural order," defined and organized by the principles of corporate capitalism, from which producers could create their 30- or 60-minute worlds for an audience embodying much more than their own elite. In this precarious balance between the legitimized exercise of their individual authority and their prescribed role within the profitmaking system of American media, television producers could accomplish two things they might not otherwise. They might first, in making British constructions the novel element in an American genre (*All in the Family*) or in reconstructing a British genre as an American form (*The Adams Chronicles; Rich Man, Poor Man*), imbue American television as a whole with significations of "quality" previously associated only with the imports themselves. And second, they might each similarly use British television to establish an

individual status as author in a medium -- witness the publicity for "John Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*" -- that had been loathe to consider any such possibility.[101] In essence, to return to Barthes' and Foucault's objections to the limiting functions of the author in literature, those producers wished to reorganize the "principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning" in television out of commercial notions of advertiser-supported, network-distributed commodities and into artistic (if not artful) personal expressions that happened to be projected into the space of the marketplace.[102] The texts and genres of British television provided the means for Lear, Michaels and others to accomplish both, and no genre served that purpose better than the serialized historical drama, with its elite status already made legitimate through its distribution by public television.

That point would be made most effectively in 1977, when ABC presented David Wolper's production of Alex Haley's family history *Roots*. Wolper, with a lengthy history in film and television documentary, including *The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau*, the George Plimpton *Paper Lion* specials and the Munich Olympics chronicle *Visions of Eight*, had become involved with television series production in 1974, with two British-inflected programs: the detective series *Get Christie Love!* and *Chico and the Man* (which he co-produced with James Komack). After hearing of Haley's ongoing research into the African background of his slave ancestors in 1972, Wolper acquired the rights to the forthcoming book two years later and sold ABC, with the "relevance" promulgated in Norman Lear's shows acting as a marketable vector, on the desirability of the work as a two-part TV movie. Upon Fred Silverman's arrival at the network, the movie quickly turned into a 12-hour miniseries modeled on *Rich Man, Poor Man*. Again, the British serialized drama was being called on -- this time, for a story of an immigrant family whose arrival in the New World came not out of a self-expressed desire for a better life but in the manacles and chains of slavery.[103]

As a televisual text, *Roots* provides a remarkably clear example of the polyvalence of televisual texts. On one hand a sympathetic portrayal of the horrors endured by the

original African-Americans, the program on another made several of the white characters encountered by Haley kinder and gentler than they would appear in his book. On one hand an unprecedented television showcase for black actors, the production on another was constructed to garner high ratings by including familiar and well-liked white actors (several of whom also appeared on *Rich Man, Poor Man*). On one hand a serious treatment of the social injustices propounded by the "peculiar institution" from Africa across the Atlantic, the show on another ideologically presented those injustices in the context of a naturalized understanding of the nuclear family as the central American social institution and visually presented them as detached instances of sexual abuse and violence that were at best voyeuristic and at worst almost pornographic. On one hand an adaptation of a major work about African-Americans by an important African-American writer, the broadcast version of *Roots* on another was refracted through the lenses of white producers, white screenwriters and (for the most part) white directors: In an overt claim of television authorship, Wolper's production team wrote Haley out of the miniseries (though he would return for the sequel).[104] Most important for this survey, on the one hand a story of American history told by Americans for Americans, the miniseries on the other hand relied structurally on a British form and genre that, until very recently, had been eschewed by primetime American commercial television -- and one that, in its exclusive attention to the British white ruling class, played its own part in the circumscription of Haley's work.

Broadcast over eight consecutive nights in January 1977, a Silverman-mandated refinement in the distribution pattern of the serialized drama, *Roots* averaged a 66 percent share of the audience and attracted an estimated 140 million viewers.[105] The success of *Roots* demonstrated both Wolper's skill in creating a controversial text that could speak to virtually every demographic group in the country and the significance of the serialized form in the apprehension of that text.[106] And while David Wolper, in part to deflect criticism of the miniseries as being black history told from a white point of view, publicly represented Alex Haley as the person who "controlled totally" the television production, it was Wolper

himself, along with African-American poet Quincy Troupe, who would offer those viewers *The Inside Story of TV's* Roots, a mass-market paperback book that was as much a hagiography of the producer as it was chronicle of the production. The miniseries had made David Wolper a star -- "the man who persuaded everyone to risk six million dollars and eight nights of television on a black slave story," as his own book noted -- and had at the same time made its genre an essential element of commercial American broadcasting.[107]

With *Rich Man, Poor Man* and Wolper's *Roots* -- along with an NBC adaptation of Arthur Hailey's potboiler novel *The Moneychangers* -- establishing the British-based serialized drama in both its historical and literary forms in the United States, other producers, many with long-standing reputations in television and film, brought their own sensibilities to the genre -- and the genre further into the workings of the American television industry.[108] Producer/director/writer Abby Mann, responsible early in his career for *Judgment at Nuremberg* and more recently for the "relevant" cop drama *Kojak*, took up Wolper's efforts to address American racial conflict in a six-hour 1978 original miniseries on the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, *King*. Herbert Brodkin, producer of the classic New Frontier dramas *The Defenders* and *The Nurses*, returned to the medium with his nine-hour-plus miniseries *Holocaust*, a 1978 recasting of the horrors depicted in *Roots* to the concentration camps of Nazi Germany. Adaptations of novels did not go unattended, either: Veteran TV crime series producer Roy Huggins (*77 Sunset Strip*, *Run for Your Life*, *The Rockford Files*) presented a nine-hour televersion of Taylor Caldwell's novel *The Captains and the Kings* as part of NBC's 1977-78 "Best Sellers" rubric; William Sackheim, who had presented the Nixon-era professional dramas *The Senator* and *The Law*, did the same with Anton Myrer's *Once an Eagle*.[109] Even James Michener, who a decade earlier had praised *The Forsyte Saga* to millions of Americans in the pages of *TV Guide*, found his own work the subject of a miniseries adaptation, in John Wilder and Richard Caffey's 26-hour *Centennial*.[110]

It was, however, a specific British text -- Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* -- that

would provide the coda to the way in which British serialized drama would shape American primetime television in the 1970s. Producer Lee Rich, whose Lorimar company was responsible for the quintessential 1970s family drama *The Waltons*, found in the miniseries form a way to reshape the compassionate gentility of rural Virginia in the 1930s into the passionate hurly-burly of contemporary urban business society.[111] Shaped by utterances representing the ongoing demographic shift from North to South and a national concern with petroleum supplies, Rich's program borrowed Shakespeare's Montagues and Capulets and moved them from the villas and plazas of Verona to the skyscrapers and oil fields of northern Texas, renaming them the Ewings and the Barneses in the process. CBS purchased the show for a brief spring run in 1978 -- on Sunday nights -- and promoted it as the story of "[a] family ruthless in its quest for power and passion. Ready to destroy two people who dared defy their own blood for the right to love."[112] Though the five episodes broadcast in that run, like the early episodes of *Upstairs, Downstairs*, featured self-contained plotlines, the network promoted it as "a five-part miniseries," with the Romeo-and-Juliet story of Bobby Ewing and Pam Barnes as the overarching narrative.[113]

*Dallas*, however, unlike other miniseries would return as a regular series in fall 1978, meaning that the closure of a final episode, central to the form, was gone. The Romeo and Juliet story would fade, as the show turned to its Iago, Bobby's brother J.R., as the main source of its continuing dramatic tension. The serialized historical/literary drama that had been at the center of governmental efforts to force American public television into a preferred mold of "quality," and of corporate efforts to take advantage of that "quality," had worked its way through the commercial television system to re-emerge at the end of the 1970s as a soap opera of the rich and famous. This is not to denigrate *Dallas*, or the clones, spinoffs and recombinations that followed: Lee Rich's show represented a remarkable confluence of utterances speaking to a remarkable number of audiences, as its popularity during the first half of the 1980s would testify. Not least among those utterances was that provided by the British serial "masterpieces" seen on PBS;

indeed, given the setting of *Dallas*, one plausible reading of the show is that of a "thick description" of the industry responsible for the arrival and success of the genre on American public television. What it did mean, however, was that the British influence had become such a commonplace in American television that it was no longer a novelty, no longer an element that producers could draw on to create new meaning. As Emma Peel had become Julie Barnes had become Charlie's angels, and as the Garnetts had become the Bunkers had become the Jeffersons, and as David Frost had become Monty Python had become the Not Ready for Primetime Players, so had *The Forsyte Saga* and *Elizabeth R* finally become the saga of Southfork and J.R. What once seemed completely different was, by the end of the 1970s, as American as cowboy hats, bourbon and branch, and a roll in the hay with the head of an international oil cartel.

