

Feminist Television Criticism: Notes and Queries.

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Introduction

Our paper concentrates on the feminist inquiry into television. Never monolithic, the wide-ranging and complicated knowledges produced by feminism since the seventies is quite remarkable, reliant upon diverse aims, separate objectives and different intellectual concerns. This contribution charts feminist research while thinking about how the socio-historical, political and cultural contexts shaped what was said and how it was said.

Conceived in the politically radical context of the women's liberation movement, and at an historical time in North America and Europe where women were lobbying for changes in legislation, initial feminist interest in television was, in the words of Charlotte Brunsdon, Julie D'Acci and Lynn Spigel, a call 'to action growing out of a deep conviction that women's oppression was very much related to mass media representations and that change was not only urgent, but possible.'¹ Raising awareness about how patriarchal ideology excluded, silenced and oppressed women would indelibly mark thinking about the processes and practices that produced ideas about what it means to be a woman in culture. Shaping scholarship was the guiding principle that gender is nothing more than a socially constructed phenomenon, rather than some immutable state of being conditioned by biology. Judith Butler in the nineties went further to question the male/female binary, advocating that even the sexed body was culturally formed.² Her view that *both* gender and sex were nothing more than cultural constructions, performances to be repeated, and subject to

regulatory norms rather than something natural would impact tremendously on thinking about how gender gets *produced* and circulated on television.

In addition, the relationship between feminism and television benefited from a wider engagement with the burgeoning field of British cultural studies (based at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies; University of Birmingham). Growing out of post-structuralist approaches to theorising ideology (Althusserian Marxism, Lacanian psychoanalysis), and firmly rooted in post-Marxist concerns with the subversive capabilities of cultural practices and mass culture, scholarship was committed to understanding popular culture as a site of struggle over meaning.³ E. Ann Kaplan describes how this early critical work on television, and disseminated through emergent journals like *Screen* and *Screen Education*, set an agenda ‘concerned ... with the social contexts within which television was viewed and might be taught. Reception became a logical focus for studies on the relationship of viewers and televisual texts.’⁴

The cultural studies intervention into feminist television criticism contributed new methodologies and approaches to research, including empirical, qualitative and ethnographic studies. Such work identified never before discussed generic forms like soap operas and sitcoms as well as talked about how the viewing experience gets determined by, but also determines, a gendered sense of self. Alternative subjectivities were made visible based on class, gender identity, sexual orientation, national specificity and regional identity, race and ethnicity, and personal experience. Studies like Michèle Mattelart’s survey of women consuming telenovas in Chile,⁵ Purnima Mankekar’s study on how state sponsored television series (e.g. Hindu ‘sacred series’)

shaped a sense of Indian womanhood amongst socially mobile urban women viewers in northern India,⁶ and Jacqueline Bobo and Ellen Seiter's work on representations of African-American femininity⁷ not only reveals the astonishing breadth of feminist insight in discerning how gender is constructed in and by television's representational practices but also pushes us into new directions for future analyses of the global, national and regional aspects shaping the relationship between gender and television.

Before moving on, it is worth noting that feminism gave a context to television production and industrial practices. Long had the housewife been targeted by American advertisers because of her perceived control of household budgets. But, as shown by Julie D'Acci, the white middle-class woman, especially the career woman, was 'discovered' as a new, desirable demographic in the seventies.⁸ In turn, Lauren Rabinovitz contends that American television networks were quick to pick up on the changing political climate and took advantage of this new lucrative female demographic, cultivating a new trend of feminist programming with sitcoms like *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (MTM Enterprises Inc/CBS, 1970-1977), *Maude* (Norman Lear/Tandem Productions/CBS, 1972-1978) and *Rhoda* (MTM Enterprises Inc/CBS, 1974-1978).⁹ Introduction of cable (with channels like Lifetime aimed at women),¹⁰ satellite and new technologies like digital have opened up new research possibilities for feminists analysing gendered discourse and struggles over power and access.¹¹