## Notes, Chapter 7

1) Dialogue taken from "Crossed Swords" episode of *Steptoe and Son*, prod. Duncan Wood, writ., Ray Galton, Alan Simpson, perf. Wilfrid Brambell, Harry Corbett, BBC, October 11, 1965.

2) Dialogue taken from "Crossed Swords" episode of *Sanford and Son*, exec. prod. Norman Lear, writ./prod., Aaron Ruben, dir. Bud Yorkin, perf. Redd Foxx, Demond Wilson, NBC, January 14, 1972.

3) Newcomb and Hirsch 1987, 457-458.

4) Read 1977, 90-92; Straubhaar 1992. Straubhaar's research on the Dominican Republic in particular will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8.

5) On the American adaptation of other British genres in the 1960s, see Brown, *Variety* June 30, 1965, 1.

6) Horace Newcomb 1974 discusses situation comedy as "television's own form of comedy" (26-27). Jane Feuer, in her analysis of sitcom as genre, refers to the form as "the most basic program format known to the medium"; see Feuer, in ed. Robert Allen 1987, 120. David Marc, though noting his own preference for the "heroism" and "boldness" of stand-up comedy, notes the ascendance of the sitcom from the early days of the medium, absorbing and transforming the dangerous comics who started simply telling jokes to an audience; see Marc 1989, 1-48.

7) The political-economic theory of American cultural imperialism (or media determinism) was given credence by the abundant supply of product made for the American market, the demand of newly developing television systems around the world for programming, and the aggressiveness of American distributors in marketing their programs to those markets.

Again, however, the economic thrust of that theory failed to address what publics being served by those new systems would actually do with the American shows they received. In terms of Britain's influence in the world market, Nordenstreng and Varis' 1974 note that the United States did not become a leading export market for the BBC until the late 1960s. (They fail to provide data for British commercial producers.) By 1974, American sales constituted some 20 percent of the BBC's exports, roughly the same percentage as sales to Asia, Australia and New Zealand; Europe accounted for some 10 percent of BBC export trade. Here again, though, the attention to the political economics of transnational communication obfuscates cultural matters: The authors elide the fact that most of the distribution of BBC programming in America came through PBS, which appealed to a small and distinct(ive) audience, and which in many markets was consigned to UHF stations that served only a fraction of households using television. Moreover, the graphic accompanying their description depicts the United States as receiving the majority of BBC exports, by counting every hour of British exported programming in every market, a standard applied to no other market. Finally, and of greatest importance in terms of this chapter, the authors do not consider in any market the role of adaptations of unexported programming. See Nordenstreng and Varis 1974, 29-34.

8) Curtis, in ed. Cook 1982, 7-9.

9) Curtis, 7-10; Lovell, in ed. Cook, 22-30. See also Feuer, in ed. Allen 1987, 120-125.

10) Comments here owe more than a little to Marc's analysis of *Green Acres* (1984, 59-63).

11) Neale and Krutnik 1990, 236-242. The authors also provide useful prehistories of the television sitcom form in both Britain and America (209-226).

12) The most notable example here is *Bewitched*, in which Samantha's father Maurice (played by Maurice Evans) was British, as was the family's warlock doctor, Dr. Bombay (Bernard Fox). Endora, though played by American Agnes Moorehead, effaced a British accent when she spoke.

13) "Sambo Jokes on TV Anger MP," *The Sun* September 12, 1966, page unavailable; Thomas, *Daily Express* January 14, 1967, page unavailable.

14) Mulligan,*Variety* January 24, 1968, 31.

15) As had been the case with *The Avengers* and *The Prisoner* before it, *TV Guide* introduced *Till Death Us Do Part* to America before the show itself arrived. In a December 30, 1967 article, Robert Musel praised the show as an example of BBC programming that was "pushing the horizons of television out just a little bit further" -- even though the lack of export success for *Till Death* proved that "the rest of the TV world is not yet ready for the comedy of social comment." See Musel, *TV Guide* December 30, 1967, 15-17.

16) Pryor, *Variety* May 3, 1967, 20.

17) "BBC's Needling Comedy 'Till Death' Preparing US Version Via Tandem," *Variety* February 14, 1968, 26. Ironically, the British public may have been less in the mood to have its social problems analyzed, as *Till Death Us Do Part* left the BBC the following week, after more public complaint about "blasphemous comment" and following an argument between the BBC and writer Johnny Speight over the former's demand that Alf's comparison of God to Hitler be removed from the script. See Mulligan, *Variety* February

21, 1968: 32; also "London TV Woos 'Till Death' After Heave-Ho By BBC," *Variety* February 28, 1968: 31.

18) Adler 1979, xix-xx. See also Gitlin 1983, 212; McCrohan 1987, 11-12.

19) On the centrality of the family specifically to the American sitcom, see, among others, Dow 1990, 261-274; Feuer, in ed. Feuer, Kerr, Vahimagi 1985, 32-60; _____, in ed. Robert Allen 1987, 120-132; Marc 1984, 49-83; _____ 1989, 39-63; Newcomb 1974, 25-58; Taylor 1989, 24-32, 65-101.

20) The humor of *Till Death Us Do Part* and *All in the Family*, to follow Neale and Krutnik's argument to the fullest, is one which violates verisimilitude less than it does the decorum -- what is proper and fitting -- of social life and of television convention. Alf and Archie's railings against "coons," "Hebes," "wogs" and "micks," the audible flushing of toilets and the referencing of biological functions usually kept private, the exaggerated gestures and accents of the characters -- all work to violate norms of both actual public behavior and the expectations incumbent upon television situation comedy. See Neale and Krutnik 1990, 84-86.

21) On the early production history of *All in the Family*, see Les Brown 1971, 128-130; Marc 1984, 175; Adler 1979, xix-xx; Gitlin 1983, 212; McCrohan 1987, 14-17. ABC's unfortunate nod to late-1960s relevance was the show *Turn On*, a version of the hip and hit *Laugh-In* series which spawned such critical and public hostility that it was cancelled after a single episode.

22) The demographic shift engineered by Wood at CBS is the major subplot in Les Brown 1971.

23) According to McCrohan 1987, CBS programming vice-president Fred Silverman, after viewing the pilot, jumped to his feet and shouted: "Don't let that tape out of the building!" (20).

24) As Les Brown 1971 himself puts it:

> Public consciousness of the ideological polarity in the country had increased between the fall of 1969 and the spring of 1970, as it had with the sensitivities between the races, the classes, the generations and the sexes. ABC tested the pilot when there was still some national disbelief in the rift; CBS when the national anxiety over it had become serious (130).

25) Curiously, the debut episode of *All in the Family* followed another new CBS program: *Hee Haw*, the network's adaptation of *Laugh-In* for its traditional older and rural viewers.

26) Part of the reason the program aired as *All in the Family* was evidently purely pragmatic: Some confusion in meaning seemed inevitable between a potentially controversial sitcom called *Those Were the Days* and British balladeer Mary Hopkin's wistful million-selling pop record "Those Were the Days," which had been released after the pilot had been made. Nonetheless, the title song for *All in the Family*, sung by O'Connor and Stapleton, retained the title "Those Were the Days."

27) As Marc 1989 and Taylor 1989 point out, *All in the Family* was in fact not terribly different from the sitcoms that preceded it, particularly those, such as *The Life of Riley* and *The Honeymooners* (and, by extension, their 1960s copycat *The Flintstones*) with loud, blustery blue-collar workers as their protagonists, and those, such as *I Love Lucy*, that

relied as much on body language, mugging and slapstick as they did on verbal gags. See Marc, 174-180; Taylor, 72-73.

28) McCrohan 1987 goes to some length to argue for the second interpretation, asserting that "Dug into his bunker, he's not out to get anybody" and "Archie is a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant American -- qualities he pulls into the bunker with him." She also cites Thomas Berger's deconstruction of both elements of the character's name: "Arch is defined in the dictionary as 'extreme, most fully embodying the qualities of his or its kind...*bunker*, full of bunk, nonsense" (38-40).

29) Lear told *TV Guide* at the time that the four-camera videotaping technique helped "convey the *spontaneity* of family life." See Barber, *TV Guide* May 29, 1971, 32; also see "Dialogue on Film: Norman Lear," *American Film* June 1977, 47.

30) "Lew Grade's Example May Stir Brit. Vidfilmers To Pursue O'seas Loot," *Variety* July 28, 1965: 34.

31) Barber, May 29, 1971, 35; McCrohan 1987, 7.

32) All dialogue quotations and visual citations in this section are taken from "A House With Love in It," *Till Death Us Do Part*, prod. Dennis Main Wilson, writ. Johnny Speight, perf. Warren Mitchell, Dandy Nichols, Anthony Booth, Una Stubbs, BBC, June 20,1966; and "Meet the Bunkers," writ./prod. Norman Lear, dir. John Rich, perf. Carroll O'Connor, Jean Stapleton, Rob Reiner, Sally Struthers, CBS, January 12, 1971.

33) British viewers were evidently as confused by Archie's patois when *All in the Family* was exported to their country as American viewers might have been by Alf's rhyming Cockney slang in *Till Death Us Do Part*: See Last, *Daily Telegraph* (London) July 23, 1971: page unavailable.

34) Marc 1984, 180-181.

35) On the background of the Michael Stivic character, see McCrohan 1987, 17-18; also 47-54. For more on the difference between the British and American Michaels, as well as other perceived differences from a British point of view, see Fiddy, *Primetime* 12, spring/summer 1987, 15-16.

36) Marc 1984, 177-178. As Marc points out, the WASPishness of the Bunkers merely continued the de-ethnicization of sitcom characters from the days of *The Goldbergs* and *Amos and Andy* in the 1950s and served as another conventional element of Lear's allegedly revolutionary new show.

37) Lasch 1977.

38) Marc 1984 refers to Lear's use of space as "precinematic, almost Victorian teletheater...so busy and tight with players and props and doors and staircases that it serves as an aesthetic counterweight to the show's self-consciously progressive narrative didacticism" (183).

39) The harridan working-class mother figure in British films of the 1950s and 1960s, according to John Hill, is part of those films' representations of the decline of the (male) working class and the rise of (female) consumerism. As opposed to the smothering middle-class "Momism" defined by Philip Wylie for Americans in 1942, which was alleged to leave a generation of American males in passive thrall to the frustrated overprotection of

their mothers, the working-class mother evident in British texts, argues Hill, was an outright castrator who fed off the decline into impotence and death of their husbands and would threaten to do the same to their sons and sons-in-law. Else Garnett did not occupy the same position in the fictive world of *Till Death Us Do Part* that mothers in films such as *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, A Kind of Loving* and *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runners* did; nonetheless, the character's ragings against her husband and her protective relationship with her daughter can be seen to come from the same sources. See Hill 1986, 158-162; on "Momism," see May 1988, 74-75; 116-117.

40) Marc 1984, 182.

41) I am borrowing the concept of "the unruly woman" here from Rowe, in ed. Newcomb 1994, 202-211. Rowe defines the unruly woman as one who "[t]hrough body and speech...violates the unspoken feminine sanction against 'making a spectacle' of herself" (204); more tellingly, in terms of the current argument, Rowe presents Roseanne as a figure that media and society attempt to "contain" (203). Else Garnett is just such a figure in *Till Death Us Do Part*; Lear manages to contain her in Edith Bunker.

42) For more on the careers of Galton and Simpson, see Curtis, in ed. Cook 1982, 6.

43) See "The Offer" episode of *Comedy Playhouse*, prod., Duncan Wood, writ. Ray Galton, Alan Simpson, perf. Wilfrid Brambell, Harry H. Corbett, BBC, May 1, 1962. Also see Brooks 1985, 340; Cooke, (London) *Sunday Citizen*, February 3, 1963, page unavailable. The praise for *Steptoe* was not unanimous by any means -- no less than Lew Grade refused to allow the program to be seen in his home, because he felt the language was too harsh for his son. "...Says Lew Grade And Bans Steptoe From His Home," *Daily Mail* December 2, 1963, page unavailable.

44) "US Pays £100,000 For 'Steptoe' Scripts; TV Cast Of Americans," *Daily Telegraph*, May 8, 1964, page unavailable.

45) Brooks 1985, 340.

46) On the success of Flip Wilson, see Les Brown 1971, 291-294. Among the shows that fell into the categories described were *Ironside*, *The Mod Squad*, *NYPD*, *Star Trek*, *Julia*, *The Young Lawyers, The Young Rebels* and even *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. The only notable exceptions to the secondary status accorded blacks in prime time were two classroom comedies: *The Bill Cosby Show* and *Room 222*, both of which had committed and hip young African-American teachers as their protagonists. Cosby, though, constituted a set of signifiers almost as multivalent as those embodied in Flip Wilson, and both series drew heavily from (and used in the creation of their narrative images) the protagonist played by Sidney Poitier in the hit film *To Sir, With Love*.

47) DuBois 1990, 8. Readings made by African-Americans of *All in the Family* varied considerably. The June 1972 issue of *Ebony* featured a cover story on Archie Bunker and the show -- the first time a white man had occupied the cover of the magazine -- entitled "Is Archie Bunker the Real White America?" Much to his chagrin, author Charles Sanders concluded that "St. Archie," whether real or not, represented a genuine threat to gains made by the African-American community in the previous decade. The magazine printed 34 letters in response to the article, with opinions ranging from complete agreement with Sanders' thesis ("The AITF show is a sick, sick, sick show, and I wish somehow there could be some sort of concerted effort to take it off the air") to complete disagreement ("We are devoted fans of the *All in the Family* television show. Incidentally, we are black"). The single issue about the article most troubling readers, however, was the magazine's decision

to use the white visage of Archie Bunker as the cover image: "[T]he June issue astonished me when I saw American's largest bigot on the cover. Many blacks, including myself, don't feel that this man should be on the cover of the leading black magazine in the nation," wrote one of eight readers commenting explicitly on the matter. See Sanders, *Ebony* June 1972, 186-194; also "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony* August 1972, 14-18; "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony* September 1972, 18-20.
48) See Adler, *TV Guide* May 13, 1972, 28-29.

49) The fact that *Sanford and Son* was shot, like *All in the Family*, in color on videotape, which flattened shadows and added to the brightness, was a technological help here as well, and continued Lear's establishment of British videotaping as a viable production technique for American television.

50) Adler, May 13, 1972, 30. In Britain, the BBC ran clips of the two shows together showing instances in which the dialogue was exactly the same. See "Brits Galton & Simpson Talk About 'Steptoe & Son' Which Inspired 'Sanford,' *Variety* May 24, 1972, 46.

51) Descriptions and dialogue here are taken from "Crossed Swords," *Steptoe and Son*, BBC, Oct. 11, 1965, and "Crossed Swords," *Sanford and Son*, NBC, January 14, 1972.

52) The "honkies" comment is taken from Amory, *TV Guide* February 26, 1972, 47. The "Puerto Rican" line is taken from McCrohan 1987, 139.

53) Marc is cited in McCrohan 1987, 139.

54) See Newcomb and Hirsch, in ed. Newcomb 1987, 461.

55) Gitlin 1983, 63-85.

56) Marc 1984, 184. The multilayered levels of meaning in the ethnic sitcoms that sprouted like little cabbages from their British roots were confounding to American audiences and critics. While characters such as Fred Sanford, George Jefferson and J.J. Evans were criticized regularly for being patronizing representations of black culture at best and minstrel show "coon" stereotyping at worst, the fact that Lear's conventional structuring of his sitcoms allowed for the problems those characters created to be resolved by other African-American characters also suggested the foolishness of the stereotype itself. And while the Nielsen ratings, skewed toward white middle-class America, registered mass "public" approval of those ethnic comedies, they were also the most-watched programs in black communities: According to a 1976 Arbitron survey of black households, the top three programs were *Sanford and Son*, *The Jeffersons* and *Good Times*. The handling of *Sanford and Son* by *Ebony* reveals the multivocality of that series in the black community. A July 1972 article on the show, printed a month after the magazine's attack on *All in the Family*, was titled "Sanford and Son -- Redd Foxx and Demond Wilson Wake Up TV's Jaded Audience." Author Louie Robinson, in defining the show as something completely different from *Julia*, *Amos and Andy* and the "Superspade" genre, called it "one of the brightest half hours to grace the TV tube." Readers, meanwhile, in the *All in the Family* debate, brought Lear's second British adaptation into the conversation, with one reader noting that "our two underhanded Watts junk dealers portray an image to America that 'niggers' are still alive and doing their thing," and a second asking: "Is Sanford the typical 'lazy Negro' who is in continual need of support?" Others, however, said that they watched and enjoyed the show. See Robinson, *Ebony* July 1972, 52-58; also "Letters to the Editor," August 1972, 16-17. On responses to ethnic sitcoms, see J. Fred Macdonald 1983, 176-185; Arlen, in ed. Adler 1979, 187-194; Rabinowitz, in ed. Adler, 199-203.

For information on the racial composition of Nielsen households, see Les Brown 1971, 60.