Another significant contribution made by feminists is the writing of a history documenting the role played by women in producing and writing for television. Women like Verity Lambert have long influenced scheduling decisions and shaped programme making. New research undertaken by feminist scholars considers this

legacy. Julia Hallam's latest publication on Lynda La Plante, writer and producer of television drama in the UK, assesses 'one of the first women writers to breakthrough the glass ceiling in an industry where, historically, women have been disadvantaged by virtue of their gender, not their creative ability.'¹² Inserting women – writers, producers, directors, actresses – into the history of television is less about *auteurist* privileging than about raising awareness of the struggles faced by women working in television, 'to achieve not only equality of representation *on* screen but equality of participation in the creative and production process *behind* the screen.'¹³

Making Visible the Invisible: i. Representation, Form and Feminism.

One area of feminist research focuses on the tensions between traditional bourgeois ideals of domesticity and femininity, and the emergent representational trends offered by feminism. Analyses often deal with a fundamental conflict between the notion of women as agents and as victims, as subjects and as objects. Uncovered is an inherent unease, in that these representational forms are not simply about feminist progress as much as about contradiction involved in the competing discourses that define the idea of woman. Struggling with what we mean by feminism and femininity involves talking about representation as never before. But the process of identifying and analysing seemingly unpromising images of women reveals a more implicit and possibly more important agenda. Just in the sheer act of looking at makes visible issues previously neglected or overlooked.

Genre analysis provided a fruitful site of feminist inquiry in this regard during the eighties and beyond, in part because the trend to reclaim popular cultural forms gained prominence, in part helped by post-structuralist approaches, and in part

because new interdisciplinary methods better enabled scholars to theorise representational ambivalence. Patricia Mellencamp revisits the early days of American television armed with new methodologies, to reconsider the slapstick routines of Lucille Ball (from *I Love Lucy*, Desilu Productions/CBS, 1951-1957) and the verbal joke telling of Gracie Allen (from *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show*, CBS, 1950-1958). Freud's theories of humorous pleasure give her the critical tools to explain how these virtuoso female performers used humour as a seditious act of defiance against domestic containment, a 'double bind' understood only too well by the fifties female viewer.¹⁴ Fast-forward to the nineties, and Roseanne, television celebrity and fictional sitcom character (Carsey-Werner Company/ABC, 1988-1997), was the subject of another interdisciplinary study. Using theoretical models from Mikhail Bakhtin (the grotesque) to Natalie Davis (the unruly woman sanctioning disobedience in post-revolutionary France), Kathleen Rowe contends that the subversive spectacle presented by Roseanne – her overweight body, her physical excesses, her performance as loud and brash – dramatises the conflict between female unruliness and the traditional ideologies of feminine propriety, between feminist liberation (informed by second-wave feminism) and the realities of working-class family life (those whom feminism left behind).¹⁵

Interdisciplinary approaches to understanding how gender is produced, combining textual analyses with an awareness of production conditions and the socio-cultural ideological context, map out a dense social history of post-war femininity. Mary Beth Haralovich pays close attention to how classic American sitcoms like *Leave It To Beaver* (CBS, 1957-58; ABC, 1958-63) and *Father Knows Best* (CBS, 1954-55 and 1958-62; NBC, 1955-58; ABC, 1962-63) 'sold' suburban middle-class family life, in

the way it naturalised class and gender identities through patterns of consumption and the spatial layout of the home, to the female consumer.¹⁶ Interest in how television accommodated social change – incorporating dissent and turning it into consensual representation preserving dominant patriarchal ideology – proves another area of discussion. Serafina Bathrick, for example, deliberates on how the sitcom form of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, centring on an unmarried career woman, and initially airing in 1970 at the height of the women's movement, worked to preserve patriarchal values. Other contributions like Rabinovitz's analysis of 'single mom' sitcoms like *One Day At A Time* (CBS, 1975-1984) and *Kate and Allie* (CBS, 1984-1988),¹⁷ Helen Baehr's look at representations of feminist liberation in television drama,¹⁸ Aniko Bodroghkozy's situating of the black sitcom *Julia* (NBC, 1968-1971) in the broader socio-political context about black single mothers and the politics of civil rights in sixties America (Julia lost her husband in the Vietnam War),¹⁹ determine how gender was (re)produced and institutionalised by television and its representational practices; and how those gendered meanings corresponded with, or else opposed, broader areas of women's changing experience and culture.

D'Acci's contribution on *Cagney & Lacey* (CBS Television, 1981-1988), about two New York-based female detectives (Tyne Daly, Meg Foster/Sharon Gless), places the groundbreaking series in a wider socio-cultural context regarding media representations of feminism and network television's institutionalisation of that discourse.²⁰ D'Acci believes that gender is so deeply ingrained in television practices and conventions that it 'is produced at the level of the overall production process – in the myriad imperatives that directly govern the construction of audiences and programmes.'²¹

Making Visible the Invisible: ii. Female Viewers, Viewing Practices and Soap Operas.

Television Studies took up its place in the academy at a moment when scholars were shifting attention away from text-based criticism to focus instead on audience research and reception studies. Whereas feminist film criticism had previously focused on an a-historical spectator constituted in the text,²² cultural studies-based feminists interested in television focused on the empirical audience – how actual women watched and made use of television. Charlotte Brunsdon made an important distinction here between the textual subject constituted in the text and the ‘social subject’ constructed within culture.²³ Much of this ethnographic work trained attention on television viewing practices and domestic consumption, taste preferences and access – and more recently videos watched at home.²⁴

One of the first to set the agenda on television viewing habits, popular pleasures and how the female viewer interacted with the text was Dorothy Hobson.²⁵ Adopting an ethnographic approach she studied housewives at home watching the early evening British soap, *Crossroads* (Associated Television/ITV, 1964-1988). Spending time with the women alerted her to how domestic and childcare routines resulted in a distracted viewing experience. In addition she found that rather than limiting their discussions to individual episodes, the women talked about the series in a broader sense. Noting how the women drew on cultural knowledge and personal experience, her findings challenge Stuart Hall’s ‘preferred readings’ model²⁶ to suggest instead that textual meaning is constructed at the moment of reading (see Dorothy Hobson’s contribution).

Feminist scholars of popular culture like Tania Modleski have sought to understand the relationship between daytime television soap opera and women's everyday lives. Modleski's analysis identifies the rhythms of television as similar to those of domestic labour;²⁷ and how the episodic, multi-linear narrative form of soap opera replicates patterns of distraction and disruption. Combining political science, psychoanalytic approaches to hysteria and reader-response theories help her gain insight into the complex mediation process shaping viewing habits and pleasures.²⁸ She recognises how the daytime soap opera meets real socio-cultural needs for women feeling isolated at home, playing out the intimacies of family life, and providing a 'collective fantasy ... of community.'²⁹ Her seminal work led the way for further studies combining an understanding of audience pleasures with textual analysis; such as Sandy Flitterman-Lewis's consideration of how television form dictates viewing practices,³⁰ Laura Stempel Mumford's interrogation of her own pleasures for a genre that displays various oppressive tendencies like racism, class-ism and hetero-sexism,³¹ and more recently Louise Spence's multidisciplinary study of the varied critical and creative ways in which women viewers use soap operas in their lives.³²

Ien Ang takes up questions of gendered pleasures, television consumption and the interplay between reality and fiction in her ethnographic study of Dutch viewers watching American top-rated soap opera, *Dallas* (Lorimar Television/CBS, 1978-1991).³³ Putting forward an alternative interpretation of the text-reader relationship, she relies on viewers' letters to theorise the complex relationship between feminism, women and a text that appealed to a female viewership. Investigating the diverse and often contradictory responses offered by women as to why they enjoyed watching *Dallas* leads her to construct a social analysis around pleasure and ideology. Female

audiences emerge from her study as active, critical and selective. Yet in contrast with audience research that privilege unquestioningly what people say as a direct reflection of their viewing experience, Ang interprets the responses as a 'text' to be read – while cautioning against the theoretical 'dangers of an over-politicising of [female] pleasure.'³⁴