57) As originally planned, the scene was to be played with Archie and Edith walking in on the kids coming down the stairs in the afterglow; CBS Standards and Practices objected, and Lear changed the script to indicate that the deed was yet to be done. See Les Brown 1971, 138.

58) The "family hour" decision led to a lawsuit against the National Association of Broadcasters by television writers, as well as an individual lawsuit by Norman Lear, whose *All in the Family* had been moved from its 8 pm time on Saturday, where it anchored a night of sitcoms, to Monday at 9 pm, opposite the violence and sex of professional football and NBC's regularly scheduled movies. The judge in the case ruled in favor of the writers, citing the "family hour" as a violation of the First Amendment, and the NAB and FCC (which had worked closely with the NAB in establishing the hour) for acting unconstitutionally in enforcing it. See Barnouw 1990, 474-481.

59) Bennett and Woollacott 1983, 231-232, 241-247. Nowhere is the retrograde shift they describe in relation to the Bond girl more visible than in 1976 advertising for the syndicated program *The New Avengers*, which returned Patrick Macnee to the trenches as John Steed, with two new partners portrayed by Gareth Hunt and Joanna Lumley. In the *Variety* ad for the series, Lumley is shown, as opposed to the sexy/threatening image that introduced the series, wearing a diaphanous robe open to the navel and positioned in what can only be called a crotch shot: seated with her legs spread, revealing both the garters holding up her stockings and black underwear. She is not carrying a gun. See advertisement,*The New Avengers*, *Variety* October 27, 1976, 56-57.

60) Dow 1990, 264-267.

61) She also would become the protagonist in a similar program, *Get Christie Love!*, also broadcast in 1974 -- except that the beautiful blonde was a beautiful black woman . *Christie Love* lasted only one season, however, indicating that the blaxploitation film audience at which it was clearly directed was not significant enough for ABC or sponsors to remain committed to it. It also supports the contentions of J. Fred Macdonald, among others, that the mass middle-class white American audience was willing to accept blacks only in comedies in which they appeared, to those audiences, as minstrel show stereotypes. See Macdonald 1983, 176-177.

62) Douglas 1994, 210.

63) See Douglas 1994, 209-212.

64) Fiske 1989, 45; Douglas 1994, 212-216.

65) For the contributions of Nicholl, Ross and West to *All in the Family*, see McCrohan 1987, 111-120.

66) The week chosen -- Labor Day week -- was significant in that it was the week before the networks would begin their new seasons. The reruns of reruns, then, that the networks would be showing, allowed the independent station to promote the Thames shows not only as something completely different, but something completely new. See Greeley, *Variety* September 8, 1976, 63; Levin, *TV Guide* November 20, 1976, 28-30.

67) Levin, November 20, 1976, 30; also "US TV Execs Evaluate The 'Thames On 9' Week," *Variety* September 15, 1976, 54; "Rock Follies Sold By Thames To PBS," *Variety* September 15, 1976, 54; "Thames Ratings Hit Targeted 10 Share," *Variety* September 15, 1976, 54.

68) "New York's TTC Has Thames Sitcom For Development In US," *Variety* September 8, 1976: 55.

69) Titles and all visual and verbal quotations taken from "Three's a Crowd," *Man About the House*, prod. Peter Frazer-Jones, writ. Johnnie Mortimer, Brian Cooke, perf. Richard O'Sullivan, Paula Wilcox, Sally Thomsett, Thames Television, September 5, 1973; "A Man About the House," *Three's Company*, exec. prod. Don Taffner; prod./writ. Don Nicholl, Michael Ross, Bernie West; perf. John Ritter, Joyce DeWitt, Suzanne Somers, ABC, March 22, 1977.

70) Some examples of dialogue: George Roper to Mildred (UK): "It's a pity you don't live in India -- you'd be sacred there"; Stanley Roper to Helen (US): "It's a shame you don't live in India -- you'd be sacred there." Chrissy to Robin (UK): "Eleanor didn't leave the recipe for toast;" Janet to Jack (US): "Chrissy can't make toast -- Eleanor didn't leave the recipe." Mildred to George (UK): "I think I should know what a man looks like -- mostly from memory"; Helen to Stanley (US): "I know a man when I see one -- though it's been a long time."

71) Rev. of *Three's Company*, *Variety* March 23, 1977, 58; see also Fiddy 1987, 18.

72) On the industry use of "tits and ass," see Gitlin 1983, 71.

73) Marc 1984, 215. Marc nowhere mentions the British origins of *Three's Company*. The male character in *Man About the House* was named Robin Tripp.

74) Lovell, in ed. Cook 1982, 22-25.

75) Marc 1984 33; also see Feuer's discussion of "lifestyle" sitcoms in ed. Robert Allen 1987, 127-128.

76) *Three's Company* spawned two apparent spinoffs: *The Ropers*, which set up the mismatched landlords in a new house of their own; and *Three's a Crowd*, which set up Jack Tripper in a new apartment with his girlfriend; her father was the landlord. While derived from the Taffner/Nicholl/ Ross/West adaptation of *Man About the House*, the American series were also adaptations of the British spinoffs from that show: *George and Mildred* and *Robin's Nest*. See Fiddy 1987, 18, 22.

77) *The Benny Hill Show* was also a part of the Thames week in New York, as well as a later version in Los Angeles. The cherubic, rubber-faced Hill had been a fixture on British commercial television since 1955 and was widely regarded as the first British comic to apply the production techniques of television to what were essentially decades-old music hall comedy routines. By 1971, when *Monty Python* was winning critics and devotees to its brand of humor, Hill's regular comedy specials for Thames were the top-rated programs in Britain. Hill's 1979 arrival and success in the United States, both critical and popular, with the bawdy slapstick of those Thames specials can be attributed to both the carnivalesque nature of its humor and the retrograde, "antifeminist" shift in American television's signification of women. See Harbord and Wright 1992, 56; Buckley, *New York Times* April 29, 1979, C23; Shales, *Washington Post* April 25, 1979, D4; Billington, *New York Times* July 29, 1979, II 23.

78) Marc 1984, 143-150.

79) Marc 1984, 150-152. Brooks and Marsh describe *Laugh-In* as "a cross between Olsen & Johnson's *Helzapoppin'*...and the highly topical satire of *That Was the Week That Was.*" Brooks and Marsh 1988, 677.

80) Hill and Weingrad 1986, 38.

81) For biographical information on Lorne Michaels, see Hill and Weingrad 1986, 33-40.

82) Such was Michaels' identification with the British show that the NBC publicity release on the producer sent with the initial announcement of the program listed among his otherwise real credits a stint as a writer for *Monty Python.* See Hill and Weingrad 1986, 14.

83) *Saturday Night Live* star Chevy Chase would later say that the limit of the *Python* influence on his show lay in the fact that "they could edit, while we had to write endings." Quoted in *Life of Python*, exec. prod. Charles Brand, prod./dir. Mark Redhead, BBC/Devillier Donegan Enterprises, 1989.

84) Wilmut 1980, 237-238.

85) On the FCC rulings and their relation to Nixon attacks on television, see Brown 1971, 232-236; 353-360; Kerr, in ed. Feuer, Kerr and Vahimagi 1984, 69-72; Porter 1976, 154-158.

86) On the development of the TV Western, see Newcomb 1974; on the decline of the form within
the television industry, see Les Brown 1971, 47-58.

87) Ryan, *TV Guide* March 20, 1976, 12-16; also "As We See It," *TV Guide* November 1, 1975, A-2.

88) Ryan, March 20, 1976, 14; "As We See It," November 1, 1975, A-2; Amory, *TV Guide* September 30, 1975, 26; "CBS Axes 'Beacon' & 'Road,' May Re-Switch 'MASH' & '5-0,' *Variety* October 29, 1975, 47.

89) "PBS 'Adams' Series Scores In Ratings," *Variety* April 14, 1976, 53.

90) For information on the creation and cost of *The Adams Chronicles*, see Cook, *American Film* December 1975, 6-13; also Waters, *Newsweek* January 19, 1976, 78-79.

91) NBC also presented an early foray into the "miniseries" form: the 1973 four-part adaptation of
Joseph Wambaugh's novel *The Blue Knight.* See Bedell 1981, 168.

92) Whitney, *TV Guide* January 31, 1976, 26-30; also Les Brown, *New York Times* March 21, 1976, II, 23. Harve Bennett had begun his career as the co-producer of Aaron Spelling's *Mod Squad*; he had then become responsible for the ABC hit *The Six Million-Dollar Man*, which gave birth to another Emma Peel recombination, *The Bionic Woman.* Among the familiar faces hired to give the miniseries an American patina were Steve Allen, Edward Asner, Dorothy McGuire, Ray Milland and Robert Reed.