A methodological problem raised by Ang concerns the interventionist role of the feminist researcher and her relationship with the ordinary woman under investigation. Christine Gledhill anticipates this when she talks about how 'criticism represents the professionalisation of meaning production.'³⁵ However, Ang has gone onto theorise ambivalence as inherent in the interpreter's role,³⁶ something acknowledged in contemporary research.³⁷ Through a series of interviews Deborah Jermyn analyses how women talk about *Sex and The City* (Sex and The City Productions/HBO, 1998-2004) in an effort to understand what the series means to them.³⁸ Pivotal here is the point at which Jermyn's own fandom intersects with the experience of those she interviewed. It is a moment that allows her to interrogate both the pleasures and difficulties involved in understanding how contemporary fan culture operates and how to speak about it.

Feminist approaches to understanding audience-response and reader-text relationships contribute significantly to the re-evaluation of popular pleasures, viewing habits and research protocols within the field of Television Studies. Looking ahead to how the debate might be carried forward is to consider the gendered viewing experience in relation to an increasingly hybrid generic product. American serial drama, for example, has long incorporated soap opera conventions into its narrative and aesthetic

structure.³⁹ Two recent feminist studies (including our own) on *The Sopranos* (Chase Films/HBO, 1999-) consider how the traditional cause-and-effect narrative male world of the (cinematic) gangster is circumscribed, and even undermined, by the open-endedness and multiple-plot narratives of soap opera.⁴⁰

Another strand is to theorise new forms of audience engagement, made possible by new technologies. Official (and unofficial) websites, online posting boards and Internet chat rooms⁴¹ make possible as never before a meta-narrative created and adapted by viewer/fans. Traditionally seen as a male preserve, new research points to how shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*⁴² and *The L Word*⁴³ are inspiring - and even anticipating - virtual communities of women. From interactive television (see, Jermyn and Holmes' contribution) to weblogs, new media technologies are clearly building on, and extending, existing forms of fandom (with not only local but global implications) and are also changing the ways in which the viewer engages with the text. These innovations invite further investigations in terms of gender, power and access.

Post-Feminisms and New Directions.

Is Feminism Dead? asked the front cover of *Time* magazine for June 29 1998. Black and white pictures of Susan B. Anthony, Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem were followed by a colour image of the television character, Ally McBeal (played by Calista Flockhart). Replacing feminist icons with a television representation is an interesting slippage. Was this fictional TV character – a successful but highly neurotic Bostonian attorney who pouted her way through court and mooched around the office obsessing over men – the new face of contemporary feminism? Surely not.

Surveying the emergence of a postfeminist primetime programming, with shows like *L.A. Law* (20th Century Fox Television/NBC, 1986-1994), *thirtysomething* (Bedford Falls Productions/ABC, 1987-1991), *Designing Women* (CBS, 1986-1993) and *Murphy Brown* (Warner Bros. Television/CBS, 1988-1998), Bonnie Dow may offer an explanation for this discernible shift in how the ‘liberated’ woman is portrayed.⁴⁴ The choice of Ally McBeal over Gloria Steinem says much about how the feminist discourse ‘increasingly defines what it means to be a feminist by factors of lifestyle and attitude rather than politics and activism.’⁴⁵ Dow’s timely intervention, produced at a new moment in the history of feminism, highlights some of the crucial ideas/themes preoccupying and shaping current feminist research.