93) Fred Silverman's relationship to the thesis of producer as *auteur* is an interesting one: As a network programming executive, Silverman represented the corporate body that placed formal and ideological constraints on the creative efforts of producers. Yet Silverman's effort in his work for all three networks during the 1970s to project himself as an authorial figure, responsible for the success of entire network schedules, merely elevates Newcomb and Hirsch's discussion of the producer's search for "radically individual distinction" from the level of the individual show to what Raymond Williams refers to as programming flow. Sally Bedell's presentation of Silverman in her book *Up the Tube* as representing "a legend of superhuman proportion" who comes to "symbolize television" as "the central player of the 1970s in television's dramatic high-stakes battle for profits and corporate prestige" is hyperbole bordering on idolatry, as Jane Feuer rightly points out (Bedell 1981, xiii-xiv). But Bedell's portrait of the artist as corporation man comes very close to Newcomb and Alley's presentation of the "choric" role of the producer: as one who expresses individual creativity while focusing on "the widely shared, the remembered, the conventional responses that take into account the notions of socially approved -- because socially tested -- notions of heroism, epic event and collective memory" (Newcomb and Alley 1983, 31). After leaving NBC in the early 1980s, Silverman himself became a producer of shows including *Matlock*. See also Feuer, in ed. Feuer, Kerr, Vahimagi 1984, 6; Williams 1975, 78-118.

94) Brooks and Marsh 1988, 971.

95) Brooks and Marsh 1988, 949-950.*The Waltons* also received two Emmys; *Eleanor and Franklin*, because it was only a two-part adaptation, won in categories for "special" instead of series. In addition to the dramatic winners, Lorne Michaels would receive an Emmy for his third special with Lily Tomlin, while *Saturday Night Live* would receive two Emmys.

96) In addition to *All in the Family* and *Rich Man, Poor Man*, *Sanford and Son* was seventh in the final ratings for the 1975-76 year; Lear's reworkings of *All in the Family* -- *Maude*, *The Jeffersons* and *Good Times* -- were fourth, 21st and 24th, respectively. James Komack's further copies of the Lear format, *Welcome Back Kotter* and *Chico and the Man*, finished 18th and 25th. And *The Bionic Woman*, another stepdaughter of Emma Peel, was fifth. See Brooks and Marsh 1988, 971.

97) Erik Barnouw cites the celebration of the American Bicentennial as an important utterance shaping national television culture, a "balm" to ease the pain of the long televisual nightmares of Vietnam and Watergate. Even programming such as *Roots* and *Holocaust*, he argues, bears such an imprimatur in its presentation of "the spirit of reexamination and rededication furthered by the Bicentennial." Barnouw 1990, 464-466.

98) Sahlins is cited in Newcomb and Hirsch, in ed. Newcomb 1987, 457; and in Newcomb and Alley 1983, 32-33. The FCC rulings were issued in 1970 and ordered networks to relinquish financial interest in the programming they presented and to give up all syndication rights to that programming; in addition, primetime viewing hours were cut back from four to three, allowing individual stations to present their own programming and giving independent producers the ability to create programs to fill the hour. Les Brown, writing in 1971, correctly assesses the short-term damage those rulings actually did to individual producers, as large film studios moved to fill in the gap, and as syndicated reruns of old network shows took much of the local time that was supposed to go to non-network programming. However, the success of Lear's comedies, as well as those of the MTM studios, established the producer as a major force in network politics as the 1970s proceeded. See Brown 1971, 353-360; Gitlin 1983, 248.

99) Newcomb and Alley 1983, 34-38.

100) Marc 1984, 40.

101) As the title indicates, much of Marc's work in *Demographic Vistas* concerns the way in which producers -- Paul Henning, Quinn Martin, Aaron Spelling, Jackie Gleason, among others -- created niches for themselves as *auteurs* within a television system defined not only by the collaborative effort involved in production but by the economic need to attract viewers appropriate to the demands of advertising sponsors.

102) See Barthes 1977, 142-148; Foucault, in ed. Rabinow 1984, 101-120.

103) Wolper and Troupe 1977, 1-41; also Bedell 1981, 168-170.

104) Wolper and Troupe 1977, 49-50. For commentary on African-American and Caucasian readings of *Roots*, see Les Brown, *New York Times* January 28, 1977, B1; Byron, *Film Comment*, March/April 1977, 31; Tucker and Shah, *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 9, 1992, 325-336; J. Fred Macdonald 1983, 214-223; Wolper and Troupe 1977, 171-179; 250-274.

105) Silverman scheduled *Roots* for the last week in January because he was not convinced that it do well enough in the ratings to mandate its broadcast during the network "sweeps" period in February; he chose to present it over eight consecutive evenings both to heighten "the impact of the work," in his words, and to minimize any ratings damage that might be done by spreading it out over two months. Bedell 1981, 170-171; Wolper and Troupe 1977, 130-141.

106) In addition to readings focusing on the portrayal of blackness and whiteness in *Roots*, viewers and critics also noted its attention to familiar American ideals of family and the achievement of success over great odds through personal responsibility and initiative: "the Horatio Alger myth in black," as J. Fred Macdonald would put it, which "allowed viewers to rededicate themselves to a myth fundamental to American culture and society" (1983, 220-221). Other readings of the show focused on its sex and violence: Richard Schickel's review in *Time*, for example, referred to the show as "...rooted in the paperback mentality....*Mandingo* for the middlebrows." Schickel, *Time* January 24, 1977: 56. Also see Bedell 1981, 170-171.

107) Wolper and Troupe 1977, 141.

108) As if to reinforce the connection between the American genre and its British progenitor, networks (particularly NBC) scheduled miniseries for 9 pm or later on Sunday night, directly opposite the broadcast time in most markets for *Masterpiece Theatre*. (In the case of productions such as *Roots* and *Holocaust* that ran on consecutive nights, the miniseries began on Sunday.)

109) For a gloss on Huggins' career as crimeshow *auteur*, see Marc 1984, 86-92. For more on the Nixon-era professional shows, which, unlike the Kennedy New Frontier dramas discussed by Mary Ann Watson, focused on and valorized senior bureaucratic authority figures, see Newcomb 1974, 110-134; also Real 1977, 118-139.

110) Michener's comments on the television success of *Roots* offer an ironic backdrop to the presentation of *Centennial*: "Encouraged by [*Roots*'] success, television managers will seek other books...if these books are required to match the performance of *Roots*, dreadful mistakes are bound to be made. Television should find good books, handle them in a good

way, and expect moderately good results." Michener, *New York Times Book Review* February 27, 1977, 39.

111) *The Waltons* was actually created and produced by Earl Hamner, who worked for Rich's company and also served as the show's head writer and narrator. Newcomb and Alley cite him as "the purest example" of the producer as *auteur*; his next major success, however -- the primetime serial *Falcon Crest* -- bore the hallmarks of Rich's success with *Dallas* and its spinoff *Knots Landing*. All four shows, though, had in common their focus on problems within the family as the source for dramatic tension. See Newcomb and Alley 1983, 154-161.

112) *Dallas* ad, *TV Guide* April 1, 1978: A-47 (Michigan edition). On Sundays in April of 1978, viewers could choose between the BBC/*Masterpiece Theatre* adaptation of *Anna Karenina* on PBS, *Holocaust* on NBC and *Dallas* on CBS -- a measure of the degree to which the British serialized drama form had come to shape American viewing patterns.

113) Both the *TV Guide* premiere episode description and a *Variety* ad for the show refer to it as a "five-hour, five-part miniseries." *TV Guide*, April 1, 1978: A-46 (Michigan edition); *Variety*, April 19, 1978: 56.

## Chapter 8: Something Completely Different?
## (British Television, American Culture, Hegemony and Assimilation)

> "They say, they say, they say. Ah, my child, how long are you going to continue to use those dreadful words? Those two little words have done more harm than all others. Never use them, my dear, never use them."
> –William Carlos Williams[1]

The American experience of British television programming in the 1960s and 1970s appears to end exhibiting many of the characteristics Herbert Schiller and others find defining the paradigm of cultural imperialism. A domestic audience in an importing nation -- in this case, American producers and distributors -- is directly affected by the economic and cultural imperatives of an exporting power whose "life styles and value systems" are imposed, through the work of those producers and distributors, over the society as a whole. And it is not simply the values evident in the imported programs themselves that come to exert an influence over a "vulnerable" society and culture but the export of an entire system of broadcasting -- here, the elitist public service orientation of the BBC -- that creates a market for both its cultural artifacts and their attendant industries in the importing nation. British programming may not have carried with it to the United States a vision of a way of life dominated by the consumption of material goods, the sole message Schiller finds expressed in American exports during the same period. Nonetheless, imported British shows did contain both hidden and overt messages, following the model of communication he employs, valorizing cultural and ideological norms of style, governance and class hierarchy not indigenous to the culture receiving them. That many of those programs, as well as the founding ideology of the BBC, represented the elite High Culture toward which Schiller hopes television will apply itself failed to mask the fact that the processes in question follow in many ways those he and others call cultural imperialism.