Amanda D. Lotz identifies a ‘confusion and contradiction’ marking academic post-feminist thought, partly due to changing theoretical contexts (second-wave feminism, postfeminism, third-wave feminism), partly because of competing labels (liberal feminism, radical feminism, cultural feminism), and partly because of confusion over terminology (one woman’s feminism is not necessarily another’s).⁴⁶ What proves invaluable about her survey is the way in which she draws out complex definitions and distinctions shaping postfeminism as a critical tool for a feminist television analysis. British feminists writing about television read the contradictions between feminism and femininity as not necessarily about conflict but about articulating the ‘experiences of being female, feminist, and feminine in the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries.’⁴⁷ Recent scholars such as Joanna Hollows,⁴⁸ Jacinda Read⁴⁹ and Rachel Moseley⁵⁰ have understood postfeminist contradiction to be not only about the competing discourses defining a ‘have-it-all’ feminism but also about a

strategy to analyse seemingly contradictory texts like *Ally McBeal* (David E. Kelley Productions/Fox Television, 1997-2002) and *Charmed* (Spelling Television/The WB Television Network, 1998-). Moseley and Read reading *Ally McBeal* through contemporary debates on feminism and its representation in the British press make the case for suggesting that the show appeals to a generation of women ‘for whom having it all means not giving things up (the pleasures of feminine adornment and heterosexual romance) but struggling to reconcile our feminist desires with our feminine desires.’⁵¹

Interrogating issues of desire and pleasure, identity and sexual politics, and ambivalence preoccupies current feminist television scholarship with which we are involved. Questions are rooted in an intellectual context indebted to third-wave feminism, often labelled postfeminism, and the product of various contradictory definitions and theoretical differences emerging in the early nineties: post-structuralist theoretical approaches to subjectivity and identity formation; Foucauldian influenced ideas about regulatory norms and the policing of sexuality; the post-modern interest in popular culture and consumer capitalism; and the intersecting discourses of black feminism and US third world feminism accounting for hybridity, multiplicity and an affirmative politics of difference.

Criticism here becomes a form of activism, allowing multiple voices and contesting opinions to co-exist in an unpredictable, and often uneasy, alliance; and reminding us what the media backlash wanted us to forget, that is ‘the power of representation to promote or contest domination.’⁵² In her study of American talk shows, Jane Shattuc contends that those women rarely seen on national television - women of colour,

working-class, older women, those of differing sexual orientations – are given a public forum to speak as never before.⁵³ Giving marginalised women the chance to speak for themselves, testifying to what are sometimes traumatic experiences, has, in Shattuc's opinion, 'become a sign of power and control,'⁵⁴ although transgression is recuperated by the talk show format to affirm social norms and appropriate female behaviours. But it seems to us that some revelations put pressure on feminists to make sense of why women invest – some by choice, others not – in misogyny and sexism. Theorising power, oppression and domination has long consumed feminist television criticism but understanding our own participation, collusion – and sometimes pleasure – in those structures subjugating us stimulates fresh questions for a feminist inquiry: 'We know that what oppresses me may not oppress you, that what oppresses you may be something I participate in, and that what oppresses me may be something you participate in.'⁵⁵

Tania Modleski, writing on the continued popularity of romantic fiction within the post-feminist age, interrogates what is it about age-old patriarchal tales of naïve heroines and dashing heroes that still finds a female audience eager 'to participate in and actively desire feminine self betrayal.'⁵⁶ Post-feminist series like *Friends* (NBC, 1994-2004), *Ally McBeal*, *Sex and the City* and more recently *Desperate Housewives* (Cherry Productions/ABC, 2004-) perpetuate these narratives of supposedly liberated women desiring romance – longing for a man to *complete* her. It is a question intriguing feminist scholars like us. How do we theorise – or even explain - our pleasurable investment in patriarchal fantasies that feminism has long told us to abandon. Joanna di Mattia explores the necessity of the romance quest in *Sex and the City* for sustaining narrative longevity, thus giving characters time to deconstruct their

fantasies of Mr Right in the process of desiring him;⁵⁷ we investigate how humour and shared laughter used by our gals interrogates female investment in cultural and consumerist discourses constructing the woman as objectified Other while offering new stories about experience;⁵⁸ and Beth Montemurro analyses how Charlotte York (Kristin Davis) uses the empowering language of liberal feminism to defend her choice of giving up her career for marriage and possible motherhood.⁵⁹ How to theorise romantic entanglements that appear to compromise our feminist principles, as well as how to talk about how identities conditioned by race, age, class, and/or sexual and cultural hierarchies circumscribe our belief in heterosexual-based fantasies of dominance and submission as the norm⁶⁰ continue to intrigue.