Any synopsis of this relationship between cultures suggesting that the British Empire may have found a new dominion over its old New World colonies through the medium of television would of course be attacked as foolish sophistry by Schiller and his followers. Those attacks, however, reveal the flaws of the theory identified by Fred Fejes and John Tomlinson: its failure to consider the dynamics of domestic cultures as they receive and work with imported programming, and its assumption of mass effects on mass populations. In the first instance, as has been presented throughout this project, audiences created meanings from their reception of British programming that were at the very least unpredictable and that frequently ran contrary not only to expectations present in the narrative images of those programs but to each other: the creation of community among audiences of BBC-produced serial historical dramas, for example, as opposed to the use of those shows by both governmental and commercial authorities for transmissive ideological purposes. In the second instance, as has also been repeatedly demonstrated, audiences for British programming in the United States were not audiences of the size necessary to mandate success in the Nielsen rating books. They instead tended to comprise people who possessed an abundance of cultural and educational (and often financial) capital, or those, as in the cases of *The Avengers* and *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, who were in the process of acquiring such capital.

Indeed, rather than suggesting an imperial relationship between Britain and the United States similar to the one Schiller alleges the United States has imposed over the rest of the world, that relationship more closely resembles the one Joseph Straubhaar and Gloria Viscasillas have found between America and the Dominican Republic. In their 1987 survey of Dominican viewers, Straubhaar and Viscasillas found that while many of their respondents watched American television imports, their habits were circumscribed by factors including class, age and genre: Upper-class audiences and younger, university-educated audiences tended to watch more American programming and enjoy it more than did middle- or lower-class audiences; both groups preferred American feature films,

cartoons and action-adventure series, while watching their own news, variety and comedy programs. Those possessing a surfeit of cultural and educational capital, however, had a much lower opinion of both national and other regional programming (in particular the serialized *telenovelas* attracting primarily female audiences) than did other upper- or middle class respondents. Finally, Straubhaar and Viscasillas point out, the native programming attracting Dominican viewers was frequently programming adapted by domestic producers from foreign sources including both the United States and regional exporters such as Mexico and Brazil. In short, the reception of foreign programming by Dominican audiences and the relationship of that programming to the production of domestic shows presents the same patterns visible in the American reception of British programming during the 1960s and 1970s.[2]

Those patterns indicate the degree to which research following Schiller's paradigm, in its sole concern with the United States as an imperial exporting power molding the hearts and minds of foreign populations in accordance to its own political and economic aims, is guilty of creating a model of American exceptionalism as specious as the Pax Americana exceptionalism of the 1950s that was a primary source of the critique of American mass culture. Though the export of American cultural artifacts exceeds in number both the exports of other nations and the import of cultural artifacts from elsewhere, making the United States an apparently unique case, the effects of those artifacts on observers abroad are as visibly limited as the effects of British programming on viewers here, while the effects on domestic production in both cases are similar in breadth and depth. In the final analysis, the quantity of transnational contact in the cultural imperialism paradigm overrides the qualities of those contacts and communication, qualities showing that the difference between the ways in which audiences abroad apprehend American television programming and the ways in which American audiences make sense of programming from elsewhere, as well as the reasons for each, are insignificant at best.

The behavior of those American audiences with British programming also demonstrates the problems with the linear direct effects model of communication behind the cultural imperialism paradigm, just as it supports -- to an extent -- the work of scholars and researchers who argue for the role of active audiences in the processes of transnational communication. In each case examined here -- the spy shows of the 1960s, the serialized historical dramas presented by the Public Broadcasting Service, the sketch comedies borne out of Oxbridge theatrical groups -- American audiences responded to British programming according to their own cultural values and accents, not those of the exporting source. With *The Avengers*, it was a character speaking to the changing roles for women in American society that spoke to an audience unconcerned with the deliberately placed British elements of the show. With *Upstairs, Downstairs*, it was the centrality of family -- both genetic and work-oriented -- as well as the power of serialized fiction that addressed an audience unfamiliar with, if not uninterested in, the specific class codes presented in the program's weekly installments. And with *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, it was the centrality of television and its absurdities in the midst of comic sketches referencing minutiae of British society and culture that drew an audience whose own society and culture were equally defined by what Todd Gitlin refers to as "the boob tube and its boobery."[3] In each of these cases and others discussed as well, the fact that the texts in question *were* in some way different from artifacts available in domestic culture at the time (although, as Hoskins and Mirus suggest, not completely different) also played a visible role in their apprehension by their American audiences -- a role ignored and/or elided by arguments centered on the imperialistic tendencies of transnational communication.

While the reception of British television by American audiences does speak loudly to the activity of those audiences in making meaning, that reception also demonstrates the problems inherent in a communications theory based on notions of polysemic texts and audience activity. In the first case, however many meanings might be available in British television programs, none of the American readings created around those texts can be

construed as what Stuart Hall or John Fiske would refer to as "oppositional" or "resistant" to the institutional sources responsible for them and their appearance in America. Emma Peel may have been constructed as a role model for young middle-class women searching for a way out of an ideology of domestic containment, and as such represented a resistance to that ideology; she was not, however, constructed as resistant to the technology or the commercial commodification central to both that ideology and the world she represented in *The Avengers*. Much of the problem evident here stems from the linear definition of communication inherent in discussions of "opposition" and "resistance," which casts the relationship of audience to text in the same mold that the model of cultural imperialism does the relationship of importer to exporter. Making sense of a given text involves elements outside the text, as seen in every example presented here, that make a straight line from sender to receiver almost impossible to draw, particularly when dealing with texts from outside a given "web of meaning" and a large, if not mass, group of readers: The intertextuality involved necessarily frames, or limits, the meaning that can be derived.

Those limits are visible in the composition of American audiences of British programming themselves: people, as already noted, either already endowed with cultural and educational capital or in the process of earning it, with the hope of financial capital to come as well. The appeal of the difference available in British programming to this audience, codified in the "British-is-better" argument promoted for many years in the popular press and addressed further by Mobil's sponsorship of *Masterpiece Theatre*, was one that served its own interests by distinguishing it, as Bourdieu argues, from other elements of society and affirming its place as a cultural elite. The construction of that audience, visible as early as the "snob appeal" noted by the members of the *Beyond the Fringe* troupe in the early 1960s, made the Nixon administration's politically expedient modeling of American public broadcasting along the lines of the BBC after the unexpected success of *The Forsyte Saga* all the easier.

More significant than the audience itself, however, is the overriding importance utterances developed within American culture played in the shaping of meaning, whether those utterances voiced the political and commercial intent of the Nixon administration and Mobil Oil in their appropriation of British serialized dramas or spoke of the ideological centrality of family that guided in part the audience response to those programs. As noted previously, those accents and values have a liberatory function as part of specific reading formations, insofar as they mediate and mitigate the presumed linear effects arising from the intent of the producers of imported media artifacts. They also, however, serve to circumscribe potential meaning as they contain the readings of a given text within the ideological strands of an already existing cultural web. While Emma Peel became a role model of a powerful independent woman for an audience of young middle-class female Americans, she never became an avatar of radical lesbian feminism; at the same time, for an audience of males, she was still contained within within the parameters of "to-be-looked-at-ness" that defined the controlling patriarchal gaze. This other form of domestic containment can even more clearly be seen in the the work of American producers such as Norman Lear who reconfigured British television programs for American audiences. Even as those producers exhibited a very direct effect of the import of British programs, their restructuring of class, gender and racial norms presented in British models as they developed programs ranging from *All in the Family* to *Roots* demonstrated the primary significance of American utterances in the creation of meaning out of transnational communication.