How best to understand female subjectivity paraded on our television screens remains fascinating and perplexing, mesmerising and frustrating, in equal measure. Central to this representational conundrum is the intellectual and theoretical struggle to analyse female identities, for better or worse, still rooted in an entrenched phallogocentric imaginary, and subject to approved cultural scripts that applaud particular lives and bodies. How do we interpret self-improvement shows like *Extreme Make-Over* (Lighthearted Entertainment/ABC, 2002-2005) and *The Swan* (Galan Entertainment/Fox Network, 2004) where the female body is literally broken, stapled and stretched into a shape conforming to prevailing ideals of feminine perfection and beauty?⁶¹ How are female bodies like those of the stripper to be read?⁶² How do women carve out power for themselves within (male) generic conventions and (patriarchal) narrative worlds that tell them they have none?⁶³ What can we make of sexually and financially liberated ladies far more interested in fashion, style and consumerism than political action?⁶⁴ How can resilient and powerful young women

kick major demon ass and still retain feminine composure?⁶⁵ And why do these women predominately have to be white and heterosexual? No easy answers emerge. Only contradiction and ambiguity exist. Shaped by competing feminisms as well as by the cultural media backlash against feminism, rooted in theories about, and structured by, fragmentation, hybridity and multiplicity, like post-structuralism, postmodernism, black and queer theories, feminist scholarship pursues new avenues for talking about the 'lived messiness' of sexual freedom and repression, pleasure and perversion, agency and submission. Weaving a highly personal confessional style with a rigorous critical engagement with theory, the new sexual politics as seen on (primarily American) television talks about sex, pleasure and desire differently as well as the ways power constrains and limits.⁶⁶

Feminist television scholars have long experimented with styles of writing that will best speak about viewing pleasures and subjectivities, often fusing autobiographical styles with the more analytical methods of the academy. Collaboration, dialogue and interdisciplinary exchange are key here. The current trend for the anthology, focusing primarily on a single series, reveals an inter- and cross-disciplinary conversation with discordant gendered voices challenging and opposing each other. A mixing of writing styles also marks these collections. Dense, close textual readings are used as a key critical strategy, allowing authors to expose multi-layeredness, to locate the contradictory readings – liberal feminism, antifeminist, postfeminist – often operating in one text.

The speed of change wrought by, and made visible through, feminism has led to a tendency to speak of feminism in terms of generations, of historical waves – first, second and third. Prevalent here is the desire to define difference among and between feminisms, to speak of what sets one type of feminism against another, often through reducing complex arguments to denigrate what came before while asserting a theoretical identity to call ones own.⁶⁷ Our reading of the history of feminist television scholarship takes issue with such a trajectory. Reviewing our paper it occurs to us that feminist television criticism offers a vibrant and diverse conversation, more about continuity than rupture, about discontinuity than linearity. As we see it, contemporary feminist debate, be it postfeminist or third-wave, does not radically break from what went before but rather offers another moment of readjustment, re-coding and re-writing to accommodate the new. Ambiguity and the struggle over meaning – gendered subjectivities, the cultural politics of television within the domestic space, the reader-text relationship, to name but a few issues - have marked feminist television criticism from the outset. Our approaches and methodologies may change but the questions remain the same: namely, what do we mean by female, femininity and feminism (and of late masculinities)? Catherine Lumby makes a useful intervention here when she warns: ‘If feminism is to remain engaged with and relevant to the everyday lives of women, then feminists desperately need the tools to understand everyday culture.’⁶⁸

Feminist television criticism has played a crucial role in setting an agenda for Television Studies. It is no small coincidence that feminism and Television Studies appeared in the academy at the same time; and both are profoundly shaped by and rooted in similar debates – post-structuralism, postmodernism, post-feminism, post-colonialism – that challenge grand theories and master narratives. Feminist Television