The reception of British television in America, then, serves to support Celeste Condit's assertion that both the activity of audiences and the availability of meaning have finite limits, defined by the social, ideological and historical situations of both texts and readers. And the importance of the American elements of those situations here seems also to speak to Gitlin's definition of hegemony as a "historical process in which one picture of the world is systematically preferred over others, usually through practical routines and at

times through extraordinary measures." His description, which further characterizes that historical process as one of "absorbing and domesticating conflicting values," is of particular interest when applied to transnational communication.[4] It first would seem to suggest, particularly in the use of the term "domesticating," that meaning is something determined by the readers, not the producers, of imported media texts -- an assertion that flies in the face of standard assumptions of the cultural inperialism paradigm, and one that the experiences of both the Dominican audiences described by Straubhaar and Viscasillas and the American audiences considered here would support. As such, what Gitlin refers to as "hegemony" can also be seen as a way in which a "vulnerable" indigenous culture might protect itself from the potential effects of outside media and cultural artifacts; indeed, such a process would seem to typify what Barthes refers to as "inoculation" -- the use of a small part of a potentially disruptive ideological text to ward off its more threatening elements.[5] That process, in both its emancipatory and its repressive phases, can be most vividly be witnessed in the adaptations and transmogrifications of the Emma Peel female action hero made by the American television industry in the decade following the success of *The Avengers*: Women could be tough and resourceful on the job, but the resource they had to work with most was their bodies, as seen and used by men.

The history of Emma Peel and her descendants also demonstrates, however, that the limits Gitlin places on meaning in his definition of hegemony go beyond the polyvalence presented by Condit, as they reduce meaning to a univocal construct -- "one picture of the world" -- that allows for no response, no dialogue. Much of the reason for the success of *The Avengers* was the tension between two clearly different gender-based readings available from the character of Emma Peel, just as much of the success of *The Forsyte Saga* and *Upstairs, Downstairs* came from the tension between their elitist British ("snob") appeal to an educated and established audience and their hailing of the lower-class pleasures of soap opera. The open-ended quality of both *The Prisoner* and the television-based absurdity of *Monty Python's Flying Circus* also invited, if not demanded, a

multiplicity of responses from their viewers. The reduction of many to one that Gitlin makes in his discussion of hegemony leaves no room for this sort of variance, as it merely inverts the linear sender-receiver paradigm of communication: In this case, a powerful receiver apprehends a message sent through a text and puts that message to use for its own purposes, rather than the sender transmitting a message that organizes and controls distant audiences for its own purposes.

And as it simply inverts, rather than challenges, the linear sender-receiver paradigm, so does Gitlin's presentation of hegemony simply invert, rather than challenge, the cultural imperialism paradigm in transnational communication. An all-powerful and monolithic receiving culture, in Gitlin's construction, makes the messages presented and represented in imported media texts conform to and ultimately uphold its values and norms. Like Schiller's theory, Gitlin's notion of hegemony fails to take into consideration the dynamics of a culture in its consideration of texts from any source -- including the importance played by utterances outside the content of a text in shaping how readers create meaning from that text. Indeed, the reception of British television by American viewers during the 1960s and 1970s is defined as much, if not more, by matters external to the shows themselves: the cultural significance of John Kennedy, the social movement of women's liberation, the political machinations of the Nixon administration, the economic goals of the petroleum industry, demographic shifts in the American population and the changes necessary in the television industry itself to respond to those shifts. In working with that intertextuality, the audiences considered here successfully read around the efforts of numerous institutional sources -- the publicists and critics responsible for narrative image, the government, commercial sponsors, American networks and British producers -- to make the meaning associated with a given program a single specific construct. Even in the most clearcut cases of what can be called absorption and domestication of British television -- the American remakes produced by Lear et al. -- audience responses were

anything but univocal, as the national debates over the political and social significance (or correctness) of *All in the Family* and *Sanford and Son* demonstrated.[6]

If the American reception of British television is to be contained within a discussion of hegemony -- indeed, if the processes of transnational communication are to be treated as such -- "hegemony" then needs to be considered as Raymond Williams defines and discusses it. Williams stresses in his treatment of the term its ultimate inability to completely absorb or domesticate. "The hegemonic," he argues, is always faced with "alternative political and cultural emphases...[that] are important not only in themselves but it what the hegemonic process has in practice had to work to control." Such control, however, can never be total; the most difficult and important part of the study of culture, he says, is the examination not of the moments in which the hegemonic can be found to be "active and formative" but of the moments when alternatives to the process can be found at work. Those alternatives, frequently found in works of art (and television programs, despite Schiller's injunctions, can be considered as such) may indeed be found to be tied to the dominant culture -- or absorbed and domesticated by it -- but they may also serve as authentic and original breaks, oppositional or otherwise, from those dominant constructs. "And we are better able to see this," Williams concludes, "...if we develop modes of analysis which instead of reducing works to finished products, and activities to fixed positions, are capable of discerning, in good faith, the finite but significant openness of many actual initiatives and contributions."[7]

Williams' language -- his use of "alternative" instead of and in addition to "resistance" and "opposition" -- and the centrality of openness and variability to his concept of "the hegemonic" breaks through the linearity of both the cultural imperialism paradigm and the plausible use of Gitlin's definition of hegemony in the discussion of transnational communication. It also, and just as significantly, creates a needed bridge between "hegemony" and the Bakhtinian concept of "assimilation" that has informed this work from the start. Bakhtin's refusal to see human communication of any sort as defined by direct

lines from senders to receivers located in "fixed positions," and his emphasis on the *varying* voices of otherness and *varying* voices of our-own-ness in the creation of meaning from the act of communicating presents precisely the mode of analysis Williams is looking for in his examination of "the hegemonic." Is the understanding of Emma Peel as a role model by high school girls in Wilmette or Edina or Shaker Heights something free of the hegemonic ideological structure of American corporate capitalism? No. But is that creation of meaning from *The Avengers* a moment in which a genuine break occurs, in which an alternative to an ideology of domestic containment is both visible and audible? Assuredly yes -- and it is a moment that is created from the varying utterances of one culture meeting, acting on, and being acted on by the varying utterances of a separate culture.

Unlike totalizing concepts of imperialism, hegemony or assimilation, Bakhtin's theory also allows for the desirability of difference evident in every example of American reception of British television presented here. As might be expected from that theory, the significance of that difference varied -- or was mobile, to return to Bennett and Woollacott's phrase -- from instance to instance: It offered cohesion during a period of national trauma; it made a strong British female character a viable role model to American women; it affirmed the elite status of public broadcasting viewers; it provided American producers with a new means of entering the commercial marketplace. In each case, however, the fact itself that the shows they were watching were from a source outside the United States acted as an important utterance guiding their reception by American audiences -- just as it was an important element in the intertextuality surrounding those shows. Even as the American television industry seemed during the 1970s to grade over the British differences so significant at the beginning of the decade, those differences still retained their power through the period, as the deliberate referencing of *Romeo and Juliet* that framed the narrative image of *Dallas* indicates. Indeed, the effort by ABC to turn *Monty Python's Flying Circus* into a commercial American program that set up the first chapter of this project, and the response to that effort by both the comic troupe and its American audience,

serves as a final example of both the importance of difference and the way in which varying voices of otherness and our-own-ness used that difference to shape meaning.

Bakhtin's theory of assimilation, in conclusion, grants communication in general and transnational communication in specific the complexity -- and, perhaps, the mystery -- they deserve. The American reception of British programming in the 1960s and 1970s, as this study has shown, serves as a model to demonstrate the ways in which transnational communication is defined by neither linear nor totalizing processes, but instead by what Raymond Williams calls "the finite but significant openness of many actual initiatives and contributions."[8] The British television programs imported then were never finished products, despite the best efforts of institutional authorities to so fix them, as those voices of otherness and our-own-ness in and around those shows continually met at play in a field of meaning. And the American audiences viewing those programs were themselves never fixed, as they refracted and reflected the utterances of history, culture and ideology they encountered as they moved through their forays into those fields.

The story of British television and American culture, then, is a story of assimilation without final control, a story in which difference matters as it helps de- and reconstruct the familiar. It is a story in which the reception of artifacts from one nation by another shifts from moments of dominance to moments of liberation and back again in an unpredictable ebb and flow. It is a story in which the "dreadful" words "They say, they say, they say" are met and addressed in dialogue by "We say" -- whether the "they" in question were the utterances of a British text or the domestic ideological constraints realized by American audiences in their understandings of that text. It is, finally, a story in which meanings constructed "here" speak about, with and to meanings from "there" -- and vice versa -- and in which nothing, inevitably, is completely different.

## Notes, Conclusion

1) William Carlos Williams 1956, 207.

2) Straubhaar and Viscasillas 1991, 53-69. Their research echoes William Read's previous characterization of transnational communication with the United States as exporter:

> (F)oreign systems began with a wealthy elite audience whose tastes tended to be more cosmopolitan than those of the middle class who later greatly enlarged the viewing audience.... But as foreign television systems matured, just as had the American system, their audience base broadened, they increased the number of telecasting hours, and they acquired more wherewithal to do their own productions that had greater local appeal.