Studies trained attention on demographic groups like the working class, housewives and women of colour as never before. Writing those rarely heard before into discourse not only disrupted orthodox wisdom on gender identity and sexual difference but also generated new theories about gendered subjectivity and viewing habits, female desire and pleasures, and feminine desires linked to class, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation. But the question of legitimacy and the precariousness of speaking about the popular, ephemeral pleasures, denigrated generic forms (soap opera and sitcom) hovers over the discourse. It is a problem of writing a new field of knowledge, about what can and cannot be said. Notwithstanding its significant contribution to date, feminist television criticism still has much work to do.

¹ Charlotte Brunson, Julie D'Acci and Lynn Spigel, 'Introduction,' in Brunson, D'Acci and Spigel, eds, *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*, Clarendon Press, 1997: 5.

² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, 1990; Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, Routledge, 1993.

³ Stuart Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding,' in Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe, Paul Willis, eds, *Culture, Media, Language*, Hutchinson, 1980: 128-138; David Morley, 'Texts, Readers, Subjects,' Hall, Hobson, Lowe and Willis, eds, *Culture, Media, Language*: 163-173.

⁴ E. Ann Kaplan, 'Feminist Criticism and Television,' in Robert C. Allen, ed, *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled*, University of North Carolina Press, 1992: 248.

⁵ Michèle Mattelart, 'Everyday Life,' in Brunson, D'Acci and Spigel, eds, *Feminist Television Criticism*: 23-35.

⁶ Purnima Mankekar, *Screening Cultures, Viewing Politics: An Ethnography of Television, Womanhood and Postcolonial India*, Duke University Press, 1999; Purnima Mankekar, 'National Texts and Gendered Lives: An Ethnography of Television Viewers in a North Indian City,' in Kelly Askew and Richard Wilk, eds, *The Anthropology of the Media: A Reader*, Blackwell Publishing, 2002: 299-322.

⁷ Jacqueline Bobo and Ellen Seiter, 'Black Feminism and Media Criticism: The Women of Brewster Place,' in Brunson, D'Acci and Spigel, eds, *Feminist Television Criticism*: 167-183.

⁸ Julie D'Acci, *Defining Women: Television and the Case of Cagney & Lacey*, University of North Carolina Press, 1994: 67.

⁹ Lauren Rabinovitz, 'Ms.-Representation: The Politics of Feminist Sitcoms,' in Mary Beth Haralovich and Lauren Rabinovitz, eds, *Television, History, and American Culture*, Duke University Press, 1999: 146.

¹⁰ *Camera Obscura* devoted an entire issue in 1994 to exploring the content and form of Lifetime, the new cable channel for women; *Camera Obscura*, vols. 33-34, 1994-1995.

¹¹ Ellen Seiter, 'Television and the Internet,' in John Thornton Caldwell, ed, *Electronic Media and Technoculture*, Rutgers University Press, 2000: 227-246.

¹² Julia Hallam, *Lynda La Plante*, Manchester University Press, 2005: 3.

¹³ *Ibid*: 8.

¹⁴ Patricia Mellencamp, 'Situation Comedy, Feminism, and Freud: Discourses of Gracie and Lucy,' in Brunson, D'Acci and Spigel, eds, *Feminist Television Criticism*: 60-73.

¹⁵ Kathleen Rowe, *The Unruly Woman: Gender and Genres of Laughter*. University of Texas Press, 1994; reprinted in 'Roseanne: Unruly Woman as Domestic Goddess,' in Joanne Morreale, *Critiquing the Sitcom: A Reader*, Syracuse University Press, 2003: 251-261.