Read also points out that part of the reason elite audiences were attracted to foreign (American) programming was because that audience was the one that could afford the technology. Again, that situation is visible in the American reception of British programs, particularly the serialized dramas presented by PBS. Individual educational and public stations were largely located in the UHF broadcasting spectrum (channels 14-83), which during the period in question required different reception capabilities and more money per television set than did VHF stations. See Read 1976, 91. For a further take on transnational communication pointing out the lack of comparative research between the United States as exporter and the United States as importer in transnational communication, particularly as it addresses Britain, see Collins 1990, 151-166.

3) Gitlin 1987, 35-36.

4) Gitlin 1980, 256.

5) See Barthes 1973, 150-151; for application of Barthes' concept to television, see Fiske 1989, 290-291.

6) Adler 1979 collects many of the voices in the critical debate on the meaning(s) of *All in the Family* (69-120). See also McCrohan 1987, 177-198; Sanders, *Ebony* June 1972, 186-194; "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony* August 1972, 14-18; "Letters to the Editor," *Ebony* September 1972, 18-20.

7) Raymond Williams 1977, 113-114.

8) Williams, 114.

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## IV. Television and Film Material

***All in the Family***
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***The Avengers***
"The Cybernauts." Exec. prod. Julian Wintle. Prod. Brian Clemens, Albert Fennell. Writ. Philip Levene. Dir. Sidney Hayes. Perf. Patrick Macnee, Diana Rigg, et al. ABC, March 28, 1966.

***The Forsyte Saga***
"A Family Wedding." Prod-writ. Donald Wilson. Dir. David Giles. Perf. Kenneth More, Eric Porter, Fay Compton, Margaret Tyzack, et al. NET. October 5, 1969.

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***Honey West***
"In the Bag." Exec. prod. Aaron Spelling. Prod. Richard Newton. Writ. Gwen Bagni, Paul Dubov. Dir. Seymour Robbie. Perf. Anne Francis, John Erickson, et al. ABC. September 17, 1965.

***JFK Assassination: November 22, 1963 -- As It Happened***
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***Life of Python.***
Exec. prod. Charles Brand. Prod.-dir. Mark Redhead. BBC/Devillier Donegan Enterprises, 1989. (Videotape: Paramount, 1990.)

***Man About the House***
"Three's a Crowd." Prod. Peter Frazer-Jones, writ. Johnnie Mortimer, Brian Cooke, perf. Richard O'Sullivan, Paula Wilcox, Sally Thomsett. Thames Television. September 5, 1973.

***The Mary Tyler Moore Show***
"Chuckles Bites the Dust." Prod. James L. Brooks, Allan Burns, David Davis. Writ. David Lloyd. Dir. Joan Darling. Perf. Mary Tyler Moore, Edward Asner, Ted Knight, Gavin MacLeod. CBS. October 18, 1975.

***Monty Python's Flying Circus***
Episode 19. Prod. Ian MacNaughton. Dir. John Howard Davies. Writ.-perf. Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, Michael Palin. BBC. October 20, 1970.

Episode 27. Prod. Ian MacNaughton. Dir. John Howard Davies. Writ.-perf. Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, Michael Palin. BBC. October 19, 1972.

***The Prisoner***
"Arrival." Prod. George Markstein, David Tomblin. Writ. Patrick McGoohan. Dir. Don Chaffey. Perf. Patrick McGoohan. CBS. June 1, 1968.

"Fallout." Prod. David Tomblin. Writ.-dir. Patrick McGoohan. Perf. Patrick McGoohan, Kenneth Griffith, Alexis Kanner, Leo McKern. CBS. September 11, 1968.

***Sanford and Son***
"Crossed Swords." Exec. prod. Norman Lear. Prod./writ. Aaron Ruben. Dir. Bud Yorkin. Perf. Redd Foxx, Demond Wilson. NBC. January 14, 1972.

***Steptoe and Son***
"Crossed Swords." Prod. Duncan Wood. Writ. Ray Galton, Alan Simpson. Perf. Wilfrid Brambell, Harry Corbett. BBC. October 11, 1965.

"The Offer." Presented on *Comedy Playhouse*. Prod. Duncan Wood. Writ. Ray Galton, Alan Simpson. Perf. Wilfrid Brambell, Harry Corbett. BBC. May 1, 1962.

***Secret Agent***
"Yesterday's Enemies." Exec. prod. Ralph Smart. Prod. Sidney Cole. Writ. Ronald Jameson. Dir. Charles Crichton. Perf. Patrick McGoohan, Maureen Connell, Howard Aaron Crawford, et al. CBS. May 1, 1965.

***That Was the Week That Was***
Pilot episode. Prod. Leland Hayward. Dir. Hal Gurnee, Marshall Jamison. Writ. Earl Doud, Robert Emmett, Gerald Gardner. With Nancy Ames, Henry Fonda, Henry Morgan, Burr Tillstrom, et al. NBC-TV. November 10, 1963.

Kennedy tribute. Prod-dir. Ned Sherrin. Writ. Christopher Booker, Caryl Brahm, David Frost, Herbert Kretzmer, Bernard Levin. With David Frost, Roy Kinnear, Millicent Martin, Dame Sybil Thorndike, et al. BBC-TV (Britain). November 23, 1963. NBC-TV (U.S.). November 24, 1963.

Premiere episode. Prod. Leland Hayward. Dir. Kirk Alexander, Marshall Jamison. Writ. Earl Doud, Robert Emmett, David Frost, Gerald Gardner. With Nancy Ames, David Frost, Henry Morgan, Elliot Reid, et al. NBC-TV. January 10, 1964.

***Three's Company***
"A Man in the House." Exec. prod. Don Taffner. Prod./writ. Don Nicholl, Michael Ross, Bernie West. Perf. John Ritter, Joyce DeWitt, Suzanne Somers. ABC-TV. March 22, 1977.

***Till Death Us Do Part***
"A House With Love in It." Prod. Dennis Main Wilson. Writ. Johnny Speight. Perf. Warren Mitchell, Dandy Nichols, Anthony Booth, Una Stubbs. BBC. June 20, 1966.

***Upstairs, Downstairs***
"On Trial." Prod. John Hawkesworth. Writ. Fay Weldon. Dir. Raymond Menmuir. Perf. Angela Baddeley, Pauline Collins, Gordon Jackson, Jean Marsh, et al. PBS. January 16, 1970.

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## Appendix

### British Sitcoms and Their 1970s American Offspring[1]

| British Original | American Version |
|---|---|
| *Till Death Us Do Part* (1965) | *All in the Family* (CBS, 1971-1979)[2] |
| *Steptoe and Son* (1962) | *Sanford and Son* (NBC, 1972-1977) |
| *For the Love of Ada* (1970) | *A Touch of Grace* (ABC, 1973) |
| *Nearest and Dearest* (1968) | *Thicker Than Water* (ABC, 1973) |
| *Love Thy Neighbor* (1972) | *Love Thy Neighbor* (ABC, 1973) |
| *On the Buses* (1969) | *Lotsa Luck* (NBC, 1973-1974) |
| *Porridge* (1974) | *On the Rocks* (ABC, 1975-1976) |
| *Man About the House* (1973) | *Three's Company* (ABC, 1977-1984) |
| *George and Mildred* (1976) | *The Ropers* (ABC, 1979-1980)[3] |
| *Billy Liar* (1973) | *Billy* (CBS, 1979) |
| *Miss Jones and Son* (1977) | *Miss Winslow and Son* (CBS, 1979) |
| **Unsold American Pilots** | |
| *My Wife Next Door* (1972) | *My Wife Next Door* (1975, 1980) |
| *Dad's Army* (1967) | *Rear Guard* (1976) |
| *Mind Your Language* (1977) | *The Primary English Class* (1977) |
| *The Rag Trade* (1961) | *The Rag Business* (1978) |
| *The Many Wives of Patrick* (1976) | *The Three Wives of David Wheeler* (1979) |
| *Butterflies* (1978) | *Butterflies* (1979) |
| *Are You Being Served?* (1974) | *Beanes of Boston* (1979) |

1) Taken from Dick Fiddy, "Comedy Crossover List," *Primetime* 12, spring/summer 1987: 20-23.

2) Dates do not include those for the spinoff *Archie Bunker's Place* (1979-1983). In a case of reverse adaptation, Norman Lear's *Maude* (1972) and *Good Times* (1973) were remade as British situation comedies: *Nobody's Perfect* (1980, starring American Elaine Stritch), and *The Fosters* (1976).

3) The 1977 British *Man About the House* spinoff *Robin's Nest* was the source for the 1984 sitcom *Three's a Crowd.*

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