- ¹⁶ Mary Beth Haralovich, 'Sitcoms and Suburbs: Positioning the 1950s Housewife,' in Morreale, *Critiquing the Sitcom*: 69-85
- ¹⁷ Lauren Rabinovitz, 'Sitcoms and Single Moms: Representations of Feminism on American TV,' *Cinema Journal*, 29, 1994: 3-19.
- ¹⁸ Helen Baehr, 'The "Liberated Woman" in Television Drama,' in *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1980: 29-39.
- ¹⁹ Aniko Bodroghkozy, "'Is This What You Mean By Color TV?'" Race, Gender and Contested Meaning in Julia,' in Morreale, *Critiquing the Sitcom*: 129-149.
- ²⁰ D'Acci, *Defining Women*, 1994.
- ²¹ Julie D'Acci, 'Gender Representation and Television,' in Toby Miller, ed, *Television Studies*, BFI Publishing, 2002: 93.
- ²² Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' *Screen*, vol. 16, no. 3, 1975: 6-18.
- ²³ Charlotte Brunson, 'Crossroads: Notes on Soap Opera,' *Screen*, vol. 22, no. 4, 1981: 32.
- ²⁴ Valerie Walkerdine, 'Video Replay: Families, Films and Fantasy,' in Victor Burgin, James Donald and Cora Kaplan, eds, *Formations of Fantasy*, Routledge, 1986: 167-199; Ann Gray, *Video Playtime: The Gendering of a Leisure Technology*, Routledge, 1992.
- ²⁵ Dorothy Hobson, *Crossroads: The Drama of Soap Opera*, Methuen, 1982.
- ²⁶ Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding,' 128-138.
- ²⁷ Tania Modleski, 'The Search for Tomorrow in Today's Soap Operas: Notes on a Feminine Narrative Form,' *Film Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 1, 1979: 12-21; Tania Modleski, 'The Rhythms of Reception: Daytime Television and Women's Work,' in E. Ann Kaplan, ed, *Regarding Television: Critical Approaches – An Anthology*, University Publications of America, 1983: 67-75.
- ²⁸ Tania Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass Produced Fantasies for Women*, Routledge, 1994.
- ²⁹ Ibid: 108.
- ³⁰ Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, 'Psychoanalysis, Film, and Television,' in Allen, ed, *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled*: 203-246.
- ³¹ Laura Stempel Mumford, *Love and Ideology in the Afternoon: Soap Opera, Women and Television Genre*, Indiana University Press, 1995.
- ³² Louise Spence, *Watching Daytime Soap Operas: The Power of Pleasure*, Wesleyan University Press, 2005.
- ³³ Ien Ang, *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination*, Methuen, 1985.
- ³⁴ Ibid: 132.
- ³⁵ Christine Gledhill, 'Pleasurable Negotiations,' in E. Deirdre Pribram, ed, *Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television*, Verso, 1988: 64-89.
- ³⁶ Ang, *Watching Dallas*: 12.
- ³⁷ Lyn Thomas, 'In Love With Inspector Morse,' in Brunson, D'Acci and Spigel, eds, *Feminist Television Criticism*: 184-204.
- ³⁸ Deborah Jermyn, 'In Love With Sarah Jessica Parker: Celebrating Female Fandom and Friendship in *Sex and the City*,' in Kim Akass and Janet McCabe, eds, *Reading Sex and the City: Critical Approaches*, I.B. Tauris, 2004: 201-218.
- ³⁹ Robert Thompson, *Television's Second Golden Age: From Hill Street Blues to ER*, Syracuse University Press, 1997: 35.
- ⁴⁰ Cindy Donatelli and Sharon Alward, "'I Dread You'?" Married to the Mob in *The Godfather*, *Goodfellas*, and *The Sopranos*,' in David Lavery, ed, *This Thing of Ours: Investigating The Sopranos*, Wallflower Press, 2002: 60-71; and Kim Akass and Janet McCabe, 'Beyond The Bada Bing!: Negotiating Female Narrative Authority in *The Sopranos*,' in Lavery, ed, *This Thing of Ours*: 146-161.
- ⁴¹ Spence observes many Internet chat rooms in her study of women watching soaps; Spence, *Watching Daytime Soap Operas*, 2005.
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